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-The TFIC Team.

JAINA STORIES

(as gleaned from canonical texts)

Vol. 3

Adhyatma Yogi

Upadhyaya Munisi Mahendrakumari 'Pratham'

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FOREWORD

The story is a kind of "Saying". It is, however, a kind of literary form but it does spring from deep human impulse and does fulfill human needs. Stories of witchcraft and enchantment, wandering loose in men's mind, attached themselves in the early sixteenth century to a real life.

Jain stories particularly have made a notable contribution to the development of literature in the form of stories. Every aspect of life has been depicted in Jain stories. They are influenced with subtle sagacious discourses on religion and philosophy. Light has also been thrown on the practical aspects of life. The significance of Jain stories lies in the fact that each incident has been narrated metaphysically. Each incident envelopes valour, intelligence, understanding, tolerance and other essential attributes. Spirituality is, of course, the main theme of Jain literature but that spirituality is not barren in the Jain stories. While taking stock of the ups and downs of life, a man ordinarily loses sight of the future and hence he commits a mistake which makes even the present fatiguing and oppressive, Jain stories live in the present and picture the future.

If we want to see ourselves in perspective to understand our predicaments and possibilities, we must be able to make comparisons with some other societies of a quite different time and place. Only then we shall be armed with sufficient detachment to grapple with our own problems. In this respect, Adhyatmayogi Munishri Mahendrakumarji 'Pratham' has done a splendid and memorable work by reproducing old Jain stories in Hindi which represents a quite different period from our own.

Kashi Vidyapith,
Varanasi,
12. 8. 76

Raja Ram Shastri
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PREFACE

Short story is one of the literary forms in which a writer expresses himself. Jainism provides a philosophy which is difficult to the extreme and is intelligible to a handful of scholars. To bring it home to the common man, spiritual teachers and scholars in different ages have used the medium of short stories of which there are hundreds, even thousands, scattered throughout the length and breadth of the vast *agamis* literature and their commentaries. They have been produced in different ages by men with widely divergent experiences, but all against the backdrop of a common canvas which is Jainism. The analysis of personalities in these stories, the conglomeration of events, the clashes of selfish motives and interests, the display of bravery, the shape of endeavour, the depth of human life, the quagmire of meanness, fear, squalor, impatience, lethargy, imbalance, etc., which undermine the quality of life and place it on a very low pedestal, these and many such things dominate these stories. They have been repeated innumerable times to refix the fallen, the misguided, the downtrodden to the right path which is the path of religion, the path meant for a pilgrim, and they are still not devoid of freshness and potentiality.

To be the subject-matter of literature, it is not necessary that the life of men only with a golden tinge is deserving of consideration. Even the life of men with dark patches provide an equally worthwhile material for the purpose. These two types of men may stand widely apart, they may, so to say, be called to belong to entirely different worlds, but that does not prevent them from receiving consideration at the hands of a creative artist. Whenever life, golden or dark, has some vigour in thinking, some 'capacity for acting, some message for others, it becomes a worthy material for the literary man's attention. Jaina

stories, in fact, depict the life of men with a golden tinge as well as that with dark patches. Men with a golden tinge are inherently good and they are already on the right path as good examples for others. But even men with the deepest patches stand the chance of rehabilitation if they can be brought back to the right path. Then there are cases where a man has slipped from the right path to get wholly lost. An account of such men serves as a useful warning. Quite a number of stories uphold the cause of women, the fallen, the downtrodden, the backward sections of the community. Jainism believes in the infinite capacity of the human soul and the core message in Mahavira's *kriyavada* is that man is the architect of his own fortune provided he asserts as a master and remains not submissive as a slave.

When in the course of my own studies of the *Agamas*, I became acquainted with the existence of such a fabulous crop of short stories, I set myself, under the inspiring guidance of my senior colleagues, notably Munisri Nagarajji of the Terapanth sect, to the task of bringing this harvest within the reach of the common man. My endeavour was, therefore, directed to the faithful reproduction of these stories in readable Hindi. As I proceeded in my work, new vistas opened in front of me so that by now it has been possible to print 27 parts in Hindi and many more parts will follow in years to come. I was encouraged by the reception given to my labour and this made me think of bringing out the same stories immediately through the English medium to reach a much wider section of the public in India and outside. The English version of Jaina short stories produced by Prof K C Lalwani is now going out and I have no doubt to say that Prof. Lalwani has made a good job of it. It is expected that the book lovers irrespective of caste or creed will derive ample benefit and pleasure from it.

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*There are superior and still superior weapons,
But there's none superior to non-weapon*

Acaranga, 3. 4.

1. SURASUNDARI

In the city of Champa, there reigned a king named Aridamana. Ratisundari was the name of the queen. A daughter was born to them. She was so beautiful that she was named Surasundari. When she reached the age of seven, the king sent her to the preceptor's school for study. She was very intelligent and had a strong memory. She could remember anything only by hearing it once.

In those days, a very rich merchant named Dhanapala lived in the same city. His business was not limited to his own city only, it was spread over lands far and near, even beyond the seas. In fact, he had become very famous as a merchant. His wife was named Dhanavati. They had affluence of wealth and influence but something was missing which made the couple very miserable. They had no son. At last, however, after a few years, their source of misery was removed. A luminous son was born to them. He was named Amarkumar. When he was eight years, old, the merchant sent him for study to that very school where Surasundari studied. Amarkumar too was very brilliant in his studies. Any lesson uttered once by the preceptor was immediately picked up by the boy. Within a short time, he acquired all the 72 arts.

Once the preceptor went out for a few days on an urgent business and he placed Amarkumar in charge of the school to look after both the boys' and the girls' sections during his absence. One day, Amarkumar was out for his daily inspection during the midday recess in the company of a friend. At this time, Surasundari, who had a heavy stomach that day, felt sleepy and she lay down on a bench in the class room and was soon fast asleep. When Amarkumar reached the spot, he looked at her, and suddenly he saw that something was tied at the corner of her *sari*. Just out of curiosity, he opened it and there came out seven shells.

Amarkumar gave them to his friend and asked him to buy some sweets against them. His friend did accordingly. Then the two friends ate a portion of the sweet, and gave the remaining portion to the girl when she woke up. She immediately asked, "Where did you get the money?"

"These sweets have been bought out of the seven shells tied in your *sari*."

Surasundari became very angry. She exclaimed in anger

"In the preceptor's absence, you are doing everything all right. But how could you do such a thing without my consent. Wherefrom have you learnt such manners?"

Amarkumar felt small and said,

"I have taken such a meagre amount! Why are you abusing me for that? Of what great use would have been those shells to you? You could not buy anything in exchange for them."

Surasundari promptly retorted,

"I could have purchased even a kingdom in exchange for them. How are you concerned about that?"

Amarkumar held a tight rein over his temper. He did not protest. For, he considered it wise not to open his lips any further, but the rude words of the princess pierced his heart. He said to himself,

"So that's it! All right. At the right moment, I shall see how she gets a kingdom in exchange for seven shells."

He left the place.

After a few days, the preceptor returned. When the course of study came to an end, all the students sat for the

final examination Amarkumar stood first among the boys and Surasundari among the girls

Surasundari was no longer a little girl ; she had become a young damsel The king was now anxious to get her married to a suitable groom So he sent his men to find out a suitable match, but nowhere could such a person be found The king grew worried He called his family preceptor and asked for his advice The preceptor said,

“Oh king ! You have misconstrued the term ‘suitable’ To me he who is intelligent and virtuous, who has mastered 72 arts, and who can properly guide his family, is to be deemed a suitable groom To such a person, wealth and fame are sure to come”

At these words, the king remoulded his thoughts He began to think of the high families in his own kingdom Suddenly Amarkumar came up in his mind. He asked the preceptor about him as a groom The preceptor said,

“I have taught both and I know well their nature There is a great similarity and common ground between them I believe, if married, they will be the happiest couple on earth ”

The king now took a final decision One day he invited both Amarkumar and Surasundari to his court The preceptor and many leading citizens were present there The king told Amarkumar and the princess to put questions to each other, and later he himself asked a few questions to each. Their performance satisfied all who were present there The king sent for the merchant Dhanapal, father of Amarkumar, and made to him a formal proposal The merchant was very happy at this proposal and he readily agreed Amarkumar and Surasundari were married on an auspicious day

The couple led a very happy conjugal life. They loved each other very intensely. After some time, Amarkumar decided to undertake a sea voyage for business purposes. Accordingly, he took his father's consent. When Surasundari came to know of this plan, she also desired to go with him. In fact, Amarkumar did not very much like this idea, but he could not bypass her pressing request. After taking the blessings of his parents and other senior members in the family, the couple started at an auspicious moment. A few months' voyage took them to the island of Ceylon. The ship was anchored for getting drinking water. Just then an elderly and experienced sailor came and said,

"Wait for some time. At the hour of sunset, a terrible monster comes to this place and it is very difficult to escape from his clutches. If you want to save yourself you ought to leave your ship here and move away to a distance till it's dark."

All the passengers did as bade by the sailor. They dispersed in small groups. Amarkumar and Surasundari walked away to another direction. They were immensely pleased at the beautiful landscape facing their eyes. They strolled for quite some time on the sea-beach. At last Surasundari felt tired. So she begged her husband to sit down somewhere and take rest. Amarkumar readily agreed. They selected a nice lonely spot beneath a tree. Surasundari was so tired that she placed her head on the lap of her husband and soon fell fast asleep.

Human memory is very alert. Sometimes words said long ago come up in memory quite amazingly, and fill the mind with unspeakable grief. The same happened with the hero of the present story. The stillness of the atmosphere all around and the sleeping beauty lying in front of him aroused in his mind an episode that had happened long ago.

Surasundari had said to him once in a proud voice, 'I could have purchased even a kingdom with the shells. How are you concerned about that?' The voice was still ringing in his ears till his love for his wife turned into a feeling of hatred. He tied seven coins at the corner of her *sari* and also a message as follows

'I hope, you will now avail this opportunity to get a kingdom in exchange for these shells'

Then he left Surasundari under the tree and returned to the ship. When the fellow passengers asked him about his wife moaningly he said that a monster had overpowered him and devoured his wife. The passengers consoled him for this tragic loss and the ship sailed onwards.

When Surasundari woke up, it was quite late at night. She was surprised to find herself alone in that dense forest. Amarkumar was nowhere near her. She started searching for him, but all in vain. Then fear crept into her and she shuddered to think that her husband might have abandoned her for ever. But she just couldn't comprehend the reason for this cruel behaviour. 'Why at all should he be cruel unto me when I had loved him so dearly and he too seemed to be a very loving husband,' thought she. She was now in deep misery. All on a sudden, the knot at one end of the *sari* attracted her attention. She opened it hastily, and in the increasing darkness of the night could read with great difficulty the following words

"I hope, you will now avail this opportunity to get a kingdom in exchange for these shells."

The earth seemed to slip from beneath her feet. The entire episode of the student days long buried in the past again revived in her memory. That Amarkumar had taken an apt revenge was clear enough. But what was she to do

now in such a dense forest ? Where should she go ? Tears filled her eyes and she wept bitterly But soon she recovered her strength Tears wont help in this trying situation She carefully tied the shells at the corner of her *sari* and uttered the *namokar* with all concentration she could command

Suddenly a thundering sound came from a nearby mountain She had never had an experience of such a terrible sound She was trembling As she looked in the direction from which the sound came, she saw a terrific monster standing before her Surasundari was very much afraid at this sight, but she did not lose her head On the contrary, she began to utter the *namokar* all the more loudly The monster seemed to be charmed at her beauty, and his furious face softened to a great extent In a mild tone he asked her,

“Who are you, my child ? How did you come alone in this dense forest ?”

By this time, Surasundari had regained her courage and understood that she had nothing to fear from him So she gave him a full account of herself The monster felt for her and asked her to live there as long as she liked, since, he added, he was the protector-master of the forest and would give her his full protection Surasundari accepted his protection and lived in a cave with a complete sense of security

One day, a ship anchored there to get some drinking water It belonged to a merchant All the passengers including the senior-most partner of the merchant began to walk on the sea-shore enjoying the natural beauty of the place Somehow the partner merchant reached a dense part of the forest and suddenly beheld Surasundari He was amazed to see such a rare beauty in a forlorn place like this.

Taking her to be a forest deity, he bowed to her Surasundari said,

“Sir ! You are mistaken I am not a deity but an ordinary mortal, an unfortunate woman, who is passing her days here ”

Then she gave a complete account of herself and explained why she was staying in the forest If the merchant had no objection, then, she expressed a desire to accompany him in his ship which might help her in the quest for her husband But she demanded an assurance that her chastity must be respected and protected The merchant agreed on her condition Surasundari was now on board the ship. The ship set sail

But the merchant could not for long remain true to his promise Whenever he saw her, he felt a lust for her Now and then he began to make overtures to her At first, Surasundari could not comprehend his feelings, but after some time, she knew what he meant, and at once she realised the danger she was in She was a spirited lady. One day, in a strong tone, she turned down his proposal and asked him to behave properly in future But the merchant was blind with lust He reminded her that he was far more powerful than she, and he would be obliged to use force provided she was so very stubborn He made it clear one day that that was the only reason why he had agreed to take her in the ship, and that if she would not listen to him, then, necessary consequences would follow

Surasundari cast a deep sigh Said she,

‘ I value my chastity more than even an empire of a *chakravartin* I can hold myself against any person’s lusty overtures I warn you for the future You should know for certain that I am prepared to die rather than court another man’s company ”

Surasundari was now clear about her own dark prospects in the ship. She looked at the vast ocean. Its water was calm. It was attracting her to hide her purity beneath the waves. She uttered the *namokar* and gave a deep plunge into the ocean. The merchant raised an alarm and asked the men of the crew to jump after her and rescue her, but none had the courage to risk his life.

So long as Surasundari was on board the ship, she was a great protection for the passengers and the crew as also for herself by dint of her great purity. But no sooner had she disappeared in the waves, her protection was no longer there. A great storm raged on the sea in which the ship was lost after a few violent tosses. Not a single life could escape. The ship itself had broken into pieces and the logs were afloat on the waves. One such huge log reached Surasundari, and she held it fast and kept afloat, leaving herself to the course of her destiny. After being tossed for a long time, she could feel the land beneath her feet. She was so exhausted that no sooner did she reach the shore than she fell down senseless. This happened to be a port named Venatat and there were many people on the shore. At once they flocked to help the lady who had been carried to the shore by the waves.

As she regained her sense, she found herself surrounded by strangers who had helped her in her difficulty. Now that she was restored to consciousness, they enquired all about her. As she was about to give them an account of herself, something strange happened in that town. An elephant had broken loose from its enclosure and was running about helter-skelter all over the city. He was now approaching the port. People ran away in great confusion. As the elephant's eyes fell on Surasundari, he picked her up in the trunk and threw her high up into the sky. Surasundari was very much alarmed and began to shout for help. As luck would have it, a ship was sailing on the sea. Surasundari



The elephant picked her up in the trunk and
threw her in the sky

dropped into it. The master of the crew saw her and was charmed at her beauty. He proposed to marry her. Surasundari made it clear to him that this was not possible under any circumstance.

The sailor believed in her story and assured her not to trouble any more. But he was greedy of money and he thought that she would fetch him a large amount if she was sold to some prostitute. When the ship reached the next port, he took her to a prostitute who gave him ample wealth in exchange for such a beautiful woman.

Now, the prostitute came to Surasundari to teach her the ins and outs of her profession. Surasundari said to herself, 'What an ill-luck! Where have I arrived?' But she was helpless. She handled the situation carefully and said, "I am under a vow for three days. If you spare me for this period, I shall abide by your instructions."

The prostitute agreed.

Surasundari was now looking for an opportunity to flee from there.

Next day, the prostitute went to the king's palace on a special invitation. Other women in the house were busy with their own affairs. Surasundari availed of this opportunity and crept out of her prison. At a hurried pace, she came to the sea-shore and decided to put an end to this uncertain life. With her eyes closed, she uttered the *namokar* and jumped into the sea.

As she fell, she was swallowed by a big fish. But the fish was caught in a fisherman's net. The fish was very heavy too. The fisherman was happy with this big catch. Quickly he brought it home and cut it across the belly. Out came a charming lady. But she was senseless. The fisherman nursed her and she recovered.

The fisherman was aware of the fact that the king was the legal and natural owner of every best find in his kingdom. So he took Surasundari along with him and presented her to the king. The king was puzzled at her beauty and sent her at once to the harem. He had intention to make her the first queen.

When the first queen saw her, she was not only jealous of her, but was apprehensive of her own future in the harem. So she talked to the lady with a view to ascertain her own intentions. When she found that she was keen to go away, she made arrangements secretly to send her out of the palace.

Surasundari was wondering if her ill-luck would ever end. She felt that even death had become aversive to her. She reached a dense forest. She moved forward. She was very sad and was thinking about her misfortune. How long was she to run about like a fugitive? As she was proceeding in this pensive mood, she had not noticed that a thief was already following her. Now he came and stood before her. At first, he had thought of stealing her ornaments and letting her alone; but when he saw her, he changed his mind and desired her to be his wife. She refused, only begging his protection. But the thief did not change his mind. He rebuked her bitterly and even raised his sword to kill her. Surasundari's only succour was the holy *namokar*. Strangely, the raised hands of the thief became stiff. Despite all efforts, they did not bend. The sword dropped from his hands. This awakened his conscience, and he realised that the lady before him was no ordinary person. He realised further that if he misbehaved towards such a person, he would be in great difficulty. So he begged to be forgiven and let her go wherever she pleased.

Again Surasundari continued her journey. After walking for quite sometime, she reached a pond. The water of the

pond was very cool and sweet Surasundari drank it A gentle breeze was blowing Tired as she was after a long journey, she lay down on the bank of the pond, and soon fell fast asleep

At that time, a *garuda* bird was flying in the sky As he looked down, he saw Surasundari lying on the ground He thought that she was dead He swooped down upon her, picked her up in his beak and flew away. At this disturbance, Surasundari woke up When the *garuda* realised that this was not a dead thing, he dropped her

But luck again saved her She dropped in the chariot of a *vidyadhara* who was flying at that moment When the *vidyadhara* saw a lady suddenly coming into his chariot at such an altitude he was surprised and asked her who she was and how she chanced to be there After Surasundari had explained her situation, the *vidyadhara* treated her like his own sister and asked her to accompany him She was ready, but she wanted to pay homage and obeisance to some Jaina monk

The *vidyadhara* agreed and both arrived at the Nandisvara island. There she met a monk named Jnani who revealed that Surasundari would meet with her husband at Benatat

Surasundari came to live at the house of the *vidyadhara* He had four wives They received Surasundari with all the warmth and treated her as their own sister Every day they sat together and merrily spent their time.

Elsewhere, Amarkumar travelled to various places in the course of his business trips and at last he came to Venatat He saw the king and presented him with valuable gifts The king was pleased with him He permitted him to carry on his business in the city One day, as Amarkumar was talking with fellow merchants in the market place, a few guards suddenly came to him and put him under arrest.

Handcuffs were put on his hands and he was produced before a customs officer named Bimalabahana.

Amarkumar became puzzled at this unforeseen trouble. This was none of his own creation and yet he was produced as a criminal. Who knew what lay ahead for him? One day, he had cheated his wife and now he was repaid in his own coins by his own destiny. Who knew where was Surasundari and in what state? Why at all did that mischief enter into his mind on that cursed day? All these thoughts were now killing him. At the same time the customs officer overloaded him with a volley of questions. He tried his best to answer, but all was in vain. Before the ready wit of Bimalabahana, Amarkumar could not stand. He, however, fervently pleaded his innocence and prayed to be freed. At first, Bimalabahana did not agree, but at last, he set a condition. "If you can rub three pounds of clarified butter on my shoes, then I let you go unscathed."

Being the son of a wealthy merchant and himself a rich man, Amarkumar was never used to hard work. But it was a desperate situation. He rubbed hard for about three or four hours but not even half a pound of the clarified butter was used up. Meanwhile, Bimalabahana's eyelids drooped and Amarkumar considered it wise to avail of this opportunity. He held up the cup and began to drink from it swiftly. Suddenly, Bimalabahana opened his eyes and caught him red-handed in this misdeed. Amarkumar had nothing to say in his defence. Pleading guilty he said,

"Sir! I am not used to this sort of work in my life. So you can easily realise how I can do this."

Bimalabahana seemed to take some pity on him. He said, "Merchant! Will you tell me frankly who you are, wherefrom you have come, and why you wear such a sorrowful countenance?" Without suppressing anything,

Amarkumar told him everything about his own life. Concluding he added

“You see, I have never deceived anyone in my life, but I have done the vilest thing. I have deceived my own wife. At that time, I took it only as a fun and a very light sort of revenge, but I never dreamt that I shall lose her for good. Now I realise that the fun has turned into a curse. I have lost an ideal wife by my own folly. I shall never find her equal in any birth.”

Bimalabahana became very grave and said, “Suppose she is still alive.”

With a sigh of great disappointment, Amarkumar said,

“I don’t think she is. I gave her up in a dense forest, and she must have right then been devoured by some monster.”

Bimalakumar smiled and said,

“I tell you, she is still alive. If you so desire, I can help you to meet her.”

Amarkumar’s face started beaming with joy. He could hardly utter a word. But his silence was revealing. Bimalabahana took him to an inside chamber where he was to wait. He himself went further in. After a few minutes, he saw Surasundari standing before him. Suddenly he spoke out,

“Are you my dear wife Surasundari?”

“Yes, sir, I am Surasundari, the daughter of King Aridamana.”

Amarkumar could not still believe his eyes. He said,

“Is it a dream or a reality? How could you come here? How could a wretched man like me be so fortunate as to recover a lost treasure?”

Then Surasundari described the chain of events upto the day when she came to live at the *vidyadhara's* place and added,

“For many days, I lived there happily But I wanted to meet you Then I divulged my mind one day to the *vidyadhara* and acquired from him the power to transform Then the *vidyadhara* left me at the park in Benatat There I changed myself into a man Then I went to a gardener and lived with him for quite some time I gave him enough money so that he had no reason to be dissatisfied One day, it occurred to me that I should attain fame by performing some wonderful deeds I discovered a new method of treatment for malaria It was not an usual drug to be taken orally, but a hand-fan made from herbs which cured the fever. The price was fixed at one lakh and twenty-five thousand But it did not sell It appeared to be too costly ”

She continued,

“Now it so happened that the son of a big merchant in the city was suffering from the same disease Best doctors were called in but they could not cure him At last, somebody brought the news about this magic fan to the merchant As a last chance, he bought the fan and fanned his son with it The boy was cured The merchant was highly pleased and presented the fan to the king The king was amazed to learn about its utility, and he desired that the producer of this wonderful thing should be brought to the court This is how I got my introduction at the court To reward my merit, the king desired to bestow some gift I asked for the post of a customs-officer, because as the customs-officer, I thought, it would be easy for me to detect every ship that came to this port, and thus find you out some day ”

Throwing light on her other achievements, she said,

“Once a band of thieves came to the city All efforts on the part of the police to catch them failed One day, they looted the king's treasury and removed a huge quantity of gold and ornaments The king was very much worried

Horsemen were despatched to pursue the thieves. They searched all corners of the kingdom, but the thieves could not be traced. At last, the king announced a reward of half the kingdom and the princess' hand to one who would be able to catch the thief, or give a clue to their hiding place.

"When I heard about the announcement, I made use of my power to attract and this brought the thieves at once in my presence. I handed them over to the guardians of law and order. The king was highly pleased. He gave me half the kingdom and his daughter's hand."

Jokingly, Amarkumar asked,

"And you married the princess?"

"Why not? I was not a fool to let go the chance."

She pointed to a room inside where the princess was and gestured to her. At once she joined with them and saluted Amarkumar.

Surasundari said

"So you see what I said in my student days has turned into a reality. For seven shells, I have acquired a kingdom and a princess too. Now, you please marry her and look after the affairs of the state."

An unexpected meeting after a separation becomes the source of the greatest joy. This meeting between Surasundari and Amarkumar brought immense joy to both. When the king heard about it, he became very happy. Princess Gunamanjari was married with Amarkumar.

After spending some time at Benatat, Amarkumar decided to return home to his parents. With his two wives and a huge wealth he came back to the city of Champa. His parents were overjoyed to see him after such a long time. All relatives and friends were happy.

Once a wise monk came to Champa. His words created inspiration for Amarkumar, Surasundari and Gunamanjari to join the holy order. In the holy order, they practised diverse penances and made a great progress towards liberation.

2. MRIGASUNDARI

King Chandrasekhara reigned in the city of Virpur. Chandrakanta was his queen and Gunekar the minister. The king had high regard for public opinion. So at night, he used to wander in disguise. This kept him well posted with the people's needs and grievances and helped him to take necessary measures. This also made him popular and highly respected. One night, as he was on his usual rounds, he heard people at several places saying "The king has been a very able administrator, but as he has no son to succeed him, what will happen to us after him?"

This created a concern in the king's mind about the future of his kingdom and he returned to the palace. When the queen enquired about the cause of his gloom, he kept silent since he did not want to cause her any pain. But he could not remain silent for long and shared his concern with the queen. The queen too shared in the king's concern and said.

"My lord : It is very unfortunate that I could not give you a son. But it is time that you marry again and fill up this gap. I shall welcome it."

But the king could not agree. Said he

"But, my dear, who will take care of the breach of peace that invariably follows such a situation as you suggest? I do not intend to take a second wife. Better have faith in luck. A throne never remains without a king."

But the queen had no peace. She invoked the family deity and went on fast for three days, at the end of which the deity appeared and said,

"Lady ! I am sorry, in no case can you have a son. Such is the order of Providence and it cannot be trans-

gressed But there is one way out If the king marries with Princess Chandravali, the daughter of King Amarsana of Amarpur, he will have a son from her This gap will thus be filled "

The queen expressed her gratitude to the goddess for the advice, after which the goddess disappeared

In the morning, the queen apprised the king, and the king agreed, though with great reluctance and after much argument The queen directed the minister to arrange the marriage without delay, and the minister lost no time to meet the princess herself at Amarpur. At first meeting the minister was able to persuade her to agree to the proposal but she had one pre-condition, namely, that her husband must be a follower of the Jina path, and in this, she said, she had the support of her parents But King Chandrasekhara was not a Jaina

The minister now used his wit and said

"Princess ! My master is tolerant of every religion. The Jina path is a very good way of liberation and the king has a very high regard for it So, in a sense, you may take him to be a Jaina "

"But, sir, that's not enough You must bring my condition to the notice of your king . and if his reactions are favourable, then I am prepared to accept him as my husband "

The minister returned to his city and submitted the whole matter for the consideration of the royal couple But the king's instant reaction was—"For the sake of this marriage, I can't become the follower of a Jina " The queen and the minister argued for long with him but to no purpose

An event to take place awaits a favourable chance, and when the chance comes, the event takes no time to

materialise A short time after this, a Jaina monk, Siddhartha by name, came to the city with a group of 500 monks and camped in the city park. People came to pay their homage and obeisance At the request of the queen, the king too called on the monk, attended his sermons and was very much inspired and influenced by the monk's stature and erudition There followed a long discussion, after which the king embraced the Jaina faith on his own inspiration It took no time for the king to become a follower of Jina, practising restraints and penances scrupulously and carefully

News has wings As the news of the king's conversion reached Amarpur, the princess was very happy Through her maid, she told her father of her desire to marry King Chandrasekhara Her father too was very happy and he sent his minister at once to Virpur to settle the marriage On an auspicious day, Chandrasekhara and Chandravali were united as man and wife, and in course of time, to the joy and relief of everybody, the new queen gave birth to a son The prince was named Sajjankumar

Sajjankumar grew up to become a fine and accomplished lad. Within a short time, he acquired knowledge of all arts It was then decided to marry the prince with eight princesses, to be selected by the king himself in consultation with the two queens The selection was over and eight kings with their daughters arrived at Virpur There was a great joy everywhere But three days before the marriage, there befell a calamity which turned all joy into gloom During the night, the prince disappeared and no trace of him could be found anywhere, and in the absence of the prince, there could be no wedding It was a great problem, and to consider the situation, the king invited the eight princesses in a meeting Said he to them, 'Ladies' You are not yet married, and I give you leave to marry someone else of your choice The sudden disappearance of my son has been the

greatest tragedy for me, but I do not want you to share in it. I wish you a good luck and a happy life.'

