S 134 (75)

Read and Act

BOOK FOUR



ORIENT LONGMANS

READ AND ACT

5-134

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VIRVL ISLAM ... SCHOOL
ERNAKULAM
5134

by

C. S. Bhandari

J. M. Ure

J. S. Bhandari



ORIENT LONGMANS

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PREFACE

The READ And ACT series consists of five books each of which contains ten scenes. The scenes have been based upon well-known stories from history, mythology, legend and folk literature. Most of the stories are known to the boys and girls in our schools and so they have been presented without any introduction; those that are not so widely known have been prefaced with short introductory notes. These introductory notes describe the setting of the scenes and are a help in the right understanding and appreciation of what is said and done by the characters.

The scenes included in this series of books are, however, not meant merely to be read, understood and appreciated. They are also meant to be acted. This can be done on certain days and special occasions as part of an institution's extra-curricular activities; and this can also form a part of the regular English teaching programme of a progressive school or college. To act these scenes in the classroom it will not be necessary to make any special preparations. Their purpose will be served if the pupils are able to read out the parts of the different characters in them with appropriate gestures and feeling.

The books have been graded both in respect of grammatical structure and content vocabulary, and all care has been taken to avoid the use of out-of-the-way words. A few of the words used in these books may at first appear to be difficult but they will be understood easily when they are read in the contexts in which they are presented. It will, however, be useful to explain such words in similar other contexts before the pupils are asked to act a particular scene. Sometimes it may also be necessary to acquaint the pupils with the story of the scene before they act it.

In order that the pupils may read out their parts correctly and effectively, they *must* first read the whole scene silently and get their language difficulties, both of meaning and pronunciation, removed. Then the teacher should read out the different parts to set a model before the pupils. This, it may be stressed, puts a heavy responsibility on the teacher, for the pupils will always try to imitate him.

The themes of most of the scenes in these books are inspirational, and they should have an uplifting effect on the minds of young students. It may, however, be mentioned that the books do not aim at preaching any moral lessons. They only present some noble deeds or some admirable qualities of character and the young readers are left alone to 'receive' what they will. The humorous scenes provide a lot of laughter but the laughter is not born of any malice or ill-will. It is simple and innocent.

The READ And ACT series can be profitably used as supplementary readers both in the English medium and non-English medium Secondary Schools. In those schools where the teaching of English starts in class VI, Book I can be used in class VIII and Books II,III, IV and V in classes IX, X, XI and XII respectively; but in those schools where English is taught from an earlier stage, the first two books can be used in the Junior High School classes. In English medium schools the first book can be introduced in the third or fourth year when the pupils are 8—9 years old.

Activity methods have proved a great success everywhere in teaching all school subjects including languages, and it is hoped that the READ And ACT series will make some small contribution to the effective teaching of English in our schools.

Twelve of the scenes included in the last two books of the series have been translated and adapted from the late Sri Dwijendra Lal Rai's plays, and the debt is gratefully acknowledged.

CONTENTS

5134

		Page
1.	Victory to Sri Ramchandra !	1
2.	A Challenge	13
3.	The Devotion of Eklavya	26
4.	Bakasur is Dead !	33
5.	A Hundred and Five	44
6.	Love Conquers Hate	52
7.	The Will to Win	60
8.	A Miracle !	68
9.	The Price of My Sins	76
10.	The Return of the Lion	83

1. VICTORY TO SRI RAMCHANDRA!

5-134

INTRODUCTION

Prince Ram and his brother Lakshman went with the sage Vishwamitra to attend the swayamvar of Sita in Mithila. Hundreds of kings and princes came to the swayamvar. King Janak, Sita's father, pointed to the bow of Shiva and said that Sita would be married to the man who broke the bow in two. One by one, all the kings and princes present there tried their luck, but they could not even lift the bow. Janak was very sad, for he thought Sita would have to remain a spinster all her life. Then Ram got up and advanced slowly to the bow. He lifted it easily, and as he pulled its string it broke in two. Janak was greatly relieved and everyone except a few jealous competitors was happy at Ram's success.

The sound of the breaking of the great bow was heard by Parasuram who lived in the forest near by. He was a great devotee of Shiva and knew that someone had broken his master's bow. He came running to the place of the swayamvar where an interesting battle of words took place between him and Ram's younger brother Lakshman.

VICTORY TO SRI RAMCHANDRA !



Characters

RAM and LAKSHMAN :	sons of King Dasarath of Ayodhya
JANAK :	King of Mithila
PARASURAM :	a fiery Brahman devoted to Shiva
VISHWAMITRA :	a sage who was also called Kaushik

SITA, her mother and companions
Several kings and princes
Several citizens (men and women) of Mithila

[*The palace of Raja Janak in Mithila. Several rajas and princes are sitting in their chairs in a circle and a few are standing. Ram and Lakshman are sitting near the sage Vishwamitra. The mighty bow of Shiva is lying broken in two in the middle of the circle. There is a lot of noise in the meeting. Most of the rajas and princes are looking towards Ram. They are surprised, and they are jealous of him. Vishwamitra is talking to Janak who is standing in front of him. Sita is sitting in a corner at some distance with her mother and companions. Janak is about to address the rajas and princes to conclude the ceremony. Suddenly, Parasuram, an old but big, hefty hermit, enters with a huge axe in his hand and a bow hanging from his shoulder. His eyes are red and his whole body is trembling with anger. As he enters, everybody stands up in terror. He looks at some of the rajas and princes and they introduce themselves saying their names and the names of their fathers. Then Raja Janak greets him and finally, Vishwamitra introduces Ram and Lakshman to him. They bow to him and get his blessings.*]

PARASURAM : (*to Janak*) O king ! why have you gathered together so many kings and princes here ?

JANAK : Sir, I invited them to attend the swayamvar of my daughter Sita.

PARASURAM : (*suddenly looking at the broken bow of Shiva and getting angry*) Foolish king, who has broken that sacred bow of

Shiva ? Tell me quickly, or else I'm going to kill you and destroy all your kingdom.

(*Janak does not speak. Everybody including Sita and her mother and companions are frightened. The jealous kings and princes are pleased.*)

RAM : Sir, the man who has broken the bow of Shiva must be a servant of yours. What are your orders for him ?

PARASURAM : (*angrily*) A servant is a man who serves another man. How can a man who has broken Shiva's bow be a servant of mine ? He is my enemy. He should come forward and fight with me. I tell you, Ram, the man who has broken the bow of Shiva is to me more hateful than Sahasrabahu. Let him stand apart, otherwise all the kings and princes here will be slaughtered.

LAKSHMAN : (*smiling sarcastically*) Most mighty Brahman, I broke a number of bows in my childhood but you never got angry with me. Why are you fond of this particular bow ?

PARASURAM : (*greatly offended*) Foolish boy, you're the son of a king but you don't know how to talk to me. Can there be any compari-

son between Lord Shiva's bow and other bows ? It seems to me that you're rushing into the jaws of death.

LAKSHMAN : (*smiling*) I thought all bows were alike. There was nothing to gain or lose by breaking an old bow. My brother thought it was new and so he tried it. It broke as soon as he pulled its string. He is not to blame at all. You're angry for no reason.

PARASURAM : (*looking at his axe*) You wicked fellow, haven't you heard about my temper ? I haven't killed you yet because you're just a child. Don't think that I am a mere hermit. I've been a bachelor all my life ; I'm very short-tempered ; and I'm well known all over the world as the enemy of the Kshatriyas. I've removed the Kshatriya kings from this earth several times and given their kingdoms to the Brahmans. Foolish prince, look at this axe of mine which cut the thousand arms of Sahasrabahu to pieces. Be wise and do not cause grief to your parents. This axe of mine can kill even unborn children.

LAKSHMAN : (*smiling*) Sir Hermit, you may think yourself to be a mighty warrior, but I don't see the point in your showing your axe to me every now and then. It seems

to me that you are trying to blow away a mountain with the breath of your nostrils. You ought to know that I'm no infant pumpkin which will wither away when you point your little finger at it. And may I ask you why you carry a bow and an axe with you ? Is your tongue not sharp enough to hurt anyone you talk to ? I want you to know that I've been patient with you so far only because you're a Brahman and because you belong to the noble family of Bhrigu.

PARASURAM : (*addressing Vishwamitra*) Kaushik, this child is foolish, wicked and impertinent. He's a blot on his great family. He'll be killed in a few minutes. Let no one blame me. If you wish to save his life, tell him about me and my fame, strength and temper, and stop him from saying unpleasant words.