But the princesses did not agree. They said,

"Worthy sir! If our luck favours us, the prince will return some day. If not, we shall engage ourselves in spiritual activities. But we cannot accept another man for our husband."

They suggested that in the absence of the prince, the marriage ritual should be completed on the prince's sword. The king had to agree. The eight princesses now entered their new household. They preferred to stay together in one apartment and devoted themselves to spiritual activities.

Days passed like this, and those were very lonesome days for the eight ladies who were virtually leading the life of nuns. One day, as they sat together chatting, said one,

"It is not wise on our part to sit idle like this. We should do something in the matter."

The second—"Our father-in-law has left no stone unturned in the matter, and he has failed. What then can we helpless women do?"

The third—"But we should not consider ourselves so very helpless. We are also endowed with some capacity and endeavour. We may even make possible what appears impossible."

The fourth, Mrigasundari, said,

"It is necessary that our performance should excel our words. Then only our capacity and endeavour become worthy of praise. If you all approve, I want to move out from here in search of our husband, and I am confident, I can trace him out in six months. If I fail, I shall enter into a burning flame."

The fifth, Srīngarasundari, approved of her plan and expressed her desire to accompany her, but Mrīga objected saying, "Let me try alone. "If I fail, you will have your chance." The co-wives wished her good-luck. Then she came to beg leave of her parents-in-law. This, however, was no easy job, and the king and the queen were not willing to let her go like this. But Mrīga said,

"I know, sir, you are doing your best in the matter, but let me try a hand in it. If I fail, my sisters will follow one after another."

The king had to agree. He wished her good luck and asked her to take as much money and as many men as she needed. She took some money but no men with her, and and then dressed like a *yogini*, she set out one day on her quest. She passed through many villages and towns, crossed many rivers and forests and at last reached a city in the south named Virpur. She proceeded straight to the city park and established contact with the lady garden-keeper. The *yogini* placed two gold coins in her hand and there was no niggardliness in the flow of hospitality. She was allotted a room in the lady-keeper's house where she took residence. The *yogini*, as is usual with them, roamed in the city during the day and returned to her room in the evening. One day, her land-lady said,

"My dear sister! Be careful. A notorious *yogi* is on a visit to this city."

The *yogini*—"Why this warning, pray? A *yogi* is dedicated to do good to the world. We should rather meet him and get inspiration from him.

The lady—"What you say is normally true, but this one is an exception. At a distance of several miles from this place, there is a monastery, where live many such *yogis*. They are all very honest people and are serious about their business. But recently the leader of the group has taken a

very unworthy and incompetent disciple, and has imparted to him some magical powers, which have made him powerful. He is abusing them. He carries away beautiful ladies from good families and ruins them. He has become a terror of the town. Sometime ago, a young man named Sajjan-kumar came to this park with his beautiful wife. As the man had gone away for a while, the *yogi* suddenly appeared and carried away the lady. When Sajjan-kumar came back and did not see his wife, he asked me about her. I could throw no light, but another man reported that he had seen the *yogi* carrying away a lady. We have no doubt that she has been carried away by this rogue."

From the identity of name, Mriga had a feeling that this man must be her own husband, meanwhile married to another lady. So she asked her land-lady,

"Whither did you see the man go?"

"Maybe he has gone to the monastery in search of that rogue to recover his wife."

Mriga was now on the way to the monastery. It was located in a dense forest but she was not afraid. As she entered the monastery, a *yogini* came to receive her and took her inside and offered her a comfortable seat and fruits.

Mriga—"Sister! Tell me something about you. How did you renounce the world at this early age to become a nun?"

The *yogini's* past at once came up before her eyes. She sobbed and said,

"At a distance of 24 *yojanas* (72 miles) from here, there is a big city named Narabara, where reigns King Vir-dhambala. His queen is Virmati. They had a daughter named Karmasundari who now stands in your presence. I was

married with Prince Madan of Mrigapur. As I was going with my husband, we were attacked by a band of robbers. My husband was killed in the encounter. The robbers took away the valuables but did me no harm. I returned to my parental home."

Continuing her account, she said,

"The robbers spared me but not my ill luck. One day I was bitten by a snake. All efforts to take the venom out failed and I lay senseless. Just then a *yogini* came and said to my father, 'If you agree to give this girl to me, I shall rid her of the poison.' If my father did not agree, death would be a certainty for me. In going with the *yogini*, I would at least have my life saved. So he agreed. The *yogini* took out a root from her bag and administered it on my wound. A portion of the same root was crushed and mixed with water and this I was made to drink. This saved me, and I followed the *yogini*. Now, as you see, I am settled and happy in this life. But, sister, happiness does not remain undisturbed for long, and a few weeks ago, the *yogini* has passed away leaving me alone. There is another monastery not at a very great distance from here and that is occupied by a few *yogis*. The monastery is very old and well-known. Many great *yogis* have lived there. But now all of them are dead and the headship of the monastery has passed into the hands of a rogue. Religion and spirituality are his least interest, his main pre-occupation being to carry away beautiful women. He was after me once but could do nothing because of the superior power of my preceptress. But as she has passed away, I was feeling somewhat lonely. Just at this time, your arrival has been a source of solace and strength to me. This, in brief, is my story. But what is it that has brought you to this line at this early age?"

Mriga started her account,

"I am Padmashri, the daughter of a merchant named Padmadeva of Palaspur. I was married with another merchant of the same city. His name was Sundara. I was

very beautiful. Once I accompanied my husband on a voyage but we were drowned due to ship-wreck. Somehow I was supported by the back of a fish, which started moving as soon as I fell on her. Luckily, it moved towards the coast instead of going into greater depth, and I was thus saved from the jaws of death. But now I was all alone there being no trace of my husband after the tragedy, and to protect myself from wicked persons, I have dressed myself like this and am looking for my husband, if he is still alive. And in the course of my search, I have arrived here.”

Karma—“Now I suggest, you spend much of your time with me here.”

Mriga agreed. Thus the two lived together and were very happy in each other's company. One day, Mriga said,

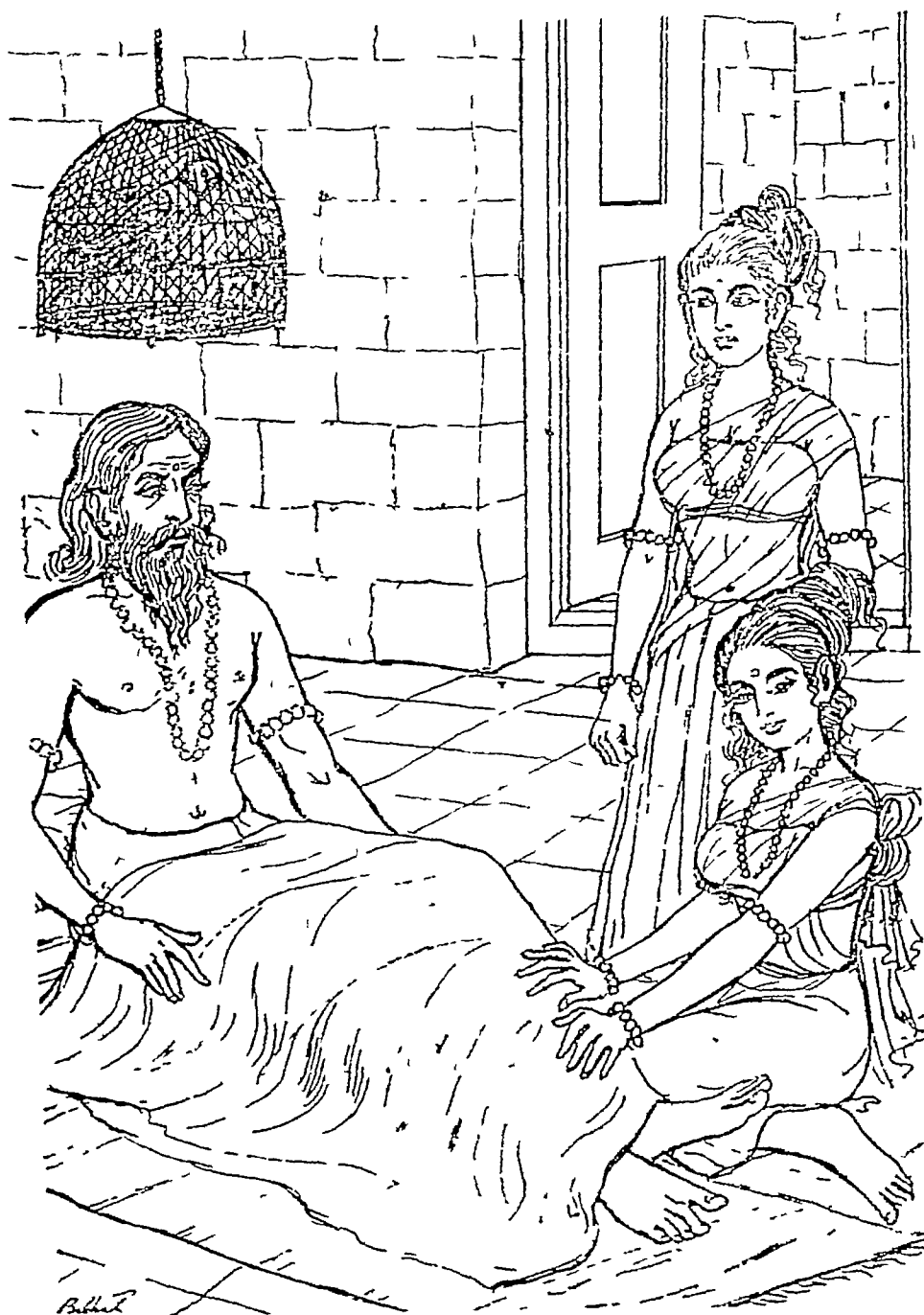
“Sister ! Let us go some day to this monastery and see what sort of *yogi* that rogue is.”

Karma—“Sister ! Don't cherish such an idea. What to speak of going there, even to turn one's face in that direction may not be free from danger. Once you are in his clutches, none can save you.”

Mriga—“But you should not be so nervous. I shall protect you. You take me there once.”

One day, the two reached the *yogi's* monastery. The *yogi* was asleep at that time. Both of them sat near him. There was a parrot who was gesturing something again and again. When the *yogi* woke up, he was surprised to see two beautiful ladies seated beside him. They had come without his seeking. He felt an excitement and welcomed them, whereon Mriga said,

“Fie on thy welcome ! You seem to be a wretched person to whom we have come even without an invitation.



The yogi cast lustful glances at her

And here there is no water even to drink, what to speak of fruits and other edibles ”

“Why ! There’s plenty of water in that yonder jar You may have as much of it as you please It is cold too ”

“But, sir it’s unclean Just now, a dog drank from it ”

“Then bring that cage to me ”

Mriga gestured and Karma brought the cage down and placed it near the *yogi* The *yogi* opened the cage and cut the thread that tied the parrot The parrot was taken out and was changed into a human being The *yogi* ordered him to fetch some fresh water from the tank

By her coquettish manner, Mriga had already established a hold on the *yogi* He was now casting lustful glances at her All on a sudden, Mriga said,

“I am very hungry Give me some fruits to eat ”

The *yogi* was now in an awkward situation, as there was none in his room So the *yogi* himself went out to bring some fruits Meanwhile the man (former parrot) came back with a a jar full of water. He said,

“You fly away from this place at once Otherwise, you will have ill luck similar to that which befell my wife ”

Mriga expressed a surprise and said,

“Noble man ! What happened to your wife ? Who are you and how you fell into his hands ?”

The man—“My name is Sajjankumar My wife is the daughter of a *vidyadhara* This *yogi* has snatched her away from me and kept her in that yonder cave As I came here in search of her and reached the cave, he changed me into a parrot and put me in the cage ”

Mriga made the man sit on one side. She was more or less sure that this was her own husband. In the meantime, the *yogi* had returned with fruits in his hand. After all were refreshed, the *yogi* took Mriga aside and was about to embrace her when the lady said.

“Why are you in so great a hurry? I am not running away. You give answer to my questions first, and then you are at liberty to use my person for the satisfaction of your passionate desires. Now that I am yours, tell me first, what will happen to me after you die. Man is mortal, and someday, you are bound to die.”

The *yogi* replied casually,

“My Master has made me immortal. He made an image in clay which resembles me in minutest details. So long as that image is intact I am all right, beyond the clutches of death. So you entertain no fear on that score.”

Mriga protested,

“But, sir, even in the past, there have been many great and brilliant men on this earth. They could have made themselves immortal in the same manner, but they couldn't do that. So death is a certainty. It spares none.”

The *yogi*—“These so-called brilliant men didn't have the power which I have. Hence they fell prey to death. But don't you bother. Come along.”

Mriga—“But before that, you must show me the image.”

The *yogi*—“Don't be in a hurry, my dear! I will show it to you later. You are simply wasting valuable time in useless talk.”

But Mriga was insistent. She must see it first. But the *yogi* was reluctant to oblige her. So she turned her back towards him and sat down adamant.

The *yogi*—"Since you are so arrogant and unreasonable, go to the yonder cottage and have a look at it and come back at once."

Mriga went to the cottage and was soon inside. With a swift hand, she tore one of its fingers. At once, one of the *yogi's* fingers fell on the ground. She pulled out one of the eyes, and the *yogi* became blind of one eye. She took out one ear and the *yogi* lost his own. Already the *yogi* had started shouting and abusing her, but she took no notice of that. She now separated the limbs one by one with a swift hand, and then placed the trunk under a huge stone. The *yogi* himself was caught in the same manner.

Karma, who had been witnessing all this from a distance, was astonished at the courage and ready-wit of her friend. Now she came near, profusely thanked her and praised her, and said, "What poison would never have achieved, you have done with jaggery."

Mriga now came out of the cottage and sternly asked the man (former parrot),

"Do you want to be changed into a parrot or remain a human being?"

The man who was badly shaken said,

"It is by your grace that I have been liberated from this animal form. Now, I would like to live as a human being. Have pity on me and rescue my wife too. She is in the yonder cave, also imprisoned. The *yogi* caused her enough trouble. But she is so devoted that she deviated not from the path of chastity."

Mriga, followed by Karma and the man, came to the cave. The lady was taken out and consoled with the information that the *yogi* was no more. Mriga now asked the man to narrate his story in detail, which he did as follows.

"I am Sajjankumar, the only son of King Chandra-sekhara of Virpur. I was going to be married to eight princesses. All preparations for the marriage ceremony had been completed and only three days remained for it, when one night I was stolen by the wife of a *vidyadhara* king. The lady took me to her own chamber and desired to enjoy my company. But I was not prepared to oblige her. To protect myself from any further overtures from her side, I remained mute. Meanwhile, the *vidyadhara* king had returned and was watching the behaviour of his wife from hiding. Now, when the lady failed in all her stratagems, she started shouting and abusing me with vile and ignoble words. Soon she attracted a crowd and I was put under arrest. Next day, I was presented before the king who asked me many questions, but I gave only one reply to all, which was, 'Ask me not, ask your queen'. The *vidyadhara* king seemed to be satisfied with my reply, and gave me his daughter, Puspamanjari, who became my first wife. I lived there for some time and learnt some of the powers

"After a month's stay there, my mind went back to my eight wives at home. So I requested my new father-in-law, the *vidyadhara* king, to arrange for my return to my native city. A big air-chariot was built up and on a fine day, I, with my wife, Puspamanjari, was very cordially seen off. The chariot dropped us at Virpur and flew back. It was night then and I could not recognise if I had reached the correct place. In the morning, I discovered that it was not my own city, but Virpur in the south, which was at a very great distance from my own place. So I left my wife in the park, and went to the city. During my absence, the *yogi* stole my wife and carried her away. When I returned to the park, she was not there. I was very anxious and made enquiries about her from the lady-keeper of the park, but she could throw no light. But her surmise was that the *yogi*, who had been seen in the park, must have carried away the lady. So I started in search of the *yogi*, and

reached a tank where I found him. But as I approached near him, he threw a thread on my neck and turned me into a parrot. Since then I have been living, caught up in his snares, the life of a bird. Today, by dint of your kindness, I have been liberated from that animal form and restored to my original one."

Now Puspamanjari was brought out from the cave. Then they made a thorough search of the *yagi's* abode and collected all valuable things, and took the road leading to Karma's abode. They spent the night there and in the morning, the three made preparations to depart. But Karma felt lonely and downcast. She said to Mriga,

"Dear sister! Why do ye discard me alone in this deserted forest? Please take me too with thee so that I can spend the rest of my life at thy feet."

Mriga welcomed the idea. All of them came to the lady-keeper of the park who recognised them. They had their lunch at her house. The prince then retired to have rest and the ladies moved out talking with one another.

The king of that city had died recently, and as he had no progeny, the people of that city were in great difficulty about his successor to the throne. According to the established convention, they let loose an elephant to garland the right man, and as luck would have it, the elephant placed the garland on Sajjankumar who lay beneath a tree in the park. The elephant picked up Sajjankumar with its trunk and placed him on its back. The selection was thus happily over and the people hailed him as their new monarch with shouts of joy.

The prince was a stranger to the city as he went to sleep, but as he opened his eyes, he found himself on the back of the elephant, turned into a full monarch. He was carried through the city, to the royal palace, where he was duly enthroned and declared king of the realm.

As the ladies came back after a promenade, the keeper broke the good news,

‘Hullo, ladies ! The man who came with you is now a king’

This was a pleasant surprise. Meanwhile arrived a chariot sent by the king to take the ladies. They were now at the palace.

Mriga had not revealed her identity so far. Now it was time to do so. This was a great surprise for Sajnankumar. Mriga now insisted that they must return to their native city at once where other co-wives were anxiously waiting for them. Besides, as she had moved out on her mission for six months, the period was nearing its end, and unless they returned at once, the second co-wife would move out on a similar mission. Sajnankumar readily agreed. So after having made necessary arrangement for the administration of the kingdom, the whole party moved out.

But meanwhile six months had passed before the party could return, and as per previous decision, the second co-wife, Sringerasundari, with the blessings of her parents-in-law and good-wishes of other co-wives, and dressed as a man, moved out on horse back. Sringerasundari became Samanta Singh. Samanta Singh reached the park at Mahimapur, contacted the lady-keeper and thrust five pieces of gold into her hand. At once, his board and lodging were arranged making him comfortable. The horse was tied in the stable and served with fresh grass. Samanta Singh took his food and retired under the shade of a tree, where he was soon asleep.

Just then Princess Sulochana had arrived in that park with her friends and attendants. Her eyes suddenly fell on Samanta Singh, and she was attracted by his grace and personality. Said she,

“I shall deem it a piece of good luck if my parents settle my marriage with this man ”

Said a friend,

“But I am afraid, your desire is not going to be fulfilled Your father has some other arrangement for your marriage ”

“Some other arrangement for my marriage ! What do you mean ? Are you serious ?”

“It is well-known to you, dear princess, that a lion has of late started causing havoc in this region, Everyday he is taking a heavy toll of life of animals and human beings All efforts to eradicate this menace have failed so far So the king has issued forth an announcement to the effect that anyone who kills this lion wins your hand, along with half the kingdom. None has responded yet If this man does, then it will be easy for you to have your desire fulfilled ”

As they were chatting, Samanta Singh woke up The princess now advanced towards him and introduced herself Soon the two become intimate with each other After this, the princess and her friends returned to the palace Meanwhile, Samanta Singh got a full report about the lion from the keeper lady, who further cautioned him not to venture But Samanta Singh did not want to miss the chance With a drawn sword in his hand, he went to the forest and kept a vigil As the lion came at night, he was caught unawares Samanta Singh finished him at one stroke At day-break, the news flashed all over the city with the speed of a lightning The king sent for the saviour of his kingdom and received him in audience He made enquiries about his family and was assured to know that Samanta Singh was a prince of the royal blood The princess was married with him

For Samanta Singh, it was now a very trying situation. He did not want his identity to be revealed to the princess. So he said to her

“My dear ! Till I obtain the blessing of my family goddess, we should not share the same bed ”

This appeared to be a reasonable request, and Sulochana readily agreed. Samanta Singh now departed with the permission of his wife's parents. By the time he reached a forest, the sun had already set. So he tied his horse to a tree and himself lay beneath it. At mid-night, the goddess of the forest thought of taking a test of the man who had come within her jurisdiction. She changed herself into a fine lad, came to the man and started playing mischief, some mild and others strong. Samanta Singh rose upto the situation and responded very suitably. This pleased the goddess, who now appeared in her own form and asked the man to pray for a boon.

“Oh goddess ! If you are really pleased with me, then help me to reach my husband.”

The goddess said,

“You are here in search of your husband, and to-morrow your husband enters his native city. If you are keen to meet him, I can take you there ”

The goddess picked up Sringarasundari along with her horse and placed her in her husband's city. She first met Mrigasundari and their joy knew no bound. Sringarasundari next met her husband.

When the news of Sajjankumar's arrival reached the palace, King Chandrasekhara, the six wives of the prince, the royal household and many leading citizens came to receive him. The whole party was taken to the palace in a procession. On an auspicious day, the eight princesses were

married to Sajjankumar. A special envoy was sent to bring Princess Sulochana, who also joined the prince's seraglio as his wife.

Sajjankumar was a very able ruler. Because of his good administration, he achieved great popularity. He had in his suzerainty the two Virpurs, one in the north and the other in the south and half of Mahimapur. He had a son from Mrigasundari who was named Mrigakumar and another from Sringarasundari who was named Bhimkumar. Other queens too had children, so that the royal household was full and beaming.

After a brilliant regime, Sajjankumar now had his turn to renounce, and he did it under the guidance of his father, now a monk, who had come to the city in the course of his wanderings. He had become an omniscient. The entire royal household and the leading citizens waited on their former monarch and paid homage and obeisance. They listened to the holy words of the great savant and were inspired. Sajjankumar decided to join the holy order. Mrigakumar was made the ruler at Virpur (north) and Saktikumar was sent to Virpur (south), while the half kingdom at Mahimapur was given to Bhimkumar. Then in the company of 500 men, Sajjankumar joined the holy order as Mrigasundari herself joined the holy order of nuns in the company of a thousand ladies. As a monk, Sajjankumar attained great spiritual heights and acquired *aradhi* knowledge, and on death, he got a coveted position in the Sarvartha-siddha *vimana*.

3. NALA-DAMAYANTI

There was a city named Kundinapur in Vidarbha where reigned King Bhima. His queen was Puspavati. One night, the queen saw in a dream an elephant (Hindi 'danti' meaning one with tusks) terrified by a forest fire. Shortly after this, a daughter was born to her and she was named Dava-danti, popularly called Damayanti. Damayanti's childhood passed in great comfort and happiness. When she attained her youth, the king thought of giving her a chance to select her own husband. Many big and powerful^u princes were invited from lands near and^d far off. Among those who responded to the invitation was King Nisadha of Ajodhya who came with his two sons, Nala and Kuvara. Damayanti's choice fell on Nala, which was widely appreciated by everybody. The marriage was performed with the greatest pomp and the king bestowed on his daughter a very rich dowry consisting of elephants, horses, maids, valets, clothes, utensils, ornaments and many other things.

Having attained his old age, King Nisadha renounced the royal responsibilities in favour of his eld^d son Nala. Nala was an able administrator and he extended the limits of his kingdom. In fact, he became the lord of half of Bharata-varsa and many powerful kings became his vassals. People of all ranks were happy with Nala's administration, and that was the main reason of his success as a king.

Even a mighty tree may be ruined if a poisonous insect perches on it. Likewise, a single member in the family can effect the ruin of the entire family. Nala had great affection for his younger brother but this was not reciprocated by the latter, who wanted to see Nala ruined and turned into a beggar. But because of Nala's success, he was not getting a chance to execute his vile design.

A man becomes perfected only on overcoming attachment, but not before that. And even a perfected man may be ruined by a single lapse. King Nala was a great master

of state-craft, but he had a passion for gambling and because of this, many of his good qualities were over-shadowed. Kuvara knew it well and he decided to ruin him by challenging him at dice. One day, as both the brothers were at the game, Kuvara said

“Brother ! This game without a stake does not give the real pleasure ”

Nala was so much absorbed that he did not consider what this would lead him to and he went on staking his towns and villages one after another, and at last his own city. He lost his all within a short time, and was reduced to complete penury.

As Nala's stars went down, Kuvara's stars moved up. He burst out into a wild laughter at this unexpected success of his stratagem. Nala now realised where he stood and he was penitent. But it was too late. Kuvara at once issued an announcement of his immediate accession to the throne and of Nala's exile. People were very much pained and distressed as they heard this.

Nala then decided to have a confrontation with his destiny. He came to Damayanti and apprised her of the situation. This was a great shock for her. But as a devoted wife, she at once made up her mind to follow her husband. She said,

“My dear ! This kingdom no longer belongs to us. We must leave this place at once. All these now belong to Kuvara ”

Nala—“I have decided to go to the forest, but you better go to your parental home. Life in the forest will be extremely hard for you. When our time will improve, we shall meet again ”

Damayanti—“You will be in the forest and I shall be in my parental home. A nice idea indeed ! But how do you think this to be possible ? I shall follow you like a shadow wherever you go. I cannot live apart ”

Nala was in a difficult situation. In taking her to the forest, he would cause her the greatest inconvenience, and yet it would be no easy job to leave her behind. In a resigned mood, he said,

"Damayanti! Good girl, I wish you accept my proposal. Otherwise, you do whatever you think best."

Damayanti—"But, pray, tell me, are you better used to live in the forest than me? Let me share in your joys and sorrows. Please make no suggestion about my staying apart."