LAKSHMAN : (*smiling*) Who can describe your virtues and fame better than you yourself ? And have you not been doing so all this time ? If you haven't finished yet, you may continue. It is, of course, true that brave men fight and cowards blow their own trumpets !

PARASURAM : (*loudly*) I say, let no one blame me.

This wicked child deserves to be killed. I can't spare him any more. His death has arrived.

VISHWAMITRA: Sir, he's a child. Please don't mind his words.

PARASURAM : I can't spare him. He has done a great offence to my master Shiva by breaking his sacred bow. How can I control myself when the enemy of my master is in front of me and my sharp axe is in my hand ? Vishwamitraji, I must kill this wicked boy and pay off the debt I owe to my master.

LAKSHMAN : Please do it. You should have paid it long ago. I hope the rate of interest is not very high.

(*Parasuram lifts his axe to strike Lakshman and the rajas and princes cry in fear.*)

LAKSHMAN : (*in anger*) How dare you brandish your axe before me ? Don't force me to kill you. I don't want to kill a Brahman. You haven't yet had to fight with a real warrior. You're a hero in your own little hut. Return to it and blow your own trumpet there.

ALL : You mustn't say so. It's improper ! It's improper !

(Sri Ramchandra makes a sign to Lakshman to stop talking.)

RAM : Great sage, please forgive him. He's a child. He doesn't know how great and powerful you are. Teachers and parents do not mind the impertinence of children. They laugh it away.

(Parasuram is cooled down slightly, but Lakshman says something softly and laughs. Parasuram looks at him and becomes furious again.)

PARASURAM : Ram, this brother of yours is a hardened sinner. His complexion is fair but his heart is black. He is wicked and cunning by nature like a snake. He is not like you. This fellow is not afraid of me. He thinks that I am an ordinary man.

LAKSHMAN : Great hermit, please don't be angry. Anger is at the root of all evil. I'm a servant of yours. Be kind to me. You can't mend that broken bow by being angry. Please be calm and have a seat. You've been standing for a long time. Your legs must be aching. If you're specially fond of that old bow, let's get someone to mend it.

(Janak is a little frightened and asks Lakshman softly to be quiet. The men and women from the city who have

gathered together there tremble with fear. They are heard saying, "He's a very naughty boy.")

PARASURAM : (*addressing Ram*) I'm sparing him because he's your brother. His body is fair but his mind is foul. He's like a gold bowl which contains poison.

(*Lakshman smiles again, but getting a sign from Ram goes to Vishwamitra.*)

RAM : (*joining the palms of his hands*) Sir, you're a wise and learned man and my brother is but a child. Children are like wasps ; that's why wise people do not pick a quarrel with them. Besides, my brother has done you no harm, for I'm the one who has broken the bow. The fault is mine, sir. Let me pay for it. Let me suffer for it. Please tell me what I should do to comfort you.

PARASURAM : How can I be comforted, Ram ? That brother of yours is still winking and mocking at me ! What's the good of my getting angry if I don't cut off his head ? Though I have my axe in my hand, the fellow remains alive. I don't know what is preventing me from using it. I've never shown mercy to anyone. I don't understand what has happened to me. I'm suf-

fering terribly because of this feeling of mercy.

LAKSHMAN : (*coming forward and bowing*) Sir, if you suffer terribly when you're in a merciful mood, may God help you when you're in an angry mood !

PARASURAM : (*to the people at the meeting*) Take this wicked fellow out of my sight. I don't want to see his face.

LAKSHMAN : Please shut your eyes and you won't see my face.

PARASURAM : (*addressing Ram in anger*) Fool ! you've broken the bow of Shiva and now you're trying to flatter me with your sweet words ! You encourage your brother to say bitter words to me, and then you come and apologize on his behalf. I know these old tricks. I can't be fooled by you. Come, fight with me or give up the name 'Ram'. Forget all your tricks and fight with me, or else I'll kill you and your brother.

RAM : Please do what will comfort you. Here's my head. Cut it off with your axe if that pleases you. Lakshman meant no offence to you. He saw you fully armed and therefore challenged you. Both he and I are your servants. We dare not offend you. You are much greater than me. I am only

Ram but you are Parasuram which is certainly a longer name.

PARASURAM : (*smiling bitterly*) Boy, you're no less wicked than your brother. You insult me because you think I'm no more than a common Brahman. Because you've broken that bow, you think you've conquered the world. You've become very vain.

RAM : Please don't be angry. I didn't break that bow intentionally. As I lifted it and pulled its string, it broke in two. It wasn't my fault at all; nevertheless I've been asking you to forgive me. As a Kshatriya warrior, it's my duty to accept the challenge from any warrior on earth to fight with him; but how can I take up arms against a Brahman ? Please think it over. The greatness of a Brahman lies in making a man free from fear, not in frightening him.

(*Parasuram is visibly impressed by Sri Ram's words.*)

PARASURAM : Ram, I'm impressed by what you've said, but all my doubts haven't yet been removed. Please take this bow of Vishnu and put the string on it.

(*Parasuram hands over the bow to Ram and suddenly feels that his strength has*

gone out of him. Ram puts the string on the bow without any effort.)

PARASURAM : Victory to Sri Ramchandra !

ALL : Victory to Sri Ramchandra !

2. A CHALLENGE

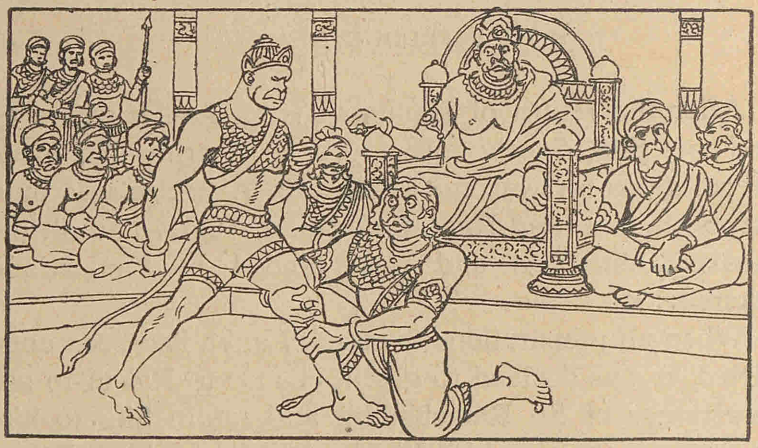
INTRODUCTION

After the return of Hanuman from Lanka where he had met Sita, Sugriv collected a large army and made preparations for war against Ravan. A bridge was built across the sea, and Ram, Lakshman, Sugriv and all the monkey chieftains and men landed in Lanka and encircled it.

When all preparations to attack Lanka had been completed, it was decided to give a chance to Ravan to ask forgiveness of Sri Ramchandra and return Sita to him so that unnecessary bloodshed might be avoided. Prince Angad, the son of Bali, the late king of Kishkindha who had been killed by Sri Ramchandra for being cruel to his brother Sugriv, was chosen to visit Ravan and advise him to save himself and his country from destruction by returning Sita to Ram.

Angad agreed and went to see Ravan in his court. What followed is described in the following pages.

A CHALLENGE



Characters

RAVAN : the king of Lanka
MEGHNAD : a son of Ravan and one of the greatest warriors of Lanka
ANGAD : the Prince of Kishkindha and one of Sugriv's generals
Five ministers and six generals of Ravan
Four guards and a messenger

[*The court of Ravan in Lanka. Ravan is sitting on his throne of gold. About a dozen of his ministers and generals are sitting around him. The ministers are on one side and the generals on the other. Meghnad, one*

of Ravan's sons, is sitting between the ministers and the generals. The guards are standing at the doors. It is a meeting of the War Council. Ravan is discussing the latest news with his ministers and generals.]

RAVAN : Ministers and Generals ! I'm told that the two hermit boys have landed on our soil with a large number of monkeys.

MEGHNAD : That's true, sir. They built a bridge across the sea a few weeks ago and have now landed in our country.

SECOND MINISTER : I'm surprised at their boldness.

RAVAN : So am I, but let's not be worried. Our people will have plenty of meat to eat for some time.

(*A messenger enters and bows. He stands trembling in front of Ravan.*)

RAVAN : Well, what's your news ?

MESSENGER : (*Bows again.*) Your Majesty, a huge monkey is waiting at the main gate. He wants to see you.

RAVAN : (*indifferently*) Bring him in.

(*The messenger goes out quickly.*)

CHIEF MINISTER : Let's hope this monkey is not like the one we had here last time.

FIRST GENERAL : Oh, no. That one was a special monkey.