Nala could no longer leave her behind. Both of them put on very ordinary clothes and moved towards the forest. People came to see off their monarch with tears in their eyes. Nala's parting message to his people was

"Be as good to Kuvara as you have been to me. Never transgress his orders or act contrary to his wishes. Entertain no anxiety on my score. Wherever I may be, I shall remain as happy as I have ever been. When the duration of my exile will be over, I shall come back again."

Nala and Damayanti now moved on. They had neither transport nor attendants with them. They moved on till evening, with their legs badly hurt by pebbles and thorns. When the sun was down, they sat down under a tree. Nala prepared a bed of green leaves. Damayanti lay down on it and was soon fast asleep. Nala sat awake pondering over his ill-luck.

Suppressed thoughts come up often at the slightest support, and then not only a man may get lost in them, he may even perpetrate very unusual things. As Damayanti lay asleep, Nala touched her wounded feet and was deeply aggrieved. He said to himself,

"I have reasoned with her in all possible ways, but she did not agree. If she had agreed to live with her parents, she could have escaped these hard experiences. But she

will not do that So if I leave her here, she will have no other choice but to go to her parents ”

No sooner did he think like that, he at once took steps to give effects to his thought He left Damayanti alone in that forest and was on his legs But after he had gone to some distance he felt a heaviness in his heart Thought he

“Did I not promise at the time of marriage that we shall live together both in joy and sorrow ? Did I not say—‘I shall not betray thee’ ? And what am I doing now to her ?”

His legs would carry him no further. He stood for a while wholly perplexed, and then he retraced his steps. He came back where Damayanti still lay fast asleep. He looked at her He took her in deep embrace

Three quarters of the night passed like this. Nala could not arrive at a firm decision Sometimes he thought of discarding her, and again he thought of not leaving her alone Sometimes he felt a deep attachment for her and again he became hard like a thunder But at last softness yielded, and Nala took a firm decision to leave Damayanti in the forest While departing, he scribbled his message to her on a corner of her *sari*

Nala was now passing through a deep forest, when suddenly he heard a voice,

“Nala, come, hurry up, man, I am burning Save me ”

Nala looked all around but found none But after he had gone a short distance, he saw a black cobra on a tree, beneath which there was a fire ablaze in all fury It was the cobra who spoke in a human voice and which Nala had heard

Nala felt compassion for the snake. He extended his shoulder cloth and helped it to get down. But the snake did not spare him. It gave him a severe bite. Nala did not die, of course, but he lost his normal complexion and became swarthy. He also developed a hump on his back. Said he almost spontaneously,

“Is this the reward you give me?”

But the snake was no longer there, and in its place stood a *deva* who said,

“My son! Have no misgiving. I am thy departed father. Your inauspicious *karma* is now up and you will pass through difficulties and dangers for a period of 12 years. I have come here to render you a little assistance so that your enemies may not recognise you and cause you further trouble. So I took out your normal complexion and made you a hunchback. At the expiry of 12 years, you will again be the king at Ajodhya and be reunited with your wife.”

The *deva* then gave Nala two fruits, a *srifala* and a *karandaka* and said,

“My son! If at any time you want to get back your original form, you decorate yourself with ornaments contained in the *srifala* and put on the divine cloth contained in the *karandaka* and you will become Nala again.”

Nala was overwhelmed at the appearance of his departed father at this moment. He bowed down before him and said,

“Father! If you be so kind to direct me, whither shall I turn my steps now? What will be good for me?”

No sooner did Nala utter these words than the *deva* physically lifted Nala up and placed him outside the city of Sumsumara and said,

“This place will be wholesome for you in all respects ”

The *deva* disappeared and the hunchback moved into the town. At that moment the town was in topsy-turvy. The people were aimlessly running about to save themselves. The king's elephant had gone amock and was running about causing havoc. The king announced a suitable reward for anyone who would bring the elephant under control. The hunchback heard the announcement and was soon before the elephant. People sought to prevent him but he would listen to none. Now, as the elephant's eyes fell on the hunchback, he hurled his trunk at him in fury. The hunchback stepped a little aside, and with a high jump placed himself on the elephant's crest. Nala was a great expert in controlling elephants. He uttered his magic words and patted on the animal's head, and the elephant was cured of his fury.

The hunchback was taken to the presence of the king. The king received him and asked him about his identity to which he replied,

“I am the cook of King Nala, with specialisation, by the grace of my previous master, to cook in the rays of the sun. From the day he has been exiled from his kingdom, I have also left Ajodhya. Since then, I have passed through many places, but I have not been able to settle at any one of these ”

The king at once appointed him to be the head of his kitchen. He gave him a respectable place in the household. Occasionally, he prepared food in the rays of the sun for the king, and the king liked him very much. The intimacy between the two went on increasing.

Elsewhere, Damayanti woke up at dawn, but she did not find Nala anywhere near her. She looked for him all around and searched all the nearby bushes. She came to the



The snake gave him a severe bite

bank of a tank. But Nala was nowhere. Her patience was exhausted and she fell down in a swoon. When she regained her senses, she felt extremely restless, and was unable to bear the pangs of separation. She was afraid too at this lonely place. At last, helpless, she came back under the same tree where she lay at night and wept bitterly. As she raised the border of her *sari* to wipe out her tears, she discovered the note tied in its corner. The note read as follows

‘Beside the yonder tree, there is a road that leads to your parents’ home. The other road to the left leads to Ajodhya. Do not be anxious on my score. At the proper time, I shall come back to you. Meanwhile, please forgive me for departing without informing you.’

On reading the message, Damayanti felt distressed. Thought she, ‘He had often suggested that I should go to live with my parents, but on this point, I made no secret of my own feeling. But now he has left me with no alternative. Perhaps it would have been good for me to act according to his wishes. But what was destined has come to pass.’

She got up, recited the holy *namokar* and took the road to her parental home. On the way, she came across a merchant who was being plundered by a robber. From a distance, Damayanti thundered at him and the fellow took to his heels. This saved the merchant’s life and his wares. The merchant thanked her and begged to be advised if he could be of any help to her. Damayanti thanked him and proceeded on her own way.

As she passed through the forest, a dreary demon barred her way. He was hungry for three days and was delighted to see his food so near at hand. Said he,

“I shall satisfy my hunger with thy body.”

Damayanti was not afraid of him. She gave a bold reply,

"I am not afraid of you nor sorry to know that you want me as your food. But I am pretty alarmed on thy score. It is not good to kill anyone and eat his flesh. This has a dire consequence. You are yourself a *deva* and you understand it better than me who am an ordinary human being."

These words made a great impression on the demon. He now appeared in his real form as a *deva* and begged to be forgiven. Damayanti told him about her own ill-luck and asked him when she will be reunited with her husband. The *deva* said,

"Your troubles will continue for 12 years, after which everything will be all right."

The *deva* disappeared and Damayanti resumed her journey. She came across many wild animals but none touched her. Meanwhile the rainy season had started and it was difficult to continue the journey. So she took shelter in a cave and spent much of her time in meditation and pious thoughts. Her presence in the forest changed even the nature of the wild animals. Even some monks of heretical orders came to her for guidance and she set them all on the right track. To all of them she was the Holy Mother.

When the months of the rainy season were over, she moved out of the cave and commenced her journey again. At last, she reached Achalapura where reigned King Rituparna. His queen, Chandrayasa, was Damayanti's own maternal aunt. Damayanti halted outside the city on the bank of a tank. Now, some maid-servants from the palace had come there, and they were delighted to see such a graceful lady on the bank of the tank. They reported the

matter to the queen and she sent her men to take her to the palace. At the palace, Damayanti gave the following account of herself,

"I was in the service of Queen Damayanti, the celebrated wife of King Nala. When, due to the coming up of inauspicious *karma*, the royal couple was exiled, I have been dislodged from my position, and while wandering I have arrived here."

The queen was overwhelmed to hear Damayanti's name. There were tears in her eyes. The remembrance of her ill-luck even gave her pain. She employed the lady in her own service. Ever since she left the palace, Damayanti had changed so much that even her aunt could not recognise her. Damayanti stayed there. She took charge of the king's alms-house where hundreds of people arrived everyday. She carefully observed all newcomers and enquired about them. She had a feeling that perhaps in this manner someday she might hit on a clue about Nala's whereabouts.

After Nala and Damayanti had gone into exile the news reached King Bhīma who was very much shocked. He sent messengers in all directions but none could trace them out. But the king did not give up the search. One of his messengers reached Achalapura, where the king and the queen were no less concerned to know the whereabouts of Nala and his wife. But they told the messenger that a lady had recently joined their royal household who, as per her statement, was once in the service of Queen Damayanti and this lady might be able to throw further light on Damayanti.

"So if you so please, you may see her in the alms-house", they added.

The messenger came to the alms-house and recognised Damayanti at once. As the news reached the palace, the

king and the queen came running offering a thousand apologies for their failure to recognise her. Damayanti was brought to Kundinapur, where the joy of her parents knew no bound when they saw their missing daughter.

But there was no trace of Nala yet and so King Bhima could not be fully happy. Whenever a foreigner visited the city, he was put under elaborate interrogation by the king's men. At last, a merchant who had come from Sumsumara reported as follows

"Your Majesty! I can tell you nothing about King Nala, but the king of that city has a strange hunchback in his service who can cook in the rays of the sun. It is this fellow who once saved the whole city from the rage of an infuriated elephant. His name is Dandika and he is reported to have formerly been in the service of King Nala. He further says that he has acquired these powers from the great King Nala himself."

Damayanti heard the account and said at once,

"None save Nala is in possession of these powers. Perhaps he has said so to remain incognito. We should immediately look him up."

But Bhima was an experienced and wise man. He made his own plan to put the fellow under a test, and with this end in view he sent a special envoy to the king of Sumsumara. The envoy saw the king and revealed as follows the purpose of his mission,

"Your Majesty! King Bhima of Kundinapura has decided to convene an assembly of princes for the marriage of his beloved daughter for the second time. I have been commissioned to invite Your Majesty for the occasion. The princess will select her man only tomorrow. In fact, I should have reached this place three days ago, but

unfortunately I fell ill We shall appreciate if Your Majesty can make arrangement to participate ”

For the king, it was a great surprise Said he,

“A selection for the second time !”

The envoy—“But, Your Majesty, what can be done ? We have looked for King Nala everywhere, but no trace has been found of him. A grown-up lady cannot be kept like this in her father's home ”

The king—“But will it not be a stigma on the lady's purity ?”

The envoy—“Your Majesty will agree that the other alternative of leaving her like this is no less risky All things considered, a fresh selection seems to be the wiser course So please come and participate ”

At the first selection, King Dadhiparna was a suitor of the lady's hand, but he came back disappointed So he had a feeling that this time luck might favour him But time was the most crucial factor To cover a distance in one day which normally took four days—the king was in deep anxiety

When the hunchback came to know of this, he was wholly upset The news was too good to be true It rolled on in his mind, and he was agitated and restless But suddenly an idea struck him He felt that surely there was some plan behind the whole move

“I must find out the secret,” thought he

When the hunchback met the king, the latter was in deep anxiety He enquired the reason for that and the king narrated the whole situation, adding in the end,

"This is a golden opportunity to win the hand of this worthy lady but it seems that time will be the major hurdle "

The hunchback smiled and said, "Your Majesty ! I can take you to Kundinapur even before time. I have the power to quicken the pace of the horses "

The king was now out of a difficult situation He dressed himself suitably for the occasion, with all the decorations displayed on his person Duly attended by his men, the king now took his seat on the chariot The chariot pierced through the air at a great speed At the gust of the wind, the king's costly wrapper was swept away When the king asked his charioteer to stop the chariot and pick it up the hunchback smiled and said,

"Your Majesty ! By this time, it must be at a distance of a hundred *yojanas* (300 miles)."

So the king gave up all hope of recovering it

The king and the hunchback were now talking about the wonderful power that gave so much speed to the horses The king was jealous of his charioteer, but he said,

"If you are an expert in speed, I am an expert in numbers I can count in a moment all the fruits and leaves even on the biggest of trees If we had time, I could have demonstrated it "

"We have plenty of time, sire, and if you so please, you may demonstrate this power to me "

So the chariot was stopped There was a big *bahera* tree there It was felled down at once and the king declared that it had 18000 leaves A count was at once started and the king's figure came out to be correct

The hunchback who had a great capacity for acquisition expressed a desire to acquire this power, but the king suggested at once an exchange with the hunchback's won power and to this both agreed. So, in the course of the flight, they acquired each other's power. Now the chariot landed at Kundinapura even two hours before the scheduled time.

Now, as the king looked at the town, life appeared to be quite normal, and there was no sign of any special occasion. When the news of the king's arrival reached Bhima, he received his honoured guest, with no less honour for the charioteer, the hunchback, and both were lodged in an elegant apartment not far from Damayanti's own. King Bhima enquired about the business that had brought the king to his kingdom. King Dadhiparna at once realised that he had set his foot in a trap. So he became careful in his talk.

Meanwhile, Damayanti had occasion to observe the hunchback, and she had little doubt about his being King Nala. She told this to her father. The hunchback entertained the host family with food cooked in the rays of the sun. Damayanti was now pretty sure that this could be none other than Nala, for Nala alone possessed the two powers,—power to cook in the rays of the sun, and power to drive the chariot through the air. So she requested her father to send the hunchback to her room on some pretext.

This was not difficult. The hunchback now stood face to face with Damayanti, and there were tears in their eyes and emotion in their hearts. For some time, none could speak a word. Then Damayanti broke the silence,

“My dear ! What was my fault that you gave me up alone in that lonely and dreadful forest ? Even an ordinary human being will not do that, and you count among the great souls. Even now you have not revealed your identity. Is it proper for you ?”

Nala was completely overwhelmed at Damayanti's words, but had hardly an expression to convey his feeling. He at once put on the cloth and the ornament given to him by his father and regained his normal form. This was a pleasant surprise for Damayanti. She at once embraced her husband. In deep embrace, both shed tears of joy. The news reached the palace and everybody was happy at the reunion.

When King Dadhiparna heard this, he realised that the whole drama was enacted to regain Nala. He was pretty ashamed and afraid. He rushed at once to King Nala and begged to be forgiven, tendering a thousand apologies. At the same time, he expressed deep regret for having desired to get Damayanti.

The period of 12 years was now drawing to its close, and at the suggestion of King Bhima and King Dadhiparna, and with their help, Nala laid siege to his former kingdom. He was victorious and was once again on the throne of Ajodhya.

Once an omniscient monk came to Ajodhya, and King Nala enquired for what fault on his part, he had to pass through these dreadful experiences for 12 years. Revealing his past, the omniscient monk said,

"In your previous birth too, both of you were king and queen, named Mammana and Viramati respectively. Once both of you were out on a promenade and were enraged to see a tonsured monk. Taking it to be a bad omen, you threw the monk into the prison. When after 12 hours, your anger had cooled down, you set him free and begged of him to be forgiven. Normally, both of you were pious souls practising austerities and penances necessary for a meritorious life and thus you earned a great merit. By virtue of that, you are king and queen again. But that

single lapse on your part which made the tonsured monk the victim of your wrath for 12 hours has given you trouble for 12 years ”

With their past revealed, King Nala and Damayanti realised the transitoriness of mundane happiness and thought of renouncing the world. They gave the mantle of the highest office to their son Puslara and entered into the holy order, acquiring great merit through spiritual practices and reaching heaven after death.

4. MRIGANKALEKHA

Abantisena was the king at Ujjain. In the same city, there lived a merchant named Dhanasar. The name of the merchant's wife was Rambha and that of his daughter Mrigankalekha. The girl was pious from her childhood, and had acquired at quite an early age 64 arts. So she was loved by all in the household. Dhanasar erected a Jina temple in his garden where he used to go with his wife and daughter for worship. One day, Mrigankalekha worshipped the image with various offerings, and then to worship in a subjective form, she stood in meditation in the presence of the image in the *kayotsarga* posture. Just then, Sagarchandra, the son of a merchant named Sagardatta came to that temple in the company of his friends. He worshipped the image of the Jina, and then mistaking Mrigankalekha in her *kayotasarga* posture for a statuette, he touched her feet. At this, his friend gave him a gentle push and burst out laughing. The young man was puzzled, when the friend told him that the statuette whose feet he had touched was no stone image but a living person, named Mrigankalekha.

Now the young man was keen to get her as his wife, but he did not know how. In severe anguish, he became greatly reduced, which became a cause of worry to his parents. When the parents came to know the reason thereof from the said friend, they were not at all angry with their son, but they assured him that they would do their best in this matter. Now, in the same garden, Sagardatta erected a temple and dedicated it to Arhat Risabha. A very elaborate ceremony was arranged for dedication which lasted for 10 days. On the 10th day, a banquet was held in which all the important people of the town were invited. Dhanasar too was present. After the banquet, as the people relaxed in the hall, somebody suggested that the day was auspicious

enough for the marriage to be celebrated between Sagarchandra, Sagardatta's son, and Mrigankalekha, Dhana-sara's daughter, and all people present liked the idea. So did the father of the bride and that of the bridegroom.

Arrangements were made at-once for the celebration of the marriage ceremony. Meanwhile, Sagarchandra expressed a desire to his friend to see the lady once before marriage. This was a meaningless wish, since the lady had already been betrothed to him, and no useful purpose would be served now by seeing her before marriage. But Sagarchandra was adamant and so his friend very reluctantly agreed. Both were to see the lady in her apartment in cognito. No sooner did they think of it than they gave effect to it. Both the friends were now in the lady's apartment invisible to anyone. The lady was enjoying a friendly conversation with her mates.

Chitralekha—'My friend is lucky to get such a man as Sagarchandra.'

Patralekha—"Whatever may be your view, to my mind, Anangadeva, son of Dhana Sresthi, would have been a better husband for our friend. In beauty, he excels even the God of Love."

Chitralekha—"You know, once an astrologer was consulted about Mrigankalekha's groom. He revealed that in beauty and wealth, Anangadeva would be the best groom for her, but he had only a short life of 20 years. So, you see, he could not have been selected. Otherwise, our dear friend would have been his."

Patralekha—"But don't you agree that a small quantity of nectar is better than a great quantity of poison?"

As the conversation went on, Mrigankalekha had no active participation in it, nor did she comment on the

discussion But her silence was misconstrued by Sagarchandra He pulled out his sword to strike at-once at the unfaithful lady. With great difficulty, his friend dragged him home At the appointed hour, the marriage passed off without any untoward event. Sagardatta allotted a big mansion for the use of the couple But alas ! Sagarchandra did not come to live there with his wife. He would not even look at the mansion Mrigankalekha could find no reason for this behaviour on the part of her husband which caused her a great misery. However, since separation was forced on her, she devoted herself to a spiritual life

Once King Avantisena prepared plans for the invasion of Latadesa He sent for Sagardatta and asked him to send his son to accompany the army on the march and arrange the supply of provision for the soldiers Sagardatta agreed Sagarchandra now started with the blessing of his parents As he was about to pass from beneath the mansion where Mrigankalekha lived, she came at the window to wish him good luck and bid him farewell To this Sagarchandra responded with a cruel gesture But Mrigankalekha was helpless, and all she could do was to console herself by saying that it was all the fruit of her inauspicious *karma*

The army continued its march and by evening reached the bank of a river. It encamped on the bank of the river It was night and Sagarchandra was lying in his tent Suddenly he heard the cry of a lady in distress Feeling that he might be of some use to her, he moved out in that direction with a sword in hand and after going a long distance, he saw the lady He said to her in a very affectionate voice

“Sister ! What may be the cause of thy distress ? May I help thee in any way !”

The lady—“Friend ! I thank you for your kind words But there is none on this earth who may allay my distress So please do not put yourself in trouble on my score ”

Sagarchandra—"But, dear lady, let me share your distress with you. Then we can think of a way out if possible."

The lady cast a deep sigh and said,

"This is purely a domestic affair. My husband is a *Kinnara* named Hariprabha and my own name is Haravali. We were on a pleasure flight. My husband suggested that we halt here right in this grove but I desired that we go to an excellent park on Mount Meru. This enraged him very much and he sat apart from me. All my entreaties to pacify him were in vain. If you can bring about a settlement between us, I shall remain ever grateful to you."

The lady then pointed to her husband who was seated not far from there.

Sagarchandra now moved to Hariprabha and tried to pacify him with the following words,

"My dear sir! Wife is the better half of man. One should never be rude to her. You should adjust with her, as she should adjust with you. Such is the normal relation between a man and his wife. You should not be too much assertive or too much demanding. This ruins domestic peace."

Hariprabha burst out in laughter when he heard these words. He said,

"Sagarchandra! Your words are wise indeed, but you should practice what you preach. Look at your own behaviour towards your own wife whom you married 12 years ago. Have you ever been good to her? Have you ever lived with her? What must be life to her without you? You are like a cat that goes on pilgrimage after killing many rats. You should be ashamed of yourself. And you have come to show me the way of reason."

These words of the *Kinnara* pierced through Sagarchandra's heart 'Mrignnkalekha is honest, says this *Kinnara*', this thought rolled again and again and created a tumult in his mind. Meanwhile, the *Kinnara* got up, picked up his wife and resumed his flight. The lady did not even get a chance to thank her benefactor. As a mark of gratitude, however, she sent for him two gifts, one the root of a plant and the other a herb. The application of the paste from the former at the feet gave one the power to fly in the air, while the application of the latter on the forehead made it possible for one to change his form. Sagarchandra gladly accepted them.

In the disturbed state of Sagarchandra's mind, there arose waves of thought. These condemned him and pricked him for his behaviour towards his wife. How cruel he has been to her without caring to know how honest she was! He was now restless to go back to her at once and make amends for his misdeeds. He returned to his camp and held consultation with his friend Dhanamitra. Dhanamitra at once approved of the idea, adding that delay might bring in further complications.

Both the friends used the root and were soon in the sky, and within a short time, they were at the door of the lady's apartment. Dhanamitra went first to break the good news, but Mrigankalekha did not recognise him. She mistook him to be a wicked fellow and chased at him. Dhanamitra said,

"My sister! You recognise me not. But I have a good news for you. My friend Sagarchandra is penitent now and has come. For bringing him, you should give me sweets rather than harsh words."

Sagarchandra now joined. Mrigankalekha had no more doubt in the truth of Dhanamitra's words. Sagarchandra

begged again and again to be forgiven but Mrigankalekha interrupted,

“I must have acquired some evil *karma* in the past. They had come up and I suffered. How could you have prevented them ?”

Sagarchandra spent the night with his wife, and before it was dawn he started back to reach the camp in time. None else could know about his coming. As this might in future create difficulty for his wife so he left with her his own ring, and took with himself her necklace.

When a non-ending series of evil *karma* are pursuing, one has hardly any respite. Mrigankalekha's condition was no better. She was carrying a child. When this came to be known, this became a scandal. Neither her parents-in-law, nor her own parents would believe in what she said, and not even Sagarchandra's own ring could be of any help to save the lady's honour. She was given up by her near and dear ones.

In such a desperate situation, Mrigankalekha fled from her home without telling anyone. Now she started on an uncertain course. The hot mid-days she spent beneath some tree, and so also the nights. In the morning, she would be on her legs. But she knew not which road would lead where and soon she was feeling helpless. In utter desperation, she gave out a cry, which attracted a merchant named Chitragupta, who was passing by that way. He came to her and consoled her and promised her all possible help. Mrigankalekha requested him to give her an escort to the camp of the marching army of the king of Avantidesa.

Mrigankalekha now proceeded in the company of the merchant, who had great admiration and regard for her. The merchant was very much impressed by the lady's grace and purity. But such was her ill-luck that one day she was

carried away by a man of the *bhila* tribe and the merchant, inspite of his best effort, could find no trace of her.

Somehow, Mrigankalekha escaped from the clutches of that *bhila* and hid yerself in a forest. She was terror-stricken, but there was no way out. At night, she had a premature labour pain and she gave birth to a male child. At day-break, to clean herself, she came to the bank of a tank, placed the child and Sagarachandra's ring wrapped in a piece of cloth on the bank and herself entered into the water. At a moment of absent-mindedness on her part, a dog picked up the bundle and fled. Luckily, the child and the ring were recovered in time by a merchant named Baisravana who took the child home. Just then his own wife gave birth to a dead child. It was a great consolation for the poor lady to get another child to take the place of her dead one. The boy was named Surendradatta. His arrival gave a great turn to the family's good fortune.

When Mrigankalekha came out of the tank, the child was not there nor the ring. All her searches for them were in vain. This was a fresh tragedy and her heart broke into pieces. A milkmaid Lalita saw her and she brought her to her own home. For the time being, Mrigankalekha was settled in the milkmen's colony. Now, the leader of the colony, one Gokula, was a debauch. When he saw Mrigankalekha in the colony, he cherished some evil designs on her, but because of Lalita, he could not be successful. One night, however, he stole her. But the lady was too powerful to be touched by him. The same night, Gokula died.

After this event, Mrigankalekha was held in the highest esteem in the colony. But ill-luck would not give her respite even there. One day, she drifted away again and found herself in the clutches of a village headman, Sundara by name. This man was committed to perform a big sacrifice with an offer of 20 heads to propitiate the goddess who had

bestowed on him a son. He already held 19 men for the purpose when Mrigankalekha fell into his hands, and unconcerned about her sex, Sundara wanted to use her for his own purpose. All the 20 persons were now brought to the spot selected for the sacrifice and they were given leave to express their last desire on earth.

All the 19 started trembling when they came to know the purpose for which they had been brought : only Mrigankalekha remained firm and fearless and said,

"Noble man ! My last desire is that you make me the first prey of your purpose. I cannot bear the ghastly sight of the murder of so many innocent persons in my presence. So let me get out of this world first. If however, you care for my opinion, I must say, it is really cruel to make such an offer for the propitiation of the goddess. You are the village headman and as such the protector of the village. You should at least desist from such a cruel deed."

A man is often a blind slave to social conventions ; but if he is hit on the right spot at the right moment, he may even be saved and be made to take a turn. Mrigankalekha's words served that purpose. Sundara was promise-bound to fulfil the last desire of these unfortunate people, and Mrigankalekha had expressed such a desire. Now, if he sacrificed a woman first, then as per convention the sacrifice of men was a taboo. So he did not know what to do. The only way out was to sacrifice none. This saved the lives of all.

Mrigankalekha somehow escaped from there and was once again in the forest. She came across a lion but the lion did not touch her. She came across a ghost but the ghost could do no harm to her. She spent the night beneath a tree. In the morning, she started again and reached the outskirts of Siddharthapur.

There she attracted the notice of a harlot named Kamasena. She brought with her some wicked persons, came to the place where Mrigankalekha was and forcibly carried her away to her own residence. Kamasena wanted to use her for her own purpose and tried to hold up the best inducements before the lady. But it was no easy job to entrap Mrigankalekha. The same night, Kamasena died. Kamasena's maid desired Mrigankalekha to take the place of her deceased mistress, but the request was made to a very wrong person.

But fresh trouble was in store for Mrigankalekha. The maid carried the story of the arrival of a very fine lady to the ears of the king. The king at once sent his most able men and they forcibly carried the lady in a palanquin with a view to take her to the king's harem. Mid-way she jumped down from the palanquin and began to dance and tear her clothes like a mad person. She abused people, hurled stones at them and often burst out in peels of laughter. She was brought back to the harlot's home and experts were called in to cure her. But she hurled stones even at them and did not allow anyone to come near her. The king then sent Kanakbahu, his own trusted body-guard, who was also an expert in the use of charms, to find out her real trouble. Kanakbahu propitiated the goddess Jwala, the attendant goddess of Arhat Chandraprabha, who make the following revelation about the lady.

"She is neither mad nor ill. She is the most devoted wife of Sagarchandra, the minister of King Avantisena and is a great devotee of the Jaina path. It is her inauspicious *karma* that has brought her here. It is to protect herself that she behaves like a mad person. You adore and worship this pious lady like your family deity. That will bring you good. Otherwise you will invite your own ruin."

Kanakbahu gave a complete report about her to the king. The king now honoured the lady and made

arrangement for her stay with Kanakbahu. When at times she remembered her past life, her husband, her son, the stigma that separated her from her near and dear ones, the dangers through which she had passed, she felt very sad. For the rest, she now completely planted herself into spiritual life.

Elsewhere, her son Surendradatta had earned success in business and was now the master of a fabulous fortune. Now that the son had grown up and was well established, Baisravana thought it fit to tell him all about his past, more particularly because his wife was not favourably disposed towards him and desired to get him out of the way of her own sons who were born afterwards.

He gave him his father's ring and explained the circumstances in which he was rescued from the mouth of a dog and brought to his home. Then he advised him to leave the place at once for the sake of safety to himself.

Surendradatta moved out from there and settled at Tamralipti. An able man, he earned enough money even here and then thought of finding out his parents. But he knew not where and how he would find them. So he propitiated the goddess Chakreswari, the attendant deity of Arhat Risabha who directed him to the park outside Siddharthapur a month hence. The deity told him that there would be no particular difficulty for him to recognise his parents. Surendradatta then took the road to Siddharthapur.

Meanwhile, the war waged by Avantisena ended in a victory for himself. It had lasted for 16 years. Sagarchandra returned home and met his parents. Next, he visited his wife's apartment which had a deserted look. There was no trace of his dear wife anywhere. When his parents tried to explain the circumstances under which they had turned her out, he could not approve of it, more particularly so when

he had left his own ring with her. So it was his first duty to find her out. So, duly equipped, he started. He passed through many places, met many people, but none could give him any clue about his wife's whereabouts. One day he met a demon who announced that he had swallowed his wife and now he wanted to swallow him too. Sagarchandra invoked the Five Great and the demon took to his heels.

He was now feeling sad and did not entertain much hope about regaining her. Once he thought of ending his own life even. Half-mad, he was aimlessly wandering now. But he could no longer bear this sort of life. So one day, he built up a pyre and decided to jump into it and end his life. As he was about to do so, one Sujasa, the progeny of a perfected soul, appeared on the spot and dissuaded him from that terrible act. He directed him to Siddharthapur, predicted for him a long and happy life, and requested him to recover Chitrlekha who had been stolen by some *bhūlas* whom, he said, he would encounter on the way.

Sujasa now proceeded towards the Nandisvara island and Sagarchandra towards Siddharthapur. He now saw a ray of hope in life. On the way, he saw Chitrlekha being carried away by the *bhūlas*. He rescued her. He had now a feeling that what Sujasa had predicted might come true.

Meanwhile, Surendradatta who had already reached the park at Siddharthapur performed an eight-day fast, on completion of which he arranged a mass feeding. All people of the city were invited and Mrigankalekha too was in the crowd. As she came near the host, milk flowed out from her breast indicating that the host was her own son. Meanwhile, Sujasa had returned. He introduced Surendradatta to his mother asking him to touch her feet. Thus Mrigankalekha received her lost child after a gap of many years.

Now Sujasa told them that Sagarchandra too was on his way to this place and suggested that they should move forward to welcome him. This they did and they were followed by many other invitees. Meanwhile, Sujasa went ahead of them to inform Sagarchandra that his wife and son were coming to receive him. This was a very happy occasion. Surendradatta fell at his father's feet. It was a happy meeting too between Mrigankalekha and Sagarchandra. Mrigankalekha was happy to see her old friend Chitrakalekha. The whole party sat down beneath a betelnut tree in a happy conversation.

Then after spending a few days in that city as the guest of the king Sagarchandra and the party returned to their own city Ujjain. King Avantisena and Sagardatta were happy to see them back. There was rejoicing in the whole city. Old Sagardatta and his wife Padma expressed regret for what they had done to Mrigankalekha and begged to be forgiven.

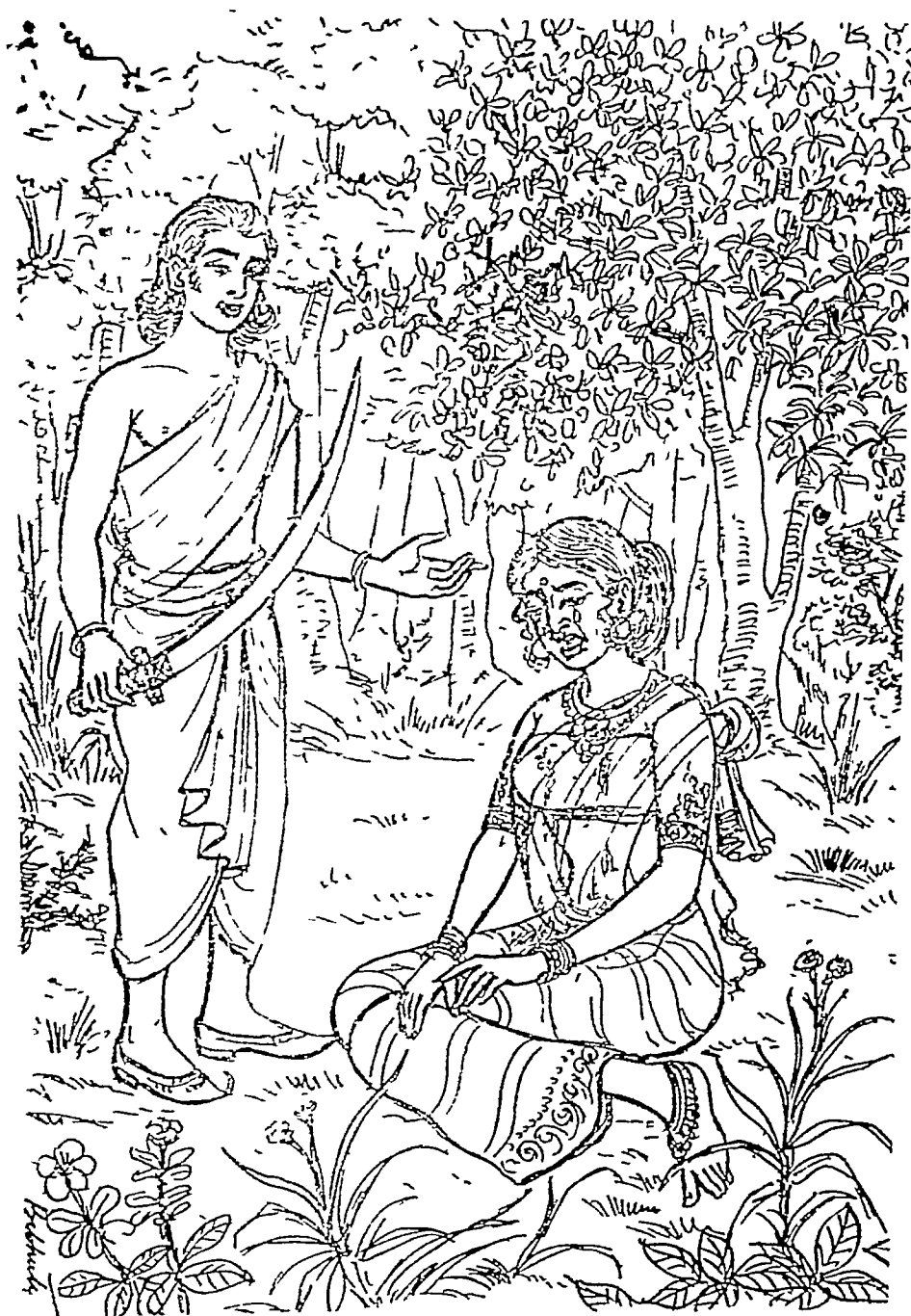
Once Jugandhara Kevali came to Ujjain and halted at the city park. All went to pay their homage and obeisance when Mrigankalekha made the following submission to the great monk,

“*Bhante* ! Why did I suffer so much in my life ?”

Throwing light on this, Jugandhar Kevali said,

“In the city of Singhapur, there lived a brahmin named Kandarpa who was an intimate friend of Prince Anantadeva. In the same city, there lived a *tapasa* monk who was held in very high esteem by all. The prince was, however, envious of the monk. One day, the prince suggested to his friend Kandarpa that some serious charge be levelled against the monk so that he might lose his reputation. Kandarpa assured his friend that he would do so.

“In the same city, there lived a rich man named Padmadeva who had a daughter Kamala by name. She was



“Sister ! What may be the cause of thy distress ?”

in love with a young man named Lalitanga, son of a merchant. This earned her an ill reputation as a bad girl. One day, Kamala disappeared from her home without telling anyone. Now on the same day, even the monk had gone out of the city. This was a nice chance for the brahmin to circulate the story that the girl had eloped with the monk. People were almost convinced about the truth of the report, as both the girl and the monk were not to be found in the city."

"After a few days, the monk came back, but Kamala was not there. Kandarpa was now afraid that people would come to know that his report was false and fabricated. Before any such impression could be made, the brahmin excited the people against the monk. The infuriated mob beat and insulted the monk but he bore everything without protest.

"Truth has tongue, and evil deeds bring forth evil consequences. In about a week's time, the brahmin had a virulent abscess on his tongue, of which he died. He was born as a dog, but the dog too did not live long and died of a similar abscess, to be born as a prostitute. By chance, this fallen woman came in touch with a follower of the Jaina faith who saved her and gave her shelter within the fold of his religion. The woman gave up her profession. One day, she went to a tank where she saw a pair of swans at play. She sprayed vermilion on the male swan so that it looked all red and his female partner would not come near him out of fear. All the time, she continued a frantic search for the male partner and was very much grieved at its sudden disappearance. The lady then washed the vermilion from the body of the male swan and the two were united again after 21 hours of separation."

Concluding the account, he said.

“That woman is now born in yourself as Mrigankalekha. For having separated the female swan from its mate for 21 hours, the penalty became 21 years of separation from your husband. So knowing the sorrowful outcome of *karma*, every human being should do his best to exhaust them by following the life of a monk or that of a devoted follower ”

At this revelation, Mrigankalekha was terror-stricken about the prospects. She along with her husband became devoted followers of the Jaina faith. They led a worthy life and were liberated at death.

4 ANJANA

The great lady Anjana was born of the first queen Hridayasundari, 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 an evil thing is to come up in life, even a normal desire may turn into a curse. There were 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."

Prahasit—"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-friends.

Vasantatilaka—"Friend 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 Vidyutkumar was praised. This enraged Pavananjaya. He said to his friend Prahasit,

"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 anybody. Let us go out from Ratnapuri. I can think of no other way of saving myself."

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

“It is the height of impertnence 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 Prahlada'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, and not even his steps were audible. 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 to whom she narrated the sorrow of her heart. Thus days passed.

Anjana tried to improve her relations with Pavananjaya. When food parcel or gift parcel arrived from her parents she sent them to Pavananjaya, but he threw them out in a very discourteous manner. She tried her best to scan 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,



... The female bird was in the greatest distress and agony.

“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 moon light, 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—“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 has 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 12 years. And all this is my own doing !”

Prahasit—“You are right. 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 !”

Pavananjaya—“But then why didn’t she protest when Vidyutprabha was extolled in most superlative terms ?”

Prahasit—“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.”

Pavananjaya—“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.”

Prahasit—“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.”

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

Prahasit—“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 wounds. 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 miscreant. 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 12 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 Ketumatī, Anjana’s mother-in-law, came to her apartment to verify the facts herself. Anjana received her with due respect, but Ketumatī burst out in great anger,

“Ye harlot ! What’s this ? You have stained the family’s great 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

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,

"Kanakratha was the king at Kanakpuri. He had two queens named Kanakodari and Laksmivati. Kanakodari gave birth to a son, but somehow Laksmivati stole the newborn 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 12 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 12 hours have become 12 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 with 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 a *Vidyadhara*, Pratisurya by name, 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 the *Vidyadhara* 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 the *Vidyadhara* 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, the *Vidyadhara* celebrated the child's birth with the greatest pomp. As the mountain had been crushed under his weight, the boy was named Silachur. As per the name of the city, however, he was named Hanuman. As the *Vidyadhara* 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 the *Vidyadhara'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

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 could never 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, howsoever 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

"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 Prasnakirti 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 12 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 "

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—"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, 29 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 12 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.

5 NARMADA SUNDARI

In the city of Vardhamana there reigned a king named Samprati. Sarthvaha Rishabhasena lived in the same city. He had two sons, named Sahandeva and Viradasa and a daughter named Rishidatta by his wife Viramati. In course of time, Rishidatta stepped into her youth. Many suitors came from top business house-holds to seek her hand, but as none of them was a follower of the Jaina path, the Sarthavaha refused them all.

Stresih Rudradatta of Chandrapur once came to Vardhamana. One day, as Radradatta was passing from beneath Rishabhasena's house, his eyes fell on Rishidatta who was seated at the window. At once, he felt a fascination for the young lady. He could go no further and was determined to have her. His friend Kuveradatta who was with him saw this. He made enquiries about the lady and told his friend that she belonged to an orthodox Jaina household and that she was the daughter of one Sarthavaha named Rishabhasena. He further informed his friend that till he was converted to Jainism, he stood no chance of getting the young lady.

Rudradatta laughed at his young friend and said,

"Friend ! You are not yet fully acquainted with my wit. This lady I must have at any cost, and for this I must use all stratagems. You will see soon that I am successful in my project."

The two friends went their respective ways. Rudradatta came straight to the abode of the Jaina monks. He established intimate contract with them, and read the fundamentals of Jainism. He picked up Jaina practices too. All this he did not to become a devout Jaina but to get that beautiful lady to whom he had forfeited his heart. Soon his objective was realised. Rishabhasena was very

much impressed by the ardentness of the young man, and he settled his daughter in marriage with him

The success of his stratagem made Rudradatta exceedingly happy. This was indeed a matter of great surprise for Kuveradatta but he did not lag behind in congratulating his friend on the attainment of his desired objective. Having spent sometime at the father-in-law's house, Rudradatta returned to his own city Chandrapur. Rishidatta also came with him. Once back to his city, he gave up the Jaina practices, Rishidatta remained firm on the Jaina path for some time but gradually she lost her steadfastness in an alien atmosphere and followed the way of her husband's family. She gave birth to a son who was named Mahesvaradatta. The son grew up to become a fine young man.

Sahadeva was Rishidatta's elder brother. Sundari was the name of his wife. Once she desired to take a dip in the Narmada. So Sahadeva collected some merchandise and reached the bank of the Narmada with his wife. Sundari's heart's desire was thus fulfilled. Sahadeva too had a tremendous turn to his fortune. He earned a fabulous income and founded a city on the bank of the river which was named Narmadapuri. After sometime, a daughter was born to them. She was named Narmada Sundari.

When Narmada Sundari stepped into her youth, the news of her beauty went far and wide. Many young men desired to have her as their wife. When the news reached the ears of Rishidatta, she desired to have the girl as the bride for her own son Mahesvaradatta. But she remembered at once that her family was not in the Jaina path, and that the union would, therefore, be next to impossible. At once, there was a drop of tear in her eye. Rudradatta noticed this and asked about its cause. When Rishidatta expressed it in so many words, Mahesvaradatta who was present said,

“Mother ! Have no anxiety on this score. I shall myself go there to have her and to fulfill your desire. I am sure, through your good-wishes, success will be mine.”

Mahesvaradatta lost no time. He came at once to the house of his maternal uncle Sahadeva and settled with him to help him in his business. Soon he won his heart. In every work, he took the lead and accomplished it with success. Sahadeva had now a great affection for his sister's son. Mahesvaradatta was an intelligent man. He did not forget establishing contact with Jaina monks and picking up the Jaina practices. Soon he was conversant with them and was regularly practising them. This was an additional reason for his becoming a great favourite with his uncle who had never an inkling of doubt in the honesty and sincerity of the young man. This helped him in making the final decision about Narmada Sundari whom he bestowed on Mahesvaradatta as his wife. Thus the young man's promise to his mother was fulfilled. He spent a little more time with his new father-in-law and then in the company of his wife, he came back home.

Narmada Sundari was now settled in her new home. Nothing was wanting there—neither wealth nor status, but still she did not feel happy. For, she could not reconcile with the atmosphere of the household wherein everyone was averse to the Jaina path. Even Mahesvaradatta proved to be no exception to this. She felt that she had been deceived. But her mind revolted at the idea of submitting to the new situation. Yet she was not rude nor harsh to anyone. She thought of gathering courage and improving her own position. She was loved by everybody in the household. So very softly she started discussion on the fundamentals of Jainism with other members of the family whenever she got a chance, and in this manner, she sought to establish the superiority of the Jaina tenets in a persuasive manner. Soon the members of the family were convinced by her logic and became converted to the Jaina way.

One day, Narmada Sundari was standing at her window in a mood of absent-mindedness. She was chewing *pan*. Suddenly, she dropped her saliva mixed with *pan* juice. Just at that time, a *nirgrantha* monk was on the highway beneath the window. The saliva fell on his head. This caused irritation to the monk who said,

“In a haughty mood, you have disrespected and defiled a monk. In consequence, in future, you will be separated from your husband ”

As these words reached the ears of Narmada Sundari, she was terror-stricken. She looked below, and as she saw the monk, she started trembling in fear and anguish. At a hurried pace, she came down to make atonement for her fault. She fell at the feet of the monk and begged to be forgiven. In a very normal tone, the monk said as follows :

“Lady ! I have no malice or anger against you. The words came out without any conscious effort. You need not take them seriously, nor feel any apprehension on their score ”

So saying, the monk went his own way. Narmada Sundari came back to her apartment.

Premature display of expertise often becomes a source of agony. Once Mahesvaradatta set out on a voyage to distant lands. Narmada went out with him. They were on board the ship seated in their cabin. It was night time. Somebody was singing a song at the next cabin. Narmada Sundari was an expert in voice-reading and she desired to take this opportunity to apprise her husband of her special capacity. So she said,

“Sir ! I say that this is the voice of a man who is dark in complexion and lean in stature. His hands and feet are thick and he has a large heart and a dark spot on the penis. He is 22 ”

This was a shock for Mahesvaradatta who did not like the observation. He paid no attention to what she said. He was now thinking that a woman who kept information about the secret parts of a man's body must be a harlot. He no more relished the company of her and was bent on getting rid of her as early as possible.

In the morning, Mahesvaradatta made enquiries about this man and got a corroboration of everything spoken by Narmada Sundari. This confirmed his belief that she was a woman of a loose character. He felt very seriously that he

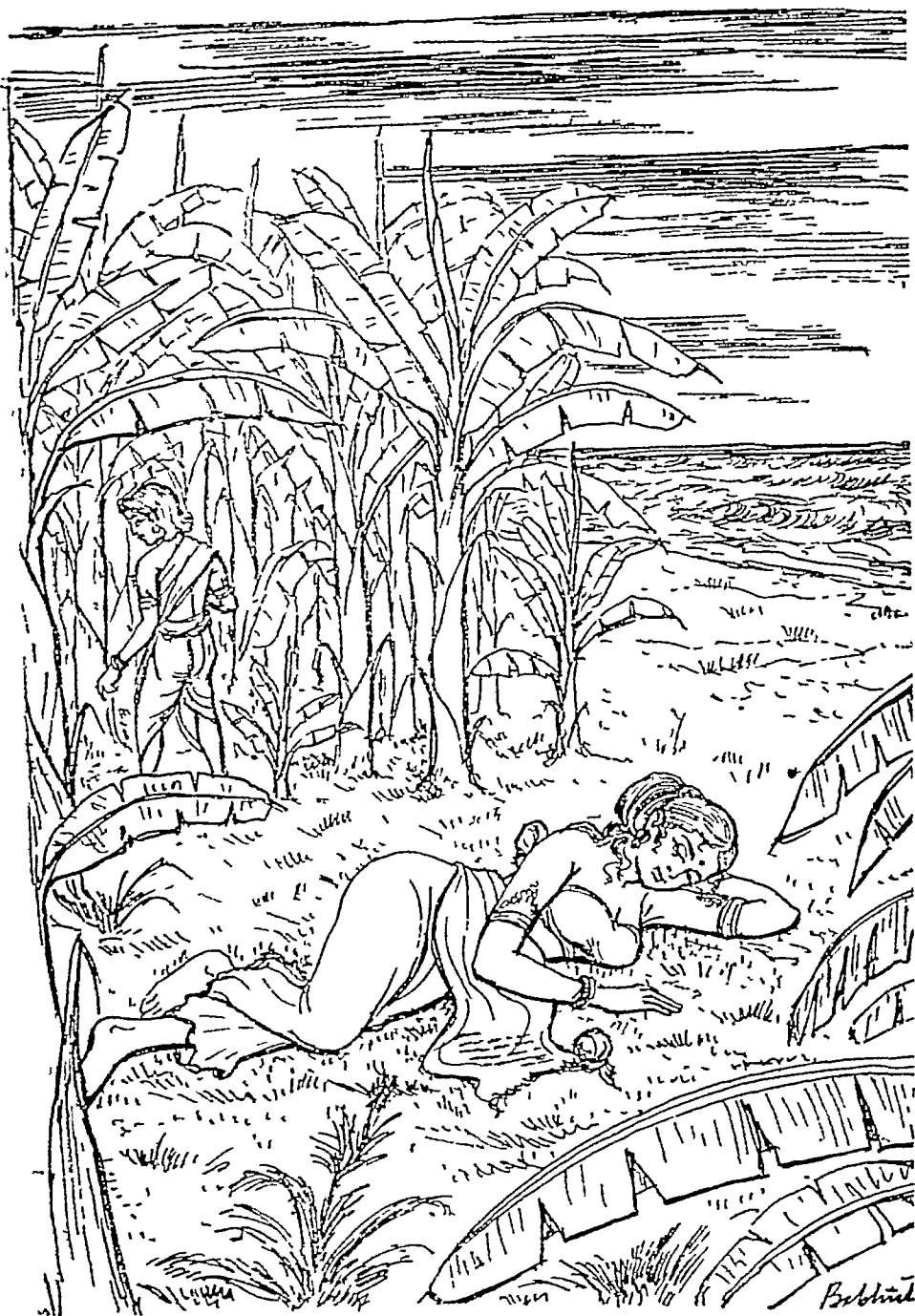
needed her no more, and he must cut off all connections with her. To him, she was no better than a poisonous creeper, and he must immediately uproot her and cast her aside. The sooner he did it, the better for him. But he did not reveal his mind to his wife and kept waiting for a suitable plan and an appropriate chance.

The ship proceeded piercing through the water. After a few days, they reached an island of man-eating monsters. The ship cast anchor to collect water and fuel. Mahesvaradatta alighted from the ship, and so did Narmada Sundari. Both of them reached a forest of banana trees where they sat down to rest. Narmada Sundari felt drowsy, and was soon fast asleep. This was a good chance. Ever since he felt bitter about her, he considered various alternatives of discarding her. Sometimes he thought of administering poison to her. Sometimes he thought of pushing her into the water. But he could not make up his mind. But now was the opportunity ready at hand. He discarded her in the midst of a deep slumber in the banana forest and reached his ship. He told his men with a feigned sorrow that his wife had been carried away by a monster and had been devoured and that he had managed to escape with great difficulty. He asked them to quit the place at once lest the monsters would follow them, in which case, none would remain alive. So pretty early in the morning, the ship set sail.

This was done, and in the morning, the ship started moving. Mahesvaradatta heaved a sigh of relief at the ease with which he could get rid of her. So goes the maxim, 'The snake has been killed, but the stick is in tact.'

Mahesvaradatta visited many lands, earned much wealth and returned home. His people were very happy to see him back. When they made enquiries about Narmada, he gave them a horrible account of how she had been taken away by a monster and killed. This created a spell of deep sorrow for all. But time is the best healer and after some time, Mahesvaradatta took a new wife, and in the new joy of life, he forgot all about Narmada Sundari.

In her sweet slumber, Narmada enjoyed many a dream,



He discarded her in the midst of a deep slumber in the
banana forest

but she knew not that the world had meanwhile changed for her. When she opened her eyes, Mahesvaradatta was not there. She called out his name but there was no response. She got up and looked for him, but he was nowhere to be found. She was now alarmed. In a helpless mood, with tears in her eyes, she was now aimlessly wandering in the lone island. Even animals shed tears for her, and expressed sympathy at her distress. Addressing her absent husband, she said,

“I placed my life into your charge which you gladly accepted. Why then have you deceived me like this? If you did not like me, you could have easily killed me. Even that would have been more bearable for me than this treachery. What harm did I do unto thee? How did I incur thy displeasure?”

While bewailing like this, she turned her steps towards the sea. She stood now on the sea beach. But the ship was not there. She had no doubt that she had been consciously discarded. She fell down unconscious on the beach. When she regained her senses, she could no longer bear the burden of this life, and was gathering courage to put an end to it. She decided to enter into the sea. Now, she stood beside the waves. Suddenly, she had the realisation that escapism did not and could not end misery. One could very well put an end to one's life, but that would not liberate one from the bondage of *karma*. Till it was exhausted or uprooted, it pursued the soul from one life to another. Her inner voice asked her to concentrate all her energy to exhaust the roots of *karma* and strike it out. So she gave up the idea of putting an end to her life and came back to the beach.

Seated on the shore, she cast a glance backward. Uppermost in her mind was the question, ‘Why did my husband discard me? What *karma* did I bind to see such an evil day?’ Then she remembered the words of the *nirgrantha* monk, ‘You shall be separated from your husband.’ Was the present situation the outcome of the monk's words? She was by now largely reconciled to her position. She realised that her own *karma* was at the root of all this misery. So she now blamed none except her own luck.

Slowly she got up and moved to settle on the island waiting for a chance to move out from there. She created a thatch for her stay, and devoted her entire time to spiritual practices. She lived on in this manner in the company of wild animals depending on the fruits of the forest. One day, as Narmada Sundari stood on the beach, a few ships arrived there and cast anchor. And who did alight from the ship but her own uncle Viradasa who was on his way to Babbarkul. He recognised Narmada at once and proceeded towards her. He consoled her with affectionate words, and asked her about her story. Narmada tried her best to master patience, but tears shot forth through her eyes. In that state, she gave an account of all that had happened to her. Viradasa was shocked. He consoled her as best as he could, took her with him in the ship and moved farther on.