RAVAN : I agree; but I wonder why this one wants to see me.

SECOND GENERAL : Perhaps he has been sent to beg for peace.

RAVAN : Very likely.

(*The messenger enters with Angad who is young, strong and very impressive. As he enters, everyone except Ravan stands up, at which Ravan looks displeased. Angad bows and occupies an empty chair.*)

RAVAN : Who are you, monkey ?

ANGAD : Ravan, I'm a messenger of Sri Ramchandra. My father and you were friends. That's why I've come here for your good. You belong to a noble family and you've achieved wonders in your life. You've got from Lord Shiva and Lord Brahma what you wanted, and you've defeated many gods and kings in battle. You're known far and wide. You have fame, power and wealth. You have everything you want. Now, may I ask why you chose to deceive Mother Sita and kidnap her ? Did you not think of the consequences of your foul deed ? What happened to you at that time ? But let's not worry about the past. There is still hope for you if you listen to my advice.

RAVAN : (*scornfully*) Aye! a monkey to give me advice ! All right, come on. What is it ?

CHIEF MINISTER : Let His Majesty hear what you've got to say.

ANGAD : Ravan, give up your vanity; give up your madness. Return Mother Sita to Sri Ramchandra. She should be taken to her husband in a 'palki', and you, your queens and your sons and other relations should follow her on foot. Appear before Sri Ramchandra with a blade of grass in your mouth and an axe on your neck. Fall at his feet and ask him to forgive you. If you do this, I have every hope that Sri Ramchandra will forgive you. (*after a short pause*) What do you say ?

MEGHNAD : (*softly to the Chief Minister*) He's talking nonsense. I won't let my father humble himself in this way.

CHIEF MINISTER : (*softly*) I would rather kill myself than do such a thing.

RAVAN : I don't know what to do with you, monkey. I'm surprised at your impertinence. Perhaps you don't know me well enough. Will you tell me your name and the name of your father ?

ANGAD : My name is Angad and my father's name is Bali. You met him once, didn't you ?

RAVAN : (*with some hesitation*) Oh, yes, I know the monkey called Bali. He's a nice fel-

low. But I'm sorry for you. You're the son of Bali and you call yourself the messenger of those hermits ! Shame on you ! You're a disgrace to your family. (*after a pause*) Well, how is Bali, and where is he ?

ANGAD : (*smiling*) In a few days you'll be with him, and then you may ask him how he is. He'll tell you in detail what happens to a man who turns against Sri Ramchandra. (*after a pause*) Ravan, you think that I am a disgrace to my family because I'm the messenger of the one who is worshipped by Brahma, Shiva and the gods; and you think that you are an honour to your family because you're opposed to him! What shall I say to you ? What can I say to a man who has decided to ruin himself ?

RAVAN : Foolish monkey, you're alive because I respect the law and have a high moral code.

FIFTH MINISTER : His Majesty is the most learned man on earth.

ANGAD : I've heard about your respect for the law and about your morals. You kidnapped another man's wife and you had a messenger tortured in your presence ! You

kept quiet when someone cut off the nose and ears of your sister and she came to you crying for help ! I'm indeed fortunate to meet a man of such high morals !

FOURTH GENERAL : (*softly to his neighbour*) It's a very impertinent monkey.

RAVAN : Foolish creature, stop chattering. Look at my arms which threaten death to the mightiest among the mighty. In your army there isn't one who dares to fight with me. The grief of long separation from his wife has made your master very weak and it has sapped the strength of his brother too. Sugriv and you are mere show-boys; my brother Bibhishan is a coward; Jamwant has grown very old; and Nal and Nil are only craftsmen who never had anything to do with war and fighting. There is, no doubt, a huge monkey who came here some time ago and burnt this city. . . . . .

MEGHNAD : He burnt our city and ran away for fear of his life.

ANGAD : (*pretending surprise*) Did he ? Are you sure he burnt your capital ? An ordinary monkey burning the capital of Ravan ! Who will believe it ? He's ranked among the lowest of Sugriv's followers. He can do a lot of walking and running about but

he isn't a front-rank fighter. He had been sent here only to get news of Sitaji. He burnt your capital without Sugriv's permission. That's why he hasn't returned to him yet. He fears he'll be punished for what he did. Ravan, you don't know Sri Ramchandra, and you have no idea of the strength of his army.

RAVAN : (*smiling*) You must say so, Angad. Monkeys, as a rule, are very obedient and loyal to their masters. They are not ashamed of doing anything to please them. I don't mind your praising your master. In fact, I appreciate it and so I do you no harm.

CHIEF MINISTER : We're a highly civilized people.

ANGAD : I've heard about this great virtue of yours from Hanumanji. He laid waste your beautiful orchards, killed your son and burnt your capital, but you did him no harm. Nothing can make you feel ashamed, angry or insulted. That's why I came to see you without any hesitation.

RAVAN : My dear monkey, you have a lot more of that virtue than I have. How else could you have become the slave of the man who killed your father ? (*Laughs loudly.*)

ALL : Hear ! hear !

ANGAD : Yes, my master killed my father and I've half a mind to kill you. But before I make up my mind to do so, I would like to know who you really are. I've heard of three Ravans. One of them went to the underworld to fight King Bali. There he was caught by children and tied to a peg in the stables ! King Bali took pity on him and set him free. Another was caught by King Sahasrabahu who thought he was a strange animal and took him to his house for display. He was released at the request of a sage named Pulastya. The third one suffered a long term of imprisonment in the armpit of Bali, the king of Kishkindha. Now tell me which of these three Ravans you are.

RAVAN : Don't chatter too much, you fool of a monkey. Listen to me. I am that Ravan who is known and feared in all the three worlds, whose bravery and sacrifice are known to Lord Shiva, who lifted Mount Kailash easily in his arms and who has defeated the most powerful gods in battle. You belittle that Ravan and praise an ordinary mortal ! You're a foolish, ignorant, mean creature.

ALL : There is no doubt about it.

ANGAD : Ravan, it seems to me that there is no hope for you. If you think Sri Ramchandra is a mortal, may God help you ! Foolish man, is Gururji a bird ? Is Sheshji a serpent ? Is Chintamani a stone ? Is Hanumanji, who killed your son and burnt your city, a monkey ? Your ignorance is amazing ! No wonder you should think Sri Ramchandra is a mortal ! I say, Ravan, there is still time. Give up boasting, repent for your sins and ask my master to forgive you. If you don't, the arrows from his bow will soon cut off your ten round heads and the monkeys and the bears will play with them.

FOURTH MINISTER : (*softly to his neighbour*) How does he dare to say such things to His Majesty ?

RAVAN : (*greatly excited*) Impertinent monkey, does your master know about the fighting ability of my brother Kumbhakarna, and of my son Meghnad ? Does he know anything about my achievements ?

THIRD GENERAL : (*softly to the Fourth General*) Do you think he does ?

FOURTH GENERAL : (*softly*) I don't think so. This fellow should be told everything.

ANGAD : My master knows everything about everybody. I'm not going to listen to the tale of your achievements any more. I've no time for it. You do not seem to understand the purpose of my visit. I have not come with any proposals of peace, and I have not come to fight and kill. My master told me repeatedly that I should not fight with you. He said that a lion gets no credit by killing a jackal. If I had not had these orders, by now I would have killed you and all your demons, destroyed your kingdom and taken Mother Sita to her lord. I have come because my master wants to give you a chance to repent and to save yourself and your demons from total destruction.

MEGHNAD : (*to Ravan*) Sir, I can't bear it any more.

ALL : We can't. The fellow must be taught a lesson.

RAVAN : Wait. He is a monkey and a messenger. (*to Angad*) Do you really believe your master can fight against me ? Is he not the man who was turned out of his father's kingdom because he was found good for nothing ? And is he not the man who has lost his wife to me and now lives in constant fear of me ? Do you really

believe such a useless, cowardly creature can fight against the mighty king of Lanka ?

ANGAD : (*losing temper*) Ravan, I can't listen to any more of your nonsense. I came to help you, but I'm convinced now that you're bent upon destroying yourself. You've been boasting that you have around you the strongest and bravest men in the world and that you're the strongest and bravest of them all. (*Gets up and plants his right foot on the floor.*) Now listen, if any of you can lift my foot from this floor, I lose Sitaji and Sri Ramchandra will return to the forest. This is a challenge from Sri Ramchandra's humble servant to the warriors of Lanka.

RAVAN : Catch him by the leg and throw him out of the window.

(*One by one, Meghnad and other strong men try to lift Angad's foot from the floor but cannot move it. All of them sit down disgraced.*)

RAVAN : (*getting up and advancing towards Angad*) It seems to me you are destined to die at my hands.

ANGAD : (*as Ravan bends to lift Angad's foot*) Fool ! why do you touch my feet ? It

won't do you any good. Go and touch the feet of Sri Ramchandra. He alone can forgive you. He alone can save you from destruction. Don't try to lift my foot. You can't do it.

(*Ravan is ashamed. He bows to Angad and returns to his seat.*)

ANGAD : (*facing Ravan*) Ravan, I'm going. I'm going back to my master. I'm sorry that my good advice has been wasted on you. I've nothing more to say to you. The day of your destruction is near. Prepare for it ! (*Goes out.*)

3. THE DEVOTION OF EKLAVYA

INTRODUCTION

Acharya Dron had been employed to teach the young Pandav and Kaurav princes by their great-grandfather Bhishm. He taught them the art of warfare and how to use the various weapons. Among the Pandavs and the Kauravs, Arjun became the most skilful archer. He was therefore the favourite pupil of the Acharya who promised to him that there would be no greater archer than him in the world.

THE DEVOTION OF EKLAVYA



Characters

DRON	:	the teacher of the Pandavs and the Kauravs
YUDHISHTHIR	:	the five Pandav princes
BHIM	:	
ARJUN	:	
NAKUL	:	
SAHADEV	:	
EKLAVYA	:	son of a Bhil chieftain

[*In an open space in the jungle. The five Pandav princes are armed with bows and arrows. They are ques-*

tioning a young Bhil lad named Eklavya who is also armed with a bow. At some distance from them is the Pandav's dog whose mouth has been shut with arrows by Eklavya without injuring it.]

ARJUN : What's your name, boy ?

EKLAVYA : My name's Eklavya.

ARJUN : Do you live in this jungle ?

EKLAVYA : Yes, sir, I live here. My house isn't far from here. Won't you come, sirs, and be my guests? My father and mother will be pleased to see you.

YUDHISHTHIR : It's very kind of you to invite us, but we've brought our lunch with us. We'll wait here for our teacher.

BHIM : What does your father do ?

EKLAVYA : He's the chieftain of the Bhils who live in this jungle. He's a brave man, sir, and he likes brave men. He'll be glad to have you in his house.

ARJUN : Thanks. We'd rather stay here. I see that you're an excellent archer. You've filled the mouth of our dog with arrows without causing it any injury. Who taught you this art ?

EKLAVYA : Sir, the great archer Dron is my teacher.

NAKUL : You lie. Dron couldn't be your teacher.

SAHADEV : (*to the other Pandavs*) I think he's the

son of a magician. I'm sure he's telling a lie.

EKLAVYA : (*angrily*) I'm not the son of a magician, and I don't tell lies. We jungle folk are simple people, and we don't know how to invent lies. I'm going. My cottage is behind those trees. If you want anything, you may call me and I'll be glad to help you. (*Goes away.*)

YUDHISHTHIR : He's a brave lad. I'm sure he's telling the truth.

ARJUN : I think so, too; but what has happened to the teacher? He should have been here by now.

BHIM : (*seeing Dron coming*) Here he comes !

NAKUL : He has a long life !

(*All the Pandavs greet Acharya Dron bowing to him. He sits on a mound and the Pandavs sit on the ground below.*)

DRON : Well, boys, have you had any success ?

ARJUN : None at all, sir. We've been held up here by a Bhil boy. He's a much greater archer than me. Our dog started barking when it saw the boy at a long distance, and the boy shot a number of arrows from his bow with the speed of lightning and filled its mouth completely with them.

DRON : Very clever of him.

ARJUN : And the wonder is that the arrows have not caused the slightest injury to the dog. I feel greatly humbled by this jungle lad, sir.

DRON : Did he tell you who taught him this art ?

BHIM : He says you are his teacher.

DRON : That's not true. I've never taught any Bhil boy to shoot arrows. Can you bring him here ?

NAKUL : He's a proud young fellow, but I'll try. (*Goes to the Bhil chieftain's house.*)

DRON : (*to Arjun*) Don't be upset, Arjun. I'll see that the Bhil boy does not steal a march on you.

ARJUN : (*sadly*) But he has done so already. He's a much more skilful archer than me.

DRON : Perhaps he is, but he'll not be so in future. (*Eklavya comes running with Nakul and falls at Dron's feet. Dron blesses him and raises him up.*)

EKLAVYA : (*joining the palms of his hands*) Sir, you've come to my father's estate today. It's a great day for me. Pray, come to our cottage and bless it. Give me the chance to wash your feet and to serve you and these young gentlemen our jungle food.

DRON : You're a good boy and a clever archer.

Could you tell me who taught you the art of shooting arrows ?

EKLAVYA : (*taking a clay image of Acharya Dron out of his pocket*) Sir, I learnt it from this clay image of yours. Perhaps you've forgotten that once I begged you to teach me how to shoot arrows but you refused to teach me. I then made this image of yours, put it in front of me every day and practised shooting arrows. This is how I learnt the art, and this is how you became my teacher.

DRON : You are indeed my pupil, and I'm pleased with you. You've now learnt the art, but what about my fees ?

EKLAVYA : Sir, I'll gladly do what you say. Please order me.

DRON : If you mean what you say, let me have the thumb of your right hand.

EKLAVYA : (*taking a knife out of his pocket to cut off his thumb*) Sir, you've not asked for much. I can gladly offer you my life.

DRON : (*holding his hand*) Dear pupil, I don't want you to cut off your thumb. I only want that you should never use this thumb of yours while shooting an arrow.

EKLAVYA : It will be never used, sir.

DRON : May God bless you ! I'm pleased with you. You may go now. (*Eklavya touches Dron's feet and goes away.*)

DRON : (*to Arjun*) Now he can't be a greater archer than you, but (*to all the Pandavs*) you should all learn a lesson from his sincerity and devotion.

4. BAKASUR IS DEAD !

INTRODUCTION

The Pandavs and the Kauravs had their education together under the supervision of Bhishm and Dron. The Pandavs always did better than the Kauravs and so the Kauravs were very jealous of them and wanted to get rid of them.

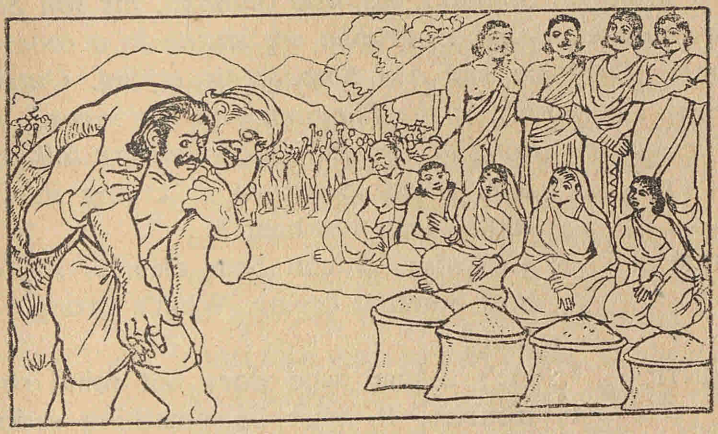
When they were grown-up men, the Kauravs built a beautiful palace of wax in Varanawatt and asked the Pandavs to live in it. The Pandavs agreed but before they went there, they were warned by their saintly uncle Vidur that the palace was built of wax and that the Kauravs had made a plot to set it on fire at night while they were asleep in it. So, before the palace was set on fire, the Pandavs and their mother escaped from it through a secret underground passage and decided to spend a few years away from Hastinapur in disguise. They disguised themselves as poor Brahmans and went from one place to another begging for their food and resting wherever they could find shelter.

After wandering about for some months, they came to the beautiful little town of Chakra which was inhabited mostly by Brahmans. A kind Brahman named Somdatt and his wife Saumya gave them shelter in their house and they spent a few months there.

In the course of their stay at Chakra, a demon called

Bakasur came to this town and started killing men, women and children for his food. The people of Chakra were in great panic. At first they did not know what to do, but later they went to the demon in a body and offered to send him a man or a woman, a goat or a sheep and two basketfuls of bread, fruit and vegetables every-day if he stopped killing the people of the town. The demon agreed and after that the heads of the families in Chakra sent him by turns what they had promised to him.

BAKASUR IS DEAD!