Viradasa reached Babbarkul and called on the king. He gave many gifts to the king and obtained permission to trade. So Viradasa settled there for some time. Narmada was with him.

Now, in the same city, there lived a fallen woman named Harini. She was the foremost woman of the city in beauty and stratagem. The king was very favourably disposed towards her. As per authority bestowed on her by the king, she was entitled to a payment of one thousand gold coins from all incoming foreign merchants. When she came to know of Viradasa's arrival to the city, she sent her maid to him asking for the aforesaid amount. The maid arrived at Viradasa's residence. There she saw Narmada Sundari and was charmed at her grace. She went back at a quick pace and reported about Narmada to her own mistress. Harini was now almost mad and determined to get her. This would open a great prospect of money-making for her.

As she sat hatching a plan for this purpose, Viradasa arrived to her house to make the payment. This was a good chance for Harini. She cast her spell on him and took no time to overpower him. Harini managed to get a ring from him with his name imprinted on it. This was a gift for

her hospitality. With the ring in her hand, Harini's plan got its wings.

Elsewhere, Narmada Sundari was looking into her own future. She was hopeful that the days of her misery were nearing their end. But she did not know that destiny was preparing fresh snares for her. As Viradasa moved out from Harini's home, she commissioned her maid to go to Narmada at once with Viradasa's ring, show it to her, and bring her at once to her abode. The maid acted as per the order of her mistress. She showed the ring to Narmada and asked her to come at once with her.

Narmada had no reason to doubt any conspiracy after she had seen the ring. So she came to Harini's house. Harini was pleased to see her. Her plan had acted so easily. Narmada was at once conducted to an underground chamber where she was confined. Harini was now building castles in the air about her own future prosperity.

When Viradasa returned home, he did not find Narmada there. He became anxious and searched all the corners of the house. But the situation did not improve. At once, he remembered that he had given his ring to the harlot. Now, he had no doubt that she was at the root of the whole mischief. So at a hurried pace, he arrived at her house. But Harini flatly denied any knowledge of her. So Viradasa came away exceedingly disappointed. Having failed to recover her, he left the place in shame and disgust.

Meanwhile, Harini tried her best to induce Narmada to join with her in her profession. Narmada flatly refused. First inducements were offered and then lashes. But Narmada would not yield. Unfortunately Harini died the same day. As the report of her death spread through the city, people had no doubt that this was the outcome of Harini's behaviour towards the newly arrived woman. They had no doubt that this woman was very chaste and the city-folks now held her in the highest esteem. At Harini's death, Narmada won back her freedom. But as she had nowhere else to go, she continued living in the same house.

NARMADA SUNDARI

Meanwhile, dejected Virdasa reached Vrigukacch could not forget the tragedy of his life even for a moment. There he became friendly with one Jinadasa who narrated the story of his mental distress. On his account, Jinadasa said,

"Unless she is dead or has escaped by some means I am pretty sure that she is still in detention with that woman. But mere diligence is not enough to reach her. It must be supplemented by intellect. But don't you worry. I am going myself and I am sure that I shall be successful in my mission." For Jinadasa, it was no difficult task. He came to Babbarkul and went straight to the house of the harlot Narmada. He introduced himself as a friend of Virdasa. To win her confidence, he gave a complete account of her uncle and informed her of the circumstances under which he had come there in search of her. When Narmada was convinced that this was not a snare, she started with him and reached Vrigukacch. There she was united with her uncle Virdasa who took her to his own home. Narmada was henceforth living in his house, happy and safe, and spending her days in his practices.

Once a wise monk had come to that city and assembled at the city park to listen to him. Narmada too had come. After the discourse, Virdasa made the following submission :

"Oh monk ! How is it that such a woman as Narmada Sundari underwent so much harassment in her life ?" Said the all

"It is all due to the bondage of her previous birth. In her previous birth, she was the goddess of the river Narmada. Once she came to the bank of that river. He was already there. Out of sheer fun, the goddess created him. But the monk remained firm. In the end, the goddess admitted her defeat and fled. Henceforth, the goddess rooted herself in the world and led a very pious life. The same

Narmada Sundari. But because of the bondage of her past *karma*, she had to undergo so much trouble in this life."

On hearing this touching account of her previous birth, Narmada Sundari had at once a revival of her memory of that life and she could see that all that the monk had said was correct. She decided now to spend the rest of her life in the monastic order. Accordingly, she was initiated in the order of nuns. In that order, she studied 11 *Angas*, the oldest canonical texts, and practised various penances. In the course of her wanderings, once in the company of nuns, she arrived to her own city Chandrapuri. People came out to listen to her. The assembly included members of her own family, including her husband and father-in-law. But none of them could recognise her. But nun Narmada recognised them all. The topic of her discourse that day was 'the technique of voice-reading'. She spoke at length on this topic illustrating it from her own experiences with it. On hearing this, Mahesvaradatta's mind went back to the day when his own wife Narmada Sundari had said some such thing which he did not care to believe. If what the nun had said be correct, then, thought he, he had done a very wrong thing in discarding her in a lone island. He could check himself no more and said,

"Great nun ! I had my first wife who was an expert in voice-reading. But I could not appreciate her and gave a wrong interpretation of her expertise. At last, I gave her up in a lonely island. I do not know what may have happened to her there. But after hearing you, I feel, I have done a very wrong thing."

—"Have patience. I am the same person just referred to by you."

—"Can it really be so ! Am I so fortunate as to set my eyes on my dear wife again ?"

—"Yes, sir, what I say I mean."

At this point, the great nun gave an account of the past, high-lighting points which none except the husband and the wife alone knew. Mahesvaradatta was now fully convinced

that this great nun was none other than his own dear wife, Narmada Sundari. He fell at her feet and begged to be forgiven. At this, said the nun,

“This was none of your fault but the operation of my own *karma*. I could not have escaped it in any case. But now my *karma* is nearly exhausted and none can make me suffer any further. Have no repentance for what has already receded into the dead past”

The words of the nun had a great impact on Mahesvara-datta. He was now anxious to retire from household duties and join the holy order of monks. This he did, living the remaining part of his life in a very worthy manner. Thus he acquired great merits which entitled him to heaven after death.

6. MADAN AND DHANADEVA

There lived a merchant named Madan in the city of Kusasthalpur. He had two wives—Chanda and Prachanda. Both were very much true to their names. Madan made a fair distribution of his love between them, but they were so very quarrelsome that they fell out on even flimsy grounds. In such a household, there could be no peace. He tried his best to make his home an abode of peace, but he was unsuccessful. At last he thought, if these ladies could be put up in two separate villages, that might perhaps help. Chanda stayed where she was, and Prachanda was given a house in a neighbouring village. He himself divided his days between the two wives.

A quarrelsome person does not care for the sentiment of others. He wants others totally subdued to his wishes, slave unto himself. Even a slight deviation from this position causes him the greatest irritation. One day, due to some unforeseen business, Madan stayed a little longer with Prachanda. When he came to Chanda, she was all afire and she hurled a mace at him. Madan ran away as fast as he could. After he was safely off, he looked back, and he saw that a snake was pursuing him. Terrified, he doubled his speed, and reached Prachanda's home. When she came to know all this, she consoled him and asked him to rest. Very soon the snake reached the door of her house. Thereon Prachanda gathered her body dirt, made small pills from them and hurled them at the snake. Soon these pills changed into a mongoose and it tore the snake into pieces.

Thus Madan was saved. He was grateful to Prachanda for saving him. But then he thought,

'I am safe now. But I am in the grip of monsters. If some day, on some pretext, Prachanda is angry with me,

then what will happen to me ? So it is advisable that I liberate myself of both.'

One who has received a shock in life is nerve-shaken Madan saw a dark future for himself in the company of Prachanda. He felt very much insecure. So he collected some money and silently crept out of the house one day.

He walked on and on and arrived at a park in the city of Sankasa. He was already tired. So he stopped to rest. As he was thinking about the future course of his life, a merchant named Bhanudatta arrived there. Welcoming Madan he said,

"Sir, you are most welcome to my house. In fact, we have been expecting you."

Madan was hesitant to accept the hospitality of a stranger. But the request was too pressing to be brushed aside. After taking his bath, meal, etc., he sat down for a little chat with the merchant. In the course of the talk, Bhanudatta requested Madan to accept the hand of his beautiful daughter. It was indeed a strange proposal to a person about whom the proposer knew nothing. Madan could not answer immediately but was meditating silently trying to understand the mystery. Bhanudatta started.

"I have four sons and a daughter. My daughter's name is Vidyullata. She is proficient in all arts. Now she is grown up and it is but natural that we desire her to be settled in marriage. Last night, the family goddess appeared in a dream and said to me 'Don't be worried. Attracted by Vidyullata's fortune, Madan is coming here and tomorrow morning, you will see him in the park. You marry your daughter with him and keep him with you.' So you see, my dear sir, how I have come to you at the command of the family deity. I am a stranger unto you, but you are not so to me, and so I have been able to make the proposal."

When the proposal came to Madan as a windfall, he could not decline. The ceremony was over. Bhanudatta gave him a beautiful house where he lived merrily with his wife.

There are occasions when nature becomes instrumental in pulling up hidden thoughts and emotions in us. It was the rainy season. The sky was covered with dark clouds. Cool wind was blowing. Occasionally there were drizzles. Madan was at his window. Suddenly he heard the wail of some forsaken woman. He thought, 'It must be very woeful for those ladies whose husbands are not with them. I have forsaken my two wives and left them behind. They must be feeling very much lonely and aggrieved in this rainy season.'

These thoughts enkindled his lost love, and his eyes became moist. When Vidyullata saw this, she became inquisitive about the occasion for this sudden grief. Madan did not try to conceal his thoughts. The lady, however, concealed her feelings and said,

"Why don't you go to them? That's your duty."

—"How can I unless you give me leave?"

Vidyullata became jealous but did not appear so. She said,

"It may be difficult to go during this season. The roads must be very bad. Better go in autumn."

Madan agreed. Now, the rains were over and autumn had come. Madan sought leave from his wife. Ladies are usually jealous of their co-wives. Vidyullata didn't prevent his going, but she made such a plan that she would have the thread in her own hand, and instead of getting away from her, he would all the more be attracted towards her like a flying kite. She gave him among other food items, some enchanted *karambas* to be taken during the journey. He set out happily, on the road to Kusasthalpur. At noon, he sat on the bank of a tank to have his lunch. Just then a *tapasa* monk came that way. Madan invited him to share the food with him. The monk accepted the invitation. All on a sudden, the monk was turned into a goat and it started moving towards the city of Sankasa. Madan was surprised. He began to follow it.

One surprising event paved the way for many others. The goat had now reached the house. Madan watched from a



She started beating him mercilessly.

safe distance outside the house. Vidyullata thought that her husband had come back as a goat. She started beating him mercilessly and repeated the following words,

“You villain ! You were eager to go to those unfaithful wives leaving behind a faithful wife like me. To save your skin, you gave up Chanda once and took shelter with Prachanda. Then you fled Prachanda and took shelter with me. Now you want to go back to the same ladies. An inconsistent wretch ! You have no balance. Now you are rightly served.”

When it was half-dead on account of beating, the neighbours rushed in and saved him. Vidyullata then sprinkled some enchanted water on the goat and it turned into a monk. The neighbours remained speechless at this sight. At last, they said,

“Holy sir ! How did you step in in such a contingency ?”

The monk described the whole incident. Vidyullata was trembling with fear. She thought, ‘If the monk curses me, I shall be undone.’ So she fell at his feet and begged to be forgiven.

This incident cast a deep shadow on Madan’s mind. He turned his steps towards Hasantipur. There was a park outside the city. Madan sat down there to take some rest in the temple of Lord Adinath. Once again, the future was clouded with uncertainty. Just then a young man came to the same temple and sat down. He introduced himself as Dhanadeva. He asked Madan why he looked so sad and depressed. Without reservation, Madan gave him his full account. When Madan had stopped, Dhanadeva said,

“My friend ! Such a trifle has made you so sad. You won’t as much be able to imagine the amount of woe that has befallen on me.”

When two grief-stricken persons meet, they readily open their heart to each other. At a request from Madan, Dhanadeva gave the following account of himself :

“In this very city, there lived a merchant named Dhana-

pati. His wife's name was Laksmi. They had two sons, Dhanasara and Dhanadeva. The merchant educated the sons and married them with two beautiful girls. After the father had died, the two brothers happily lived on in a joint family. But the two wives were not on very good terms. When matters reached an extreme, the two brothers agreed to the partition of property amicably. But even this did not solve the problem. Dhanadeva was entirely dissatisfied with his wife. She did not give him a moment's peace. Under this situation, he accepted a suggestion of his elder brother and got married with another lady. Now, the first wife thought of teaching her husband a good lesson. She became very intimate with her co-wife and changed her to her own ways of life. So, Dhanadeva's peace was very short-lived and he became unhappy again.

"When a man is troubled too much by another, he tries to hit upon some loopholes in him so that he can pay him back in his own coins. One day, Dhanadeva pretended to be unwell and lay down. Soon he began to snore loudly. The two wives were pretty certain that he was fast asleep. Both of them now got ready to go out and took their seats on a mango tree. When Dhanadeva came to know of their intention, he took shelter in the hollow of the tree unnoticed. The tree carried the party to Ratnapur in the Ratna island. There they began to move in a very familiar way. Dhanadeva followed them unnoticed.

"Now, in that city, there was a merchant named Sripunja. He had four sons, followed by a daughter who was named Srimati. The girl was to be married on that very day. Now, as the groom stood under the gateway constructed for the occasion, it suddenly collapsed and he died. This was a great calamity. If the girl was now to remain unmarried, it would be difficult to marry her again. Sripunja was in a great dilemma. He sent at once some of his trusted men to the four corners of the city to see if some suitable groom could be found with whom he could settle the girl in marriage. One of these men saw Dhanadeva, and at once he took a fancy for him. Dhanadeva was young and beautiful. He was brought before Sripunja who at once

approved of him, Keeping in view the situation under which the request had come to him, he could not really decline. The marriage took place at the appointed hour.

“Meanwhile, Dhanadeva’s two wives had come to the spot. They liked and praised the newly-married couple. But on closer observation, the younger wife said,

“Sister ! The fellow bears a striking similarity with our own man. Maybe this is he’.”

The elder wife protested,

“Why ? There may be many persons with similar features, but that does not make them the same. We left him in the bed down with fever. How can he come here ?”

“The marriage ceremony was over in the midst of great rejoicing. Dhanadeva now came out from his father-in-law’s house on some pretext and, before the return of his wives, he sat down in the hollow of the mango tree. After some time, the wives returned and climbed on the tree. The tree carried them back to their own courtyard. Dhanadeva crept out from the hollow stealthily and quickly put himself in his bed. The two wives remained ignorant of this and went to sleep.”

“But actuality can never be kept hidden for long. In the morning, when the younger wife was engaged in her household duties, her notice was suddenly drawn towards a nuptial thread tied round Dhanadeva’s wrist. Her last night’s guess now seemed to her to be correct. She complained about it to the elder wife who became furious and exclaimed ”

“‘All right. He will have his reward very soon’.”

“So saying, she enchanted a piece of thread and tied it round Dhanadeva’s feet at the first available opportunity. Instantaneously, Dhanadeva was turned into a parrot.”

“It was very natural for a human being turned into a bird to be afflicted with grief. Dhanadeva was no exception. The elder wife now mocked at him and said,

“‘You fool ! You had made a nice pretence of fever

and were following us all the time Now, you are duly served. You should have known beforehand what you would get from an encounter with me' "

"So saying, she caught the parrot and hurled it into a cage. Thus whatever little freedom Dhanadeva had was gone.

"The younger wife praised highly the elder one Dhanadeva was passing his days in the cage in grief and despair When the wives cooked food, they hanged the cage in the kitchen When they poured vegetable into the frying pan, they threatened the parrot that it would be treated like that

"Meanwhile, there started at Ratnapur an intensive search for Srimati's groom, who reportedly had disappeared. Search squads were sent in all directions, but no trace of him could be found One morning, Srimati got a piece of verse which contained information to the effect that the man with whom Srimati had been married was one Dhanadeva, son of Seth Dhanapati of Hasantipur Srimati passed on this information to her father, who now began to think of a plan to bring back his son-in-law

"In the meantime, merchant Sagardatta was preparing to make a voyage to Hasantipur for business purposes. Sripunja considered it wise to avail of this opportunity He sent with him a costly ornament and request to his son-in-law to come and take his wife with him On crossing the sea Sagardatta arrived at Hasantipur. He called at the residence of Dhanadeva but he was not there His two wives informed him that he had gone abroad for business purposes

"Sagardatta said,

"Seth Sripunja of Ratnapur has sent an ornament for him and has requested him to meet him in that city'."

"The two wives of Dhanadeva, who were very intelligent, said,

"Our husband was himself very eager to go to Ratnapur, but he has gone abroad on an urgent business He has left word with us that if anything comes from Ratnapur, we are

to receive it and, in return, we are to send this parrot to his newly-wed wife'

"Sagardatta could not comprehend the mind of these crafty women. He gave the ornament and took the parrot. On his return, he handed over the parrot to Sripunja and narrated everything in detail. Srimati was very happy to have the parrot and she spent much of her time in playing with it.

"When the period of misery is about to end, the course of events takes a turn in that direction. One day, as Srimati was spending her time in the company of the parrot, suddenly she noticed the thread tied round its leg. She became curious, and after pondering for a few moments, she tore it off. That very moment the spell broke down and Dhanadeva stood before her. Srimati became dumb-founded. She did not realise whether it was a dream or a reality and in utter bewilderment, she could not turn her gaze from him.

"Breaking her astonishment, Dhanadeva said in an assuring tone,

'My dear ! Everything before your eyes is true. But please do not ask any question about it at this moment. The mystery will be clear at the right moment.'

"The sudden appearance of Dhanadeva brought unprecedented joy everywhere in the house. He began to live at the father-in-law's place. Sripunja passed away after a few years, and the brothers' affection for their sister Srimati gradually waned. Now she began to request her husband to go back to his own place. But Dhanadeva went on putting it off on some plea or other. At last, when Srimati seemed to be very much adamant, he narrated the entire incident and said at last,

'When I remember the scene of putting vegetables in the frying pan, even now I shiver with fear.'

"Srimati replied with full confidence in her voice,

'Don't you worry on that account. I know how to-

tackle such a situation. None of the tricks of my co-wives will be effective with me.'

"On being repeatedly persuaded by Srimati, Dhanadeva returned home with his wife. When his previous wives saw him come back in his true form, they expressed superficial joy and made preparations to receive him back. At the direction of his elder wife the younger one began to wash Dhanadeva's feet. At this moment, the elder wife took some water from a copper jug and sprinkled it on the floor. At once, the floor was flooded from all directions. Dhanadeva looked at Srimati. She only made a sign—'Don't be afraid. I shall deal with it.' As the water came rushing up, he was drowned up to his throat, and now up to his nose. He cried out,

'I am drowned. Won't you save me yet?'

"Srimati was well-versed in enchantments. She drank all the water at one sip. The two co-wives were very much puzzled at this feat. They fell on their knees before Srimati and acknowledged defeat. This also brought about a change in their behaviour. They devoted themselves whole-heartedly to the service of their husband and began to be more friendly with Srimati. But one cannot save himself from the influence of the company he keeps. This happened to Srimati. She could not avoid the influence of the two-co-wives, but fell a victim to their evil designs. Dhanadeva became isolated. The three co-wives now made a group of themselves. Utterly tired of them, one day Dhanadeva fled from the house."

Now giving a twist to his account, he said,

"Now tell me who is more miserable—you or I. You can imagine how very miserable I was as a bird."

Thus they were comparing the experiences of their life with each other. But their bad time was nearing its end. Acharya Bimalbahu came there. Being inspired by his sermons, both of them were initiated into the holy order. They practised sundry penances, and after death, they attained a celestial abode each in Saudharma-kalpa.

Having completed his life-span in heaven, the soul of Madan was born as son to King Samarsen of Vijayapur and

Queen Vijayavati. He took the name as Maniprabha. After the retirement of his father, Maniprabha became the king. He ran the administration with great efficiency for many years. One day he saw a lotus forest wholly dried up. This made a profound impact on his mind and he entered into the holy order. He acquired *avadhi* knowledge and the power to fly through the sky.

The soul of Dhanadeva was born as a Vidyadhara at Rathnupur-Chakravallnagar and took this name as Mahendrasingh. He became the ruler of that state and took the title of Chakravarti. The name of his wife was Ratnamala, and he had two sons by her who were named Ratnachuda and Manichuda. Ratnamala died of some incurable disease. This depressed Mahendrasingh to such an extent that he lost all interest in life. Monk Maniprabha saw this by dint of his *avadhi* knowledge and, because of his affection for his friend from the previous birth, he came to Rathnupur through the sky. Mahendrasingh came to him to pay his homage and obeisance. The monk tried to console him through his inspiring sermons. This to some extent restored peace to his mind. Whenever he looked at the monk, he enjoyed peace. One day, he asked him about his own previous birth when the monk narrated the complete story of Madan and Dhanadeva, and threw particular light on the character of the three ladies. This ended Mahendrasingh's attachment towards his departed wife and he was now free to join the holy order. He entrusted the kingdom to his son, Ratnachuda, and got initiated at the hands of his friend, the monk. Both the monks henceforth practised severe penances, attained the supreme knowledge and were in the end liberated.

7 LALITANGAKUMAR

Once upon a time, there was a big city named Srivasa Narabahana was the king of that city. He had a son who was named Lalitangakumar. The king loved him very much. He was given proper education.

From his childhood, Lalitangakumar was very pious. He took great interest in religious activities and he had a very sympathetic heart. If he saw anyone in distress, his heart was filled up with pity. He would give away whatever he had to help the needy. Many poor people of the city came to him, and none went empty-handed.

The prince had a fast friend whose name was Sajjan. His nature was just the reverse of his name. He would not tolerate anyone to be happy. Jealousy and revenge always dominated his heart. His friendship with Lalitanga too was more formal than real and he always tried to find loopholes in the character of his friend. He never looked with admiration on the help that the prince rendered to the poor and the needy and he would often complain against the prince to the king.

Once it was the prince's birth-day and it was celebrated with great pomp and splendour. The king presented him with a very costly necklace inlaid with gems. The prince was very happy and placed it on his neck. When he was returning to his own apartment, he heard a beggar crying in the street. When the beggar saw the prince, a flicker of smile crossed his face. The prince's heart melted and he gave away the necklace to the beggar. The beggar was pleased and blessed the prince and went away.

Sajjan watched this scene and his eyes started showering poison. He wanted to teach the prince a good lesson, and so he came to the king at once and narrated the incident.

adding rhetoric of his own. The king became angry, He sent for the prince and said to him very sternly,

“My son ! Charity has a limit If you go on making charity like this, you will empty the entire treasury in no time You should know that I reign over a big kingdom and that is not possible without money You must be careful in future. Everything is proper within limits I hope, in future, you will not repeat this sort of behaviour.”

Lalitanga was very much distressed by these words. He decided to obey his father. On the next day, when beggars came to him, he did not give alms to all but gave to about hal the number In consequence, those who did not benefit, began to speak ill of him. The prince silently endured everything Henceforth, this happened everyday Sajjan felt elated when he heard the prince being abused by a section of the beggars

One day, among the beggars, a garrulous person came to seek alms But his luck did not favour him So before he departed, he shouted,

“Oh prince ! You are a touch-stone but you are a miser too. How do you combine the two qualities ? Do not sacrifice the nobility of your heart Your wealth will never increase this way. On the contrary, it will decrease together without with your fame Nobody has ever gone away from your doors without receiving Now, it is not proper for you to retreat from a donor's position ”

These words of the garrulous beggar touched the heart of the prince So he again started to give alms, as before. Again he went high up in the estimation of the seekers. Sajjan was filled with jealous He came to to the king and said,

“Sir ! Lalitanga has again started giving alms lavishly. He is thus violating your order The treasury is going to be emptied very soon Please take care of it.”

The king became very angry at this report He sent for the prince and said to him in a very threatening voice,

“Hallow ! You have been disobeying my orders ? How did you dare do that ? I won't stand this. My strict order

to you is that before the next sun-rise, you get out from my kingdom I may, however, permit you to live here on condition that you stop giving alms in future ’

The prince returned to his apartment overburdened with thoughts He was to make a choice of the position. Diverse thoughts came to him, but at last, he did not think it proper to obey the king blindly for fear of the trouble he would otherwise be in He took a firm decision as follows :

‘It is better for me to live in the forest and face troubles rather than to submit to the unreasonable order of my father ’

He took some ornaments with him from the vault, some provisions and departed on horse-back before sun-rise.

Sajjan came to know of the order of the king He also knew that the prince would give up the kingdom rather than give up his charities and principles So he acted speedily and hid himself in a roadside garden before sun-rise As the prince rode by, Sajjan followed him from behind Lalitanga did not perceive that After he had gone a long distance, he stopped to rest beside a pond Now, Sajjan reached the spot The prince was very much amazed to see him there He asked him,

“Dear friend ! What brings you here ? ”

Sajjan replied with a false tone of endearment,

“When I came to know that you have been exiled from the kingdom, I could not remain quiet I have come all the way to help you.”

— “That’s very fine. This journey will be a pleasure in your company.”

The prince took out his provisions and both refreshed themselves Then they started again The prince said,

“My friend ! Start some topic so that we may not feel the strain of the journey.”

— “Tell me whether virtue wins or vice ”

—“What a silly question ? There is a universal agreement on this that virtue alone wins”

Sajjan protested,

‘What you say is far from the common experience’ In life, virtue never wins ; it is vice alone that wins. Had you given up your virtue, you would not have been roaming in this dense forest alone.”

Lalitanga explained.

“If virtue had any place in the heart of my father, he could never have given me this order.”

The argument and counter-argument proceeded to the stage of a breaking point, when Lalitanga said,

“Well, let us consult a third party.”

—“This I agree to but on one condition, which is that if I am proved wrong, I become your slave for the rest of my life ; but if you are proved wrong, your ornaments and horse will be mine ”

The prince gladly agreed. On the way, they met an old man, and Lalitanga felt that this man would be suitable to arbitrate by virtue of his age and experience . So he repeated the problem in view, concluding :

“Sir ! Could you please tell us which of the two wins at last, virtue or vice ? ”

The old man cast a deep sigh and said,

“My young friend ! Times have changed and vice is waxing, as virtue is waning . Bad people are leading a very comfortable life and the life of the good people is filled with grief and despair.”