Characters

YUDHISHTHIR	:	the Pandav princes disguised as Brahmans
ARJUN	:	
BHIM	:	
NAKUL	:	
SAHADEV	:	
KUNTI	:	the mother of the Pandavs
SOMDATT	:	the host of the Pandavs in Chakra
SAUMYA	:	Somdatt's wife
SHIVDATT	:	Somdatt's son
PRABHA	:	Somdatt's daughter
BAKASUR	:	a demon

A crowd of men, women and children

[*The house of a Brahman in the town of Chakra. The Brahman Somdatt, his wife Saumya, his son Shivdatt, and his daughter Prabha are sitting in a room on a mat. They are sad and Somdatt is crying. Outside, Kunti, the mother of the Pandavs, and her second son, Bhimsen, are sitting on two low stools and are talking.*]

KUNTI : Son, listen. Someone is crying in that room. Can you hear ?

BHIM : (*listening*) I can hear clearly. It's our host Somdatt crying. What's wrong with him ?

KUNTI : He's a man who does not mind small troubles. It must be something serious. We've stayed in this house for many days now and Somdatt and his wife have been very good to us. Their son and daughter, too, have been looking after us. We must do something to help them.

BHIM : We must do all we can for them, dear mother. Please go in and find out what their trouble is. (*Kunti goes in and sits down on the mat beside Saumya.*)

BHIM : (*to himself, licking his lips*) I haven't had a hearty meal for several days. Today I've a feeling that I'm soon going to have a grand dinner.

(*Kunti accompanied by Somdatt and his family comes out of the room. Prabha*

brings the mat with her. Kunti and Prabha spread the mat on the ground and all of them sit on it. Bhim puts the stool away and sits on the mat in front of his mother.)

KUNTI : (*addressing the Brahman and his family*) I couldn't make you speak in the room. The open air may do you some good. I can see that some big calamity has fallen on you; but, my dear host, life is a bundle of sorrows, troubles and calamities. We must face them as they come. You've been kind to me and my children. We've spent many happy days in your house. Therefore we've a right to share your sorrows. Please tell me what your trouble is.

SOMDATT : (*sobbing*) O noble lady, I'm undone. Today I must lose either my only son, or my only daughter, or my wife; or I must go and leave my wife, son and daughter behind to starve.

SAUMYA : My lord, you're a wise and learned man. Why do you grieve in this way ? I've given you a son and a daughter. They're grown-up children now. I've done my duty to you and to them. So let me go. You'll be able to look after them better than I.

SOMDATT : No, no, it can't be. I can't let my wife go.

SHIVDATT : Dear father, please let me go. Prabha will look after you and mother.

PRABHA : How can it be ? I won't let you go. I'm happy to go instead of you or Father or Mother.

SOMDATT : (*decisively*) Neither Saumya, nor Prabha nor Shivdatt will go. I'll go instead. I've made up my mind.

KUNTI : What are you people talking about ? I don't understand it.

BHIM : (*licking his lips*) I don't understand, either.

SOMDATT : (*addressing Kunti*) Dear mother, a demon named Bakasur has come to live in this town. We must send him every day two basketfuls of fruit, vegetables and bread, a goat or a sheep and a man or a woman to eat. This is his daily food. Today it's my turn to send him food. If he doesn't get it, he'll come and kill all of us and a few others too. He has done it before, and everybody in this town is afraid of him.

BHIM : (*softly to himself*) He's a lucky dog. I wish somebody sent me two basketfuls of fruit, vegetables and bread and a goat every day. I wouldn't, of course, want a man or a woman to eat.

KUNTI : Somdattji, please do not grieve. You

have only one son and I have five. Let one of my sons go to the demon today.

SOMDATT : Thank you, noble lady, but we can't agree to it. You're our guests.

KUNTI : Brahman, sir, do not be afraid. All of my sons are strong, brave boys, and this one (*pointing to Bhim*) is the strongest of them all. He'll go to the demon and fight him. He may succeed in killing him.

BHIM : I'll go to the demon and kill him, but I must take with me the baskets of fruit and bread and the fat goat too. Let me see who eats them.

KUNTI : Saumya, let's not waste time. Please let my son have the goat and the baskets of fruit and bread.

(*Saumya and her son go and bring the baskets and the goat. Bhim puts them under his arms and bows to his mother.*)

KUNTI : (*raising her hand to bless him*) May you be victorious, my brave boy, and may today be the last day of Bakasur's life !

(*Bhim walks away quickly. As he goes, he takes some of the fruit and bread out of the baskets and eats them.*)

SOMDATT : He's a brave man, but I doubt if he'll come back alive. I've done my guests a

great wrong. I should not have agreed to let him go. Oh ! I'm a great sinner !

KUNTI : Don't feel so bad about it, Somdatt. My sons have faced many such dangers. God has always helped them, and I'm sure He'll help my Bhim in his fight with the demon.

SHIVDATT : Grandmother, your son is a very strong man, and he can fight like a lion. He has been telling me all about his fights.

PRABHA : Oh, he's a jewel among Brahmans. I've never seen a braver man than him.

KUNTI : (*proudly*) All my sons are like that. I'm proud of them. I forget all my troubles when I look at their faces and their strong bodies.

(*The sound of somebody's shrieking in the distance followed by a big thud. All of them look up.*)

SOMDATT : What can it be ?

KUNTI : I think my son has killed the demon.

SAUMYA : If he has, he'll be worshipped as a god in this town.

KUNTI : (*seeing Yudhishthir, Arjun, Nakul and Sahadev in the distance*) Oh, here come my other sons ! They've returned home early today.

(*Somdatt, his wife and children look in that direction.*)

SOMDATT : Yes, mother, they are your other brave sons. Oh, how noble and carefree they look !

(*Yudhishthir, Arjun, Nakul and Sahadev enter with bags full of grain in their hands. They bow to their mother and greet Somdatt and his family and then put the bags at their mother's feet.*)

YUDHISHTHIR : Mother, we've been lucky today. We didn't have to beg from door to door. We saw some men shooting arrows near a rich man's house and stopped there. None of them could shoot the target. Then Arjun offered to shoot and hit the mark with the very first arrow. The rich man was very much pleased. He filled our bags with the best rice in his house and told us to return home.

ARJUN : Where is Bhim, mother ?

KUNTI : He has gone out on an adventure. Don't worry about him. He'll be back home soon.

YUDHISHTHIR : (*looking worried*) Mother, please tell us where he has gone. I'm worried.

KUNTI : Son, he has gone to pay for the kindness we have received from our host Somdatt.

He has gone to the demon Bakasur, instead of Shivdatt.

YUDHISHTHIR (*looking much more worried*) Dear mother, you've done a very bad thing. Why did you send our dear Bhim alone to the demon ? Why didn't you wait for us ?

ARJUN : Let's go to Bhim's help.

KUNTI : Be patient, boys. You know Bhim as well as I do. No demon can kill him. He has gone to save the life of our kind host's son. He has gone to save this beautiful little town from ruin. He must kill the demon. He must be victorious.

YUDHISHTHIR : (*thinking*) I hope so. (*after a pause*) You're right, mother. You've done the right thing.

(*A big noise in the distance. Bhim is seen carrying the body of Bakasur on his shoulders. A crowd is shouting joyously behind him, "Bakasur is dead ! Long live Bhimdatt !"*)

ALL : (*greatly excited*) Wonderful ! That's Bhim ! Bakasur is dead !

(*Bhim enters with Bakasur's body. He throws it down on the ground. The crowd shouts for joy.*)

BHIM : (*bowing to his mother*) I've done the job, mother.

KUNTI : (*hugging Bhim and crying for joy*) O my darling boy ! I wish your father were here !

(*Faints and falls on the ground. Saumya lifts Kunti's head and puts it on her lap. Somdatt runs to fetch water. The Pandavs and Somdatt's son and daughter start fanning her. The crowd suddenly becomes silent. Somdatt comes with a big bowl of water, utters something and sprinkles the water on Kunti's face. She opens her eyes and smiles.*)

THE CROWD : Long live Mother Kunti ! Long live Bhimdatt !

5. A HUNDRED AND FIVE

INTRODUCTION

The Pandavs lost their kingdom to their cousins, the Kauravs, in a gambling-match and had to spend twelve years in the forest. So the five of them left Hastinapur with their queen Draupadi and mother Kunti for the forest. They wandered about from place to place, ate what they could get and slept where they could find shelter.

After wandering about a good deal, they came to the forest of Dwet and decided to spend a few months there. Duryodhan, the Kaurav king, learnt about it and left for the forest with his friends and a large number of followers. He went there to have the satisfaction of seeing the Pandavs in misery.

Unfortunately for the Kauravs, Chitrasen, the Gandharva king, also decided at the same time to spend a few days in the forest of Dwet with a large number of his men. They went into the forest and encamped beside a beautiful lake. Duryodhan ordered his men to drive away the Gandharvas from that place, and there was a fight between the Kauravs and the Gandharvas. The Kauravs were badly beaten and Duryodhan was taken prisoner.

When Yudhishthir saw this, he ordered Arjun and Bhim to fight the Gandharvas and save Duryodhan's life. They started killing the Gandharvas, but when Chitrasen saw them, he called out to them and the fighting stopped.

A HUNDRED AND FIVE



Characters

CHITRASEN : the king of the Gandharvas

YUDHISHTHIR :
BHIM :
ARJUN :
NAKUL : } four of the five Pandavs

DURYODHAN : the eldest of the hundred Kauravs

Four young Kuru ladies and six Gandharva guards

[*In the forest of Dwet. Chitrasen, the Gandharva king, is talking to Bhim and Arjun. All three of them are standing. Chitrasen and Arjun have their bows on their shoul-*

ders and Bhim has his club in his hand. A few feet away from them, Duryodhan is standing bound hand and foot and without any weapon. Behind him four young Kuru ladies are standing as prisoners of Chitrasen. Six fully armed tall, strong Gandharvas are guarding the prisoners.]

CHITRASEN : Dear Arjun, we're old friends. I cannot dream of raising a finger against you. As soon as I saw you, I stopped shooting arrows and called out to you ; and here we are. Now, will you tell me why you have killed so many of my men with your deadly arrows ?

ARJUN : Dear friend, please don't blame me. I carried out the orders of my eldest brother and king, Maharaj Yudhishthir.

CHITRASEN : What ? Did Maharaj Yudhishthir order you to fight against me and my men ? What has happened to him ? Is he all right ?

BHIM : Perfect. Fit as a fiddle, both mentally and physically.

CHITRASEN : I doubt it very much.

ARJUN : Don't. Maharaj Yudhishthir is in perfect health, and he ordered me and Bhim to fight against you.

CHITRASEN : But why ?

BHIM : To save the life of our cousin, Maharaj

Duryodhan, and to save the Kuru ladies from dishonour.

CHITRASEN : Does Maharaj Yudhishthir know why Duryodhan came to the forest of Dwet with a number of beautiful ladies and a lot of armed men on horses and elephants?

ARJUN : I think he does.

BHIM : I think so, too.

CHITRASEN : I don't think he does. Please listen to me. Duryodhan came to this forest with so many of his followers to torture you—to torture the Pandavs. He came to have the pleasure of seeing you in misery. He came to show you how high and mighty the Kauravs were and how small and miserable the Pandavs were. He came fully prepared to kill all of you if you decided to fight. I came to know of it and decided to come along with a large number of my people. We encamped beside the big lake in this forest and enjoyed ourselves. I gave orders to my men to watch the movements of Duryodhan and his friends and followers but not to start a fight with them. My men followed my instructions faithfully and kept me informed of the situation. Then Duryodhan suddenly ordered his men to drive us

away from here, and they started shooting and killing my people. My officers tried to persuade Duryodhan and his lieutenants to stop fighting with us, but when they refused to listen to us we decided to teach them a lesson. And so there is the braggart, bound hand and foot, deserted by all his brave warriors and accompanied by only a few ladies ! He has been made to bite the dust, but he's a shameless creature. If I let him go, he'll start plotting against you again. No, no, I mustn't let him go. I must send him to his forefathers.

ARJUN : Not while Arjun and the rest of the Pandavs are alive.

BHIM : (*grinding his teeth and holding up his club*) Never while Bhim can use his club.

CHITRASEN : What has happened to you men ? What has happened to Maharaj Yudhishthir? Has he forgotten that Duryodhan has unjustly deprived him of his kingdom ?

BHIM : He hasn't.

CHITRASEN : Has he forgotten how Dushasan and Duryodhan insulted Draupadi publicly ?

ARJUN : I'm sure he hasn't.

BHIM : I certainly haven't forgotten it and I shall

never forget it. Not until I have taken revenge on both of them.

CHITRASEN : But if a friend of yours puts your enemy out of your way, won't you be happy and grateful to him?

ARJUN : I won't be happy at all.

BHIM : I won't, either; and I won't be grateful to the friend. I'll hate him all my life, instead.

CHITRASEN : You're very difficult men. I don't know how to convince you that I'm your friend and I'm trying to help you.

ARJUN : Dear Chitrasen, we know and we are convinced that you are a great friend of ours, but we don't want you to help us in this way. We are Kshatriya princes and we don't want anybody else to fight our battles. A lion does not ask another lion to kill an animal for him.

CHITRASEN : I'm puzzled; but here comes Maharaj Yudhishthir himself !

(*Yudhishthir enters followed by Nakul. Chitrasen joins the palms of his hands to greet him and Yudhishthir also greets him in the same way. Duryodhan hangs his head in shame, and the Kuru ladies touch Yudhisthir's feet. He raises his right hand and blesses them.*)

YUDHISHTHIR : Chitrasen, what have I or my brothers done to deserve this insult?

CHITRASEN : I can never insult the great sons of the noble king Pandu. Maharaj Yudhishthir, I'm a friend of yours, not an enemy. How can I think of insulting you ? On the contrary, I've been trying to do my duty as a friend to you. I have been trying to put your enemy out of your way. This is what I've been explaining to Bhim and Arjun.

YUDHISHTHIR : Maharaj Chitrasen, there is no doubt that you are a very good friend of ours and you mean to help us. I am very grateful to you and so are all my brothers. You are very dear to us. (*after a short pause*) But, forgive me, sir, Duryodhan is much dearer to us. He is the flesh of our flesh and the blood of our blood. It is true that he has chosen to destroy us, but that does not mean that he has ceased to be our cousin and brother. We will fight him, his brothers and friends and his huge army to get back what belongs to us. The five Pandavs will fight against the hundred Kauravs. Yes, five against a hundred; a hundred against five. But if an outsider attacks us, there will be a hundred and five to fight against him. That is all I have

to say to you. You are a friend and I therefore advise you to set Duryodhan and the Kuru ladies free. I am going now. (*addressing his brothers*) Bhim and Arjun, come on. Let us go.

(*Yudhishthir, Bhim, Arjun and Nakul join the palms of their hands and say good-bye to Chitrasen who does likewise.*)

CHITRASEN : (*as the Pandavs move to go*) Maharaj Yudhishthir, I shall do as you wish.

6. LOVE CONQUERS HATE

INTRODUCTION

King Brahmdatt ruled over the kingdom of Kashi about the time of Buddha. He invaded the kingdom of Kosal and defeated King Virgati in a big battle. Virgati fled to Kashi with his queen and lived there in disguise in the house of a potter. There, a son was born to his queen. They called him Chiranjiva and made secret arrangements with friends for his bringing up and education.

King Virgati and his queen were seen one day by a former servant of theirs called Karmnashi. This man informed King Brahmdatt that King Virgati and his queen were living in disguise in the house of a potter in Kashi. Brahmdatt took the man into his service, and had King Virgati and his queen arrested and, later, hanged. When King Virgati and his queen were being taken to the gallows, they saw their son Chiranjiva standing by the roadside. Virgati went close to him and said softly, "My son, remember that love conquers hate."

Later, Chiranjiva managed to get a job at King Brahmdatt's court and in a few years became his favourite. One day, the king went out big game shooting with Chiranjiva, Karmnashi, who was now called Bhojandas, and a large number of followers. In the forest the three of

them were separated from the rest of the party and after wandering about for a long time they sat down to rest in an open place. The king and Karmnashi lay down and were soon asleep. Chiranjiva sat up all the time.

The following scene describes what happened after the king and Karmnashi had fallen asleep.

LOVE CONQUERS HATE



Characters

BRAHMDATT	:	the king of Kashi
CHIRANJIVA	:	the Prince of Kosal, called Samarjit at the court of Brahmdatt
BHOJANDAS	:	an attendant of Brahmdatt, whose real name was Karmnashi

[*A small open space in the forest. King Brahmdatt of Kashi is lying asleep. His head is resting on the left arm of a young man called Samarjit who is really Chiranjiva, the Prince of Kosal. Their bows and arrows are on the ground beside them. A few paces away from them, a fat*

man called Bhojandas is lying fast asleep on the ground. His spear is lying on the ground by his side, and he is snoring.]