Sajjan was happy at this reply. Lalitanga, on the other hand, was deep in thought, Said Sajjan,

“So you see, what I had asserted has proved to be true . Now may I expect you to fulfil my condition ? ”

Lalitanga was always true to his words. He gave away

the horse and the ornaments. Both started again on their journey. Said Lalitanga

“What times we are in ! Contradictions in values are steadily on the increase ”

Sajjan—“Well, let us ask a second man about our point. But what shall be the condition this time ? ”

Lalitanga—“I have nothing more left with me which I may give But if I am proved to be wrong, then, I shall give you my eyes ”

Sajjan—“And if I lose, you get back your horse and ornaments ”

Both proceeded onward After some time, they met a man on the street When Sajjan repeated the question to him, he said,

“It is vice that wins and virtue is always on the losing side ”

Lalitanga was struck dumb and he cast a deep sigh. Sajjan said,

“My friend ! Will you give up your wrong ideas ? You should now agree with my view.”

But Lalitanga could get no confirmation from within He protested,

“No, that cannot be so A sinful man may get something by chance, but the ultimate outcome is disastrous for him ”

Sajjan laughed at him and said,

“You deserve to be congratulated for your firm stand But what about the fulfilment of your condition ? ”

Lalitanga—“Yes, my eyes now belong to you. Let us go to the yonder banyan tree. There I shall take out my eyes and give to you I can assure you that I shall not hesitate or step back ”

The two friends came under the banyan tree Sajjan could not hide his joy and was waiting impatiently to get

the eyes of his friend. He felt no pity for him nor any penitence for such a vile act. Lalitanga addressed the gods and goddesses of the forest as follows .

“I am firm and unshakable in my opinion that it is virtue that wins, not vice. Virtue is the protector of man. May I be sheltered in virtue !”

He chanted the holy *namokar*, took out his eyes with his own hands and gave them to Sajjan. Even this ghastly sight did not touch the cruel man's heart. He picked up the ornaments and rode away. Lalitanga lay alone under the banyan tree. He felt intense pain in the eye-pits, but continued uttering the holy *namokar* almost in a state of trance.

The sun was reclining to the west. Darkness crept all over the land-scape. Grazing animals were returning homewards. Birds were flying back to their nests. For Lalitanga, the world had already become dark.

In the evening, some *bharanda* birds came and perched on the branches of the banyan tree under which Lalitanga lay. They were talking among themselves. Lalitanga knew the language of the birds. So he began to listen attentively to their talk. Said a bird,

“There's a city named Champa which is to the east of this place. King Jitasatru of that city has a beautiful daughter named Puspavati. She is very dearly loved by his father. Unfortunately, she has become blind and this has made the king very sad. Many eminent physicians have been consulted but to no effect. Seeing no way out, the king has proclaimed that anyone who will cure the eyes of the princess and restore her vision will be given half the kingdom and will be married with the princess.”

The second bird said

“Is there any possible way of restoring the eye-sight of the princess ?”

The first—“I think, there is, and it is very simple and easy too. If someone mixes the juice of the creeper that has grown round and hangs from this banyan tree with our



“If some one mixes the juice of the creeper . . . and applies it to the eyes, the eye-sight will at once be restored ”

excreta lying on the ground and applies it to the eyes, the eye-sight will at once be restored ”

Lalitanga was enlightened by this conversation of the birds. He thought of experimenting it on himself and if he was successful, then he should apply it to the eyes of the princess. He got up immediately and extended his hand towards the tree. He caught the creeper in his hand. He mixed it up with the excreta and applied the paste to his eyes. Very soon his sight was restored. With the restoration of his sight, he was happy again. He was grateful to virtue in which he had an unshakable faith. He put some creepers into his pocket and turned his steps towards the city of Champa.

The king of Champa was eagerly awaiting the arrival of some perfected being who would cure his dear daughter. Now Lalitanga announced his intention to try it and was taken to the princess' room and within a few moments, she could see again. The king was very happy. He gave half the kingdom to Lalitanga and married his daughter with him. Lalitanga began to live happily in a splendid palace at Champa.

Happiness is followed by sorrow, as sorrow is followed by happiness. That is the way of life and both are initiated by different causes. One day, Lalitanga was sitting at his window. Suddenly, he saw in the street his old friend Sajjan dressed like a beggar. He was astonished and felt sorry for him. He asked his valet to usher him in. Sajjan could not hide his surprise when he saw Lalitanga sitting in a splendid palace with his eyes intact. Said Sajjan,

“My friend ! What stroke of good luck brings you here ? ”

Lalitanga narrated his story and asked in turn,

“But how is it that you are moving in these tattered rags ? You took away everything from me. What has happened to them ? ”

Sajjan's eyes were filled with tears. He said,

"Oh dear ! Mine is a very woeful story. I am so unlucky Forsaking you in that pitiable plight, I went away, but no sooner had I gone some distance than robbers surrounded me. They snatched away the ornaments as well as the horse from me and beat me mercilessly Since then I have been roaming here and there, and supporting myself by begging alms. Having passed through many villages and cities, I have come at last to this city. Forgive me, my friend, for all the harm I have done to you "

The heart of Lalitanga was filled with pity He said,

"Don't you worry You stay with me. But now you should change your view and outlook on virtue "

Sajjan agreed and stayed on For some time, he lived properly, but again his wickedness was up. He was now acquainted with the king and took the first opportunity to poison his ears against his friend and benefactor One day, the king asked Sajjan about the origin and nationality of his son-in-law

Sajjan said,

"I am the son of King Narabahana of the city of Srivasa. Your son-in-law is also a resident of that city But he has no family aristocracy He is just a commoner, belonging to a low caste Once he met a sage who gave him the cure which he recently applied to your daughter's eyes As per your own proclamation, he is now your son-in-law, but what else could you do ? As for me, I had some trouble in the family because of which I have left my home and have been wandering ever since. It was in this way that I reached this city. My friend recognised me at once Lest I should reveal his true identity to you, he has made me live with him "

The king dismissed Sajjan The very thought that his son-in-law was of a low origin tore his heart bitterly He decided to get rid of such a son-in-law and began to hatch a plan for that He sent for two of his faithful men and said,

"You are to keep watch at night outside Lalitanga's palace, and kill any person who comes out of his palace at 10 'o clock at night "

Then as evening fell, he wrote a letter addressed to Lalitanga asking him to come to the palace and see him at 10 p m. on an urgent piece of business

Lalitanga was now preparing to come to the palace It was only a few minutes to 10 It was pitchy dark outside. Puspavati asked in a surprised tone.

“My dear ! Where are you preparing to go at this late hour ? ”

—“Just now I have received a message from the king He has asked me to see him at 10 on a very important piece of business ”

—“No, you shall not move out at this hour of the night. See him to-morrow in the morning.”

—“But it may be a very urgent business.”

—“Well, your friend Sajjan is there Send him to ascertain the nature of the business If it is really urgent, then you go ”

Lalitanga appreciated this advice of his wife. He sent for Sajjan and explained to him the whole position and added at last,

“So you hasten at once to the palace and see the king.”

Sajjan was only too glad to get the opportunity to see the king. He felt elated and dressed suitably for the occasion. But as soon as he came out on the street, the two hidden guards applied their axe on him. With a loud cry, Sajjan fell on the spot and died. Drawn by the wail, Puspavati and Lalitanga rushed to the balcony, and even in that darkness, they could perceive that it was Sajjan's body that lay in a pool of blood on the ground.

Said Puspavati,

“Just see, my dear, what a conspiracy was this Only if you had gone out ! ”

Lalitanga became very angry with the king He called in his own men and declared a war against the king to take revenge for the death of his friend When the king saw that an internal feud was about to start at the palace, he felt

sorry He asked his son-in-law to reveal his true identity which had been troubling him the most Lalitanga, who was shaking with anger, said,

“What I am, only my arms will reply.”

Minister Sumati handled the situation carefully He saw Lalitanga and explained to him the cause of the king's concern about his son-in-law's background This to some extent appeased Lalitanga Besides, he could now see his friend Sajjan in a new light and he felt that he had been paid back in his own coins, an inherently wicked person that he was. This was followed by a visit from the king himself who begged to be forgiven for all that had happened

Jitasatru was highly impressed by the chivalry and nobility of his son-in-law. For many years, they lived together, after which the king handed over the highest office of the state to his son-in-law and courted monkhood.

Lalitanga was now eager to meet his father Together with Puspavati, he came to Srivasa. The king was happy to see his son after so many years. He was also greatly impressed by his religious attitude and chivalry He too handed over the throne to his son and joined the holy order

8 UTTAMKUMAR

Once upon a time, King Makaradhwaja reigned at the city of Varanasi. Lakshmivati was the name of his wife. Both of them were virtuous, benevolent and just. The people had the greatest regard for the monarch and the king was always kind to them. But unfortunately there was no son born to the king and so chances were that the line would end with him. After many years, however, a son was born and the king's wishes were thus fulfilled. The prince's intellect, conscience, beauty and intelligence were all of the topmost quality, because of which he was given the name Uttamkumar. On crossing the threshold of childhood, as Uttamkumar moved on to youth, his manliness and vigour began to grow steadily, as also did his personality.

One day, the prince was sitting in his palace absorbed in deep thought. He was dreaming about a happy future. The river Ganga was flowing within his sight. The prince's eyes were drawn to its serenity. Suddenly, some sweet music poured into his ears. Together with the melodious tune, the wording of the song also carried some meaning, so that the prince began to listen carefully. The song had the following purport :

It is fit and proper for a person to enjoy the property of his father during his childhood, but if he continues to do the same after 16, it only makes him lazy and good-for-nothing. He must travel far and wide to gather experience and learn more and more skills. He should depend only upon himself and try his own luck. He should never forsake the path of virtue and morality. He must at least once visit a foreign land."

This harmonious yet meaningful song pulled up the dormant feelings in the heart of Uttamkumar. His manliness was touched. The music had shown him the way and he

decided to try his luck. He took no time to dress himself up. But what about seeking the permission of his father, the king. He knew that his father would, under no circumstances, allow him to go, but go he must. Should he then go without taking the permission of the king? This point almost raised a storm in his mind. But at last he took a firm decision to move out without taking the permission of the king.

On horse back, Uttamkumar left Varanasi before the sun was up. He passed through many villages and cities and crossed many mountains and rivers. At last, after many days' ride, he reached a port named Bharuch. There lived a very rich merchant named Kuverdatta in that coastal town. He was preparing to go on a long voyage. He had collected many ships and was loading them with wares. As the merchant himself was supervising the loading at the port, his eyes fell on Uttamkumar who was passing by that way. He said,

"Hallo young man! Who are you? How have you come to this port?"

—"Seth! I am a prince. I left my own city with a view to gathering experience by travelling abroad."

—"If that be your desire, then come with me. The ships are ready. I have to see many lands to sell my things. I think, our company will be mutually profitable to us."

Uttamkumar too was looking for a chance and it had come so unasked for. He accepted the merchant's invitation. The voyage started. The ships had sailed over to a great distance. It was really an enjoyable voyage. But all on a sudden, a trouble arose. A thunderous sound became audible and all saw to their greatest alarm that a big monster was rushing towards them and shouting—"I shall eat you up." The passengers were half dead with fear. At this moment, Kuverdatta came to Uttamkumar and said,

"Brave young man! You are a ksatriya. If you show your skill at this difficult moment, we may all be saved."

Uttamkumar came forward with the sword in his hand. He challenged the monster. The fight continued for a long time. The attacks by the prince made the monster very furious and he rushed on him with double the speed. But the prince was very careful and he did not give the monster a single chance to strike on his body. The monster was exhausted at last. He was feeling somewhat ashamed that he had been vanquished by an ordinary human being who was normally his food. But he could not stand for long and took to his heels. The danger was thus averted and the passengers heaved a sigh of relief and showered heaps of praise on the prince.

The ships sailed on. The weather was fine and the passengers were happy. After they had covered a long distance, they found that they were short of drinking water. An old sailor said,

“At not a very great distance from this place, on an island, there is a well of sweet water. If we can go there, our problem will be easily solved.” The ships were turned in that direction. Soon they reached that place and the well was spotted. People proceeded towards the well with their water-jugs in hand. They tried their best to draw water out of the well but all their efforts were in vain. On investigation, they found that the water was under a thick cover. Efforts were made to remove the cover but it proved too hard to be removed or pierced through. People again came back to the prince and invoked his help. The prince agreed at once to help them. He jumped into the well and, mobilising all his energy, he removed the cover. The problem of drinking water was thus solved.

Wherever Uttamkumar laid his hand, it turned out to be a success. As he was coming out of the well, he saw a doorway in the wall. The door was closed. He felt curious as to what might be behind the door. He broke it open, but could see nothing. So he stepped in and went ahead. Suddenly, he saw an old lady. Uttamkumar asked,

“Mother ! Who are you ? ”

The very look of Uttamkumar seemed to please the old

woman For, as soon as she saw the young man, a plan was suddenly formulated in her mind It was the plan of marrying Princess Madalsa with him. It would make the princess happy and liberate her from the captivity of her father. She handled the situation with care Before giving out her own introduction, she tried to get as much detail about the new-comer as was possible for her. She asked him diverse questions and yet she had a curiosity—"This fellow looks like a prince" But the very next moment, she thought—"But why should a prince come at all to this place and draw water with his own hands?"

The prince said all about himself, concluding his account as follows :

"You see, when my men could not do this, I had myself to go into the well. Then I saw this door Out of curiosity and inquisitiveness I opened it and thus I am here. But I am surprised to see you This has increased my curiosity all the more. Will you kindly tell me about the mystery behind this door?"

The woman started,

"This is a rather strange story You must have heard the name of the city of Lanka The demon-king of that city whose name is Bhramaraketu has only one child, a daughter, whose name is Madalsa Once the king came to know from a fortune-teller that the princess would be married to a human being This made him furious and he cried out,

"Is there no demon left on this earth that my daughter will be the wife of a human being? I shall never allow such a thing to take place"

With this determination, he constructed a beautiful palace on the sea coast and the palace has only one doorway. Princess Madalsa is a captive in the palace Whenever any human being comes here, the demon-king comes out and kills him Oh prince! You look to be very brave You have reached this place alive I feel that you are perhaps the man chosen by destiny for the said princess. So I

have taken a fancy for you. You come with me. I shall lead you to the princess' apartment."

The woman led the way and Uttamkumar followed her. He was amazed at the splendour of the palace. They were now inside a beautifully decorated room. Madalsa came forward to greet him. As Madalsa and Uttamkumar looked at each other, they fell in love at the very first sight. The woman now made the formal proposal and the two gave a silent consent. The marriage was performed according to the Gandharva rites. The lady was very happy at the smooth fulfilment of her duty. Her long-cherished desire was at last fulfilled.

The prince, accompanied by Madalsa and the woman, came back to his ship. Everyone was surprised at the valour and good luck of the prince. The couple was congratulated by all. The ships sailed on their voyage.

Man's destiny is a curious mixture of extremes. When one extreme gets the upperhand, the other goes down and through this process of imbalance, many evil results creep in. When Kuverdatta beheld the beautiful Madalsa, he was full of lust for her. He deviated from his path of honesty and all his efforts were now directed to getting her by hook or by crook. He started calling on the prince very often and thus he got the chance of seeing Madalsa from very close quarters. Madalsa comprehended soon his ugly mind and said to the prince one day,

"This man in whom you have so much faith and trust appears to me to be a devil with a vile heart. Be careful of his company."

The prince did not pay much heed to her words. He said instead,

"No, you are wrong. The merchant is an honest man and he is honest to the core. Why do you doubt him for nothing?"

A good man evaluates others by his own standard and the outcome in most cases is disastrous. Uttamkumar had

never doubted in the merchant's veracity, but the latter took undue advantage of his goodness. He began to dream of meeting Madalsa alone. But the presence of the prince made the fulfilment of his dream impossible. So he hatched a conspiracy to remove this obstacle from his path. One day, Kuverdatta went to a secluded corner of the ship and stood there. Then he called Uttamkumar and began to talk to him so intently that the latter's attention was diverted. Suddenly, the merchant pushed him into the sea.

For a pious man, even an adverse situation turns favourable. A man who is firm in religion and morality may temporarily be in difficulty, but in the end he comes out with flying colours. Trapped even in the greatest misfortune, he would find a way out by some means or other. As soon as the prince fell into the sea, a giant fish swallowed him up. Just then a fisherman threw his net and the same fish was caught into it. The fisherman was happy at the sight of the prize fish. He rushed back home and pierced it. Out of the fish's belly came out a fine young man. He was, however, unconscious. The fisherman's quick effort restored him to full consciousness. From the man's dress and demeanour, the fisherman had no doubt that this man must be a prince or a man of noble descent and that due to some conspiracy or misfortune, he was in this miserable state. When the prince regained his senses and was feeling normal, the fisherman asked him all about him. The prince narrated to him the story of his life. The fisherman felt pity as well as consanguinity for him. He did not let him go, but insisted upon his staying at his home as an honoured guest.

Now let us have a look at the scene on the ship. As Uttamkumar was pushed down into the sea, the merchant himself raised an alarm, shouting, "Uttamkumar has slipped into the sea." But no trace of him could be visible, and people on board felt sorry for him. Soon Madalsa came to know of the unfortunate event and started weeping bitterly. Her sorrow touched the heart of everybody except the merchant who spoke some superficial words in order to console her. Madalsa took no time to understand that

Kuverdatta was the real culprit. But she was helpless and remained silent.

After a few days had passed, Kuverdatta approached Madalsa and said,

“Madalsa, my dear ! Why are you so much aggrieved for one who is no more There is no possibility of Uttamkumar ever coming back to life. But why should you make yourself miserable for him ? I am at your service. You accept me and all that I have will be at your feet ”

Madalsa could anticipate this. Shaking with anger at his dirty intentions, she thundered,

“Merchant ! You are looking at me with lustful eyes, but your desire shall never be fulfilled I am the brave daughter of a demon king and wife of a very powerful man on earth. Do you think I shall ever lay my eyes on such a filthy creature like you ? Keep yourself out of my sight, or you will suffer the consequences ”

The merchant was not to be cowed down. He became furious and cried out in a very sharp voice,

“You haughty woman ! You should know with whom you are talking If you win my favour, you may be a fortunate woman , but if I am angry with you, you will be without any succour I have made a very polite request so far, but if necessary, I shall not hesitate to apply force even. You have no friend on this ship. All the people here are in service under me.”

This open threat shook Madalsa She realised that it was not wise for a person of inferior strength to fall out with a more powerful man She changed the mode of her talk and tried to be more accomodating She said,

“Merchant ! What you have said is correct and I realise my own situation But I want to make a request We should at least wait for ten days and see if Uttamkumar comes back We should not do anything in haste or right now For, anything done hastily and stealthily seldom succeeds.

After this period, we shall go to some court and, with the sanction from the king, we shall wed ' '

The merchant was pleased at these sweet and appeasing words. He thought that it was the threat he held that has yielded good result. This has even changed a chaste woman who has turned to him. He was more than sanguine that Uttamkumar could never come back. After ten days, the ship cast anchor at Morepalli and, as per her condition, both Madalsa and the merchant came to obtain the sanction from the king. Introducing himself, Kuverdatta said,

'Sir ! In the course of my voyage, I picked up this woman and, if you be so pleased as to permit, this woman is ready to marry with me ' '

The king looked at Madalsa and said,

"Sister ! Has the merchant said the truth ? Are you willing to marry him ? "

When the king addressed her as 'sister', Madalsa felt somewhat relieved and saw a ray of hope. She had a feeling that she might be protected by the king. So with folded hands, she said,

"Your Majesty ! Whatever the merchant has said is furthest from truth. I am the daughter of the demon-king Bhramaraketu. I was married to Uttamkumar, a prince from Varanasi. We were travelling with this merchant in his ship. In order to satisfy his amorous wishes, he pushed my husband into the sea. He wanted to use force on me. I have somehow saved my honour by promising to marry him after ten days with the permission of some king and, with that purpose, I have been brought to this court. I am already married and the question of my marriage again does not arise. I seek protection with thee. Please save me ' "

The king became furious at this revelation. He ordered that all the treasures and wares belonging to the merchant were to be confiscated and he was to be put into the jail. Turning to Madalsa, he said,

"I will henceforth address you as my daughter. You

will live at the palace with my own daughter Trilocana. I shall henceforth be responsible for your safety and well-being "

Madalsa was relieved. She was only looking for this much and this she had got. She started her new life with Trilocana, to whom she would often tell many beautiful stories. She was thus well provided for.

One day, a sad incident happened. Trilocana was taking a stroll in the garden along with her friends when a black panther suddenly appeared there and bit the young princess. With a loud shriek, the princess fell on the ground and became senseless. The matter was at once reported to the king. The king and other dignitaries of the court soon rushed to the spot. Doctors were sent for, but all their efforts to restore the princess to her senses failed. The king became restless. The princess was carried to the palace in a palanquin. Doctors were attending on her, but all their knowledge of medicine proved futile.

The king issued forth a proclamation that anyone who would be able to cure the princess of the panther's poison will win her hand. But none responded, since it was no easy job. When Uttamkumar, who was residing in the fisherman's house in the same city, heard the proclamation, he decided to respond. He came to the court and offered to try his hand to cure the princess. He was taken to the room in which the princess lay senseless. Uttamkumar uttered the *namokar* and applied a gem that he had acquired from his wife Madalsa in the palace of the demon-king. This removed the poison and the princess moved on her side. After some time, as she was rid of poison, she sat up to the joy of the king and the entire royal household. The king fulfilled his promise and married his daughter with him. Uttamkumar was now allotted a beautiful palace where he started living with his newly married wife. Madalsa also joined the prince, her husband.

To celebrate the happy occasion of the restoration of the princess to life, the king released many prisoners, and Kuyerdatta was one of them. Before leaving the city, he

was just wandering to see the places of interest when, all on a sudden, his eyes fell on Uttamkumar. In a great surprise, he thought,

“How is it that he is here? I pushed him down into the sea, and he is still alive and he enjoys the enviable position of being the son-in-law to the king!”

He was bent on taking revenge. He decided not to rest till he put an end to Uttamkumar’s life.

Kuverdatta reached a garden outside the city. A flower-woman was picking flowers. Kuverdatta came to her and asked about her business. The woman said,

“I make garlands and boquets out of these flowers and sell them in the market.”

—“Do you ever sell these to the king and his ministers?”

—“Oh yes, very often do I go to the palace. Besides, I sell my things to all big people and high officials here.”

—“Do you know the new son-in-law of the king?”

—“Oh sure. Only the other day, he has been married to Princess Trilocana. I go to his palace too to sell flowers.”

Kuverdatta now placed his gold necklace in her hand and said,

“Fine woman! I want you to do a special job for me. Will you oblige me?”

With the gold necklace in her hand, the woman could not but agree. She said,

“You are such a fine man. How can I disoblige you? I shall do anything at the cost of my life even to help you. You tell me what is it that you desire to be done.”

Kuverdatta felt safe to reveal his plan;

“This new son-in-law of the king, Uttamkumar, is my inveterate enemy. I do not want to see him alive. Can you finish him by some secret means?”

The woman was in a dilemma. She could not even dream of such a commission. Her heart trembled at the thought of killing an innocent person. The merchant comprehended her thoughts. He took out a few gold coins from

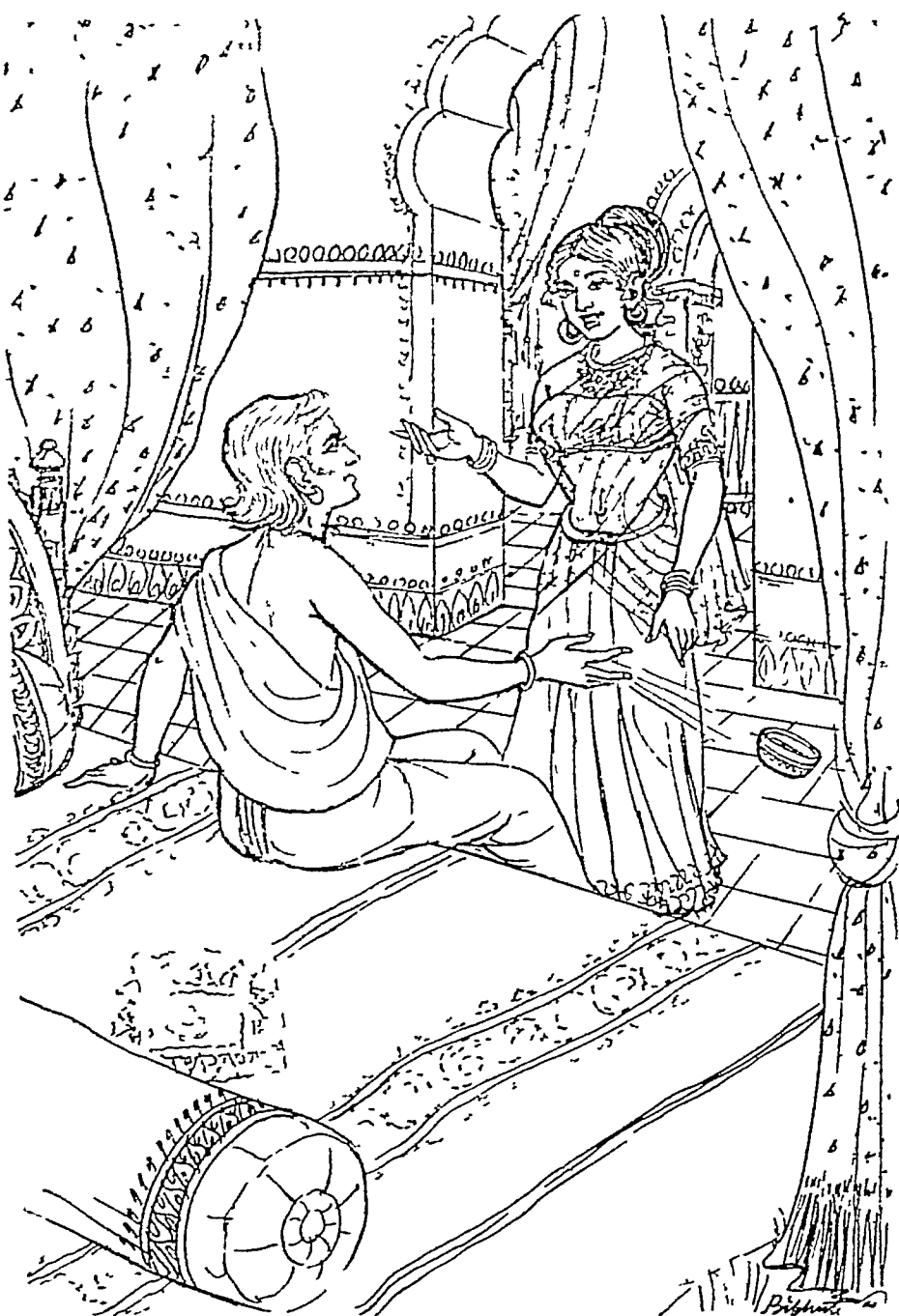
his pocket and placed them in her hand. The weight of gold was able to subdue the finer elements in her. She said,

“Seth ! Don’t you worry. I shall go just now to Uttamkumar’s palace. Every morning, Trilocana goes out to another palace to spend some time with her friend and Uttamkumar is alone. I shall go to him and present him with a boquet. I shall place an infant cobra inside the boquet. This will serve the purpose. Do you see ?”