CHIRANJIVA : I'm twenty-five now. What has life given me all these years? Nothing but toil, sorrow and suffering. I've lost my dear parents and I've lost my kingdom. Although I'm the son of a king, I'm no more than an ordinary servant. If I went to Kosal and told the people there that I was the only son of their late king, they would not believe me. And if Brahmdatt comes to know that I'm the Prince of Kosal, he'll have me hanged in the same way as he had my parents hanged. 'The foes of the father cannot be the friends of the son.' Brahmdatt hated King Virgati, and he hates King Virgati's son, too. I'm alive only because he does not know I'm Virgati's son. But how long shall I live in this mean disguise? Is it not cowardly on the part of a prince to live such a life? Oh! I can't bear it any more. I must kick the enemy in the teeth while he is down. Brahmdatt must die today. (*Takes his sword out of the sheath and raises it to strike Brahmdatt, but stops suddenly.*) What were my noble father's last words to

me? He said, "Chiranjiva, my son, remember that love conquers hate." (*putting his sword back into the sheath*) Father was right. I'll conquer this man's hate for me by love.

(*Brahmdatt wakes up suddenly and looks worried. Bhojandas also wakes up and looks frightened.*)

BRAHMDATT : Where am I Samarjit? Please don't leave me.

CHIRANJIVA : I'm not going anywhere, sir. I'm here. I'm with you. Why are you worried ?

BRAHMDATT : Oh, don't ask me, Samarjit. I had a terrible dream. I have such dreams almost every night.

BHOJANDAS : (*trembling with fear*) I had a terrible dream too, sir. I dreamt that my head had been cut off and it was spitting on my poor body.

CHIRANJIVA : (*to the king, smiling but paying no attention to Bhojandas*) And what did you dream, my lord ?

BRAHMDATT : Don't ask me, Samarjit. I'm worried. I dreamt that Chiranjiva had caught hold of my right ear with his left hand and was cutting off my head with the sword he had in his right hand. Samarjit, I don't know

what to do. I can't get rid of the fear of Chiranjiva killing me.

BHOJANDAS : I have the same fear, sir. As soon as I'm asleep, I dream that Chiranjiva has cut off my head.

BRAHMDATT : (*to Bhojandas*) Shut up, you idiot. Your head isn't worth a shell.

CHIRANJIVA : (*Takes his sword out of the sheath and holds it in his hand*) O King! the man you call Samarjit is Chiranjiva, and I'm that man. I'm the man you fear day and night. You robbed my father, King Virgati of Kosal, of his kingdom, and he ran away to Kashi with my mother. I was born there and was brought up and educated by my father's kind friends, and you knew nothing about it. You only heard that King Virgati had a son called Chiranjiva. For a long time you did not know that my parents were living in Kashi in the house of a potter. You knew it when one of my father's former servants called Karmnashi told you about it. You had them hanged but I managed to bribe your men and get their bodies and perform the last rites. (*after a pause*) I've told you what you did to my parents. Now tell me what I should do to you.

BHOJANDAS : (*trembling from head to foot*) O noble prince, please don't kill me. I'm Karmnashi. I'm that sinner. I betrayed my noble master for the sake of this ignoble belly of mine. Have pity on this glutton.

CHIRANJIVA : Shut up, you wretch. I'm talking to the king.

BRAHMDATT : (*to Bhojandas*) Hold your tongue, you glutton. You've never done anybody any good. (*to Chiranjiva, trembling*) Chiranjiva, won't you forgive me and spare my life ?

CHIRANJIVA : (*politely*) Sir, I'm as much afraid of you as you are of me. It's true that I don't have any ghastly dreams, but I have no peace of mind. I have fears that some day you'll have me killed.

BHOJANDAS : Oh, my dreams are most ghastly every night !

BRAHMDATT : Very well, Chiranjiva, I promise that I'll do you no harm. What do you say now ?

CHIRANJIVA : I promise that I'll do you nothing but good.

BRAHMDATT : (*with a change in his voice*) I feel greatly relieved. I have sinned against you and your parents, noble prince, but I will make amends.

CHIRANJIVA : You're already a changed man, sir. My father's last words to me were, "Love conquers hate." How true they are !

BHOJANDAS : I'm very sorry for my past misdeeds. I'll make amends, too. O Prince, I'll be your slave for the rest of my life.

CHIRANJIVA : Don't be afraid, Karmnashi, and don't be anybody's slave. I won't do you any harm. Don't forget that love conquers hate.

BHOJANDAS : I promise that I'll learn these noble words by heart. I'll repeat them to myself a hundred times every day and act upon them. (*Starts repeating* 'Love conquers hate' *loudly.*)

(*The sound of horses' hoofs and men's voices in the distance.*)

BRAHMDATT : That's our men. Chiranjiva, let's get up. (*Blows a whistle.*) They'll be here soon. I'm a happy man today, and tomorrow I'll be happier still. I know that Princess Hemlata, my only daughter, loves you and you love her. Tomorrow I'm going to marry her to you, and then I'm going to return your father's kingdom to you.

BHOJANDAS : And I'll ride to Kosal behind the Prince and his bride.

7. THE WILL TO WIN

INTRODUCTION

Babur, the first of the Great Mughals, was the king of Kabul in 1525 when he invaded India; and early in 1526, with only twelve thousand men he gave a crushing defeat to the huge army of Sultan Ibrahim in the battle of Panipat. This put an end to the Afghan rule in India and the Mughals became the masters of Delhi and Agra. The empire of Hindustan was not yet, however, completely won. There were still a number of Afghan chieftains to crush and the Rajputs under Rana Sanga of Mewar had yet to be defeated.

The following scene refers to the eve of the great battle with Rana Sanga which Babur won at Khanwa in 1527.

THE WILL TO WIN



Characters

BABUR	:	the first Mughal emperor
MIR ALI	:	Babur's chief minister
MUHAMMAD SHARIF	:	an astrologer
YAKUB KHAN	:	Mughal commanders and amirs
ASAF KHAN	:	
MUNIR KHAN	:	
ZAMIN ALI	:	
HAMID ALI	:	

A Messenger

[*Babur's camp at Sikri. Babur is having a session with his amirs and army officers. He has soon to fight a great battle with Rana Sanga of Mewar who has a huge army under him. The Afghan chiefs are not friendly, and Babur has no powerful friends on whom he can depend. The situation is therefore critical from the point of view of the Mughals.*]

BABUR : My brave friends, the news is bad. It is very bad. We are in a critical situation. No one can deny it. But this is not the first time that we have found ourselves in such a situation. There have been many such situations in the past, and we faced them like brave men. Nobody made a gift of Kabul or Samarkand or Delhi to us. We conquered them with our swords and courage.

YAKUB KHAN : You're quite right, Your Majesty; but then we didn't have to fight against the best of fighters in the world. They have Sanga, the ablest general in India, to command them and their numerical strength is at least five times as great as ours.

BABUR : I don't deny what you say. But do you want me to appear before Sanga on bended knees and make a shameful peace with him ? Can we hope to rule in peace in

Delhi as long as Sanga and his Rajputs and the treacherous Afghan chiefs remain unbeaten? No, no, this cannot be. We must strike, and strike hard. We must crush Sanga, his Rajputs and his Afghan friends or run away to Kabul. There is no other alternative.

ASAF KHAN : It was an evil day when we left Kabul for this miserable country where there is neither comfort for the body nor peace for the mind.

BABUR : You'll have both if you fight like brave men.

MUNIR KHAN : You're unjust to us, sir. Did we fight like cowards when we won Ferghana, Kabul, Samarkand or Delhi for you?

BABUR : Cowards do not fight. You are brave men and you should not be frightened by the fame of Sanga or the strength of his army. We have something which he hasn't. We have the guns forged by that master gunner Ustad Ali.

MIR ALI : Sir, Ustad Ali has been testing his big guns for the last few days and he's quite satisfied with their range.

BABUR : I know it. Dear friends, I do not underrate Sanga's military genius or the fighting quality of his men. I know, too, that more

than a dozen Hindu chieftains have come to his help with their large armies. I cannot deceive you or myself. But I have not the least doubt in my mind that if we use our guns at the right time and in the right way, there will be frightful confusion in the camp of the enemy and that will be the beginning of our victory and his defeat.

ZAMIN ALI : It's surprising that we never thought of that.

(*A messenger enters hurriedly and bows to the Emperor.*)

MESSENGER : Your Majesty, a thousand men from Kabul have arrived at the camp. They've brought with them a hundred camels loaded with the finest wine from Ghazni. The astrologer Mohammad Shariff has come, too.

BABUR : That's fine. Go and get some of the wine cooled, and bring the astrologer to me immediately. If he says the stars are with me, I'll drink to their health and my victory.