Kuverdatta thanked the woman profusely and requested her to finish the job as quickly as she could. The woman prepared a fine boquet and took some loose flowers with her and went out. She took no time to reach Uttamkumar’s palace. At that time, Uttamkumar had dressed to go out. The woman placed the boquet in his hand. The prince began to admire it. Suddenly the infant cobra came out and gave a bite on his hand. The prince shrieked and fell down senseless. There was none else at the palace to help him.

In the same city there lived a prostitute named Anangasena. By dint of her beauty and intellect, she had a great influence on many rich and distinguished persons. Once she saw Uttamkumar at the court and she was attracted by his beauty. She was thinking of entrapping him somehow. From that day, she often came to the palace and tried to establish intimacy with him. As the flower-woman was moving out, Anangasena entered into the palace. Anangasena went up and was surprised to see the prince in that dreadful condition. His body had become blue and almost lifeless. She could guess that the prince must have been bitten by a snake. Anangasena carried a gem with her which could remove the poison. She applied it at once. At the touch of it, the poison was removed from the body of the prince and he sat almost cured. He thanked the woman for saving his life and told her to ask for anything as reward. The harlot said,

“Oh prince ! I have lost my heart to you. I want you to marry me. That is all I ask of you.”



The harlot said, "Oh prince ! I have lost my heart to you "

The prince could not refuse his benefactress. When Anangasena saw that the prince was within her clutches, she tied a thread round his neck and at once the prince turned into a parrot. Hiding the parrot in her dress, she took it out to her home. Henceforth, he lived as a parrot during the day and when, at night, the woman removed the thread from his neck, he became a human being enjoying life with her.

At this sudden disappearance of his son-in-law, the king was very much worried. He sent out his men to many places to search for him, but all his efforts were in vain. Being desperate, at last, the king issued forth a proclamation to the effect that any man giving news of the prince would be rewarded with the whole kingdom and would be married to Sahasrakala, the daughter of the Nagar-seth (town merchant).

One day, the cage of the parrot remained open due to carelessness. The parrot flew out. It heard the king's proclamation. It flew to the palace gate and said to the people there,

“Tell the king that I am able to give information about his son-in-law.”

The men at once informed the king. The parrot was taken before him. Everyone present at the court began to listen intently to the parrot who was speaking like a human being. The parrot gave a complete account, adding in the end,

“He is still living in the house of Anangasena. I have given you information about your son-in-law. Now, as per your proclamation, oh king, you hand over the charge of your kingdom to me and marry me to the daughter of the Nagar-seth.”

People were surprised and were looking at the king and at each other. Some one said, “How shall the Nagar-seth marry his daughter with a bird?”

Said a second man.

“Is it not surprising that a bird has so much information about the world of men ? ”

But the consensus was—

“Let us see what the king does to solve the problem ? ”

The king now said,

“Oh parrot ! How are we to believe without any direct proof that you are speaking the truth ? ”

The parrot seemed to be aggrieved and insulted at these words and was about to fly away. But before doing that, he said sadly,

“Oh king ! I have nothing further to add if you cannot believe in what I have said I am sorry that I thrust my head in vain into all this trouble ”

Madalsa came forward and said,

“Please don't fly away, oh parrot ! Tell us something which will prove the correctness of your words.”

The parrot said,

“Well, I am here You send some one to Anangasena's house to get all the information you want ”

Immediately, at the king's order, men were sent to Anangasena's house They searched every corner of the house, but they could find no trace of Uttamkumar there. The men came back in despair.

The king looked at the parrot and said,

“Parrot ! We have found nothing there to support you ”

The parrot smiled, looked all around and said,

“Oh king ! You want proof I am the proof I am myself Uttamkumar By some magical power, Anangasena has transformed me into a parrot If you remove this thread from my neck, I shall regain my self ”

The king arose and removed the thread and there stood the real Uttamkumar before them Everyone was highly

astonished. The king became angry with Kuverdatta, the flower-woman and the harlot for creating this trouble and ordered severe punishment for them. Uttamkumar's earnest pleading, however, got their release.

According to the king's proclamation, Uttamkumar was married to Sahasrakala. He also married Anangasena who loved him very much. With his four wives, he lived on happily. After some time, the king retired to join the holy order and Uttamkumar became the king in succession to him.

Uttamkumar was now anxious to meet with his parents. Together with his four wives and duly accompanied by many other dignitaries of the state, he came to Varanasi. King Makaradhwaja was very happy to see his son after such a long time. But the king had grown old and so he expressed a desire that he should retire by handing over the kingdom to such an able son. This he did concentrating henceforth on the affairs of the soul. Uttamkumar was now the king of two states, but he ran the administration with great ability and earned great reputation for his steadfastness in truth, honesty and justice.

Once a Jain monk came to Varanasi. King Uttamkumar came to pay his homage and obeisance to him and was inspired by his words. Now he was sufficiently old to retire. He placed his successor on the throne and himself joined the holy order. Therein he attained great spiritual progress, and after death, he acquired life in heaven.

9 SETH AKALASA

In olden times, there was a big city named Ghogha-patan. The big merchants of that city were famous even in far-off lands. Many merchants from far-off places from across the sea often visited this city on business. Thus business was very prosperous in that city and all people were living a happy life.

Bhupatisingh was the just and most valiant king of that city. He had two queens, each having given birth to a son. The elder son was Mansingh and the younger one was Hamirsingh. One day, Hamirsingh's mother thought that as Mansingh was the elder of the two and was the crown-prince, he would be the successor to the king to the throne, and so she should so contrive that her son might not be in difficulty with his brother in future. When, after this, the king came to her chamber, the queen suggested to him that the responsibility for the running of the administration should be shared by the two brothers. She desired that their amicable relation should last throughout their life. The king appreciated the idea and accepted it.

After the king's death, Mansingh was on the throne. The intimacy between the two brothers was intact. Mansingh consulted his brother on every administrative problem and Hamirsingh respected his elder brother as he would do his father. Mansingh formulated the policies of the state and their execution was the responsibility of the younger brother. Hamirsingh proved to be very capable in fulfilling his assignments and soon he became popular among the people. He was just, honest and truthful. He was handsome too. So he was a curious combination of grace and virtue. This was the main reason why he attracted anyone who came into contact with him.

The name of Mansingh's wife was Kamalata. She had been brought up in a right environment; but in fact she did not benefit much from it. She was exceedingly passionate.

and was a woman with dirty habits. Whenever she saw a young man with physical grace, she became covetous of his company and it was impossible for the man to escape from her clutches

One evening, when Hamirsingh was out on horseback, Kamalata sitting at her window saw him and she lost herself. She sent her maid to invite him to her chamber. For a moment, Hamirsingh felt a mild hesitation to call on his sister-in-law at this hour of dusk, but he could not disrespect the order from the elder which, he felt, would be like insulting her. So he came. Kamalata desired that he should give his company to her. This made Hamirsingh extremely angry. But he restrained himself somehow and tried to pacify the queen through words of reason. He said,

“You are my sister-in-law and elder to me in status. Hence you are like my own mother. How can I submit myself to your desires? I am sorry and I beg to be excused.”

Hamirsingh got up and went out. Kamalata felt disheartened. She decided to insult Hamirsingh and disgrace him too. She ran after him and caught him on the staircase. And then she started shouting,

“Save me. I am being molested.”

Many maids at once ran to the rescue of the queen. She was brought back to her chamber. Feeling greatly insulted and harrassed, Hamirsingh came back to his own apartment. Out came from his lips the following words,

“Destiny ! Mysterious is thy way !”

This unexpected event totally upset Hamir. He was thinking how mean women could be. Just then he received a letter sent by his elder brother, the king, which had the following content,

“Hamir ? You have proved yourself to be a brute. I had a different impression about you, but that is proved false now. I had great respect for you and I had never doubted you even for a moment. But to-day you have darkened all my bright ideas about you. When I got the

report about your behaviour towards the queen, my blood was boiling in anger. The way you have treated your sister-in-law, who deserves to be respected like the mother, would put our family line to great ignominy. I do not think, after this incident, I can live with you even for a moment. Do not show me your blemished face any more. I order that you leave this kingdom and move out of its borders before sun rise. If you dare disobey my orders, I am afraid, the result will be very bitter."

As Hamirsingh was glancing through this note, his eyes became stunned. He had never expected such a thing from his brother. As an elder person, as also the ruler, he should have looked into the matter before passing on this crude judgement. He decided not to protest, but silently to accept the verdict and move out of the kingdom. But before he could do that, he should make suitable arrangement for the management of his property. Indeed there were many people in the city, but it took him a fairly long time to fix up a suitable attorney.

In the same city, there was a merchant named Akalasa. He possessed a small capital of one lakh. Really he was not a business man, but a mere rentier and money-lender. But he was a pious and devoted person and spent much of his time in spiritual activities. He believed in, and practised, the ideal limiting possession and was satisfied with his limited earning. He was never deceitful to any one.

Bhadra was the name of his wife. She was a fine and accomplished woman, pious, honest and devoted like her husband. But she had one flaw. She was given too much to competitive ostentation, and when she saw some neighbouring woman with new clothes or ornaments, she insisted that she too must have similar things. The merchant would tell her not to make a blind imitation of others.

One day, Bhadra went to visit a neighbour, Laksmidevi, wife of Seth Hirachand. He ran many shops in the city and in other towns. He had many employees and servants under him. When Bhadra was in conversation with the Seth's wife, she found that all sorts of people were coming to Laksmi to hold consultation and receive orders from her.

Her standard of living appeared to be majestic. Bhadra felt tempted. Then Laksmi started giving an account of her wealth. She said,

“Dear Bhadra ! Just see how our business is progressing. Every year, millions are showered in our shop. Even most learned people are after us for a job. My husband is the most respected person everywhere. All this is the marvel of wealth. Your husband does not do business. He always remains at home. So nobody knows him or cares for him. Nor can he increase his wealth in this way. If he starts some business, you will see, both wealth and fame will run after him.”

These words of Laksmi pierced Bhadra's heart. She returned home and tried to persuade her husband to engage in some business.

She said,

“Only the good-for-nothing people sit idle at home. Please do start some business like Hirachand. We shall also have enormous wealth. If you don't listen to me, I shall some day leave this home.”

Akalasa replied,

“My dear ! You are too simple. But is it wise for one to burn his hut at the sight of somebody else's palace ? Business is not possible without resort to falsehood, faithlessness, tricks and immorality. We have enough to meet our needs. We should not involve ourselves in this vicious job. We may not have superfluous wealth, but we are abounding in happiness, peace and fame for honesty and integrity. Peacefully we go to bed every night and we get up peacefully in the morning. Why should we invite fresh trouble by indulging in business activities ?”

But Bhadra was not prepared to listen to this sober advice of her husband. She went on reiterating her demands, and when she found that her husband would not change, she broke down into tears. Akalasa was in a great dilemma. Although he did not want to deviate from the path of

virtue, but ultimately he had to bow down before the wishes of his wife. So he promised that he would start business very soon. At this assurance, Bhadra became happy.

Akalasa went to the market-place and held consultation with the merchants there. At last, his eyes fell on one Nanchand who was seated in a shop surrounded by many people. He was the manager of the shop. Akalasa was impressed by his appearance. He came to him and invited him to his house in the evening. Nanchand accepted the invitation.

In the evening, Nanchand came to Akalasa's house. Akalasa received him with the greatest warmth. They had a very hearty conversation, in the course of which said the Seth,

"Nanchand ! You seem to be very efficient in business, but how is it that you do not appear to do anything of your own ?"

—"Sir ! Business needs capital. I don't have it."

—"I shall give you capital, and you start some business. Let us start a commission shop at the port which we will own in partnership."

Nanchand gladly accepted the proposal. Akalasa, however, imposed a condition that the business should be kept restricted to fifty thousand to start with. Any further expansion of business could be made only by ploughing back profit, and not by making investment from the pocket. In other words, they were to carry on the business within the limit of their capital. Nanchand accepted this as a principle in his business.

The shop named after Akalasa was started at the port. Many big merchants from lands far as well as near came there and established a business link with the new shop. Very soon, the shop earned a great good-will, and made a profit which exceeded a lakh. Nanchand conveyed this happy news to Akalasa and tendered him a complete account of the business. Akalasa only reminded him of the condition he had laid down at the commencement.

Nanchand engaged himself in business heart and soul. The initial success gave him the greatest encouragement. At the end of the second year, he had a profit of five lakhs. This too he reported to his partner-in-business very honestly.

However efficient a man may be, at the wrong turn of his luck, his efficiency even changes into inefficiency. All his estimates and expectations betray him and there is heavy loss where profit was so clearly visible. This happened with Nanchand.

One day, a wandering merchant named Lakha came with a large caravan consisting of hundreds of pack animals to the port of Ghogha. He was to despatch his wares to Java. He came to Seth Hirachand's house where he lodged. He wanted to insure his things against marine risk to the extent of fifteen lakhs. So he sent Hirachand's man to Nanchand's shop in the harbour with a request to underwrite for the same amount. This, he said, would bring the shop a great profit.

Nanchand gave thought to the request. He thought of the condition imposed by his partner. But the value of the insurance was much larger than the capital of his business. But the very next moment he thought that his stars were favouring him in anything on which he lay his hands and that in this deal too, the luck would give him full support. So at last he agreed to underwrite.

Man has many expectations, but it is not necessary that all his expectations are fulfilled. Nanchand thought that the ships would reach their destination without any difficulty, and this one deal would bring him a profit of three lakhs. When the ships were in mid-ocean, however, a violent storm started and most of the ships were in danger in the ocean. Some men of the crew could escape with great difficulty. They came back to Ghogha to report about the great calamity.

When Seth Hirachand came to know of the disaster, he hastened to Nanchand to get the compensation. When Nanchand heard of it, the earth slipped from under his legs. He had taken such an enormous risk without consulting with his partner and the risk had materialised bringing such a

huge loss on his shoulder. But what could he do now ? He came to Seth Akalasa and apprised him of the great loss that the business has suffered from this single deal. Akalasa too was stunned to hear this. How could he meet a loss of fifteen lakhs ? Said he to Nanchand

“You have done a very wrong thing in transgressing the limit I had fixed and this you have done without taking me into confidence. But now we must honour the commitment You go to Seth Hirachand at once and tell him that the compensation will reach him to-morrow in the morning ”

When Akalsa said like that, he himself did not know wherefrom he would get such a huge amount. Whenever he remembered of it, he saw a nightmare. He felt that he was wrong in taking to business at the insistence of his wife For a credit-worthy man, it was a very bad thing to fail to honour his commitment Akalasa was pious, conscientious and brave, but now he saw no other alternative but to end his own life. He came out of his house, went to the market and purchased some opium. With this, he came back to his home Bhadra knew nothing of it. He came to his room, but as he was about to swallow this poisonous drug, Bhadra entered his room. She caught his hand and said,

“What is this you are doing ? ”

Akalasa told her the entire story, concluding,

“Such is the outcome of your insistence How can I meet such a heavy loss out of a small capital ? I cannot live after my credit is gone So I must end my life What remains will be enough to support you and the child.”

Bhadra had tears in her eyes when she heard all this. She said,

“You end your life in this manner, and I continue to live after that—I cannot even think of it ! If you must end your life, let me sip the poison first and end mine. The child will be supported by his own luck ”

It was a very tense situation The *seth* and his wife were on the point of exit from this world In such a situa-

tion, the words of wisdom dropped from the lips of the wife. Said she,

“My dear ! Did we do as many good deeds in our life as we should have done as human beings. Perhaps we didn’t We did not practise all the rituals, penances, reading the sacred texts, meditation, *kayotsarga*, etc , in particular. You are more pious than me, more learned, more wise I have a very humble request If we end our life like this, without fulfilling our spiritual obligation, what will be the outcome for us ? Any spiritual practice performed with sincerity never goes in vain I am sure, such a thing will help us to overcome this great difficulty ”

Akalasa readily agreed He thanked his wife for showing the right path He threw aside the cup of poison and fixed himself in the *kayotsarga* posture

The next morning, Hamirsingh was to leave the kingdom. He was all these days looking for an attorney who would take charge of his property He acquainted himself with the standing and creditworthiness of various people living in the city, and at last he decided to have Akalasa to be his attorney to look after his earthly possessions during his exile He felt that Akalasa was the right man to do the job With this thought in his mind, he came to Akalasa’s house and explained to him the situation he was in. The *seth* expressed his sympathy for him and said,

“Sir ! What can I do for you ? ”

—“So long as I am outside the country, you will be my attorney to look after my property, movable and immovable. I hope, I am placing my property in right hands and it will be duly taken care of by you ”

In a very calm voice, Akalasa said,

“Sir ! Never trust a merchant When there is loss in business, he gets tempted at other people’s wealth So please do not involve me in the safecustody of your wealth ”

—“Seth ! I am not going to be guided by you on this point After much consideration, I have selected you for my purpose. You may use my wealth for any purpose you

deem fit and necessary. When I shall come back, you give me whatever portion of it still remains with you, and whatever portion of it you intend to return. If perchance the whole is wasted, you give me nothing. So you see, my conditions are perfectly flexible and you are under no hard obligation in any way. I have no time. You take charge of it immediately. I have thereafter to prepare for a very long and uncertain journey. If I fail to go out before day-break, my life will be in danger."

Akalasa had nothing more to say by way of refusal. Only these words came out from his mouth,

"If you have so much faith in me, I am at your service. But, sir, when you are fixed up, please send me your address, and if there is any change in it, please keep me informed about it. As for myself, I shall try to keep in touch with the king and place the real facts before him at the opportune moment. When I find a change in his mood towards you, I shall immediately inform you about that."

This was all that Hamirsingh expected from the merchant. Perhaps he got more than his expectation, and he felt himself happy and relieved. He returned to his apartment and took no time to move out on a very long and uncertain trek to where the destiny would carry him. Before day break, he was not only outside the city, but had crossed the boundary of the kingdom.

The impact of religion is very great. Spiritual progress strengthens man's material realisations. Akalasa was now freed from worry. In the morning, purses containing fifteen lakhs reached the house of Seth Hirachand. He had now no doubt that Akalasa was a man of great means. Just then the news came that the ships bound for Java fell into difficulty on the ocean, but had at last safely reached Java, and there was no much damage to the ship or loss of cargo. This pleased Seth Hirachand, and he sent back the purses containing fifteen lakhs to Seth Akalasa.

It was in this way that Hamirsingh's wealth had saved Akalasa's credit at a very crucial moment. Henceforth he

was very much alert about the trust and he often came to the court, which gave him a chance to establish contact with the king. Soon there developed an intimacy between the king and the *seth*.

Sin does not remain concealed for long. One day, as Kamalata was enjoying the company of some stranger, the king entered into her room. Thus she was caught in the midst of adultery. When the king saw it with his own eyes, his eyes opened about the real state of things with his brother. He had now no doubt that Hamirsingh was innocent and he himself had been unduly harsh and cruel towards him. This filled his mind with great repentance and he was anxious to recall him home. But he knew nothing about his whereabouts so that he could not write to him even though he wanted to. One day, he mentioned about it to Akalasa. At the king's pressing request, Akalasa sent information to Hamirsingh to come back.

The king now found no charm in the worldly life. His own treatment of his innocent brother made him extremely penitent. The behaviour of his seniormost queen embittered him towards domestic life. He gave his throne to his younger brother and entered into the holy order. It was now Hamirsingh who changed his own sister-in-law and brought her back to the path of honesty and virtue. Kamalata was now a wholly changed person. She fixed herself firmly in religion, and later she too joined the order of nuns. She made great progress in this life, and after death, she was born in heaven.

10 BHADRASINGH

In Saurashtra, there was a city named Kalyanpur. Bhadrasingh was the king, Sundari was his queen and Kuldipsingh was their son. The king was a great devotee of truth. In his whole life, he had never made a false utterance. He had to face many complicated situations in life, had to pass through many difficulties, but he always remained firm in truth. The king's behaviour greatly influenced the queen and the prince. This small family of three shared together material welfare as well as spiritual wealth.

One day, Indra was discussing spiritual matters in his great assembly and the discussion centred on the lives of pious men. Said he addressing the gods,

“Among all the vows, the practice of truth is comparatively more difficult. In many a difficult situation, the fulfilment of this vow is the real ordeal and test of the soul's steadfastness. In the world of men, there are very few who are devoted to truth.”

Said one of the gods,

“It seems to me that there is not a single soul on earth who is really devoted to truth. Perhaps the earthly beings have been created on the pedestal of falsehood.”

Indra sharply disagreed. Said he,

“This is not a correct statement. Falsehood is comparatively more in the world of men, but truth has not become wholly extinct. King Bhadrasingh is a shining example of this. There is no power on earth which can make him deviate from the path of truth.”

One of the gods wanted to test and he sought Indra's permission to do so. He had a feeling that human resolve, howsoever firm, must bend before the power of the god.

Being permitted by Indra, the god came down to the world of men. He created a large army and laid siege of Bhadrasingh's kingdom. There was a severe battle between the two armies. Bhadrasingh's men fought with the greatest bravery, but they could be no match to an army created by the power of a god. Bhadrasingh was defeated, and the kingdom, the palace and the throne were now occupied by the victor. The king, the queen and the prince went out to the forest.

When the adversary is more powerful, one does not get peace. Wherever he goes, the adversary is behind him, further and further on. The three continued their journey through wild forests, hurt by pebbles and thorns. They were now exhausted and sweating like anything. They had hunger and thirst, but had no means to satisfy them. In this sort of situation, the prince was now wholly unable to move further. So they sat down beneath a tree. A traveller offered them a piece of meat, which the king declined saying,

"We may die of hunger, but meat is a prohibited food for us."

The traveller was insistent. So the three left the place.

Suffering is the real test of life. And suffering has a fairly long course. Once it starts, it does not end soon. In many cases, it comes in more and more intensified form so that an ordinary person breaks down, or deviates from the goal. King Bhadrasingh's life was on trial. They walked to some distance and sat down again. The king was looking/blankly at/the future. Suddenly, a cobra came out and bit the prince. The prince fell on the ground in a moment. The patience of the king and the queen was disturbed at this unexpected turn of event. They could no more bear it. The loss of kingdom was nothing compared to the loss of the son. The queen placed the boy on her lap and washed the wound with her tears. The tears in the king's eyes were, however, wholly dried up at this great loss. He could not relieve himself by shedding them.

When pain is excessive and one has no one beside him with whom he can share it, he can no longer remain steady.



Said the quack, "you take this bow and arrow "

The king and the queen lost their their consciousness and fell on the ground. The same god appeared there as a medicine man. He applied air and water, and the king and the queen regained sense and sat up. Said the quack,

“You people look to be very much lucky. Just see I have arrived here in time to help you. If you do one thing, I think, the prince may be restored to life.”

“What’s that ? ” asked the royal couple in great curiosity. Said the quack to the king,

“You take this bow and arrow in your hand. Look ahead, and on the tree, you will see a bird of the colour of berry. You shoot the arrow at the bird so that it drops down. Then you apply its meat at the wound. It will be healed in a few minutes. I have myself tried it in many cases, without failure even in one case.”

The king declined. Said he,

“Sir ! This is a remedy beyond my capacity to use. I do not want to save my son by killing another’s son. For me, life is life and I make no discrimination between the bird and the prince. Killing a living being, howsoever small it may be, is a sin, and I am afraid, I cannot indulge in it.”

The quack argued with the king and the queen and did his best to turn them to his way of thinking, but he failed. Now, the parents were thinking of performing the last rites of the dead prince, but they could not find sufficient wood in the forest, thanks to the stratagem of the god. So they had no other alternative but to discard the dead body in the forest and move ahead.

After the parents had left, the god came to the prince and restored him to life. The prince looked around, but his parents were not there. So he started crying. He was wandering where his parents had gone and why they had gone by leaving him alone in that dense forest. He thought they would come back. But for a long time there was no trace of them. Now, he was really alarmed. So he got up and moved out in search of his parents.

The luck of the boy took a favourable turn and brought him to a city of which the king was Sumanasena. As the

boy was passing by the palace, the king saw the boy. He was impressed by his princely look and he sent his men to bring the boy to him. The king gave him shelter at the palace

King Bhadrasingh and his queen were spending their days in the greatest distress. Sometimes they were living in the countryside and sometimes in the forests, but their firmness in spirituality did not wane. Both of them had the same thinking which was to remain firm on their chosen path.

At last the king and the queen reached the city where their son was living. They thought that the city was fairly big and that they would get their subsistence quite easily.

The king left the queen outside the city and himself moved in with a view to sell his ring. This was a ring which both the king and the queen valued most. But in their present distress, they had no other alternative but to part with this.

The king reached a jeweller's shop which was near the palace. He offered the ring for sale. As the king was talking with the jeweller, the first queen of Sumanasena saw him from her own window and sent for him. The king forgot to take the ring from the jeweller.

The queen had a different sort of business with him, which was none too dignified. This was a fresh temptation for him but he remained firm. The queen tried her best to induce him. She unfolded all her coquetry, but to no effect. Then she said,

"Either you agree to my request, or, you will be in great difficulty. I shall not spare you in any case."

Bhadrasingh stood up at once and ran out. But the queen had meanwhile started shouting and this attracted the guards. The guards arrested him at once and presented him before the king. The charge was serious—intention to molest the queen, for which he was given a capital punishment. Bhadrasingh was then taken away to the execution ground and preparations were ready to hang him.

When Queen Sundari, Bhadrasingh's wife found after a long waiting that her husband did not return, she started in

search of him. As she was new to the city, she was wandering aimlessly when she came across the body of a young boy. Out of compassion for him, the queen placed him on her lap. She felt the boy was perhaps not yet dead. But really the boy was dead and the queen was mistaken. Just then some of the king's guards came that way. She saw a woman with the dead body of a child with her. They took it to be a case of infanticide or some such thing, and on a charge of killing the child, they arrested her and brought her before the king. The king pronounced a capital punishment for her too, and she was taken to the execution ground, where her husband was also awaiting his own execution. The coincidence and meeting were thus very striking.

Said Bhadrasingh to his wife,

"Now the time for our liberation is drawing near. It will be a chance to end this miserable life and start afresh. Have patience. Be firm in spirituality. Remember the truth. Give up the meditation of the miserable and be steady. This is no punishment, but the termination of a miserable life."

Bhadrasingh had passed through many difficult experiences in life. He was now almost at the last threshold of it. But one more test, the final one, so to say, still waited for him. As the couple stood ready for being hanged, the same god came there as a brahmin. The brahmin expressed great sympathy for the couple and said,

"Sir! You appear to be a man of great fortune from whom the world is to derive much benefit. I wonder, how you are here with the executioner's rope round your neck?"

In a very calm voice, the king said,

"We are ksatriyas but convicts. We cannot deny this at this supreme moment of death."

The brahmin said,

"Our king who is a ksatriya has a very great regard for all ksatriyas. He believes that a ksatriya can commit no crime and he is above capital punishment. So my suggestion is that if you take meat only once, he will be convinced that you are a ksatriya, and then he will spare your life. That will save your life. That will be an easy way out for you."

to save your valuable life. If, however, that is not acceptable to you, then, as an alternative, I suggest that you play with the king at dice, and with all my brahminical power, I promise to help you so that you will win for yourself all his wealth and power. Thus you may be relieved of the present ordeal and enjoy a kingdom. If none of these proposals be acceptable to you, then, I have a third one too, which is that I myself and my own wife are prepared to sacrifice our own life in order to save you both. We will confess and take on ourselves the crime for which you have been charged. We are after all poor people, always in distress and misery. Our exit from the world would make no difference. But if you live, you will be able to do great things in this world. I hope, you will agree to this at least and will not bother much about our life."

The king and the queen thanked the brahmin for his proposals to save their life, but they regretted inability to accept any one of them. Said they,

"Sir! We believe in non-violence, and to us all life has the same value. Our heart does not approve that we save our own life by sacrificing your life. Life is after all short and it must end some day. To save this, we won't agree to eat meat or play at dice either. Nor do we agree to your readiness to confess the crime which will be indulging in falsehood. After all, this body will go some day and it is good that the chance for it has arrived to us. Let us go out when we are firm in our faith and have not allowed ourselves to bend or to submit."

All the efforts of the god thus ended in failure. He could not make Bhadrasingh to deviate from truth and virtue. As now the king and the queen were hanged, the whole situation changed in a twinkling of the eye. The execution, the scaffold, the rope—all disappeared and King Bhadrasingh was seated on his throne in his own kingdom, with the queen at his side. Prince Kuldipsingh stood with his folded hands. The king and the queen did not know if the whole thing was a dream or a reality. Now, the god appeared before the king in his own form and begged to be excused for the test he

took of him and for all the trouble he caused to him. Then he showered praise on the king and departed for his abode in heaven.

The king and the queen were now old and they thought of relinquishing the responsibility of office. They placed the prince on the throne and joined the holy order. Kuldipsingh too proved to be a great king. He led a very honest life and ran a clean and just administration. In his old age, he too joined the holy order and attained great spiritual progress.

11. BANKACHULA

In a certain part of India, there reigned a king named Vimala. He had two children by Queen Sumangala, one a boy and the other a girl. They were named respectively Puspachula and Puspachulaa. When the two had grown up, they were duly married. But unfortunately, Puspachulaa lost her husband within a few years of her marriage. Then at the pressing request of her brother, she came to live with him. Her brother's wife was also very fond of her. Thus she spent her days at a reasonable ease and comfort.

Puspachula was a prince, but he was not a good man. All his activities were devoted to things that were harmful to others. For playing mischief, he maintained a large band of rogues, and people were very much afraid of them. Yet, none dared to complain, since the prince himself was their patron. On account of his anti-people activities, the prince was nicknamed Bankachula. Even the sister became involved in the brother's vices and she too acquired the nick-name of Bankachulaa.

The prince was virtually without a check and his wickedness was increasing with the passage of time. At last, people became desperate and collectively lodged a complaint with the king. The king was also not very happy about his son, but when the people reported against him, he was not only pained but also ashamed. By the order of the king, the prince was banished. His wife and sister accompanied him.

In wandering from place to place, the party reached a village of tribal people who were notorious criminals. When these men came to know that the stranger was a prince who had been banished for his anti-people activities, they hailed him and accepted him as their leader. The prince, too, liked this new life and was well-settled there.

The rainy season was drawing near and Acarya Chandra-

yasa was moving with his monks in the company of a certain merchant. But, by chance, the monks were separated from their host, and it was not possible for them to reach their destination before the rains started. So they sought shelter in Bankachula's village. Bankachula welcomed the monks but said,

"Monks ! As for shelter, there is no dearth of it in this village, and you may live wherever you like, but on one condition, viz., that you do not utter any holy word here. The ways you ask people to discard are the means of our livelihood. We do not want that you take shelter with us and yet deprive us of our means of livelihood."

The Acarya agreed. The monks lived on but they never violated the condition. They did not open their lips to talk or to take any food. When the rainy season was over, the monks were preparing to depart. The Acarya sought Bankachula's permission. Bankachula who was deeply impressed by their firmness very reluctantly gave it. He himself accompanied the group till the border of his village. Then he bowed before the Acarya and the monks imploring,

"Come again"

The Acarya said the following words at the time of departure :

"Bankachula ! We thank you for the shelter you gave us, and happily did we spend the rainy season in your village. As per your condition, we never opened our lips during these four months. But it is now time for us to depart and I would like to address a few words to you. If you like them, then, try to understand them."

"You are welcome, sir, but I hope, you will restrict yourself to items that may be possible for me or within my capacity."

"Bankachula ! I advise you to desist from four things, which are

- (1) do not eat a fruit you do not know,
- (2) do not strike at any one without moving back seven or eight steps ;

- (3) look on the first queen as your own mother ; and
- (4) never take a crow's meat.

"If you follow these four rules which I prescribe, then you will have only prosperity throughout your life "

Bankachula agreed and saw the monks off

It was summer Bankachula started with his men to loot a certain village The villagers got the information in time and left the village with all their belongings When the robbers came, they found only empty houses So in great disappointment, they left But they were hungry and thirsty because of the day's hard labour They took shelter under a tree Some men went out in search of some fruits and luckily they got them on a tree The fruits were ripe and juicy and had a very attractive flavour They brought them and spread them before their chief Bankachula enquired what the fruits were, but none among his men knew its name Then said Bankachula,

"Well, I am bound by a vow not to take an unknown fruit. So I cannot take these "

"But, sir, we are in a very difficult situation here and we should not attach much importance to vows We are utterly famished and we must save our life If we live, we will have ample time in future to observe our vows "

But Bankachula did not yield Said he,

"To my mind, it's not enough that we honour our vows only under favourable conditions They are to be observed under all conditions, howsoever adverse That's the real test Let my life be in danger, but till I know their name, I cannot take them, whatever the consequence "

Bankachula remained firm in the observation of his vow He did not touch the fruits All his men except one ate to their heart's content and lay down to take rest After some time, Bankachula asked them to 'get up, but not a single person stirred When he bent to give one a severe jerk, he found that all of them except one were dead. Bankachula found that his vow had saved his life

Said he to himself,

"The far-sighted monk has saved my life"

Full of grief at the death of his trusted men, he returned home. It was the dead of night. Before knocking at the door, he peeped through the door and in the dim light of the lamp, he saw that a man was sharing the same bed with his wife. His blood boiled within him and he pulled out his sword to strike. But at once he remembered the second vow and moved a few steps back. This caused a loud din and the man in the bed jumped up. It was none other than his own sister in the male attire. She advanced to receive her brother. Throwing light on her attire, she said,

"My brother ! There's an interesting story behind it. This evening, men from your enemy camp came to this village disguised as operamen to ascertain your plans. I thought that if these men would come to know of your absence during the night, they might cause us trouble. So I dressed myself in your attire in order to look like you. As a matter of precaution during the night, I did not change my dress."

Bankachula saw the benefit he had derived from the second vow and that too so soon. But for this, he would have killed his own sister, to repent for the rest of his life.

Once Bankachula went to Ujjain to steal in that city. He was about to break into the house of a rich man when he heard that some people were quarrelling inside. From what he heard, he realised that a father and a son were quarrelling over a penny. He thought,

"What do I get in such a miserly home ?"

Then he turned his steps towards the colony of the brahmins. But soon he thought,

"The brahmins are beggars by habit and profession. How much shall I get in their house ?"

So he turned towards the red light district. But again he had a prick of conscience,

"These harlots do not spare even a leper. I mustn't touch their money."

Just then he had come near the palace Said he to himself,

“This is the right place to steal If I am successful, I shall be rich overnight ; and if I am caught, still people will know my name So there’s gain eitherway ”

He scaled the wall and dropped inside He was now inside the palace. Man expects something, but Destiny has something else in store for him. As Bankachula stepped inside the palace, whom did he meet but the first queen herself The queen was charmed at his physical grace Almost welcoming him, she said,

“Well, who are you ? Wherefrom do you come ? What’s the purpose of your coming at this hour ? But don’t be scared ? Speak out whatever you have in your mind Here we are alone, and you are in a safe company ”

Bankachula’s voice almost failed him He was severely shaking With difficulty, he said,

“ Mother ! I am a thief and I have come to steal ”

“Well ! There’s plenty of wealth here You may pick up anything you like to. But don’t be in a hurry to go out You should know that I am the first queen I am attracted by your physical grace and manliness I invite you and welcome you to my chamber Let us enjoy each other’s company Take it from me that this evening, I declined the company of the king himself But I am covetous of your company Remember that if I am pleased with you, you will have plenty of wealth and plenty of happiness, but if I am displeased, then you will not only be under arrest, but will also be deprived of your life Now, you make your choice as you please ”

Bankachula thought of his third vow and said,

“Mother ! You are the first queen, and so you are venerable to me I live in the forest. I am a thief by profession. It does not befit your dignity to be attracted towards me ”

The queen interrupted,

“Fool ! Why do you address me as ‘mother’ ? Don’t

repeat the word Remember that if you do not oblige me, you will have no standing room anywhere on this earth."

But Bankachula remained firm. Said he,

'Madam ! I cannot be a party to such an ignoble proposal even if I am to court death on account of non-compliance.'

The queen burst out in rage She pierced her skin with her own hands, tore her clothes and shouted for help. The sentries came at once to the spot Bankachula was caught The king had witnessed the whole scene through a hole in the wall He now appeared on the scene He signalled the guards not to be too harsh with the man and to present him for trial at the first hour after daybreak.

The king felt very small at the behaviour of the queen. He passed the night in extreme restlessness In the morning, he came to the court and Bankachula was presented before him The king asked him to tender his account which he did without hiding anything Said the king,

'Man ! I am pleased with your honesty. It's no easy job to reach the queen's apartment, but you went there. I gladly bestow the queen on you''

'But, sir, these are impious words. The queen I have addressed as 'mother' ''

Then giving a turn to the conversation, the king said,

'Then, on account of your misbehaviour towards the queen, you will be punished ''

"Sir ! I am prepared to submit to any ordeal, but I cannot carry the queen with me ''

The king was extremely pleased with Bankachula He declared him to be innocent and gave a capital punishment to the queen. At this Bankachula fell at the king's feet.

"Sir ! I cannot stand the punishment of my mother. Please spare her ''

The king spared the queen's life but he divorced her At the request of the king, Bankachula stayed at the palace His wife and sister joined there with him.

He was now remembering the Acarya again and again. He was a completely changed man and was keenly waiting for the day when he would meet the great monk again. At last, his ardent desire was fulfilled and the great monk arrived in the city one day. Bankachula waited on him in a manner befitting his present position. When he met the great monk, he courted the vows of a devoted follower from him. It was on this occasion that he became acquainted with a merchant named Jinadas who had come from a town named Saligram which was located near Ujjain. Jinadas was a devoted follower. Both Bankachula and Jinadas became great friends.

Bankachula's three vows had already been tested, but now there remained the fourth one. Once the king assigned an expedition to Bankachula against the powerful king of Kamrup. Bankachula was a veteran in the art of fighting. But the task was immensely difficult. However, the expedition went in his favour, though at a tremendous cost. He received severe injuries all over the body. Bankachula came back to Ujjain. The best physicians were appointed by the king to attend him, but they could hardly give him any relief. One day, the king asked,

"Are the wounds too severe to be filled up ? "

The physicians thought for a while and said,

"Sir ! All our medicines have proved futile. Now remains the last one "

"What's that ? " asked an anxious king,

"It's the meat of a crow."

Bankachula heard it and at once reacted,

"This is not acceptable to me. I am bound by a vow not to take it "

The king—"My dear friend ! Vow is not more important than your life. You have to take it "

Bankachula—"But, sir, I cannot agree. I have given up all kinds of meat, what to speak of the meat of the crow."

The king—"Bankachula ! All the vows are meant for

a living person; not for one who is in the jaws of death. So do not worry about it."

Bankachula—"Sir ! I do not care for my life. One day, I must die. Why then do I deviate from my path ? I am not prepared to face the outcome consequent upon the breaking of the vow."

When all the arguments and inducements by the king had failed, he sent for Bankachula's friend Jinadas. On his way to Ujjain, Jinadas came across two nymphs who were weeping. He asked them about the cause of their trouble. Said the nymphs,

"We are the denizens of Saudharma-kalpa. Our lord has gone out from there on completion of his life-span, and we are unable to live alone. So we have come to invite Bankachula if he agrees to live with us. But, sir, our plans will fail through if you are successful in inducing your friend to take the crow's meat. It is for this that we weep."

Jinadas consoled the goddesses and assured them that he would try to help them, so far as he could.

Jinadas met his friend Bankachula and advised the king as follows .

"Sir ! The only cure for him now is to remain firm on his path. We should stop applying all cures so that he may spend the remaining portion of his life in quiet and peace."

Bankachula now made a final request to his friend,

"If you have got any affection for me, then, administer prescriptions to me that may help me in my final moments. I need not anything else."

Jinadas helped him in his last moments and did what was expected of a true friend. Bankachula was thus rid of all attachments. Then he undertook a fast upto death, adored the four 'refuges', remembered the five 'great souls', decried his past evils, forgave all living beings and begged to be forgiven by them. Thus he attained a celestial abode in very high regions.

On his way back, Jinadas came across the same nymphs who were still weeping. Said he,

“Why are you weeping even now I did as you had desired and Bankachula did not deviate from his path. Has he not agreed to husband you ?”

Casting a deep sigh, the nymphs said,

“Sir ! Your coming, instead of helping us, has done us a great harm. You made his final moments extremely pious because of which he has attained a celestial region, which is very much beyond our access ”

Jinadas could no longer stand there He had the satisfaction that he had been able to help his friend adequately In the ecstasy at the success of his mission and in deep gratitude to the path, he came back to his own city

12. AMBIKA

Tirthankar Arhat Aristanemi attained supreme knowledge on the top of Mount Ujjayanta. The great occasion was celebrated by men as well as gods. A congregation was held and the Arhat gave his sermon.

In the assembly, Sakrendra, the Indra of the gods, looked around. His eyes fell on a goddess who had been a new arrival in heaven. With the Tirthankara, he raised a question about her previous life. Ordained the Arhat,

“Sakrendra ! The event is quite recent. To the south of this Ujjayanta mountain, there's a city named Kuvera (Kodinagar). The king of that city was named Somabhatta. He was a remarkable combination of piety and justice. His wife's name was Ambika. She was a highly accomplished lady, being a support and strength to her husband. They had two sons—Ambar and Sambar.

“Somabhatta's own father was a devout Jaina and this had its impact on the family. But after his death, the Jaina influence started waning, because his wife, the queen-mother, was a Saivait, and she discouraged the Jaina practices at the palace.

“One day, two *sramana* monks came to the palace. They had just completed severe penances and came to beg to break their fast. The queen-mother was not there at that time. Ambika bowed before them, welcomed them and humbly begged them to accept food. The monks accepted food and left.

“A dissident never fails to turn a pious deed into a vile one by his behaviour. One of the palace-women who was patronised by the queen-mother saw Ambika offering food to the monks and made a long harangue.

““What have you done ? What were you after with these tonsured men ? This is inconsistent with the dignity and honour



Piercing through the silence of the forest, Ambika proceeded.

of a queen Well, I know, you will say, you gave them food But was that even worthwhile when you had not yet worshipped the gods and made offerings to the departed forefathers ? And this you have done when your mother-in-law is not present ? ”

“The lady was not yet prepared to hold her tongue Ambika listened with her lips sealed Just then the queen-mother returned The matter reached her ears and she started now her part of the vilification Ambika was at a loss to understand what wrong she had done But she said nothing in protest Silence proved more provocative than an actual exchange of words and the queen-mother’s tongue moved like a horse broken from its moovings :

‘Ye harlot ! Ye dared to do such a vile thing when I am still alive During my absence, you courted the company of two beggars and I know not what you may do in future. The dignity of this royal house is in danger so long as ye are here’.

“Ambika was a noble lady with few words, but there is a limit to toleration Her heart was pierced, but she felt herself helpless The matter was reported to the king in a very distorted form, and shouted he in rage ‘Wherefrom has this vile woman come to this palace ? I do not want to see her here even for a moment.’

“Ambika shivered at this turn of events. She had never thought that it would come to this She pitied her own self After so much insult she had borne, life had no more charm for her She hardened herself, took her young sons with her and left the palace All the while, she asked herself, but found no answer, ‘What wrong did I do in giving food to the monks ? Is it so vile ? ’

“But at last, she consoled herself and thought, ‘I should blame none They are the outcome of my own impious *karma* Now I should concentrate on improving my future’ So she gathered courage and turned herself inward ‘Henceforth I take shelter with Arhat Aristanemi who is fixed in meditation on Mount Raivata ’

"Piercing through the silence of the forest, Ambika proceeded steadily with her two sons. The way was bad and oppressive, and they were tired. The boys who were not accustomed to see a forest were alarmed. Already a quarter of the night had passed, and all were hungry and thirsty. They could move no more.

"What could Ambika do ? She was no longer a queen living in the palace. She looked all around but she saw nothing which they could eat or drink. She roamed like this for some time and then sat down beneath a tree.

"But she could not rest when the boys were oppressed by hunger and thirst. She was looking on and on. Suddenly she saw a place where the trees were very thick. She felt that near the thick vegetation, there might be a tank. Her guess was not wrong. There was a tank and mango trees on its bank with ripe fruits on. Their immediate needs were thus fulfilled.

"At the palace, the queen-mother felt elated at her immediate victory. She had been able to abuse the monks and throw out her daughter-in-law. Thus happy, she returned to her room. To her great surprise she saw piles of gold and gems there. She came to the kitchen, and there too the same. She was wondering wherefrom all these had come, when she heard a voice from above, saying, 'This is the outcome of making an offer to the monks. Ambika is worthy of worship even by the gods.'

"This alarmed the old lady. She felt that Ambika did nothing which might be called into question. She felt somewhat penitent and asked her son to look for, and bring back, the daughter-in-law and the two children.

"Somabhatta moved out in a great hurry in search of his wife. Following her footsteps, he proceeded in the right direction. At last, he could see them from a great distance and shouted 'My dear ! Wait. Wait for me.'

"Ambika turned and saw her husband. She thought that he had come to kill her at the instigation of his mother.

Where should she go ? With whom should she seek shelter ? She did not like to die in this ghastly manner. She preferred to put an end to her life herself. She saw a well nearby. She picked up her little ones and moved hurriedly to it. Then she addressed these final words.

“ Oh Arhats ! Liberated Souls ! Monks ! I take shelter with thee. I have no intention to commit suicide, but circumstances compel me to do so. I have been supported by spirituality so far, and I pray, may I be supported likewise in my next life ! If I have earned any merit in this life, may I not be born in a non-Aryan race or in a non-Aryan country ! May I always get shelter with the Liberated Souls, Preceptor and Religion ! I seek shelter with Arhat Aristanemi who is soon to reorganise the Order. I could not live to see the day myself and pay my homage and obeisance to him. May my desire to worship him be fulfilled in my next life !

“Before Somabhatta could reach the well, she leapt into it with her two little children. Somabhatta saw this from a little distance and heard her last words. He was alarmed and his eyes were filled with tears. He could no longer stand this tragic scene and fell down in a swoon. When he regained consciousness, the following words slipped from his mouth, ‘You were pure, and you were abused for nothing. How shall I be liberated from this colossal sin ?’

“With great effort, he came to the well. He stood on it and said, ‘My dear ! Useless is this life of mine when you are no longer in it.’ So saying, he leapt into the well to join his wife through death.

“Sakrendra !”

Concluded Arhat Aristanemi,

“This Ambika is now born in heaven. She came here to pay her homage and obeisance. She is now a commanding deity. Her husband has been born as her vehicle in the form of a tiger.”

GLOSSARY

Arts, 72 and 64—Arts have been identified as 64 in some cases and 72 in others, which are to be acquired by a person to obtain full accomplishment

Avadhi knowledge—Extra-sensory knowledge without the use of sense organs This comes at a certain stage of spiritual advancement.

Bharanda—A giant bird of which there is mention in many Jaina stories. It has two mouths and one belly Traders used to go to the Valley of Diamonds with their help These birds have been praised in the Jaina literature for their extreme steadfastness

Bhula—A man belonging to the aboriginal tribe Men of this tribe usually live on hunting

Chakravartin—World-monarch, emperor

Garuda—A bird supposed to be the vehicle of Vishnu, the Protector-god in the Hindu pantheon

Karambas—A sweetmeat which may be conveniently taken during a journey.

Karandaka—A fruit.

Karma—It is the substantive force, matter in very subtle form Matter-atoms called *pudgala* fill up all cosmic space The soul, by its communication with the outer world, becomes literally penetrated with by these matter-atoms These in their turn become *karma* and build up a body round the soul called *karman sarira* which does not drop out even when the soul moves out from one existence and goes to another. *Karma* works in such a subtle way that every action leaves a mark of its own which is retained and built in into the organism to determine and guide the future course of the soul. *Karman sarira* drops out only at liberation.

Kayotsarga—A posture of meditation in which a monk loses even his body sense It is popular with the Jaina monks.

Kinnara—A species of Vyantara god. They are, with *yaksas*, *bhutas*, *pisachas*, etc., of an inferior quality.

Ksatriya—In the Indian social system of the past, the *ksatriyas* or warriors occupied the second position next to the *brahmanas* or priests. This caste is now extinct. The Rajputs claim to be the successors of the *ksatriyas*, which may or may not be accepted.

Nagar-seth—Town-merchant. It is an honorific title conferred on the wealthiest merchant of the city.

Namokara—This is the core *mantra* (inspiring words) of the Jainas which is often counted on the beads. Translated into English, it is only a form of obeisance to the five 'agents of well-being', called *pancha paramesthin*. They are, the victor-Jinas, the perfected souls, the head of the order, the spiritual preceptor and the monks at large in the universe.

Nirgrantha—Literally meaning one who is freed of all worldly ties, the word has come to be synonymous with a *sramana* or Jaina monk.

Seth—A wealthy merchant.

Srifala—A fruit, also called *bael*.

Tapasa—Used singly or collectively, it means a heretical monk or an order of heretical monks respectively.

Yojana—About 8 English miles. Two miles make one *krosa* and four *krosas* make one *yojana* respectively.

Yogi, yogini—*Yoga* is the Hindu system of philosophic meditation and asceticism designed to bring about the reunion of the devotee's soul with the supreme reality, viz., God. Hence the words mean a devotee of *yoga*, male as well as female. Broadly they are a class of heretical monks who indulge in all sorts of practices considered offensive and objectionable by the orthodox Jainas.

SOURCES

Surasundari, Mrigankalekha and Bhadrasingh—These are popular stories current in the Jaina tradition. Their sources are not definitely known.

Mrigasundari—In V. S. 1667, Kanak Kusal Gani wrote this story. A second manuscript on the same is available, but the name of the writer is not known. There are several versions of the same story in Gujarati.

Nala-Damayanti—The story of King Nala and Queen Damayanti is well-known in the Indian mythology and is a part of the great epic, the *Mahabharata*. Its Jaina version is available in *Vasudeva Hindi, Tri-sasti-salaka-purusa Charitra, Pandava Charitra, Neminaltha Charitra, Kumarapala Pratibodha, Silopadesamala Vritti, Karpura prakara Tika, Amamasvami Charitra, Bharatesvara Bahuvali Vritti* and many others.

Anjana—Almost equally well-known in the Indian mythology is the story of pious Anjana, wife of Pavananjaya and the celebrated mother of Hanumana of the *Ramayana* fame. The Jaina version is contained in *Pauma Cariyu* by Vimal Suri, *Padma Purana* by Ravisena and *Pauma Cariyu* by Svayambhu. The story has been very lucidly retold by Acarya Hemachandra in *Tri-sasti-salaka-purusa Charitra*. In the 14th-15th century V. S., poet Hastimalla produced a piece of drama based on the same theme. Poems on it have been composed in Prakrit by Gunasamriddhi Mahattara, in Sanskrit by Punya Sagar Gani, and also by Upadhyaya Merusundara and Brahma Jinadasa.

Narmada Sundari—The story was produced in Prakrit by Devachandra Suri and Mahendra Suri, in Apavramsa by Jinaprabha Suri and in Gujarati by Merusundara. It has also found a place in *Vasudeva Hindi*. The story has been produced in 205 beautiful *slokas* in a work entitled *Dharma-katha* written in V. S. 1339. In Sanskrit prose literature, the story has been included in *Kama-kumbhadi Katha Samgraha*.

Madan & Dhanadeva—The story has been taken from a popular poetical work (*rasakatha*) which has 459 couplets. Its author is one Padmavijaya and the date and place of composition respectively are 1857 V. S. and Rajnagar (Ahmedabad). A copy of this work in *mss* form is preserved in the collection of Srimali Jain Upasraya at Jamnagar. On the initiative of Sri Ramanikvijayji, it has been printed in

Gujarati script in the second part of a commemoration volume (Pp. 50-51) released on the occasion of the Golden Jubilee of Sri Mahavira Jain Vidyalaya. The basis of this story is to be found in two earlier works entitled *Sumatinath Charitra* and *Jayananda Charitra*. *Jayananda Charitra* is a poetical work in Sanskrit in 9 cantos by Acharya Munisundara Suri of the Tapogaccha sect which in its turn has been taken from a Prakrit work entitled *Sumatinath Charitra* by Sri Somaprabhacharya who lived in the 12th century V. S. It is written therein that some Acharya while revealing the previous birth of a Vidyadhara had stated that in their previous lives, they (i e, the Acharaya and the Vidyadhara) were Madana and Dhanadeva. This proves that the story is very old and was current even before the 12th century V. S.

Lalitangakumar—The story finds a place in *Amanasvani Charitra* by Muniratna Suri (V. S. 1252)

Uttamkumar—The story has many versions, the first one being due to Jinakirti and the second one to Samamandana Gani. Both belonged to the last decade of the 15th century V. S. Another version by Subhasila Gani is also available. In the 16th century V S, Charuchandra reproduced it in 686 *slokas*. His language is lucid, but at places, he has included poems from elsewhere and also matters not strictly relevant. The story is also available in Sanskrit prose. Its great popularity is established by the fact that in 1884, Dr. Weber edited, translated and published it in German.

Seth Akalasa—Unlike the story of Madana and Dhanadeva, the present story is more religious and nearer-to-life in its content than being merely popular.

Bankachula—It is the fourth story in the *Kama-Kumbhadi Katha Sangraha*.

Ambika—Ambika was the guiding female deity during the spiritual regime of Arhat Aristanemi who was the 22nd Tirthankara of the Jainas. Hence she has figured at many places in the life-story of this Tirthankara. This has been noted by Acarya Hemachandra in his monumental work and also in several *Puranas* and epics. Several hymns are dedicated to her. In the Jaina tradition, this goddess occupies a very respectable place along with others, such as, Chakresvari and Padmavati.