(*The messenger goes out and brings in the astrologer who bows to the Emperor.*)

MUHAMMAD SHARIF : May Allah grant Your Majesty long life and unending fame and happiness !

BABUR : Welcome, wise man. You've come at the right time. I'm sure you've read the stars. Are they with me or against me in the battle tomorrow ?

MUHAMMAD SHARIF : Your Majesty, it's my duty to tell you the truth. Please don't fight tomorrow. The stars are against you. If you do, you'll lose everything.

(*The amirs and officers look worried. They look at one another. Babur notices this and gets up quickly and speaks in a decisive manner.*)

BABUR : Bring all my wine-cups of gold and silver, my drinking-glass which is set with precious stones and the wine which has just arrived.

ZAMIN ALI : Is Your Majesty going to drink to your destruction ?

ASAF KHAN : (*softly to Hamid Ali*) We can't prevent him, can we ?

HAMID ALI : (*softly to Asaf Khan*) I'm afraid he won't listen to us.

BABUR : (*smiling*) Don't worry, friends. I'm going to make a great sacrifice. I love wine and I've been drinking a lot of it. You all know that in the past I often drank heavily before the battle began and was

victorious. I'm surprised now how it happened, for drinking is a sin in the eyes of our holy faith. I'm not going to commit this sin any more. I swear before you all that I shall not touch wine again.

ALL : We swear, too, that we shall not touch wine again.

(*The wine-cups and the Emperor's drinking-glass are brought in and put before him. He breaks the glass with his own hands.*)

BABUR : (*pointing to the cups and the pieces of his drinking-glass*) Distribute these among the poor, and throw away all the wine there is in the camp.

MUNIR KHAN: Your Majesty, will you be able to live without wine ?

BABUR : You don't speak like a strong man, Munir Khan, do you ?

MUNIR KHAN: I'm sorry, Your Majesty. I thought....

BABUR : (*rising from his seat*) Amirs and officers ! think of nothing else but the battle tomorrow. Tomorrow is going to be a great day for us. If we win, we get the empire of Hindustan; if we die fighting, we get into heaven. Swear, therefore, with me to Allah, to the Prophet, and to the Holy Quran, that tomorrow we will fight as long

as there is life in our bodies and never think of running away from the battle-field. (*Pulls a copy of the Holy Quran from the inside pocket of his robe and holds it out in his hand.*) What do you say ?

ALL : Your Majesty, we swear in the name of the Holy Quran that we will win or die tomorrow.

BABUR : I swear, too, with you. (*after a pause*) My brave friends, let us now retire to bed and be refreshed for the fight of our life tomorrow. Remember that fortune favours the brave; and I assure you that victory will be ours tomorrow even though the stars may be against us. Allah is much greater than the stars, and He is with us. If we have the will to win, we will win. (*Puts the Quran back into his pocket and retires to his bed-chamber.*)

8. A MIRACLE !

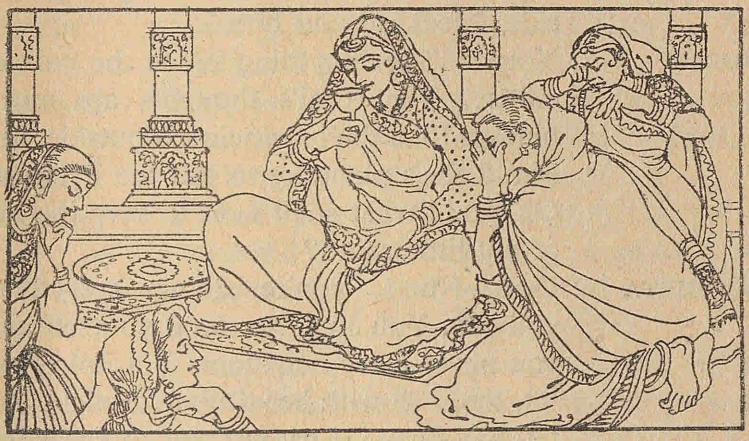
INTRODUCTION

Mirabai was the daughter of the Rathor chieftain Ratan Singh of Merta in Marwar. She was a sensitive child and at the early age of six she had dedicated herself to Lord Krishna. Later, she was married to Prince Bhojraj, the eldest son of Rana Sanga of Mewar. The marriage was a failure. Mira believed that she was the spiritual bride of Krishna and so she had nothing to do with the Prince. She refused to give up worshipping Krishna and to accept the Rana's family goddess Bhawani instead. Her mother-in-law attempted several times to kill her but failed every time.

After the death of Prince Bhojraj, Mira left the palace, threw off her royal robes and put on the clothes of a beggar. She was thrown into a river but was saved from drowning by some cowherds. They led her to Brindaban where she visited every temple and worshipped Krishna, her lord and master.

Mirabai is remembered not only as a great saint but also as a great Hindi poetess. Her songs have a place in the finest Hindi poetry.

A MIRACLE !



Characters

MIRABAI	:	the Princess of Merta in Marwar married to Prince Bhojraj of Mewar
SANYUKTA	:	a young companion of Mira
NURSE	:	Mira's nurse who came with her from Merta

Servants

[*A room in the palace of Rana Sanga of Mewar. Sanyukta, a young companion of Mira Bai from Marwar, is sitting at the window. Mira Bai's old nurse is sitting on a stool and is stringing a necklace for the Princess.*]

SANYUKTA : Oh, what a day ! The sky is covered with black clouds. You can't see anything outside. I feel sad and bored.

NURSE : You can't see anything inside the palace, either. The Rani's thoughts are much blacker than the black clouds outside. I'm afraid she's planning to kill the Princess. Oh God ! what shall I do to save the life of my little saint ?

SANYUKTA : Dear Nurse, you're doing everything you can. You cook her food yourself and you never leave her alone. I'm doing my bit, too. I sit with her till late at night and tell her stories. I try my best to cheer her up. What else can we do ?

NURSE : Perhaps nothing. She won't listen to me. She won't hide her faith. She believes that her lord and master is Krishna, and she'll have nothing to do with the Prince. It's a very difficult situation.

(*A tall female servant enters with a basket of fruit and puts it on a table. There is a sound of singing in the adjoining room.*)

SERVANT : What's that ?

NURSE : It's the Princess singing ?

SERVANT : Who is she singing to ?

NURSE : To herself. She does it every day.

SERVANT : I thought she was talking to some dear friend of hers.

NURSE : Shut up, and get away from here. The Princess is alone.

SERVANT : My job isn't done yet. I have a message for the Princess. It's from Raja Jaimal.

NURSE : What is it ? I'll take it to her.

SERVANT : I can't give it to you. You may slap me as you did the other day but I won't let you have it. The Rani has ordered me to give the message to the Princess only.

NURSE : And the Princess has ordered me not to disturb her while she is saying her prayers.

SERVANT : I'll wait till the Princess has said her prayers.

NURSE : You may wait till Doomsday. All I want is that you should keep your mouth shut. (*The words,* "I belong to Giridhar—the Mountain Holder—and to nobody else," *are clearly heard from the adjoining room; and the servant is alert. The song stops and Mira suddenly appears at the door.*)

MIRA : (*seeing the servant who pretends to bow*) What does the Rani want me to do ?

SERVANT : Princess, I've brought a message from your kinsman Raja Jaimal.

MIRA : Every kinsman of mine has forgotten me

in this strange land. What has Raja Jaimal to say to me ?

SERVANT : Princess, Raja Jaimal is the right-hand man of the Rana.

MIRA : And I'm a prisoner of the Rana.

SERVANT : The Raja says that if you need his help you may send a token and he will understand.

MIRA : Thanks. I have everything. I don't need anything from anybody.
(*The servant is disappointed. She bows and goes out.*)

NURSE : That's a wicked woman, my dearest. I know Raja Jaimal did not send you any message. She wanted to get some secret out of you.

MIRA : I have no secrets, and she should know it by now.

NURSE : It was an evil day when we set out for Mewar.

MIRA : Let us not fret about our present situation. We can't do anything about it. God has a purpose to fulfil through our suffering. Let us not complain. Let us submit cheerfully to His will.

NURSE : My child, your philosophy is too deep for me. I can't understand it. I've nursed you, fed you and loved you since

you were a baby, and I want only to love you and to look after you. Come on, let me comb your hair and let me put this necklace round your neck. (*Weeps.*)

MIRA : Do not weep, dear Nurse. Sanyukta is there. If she sees you crying, she'll start crying, too. All my dear ones are suffering because of me. I'm told that my brave cousin Jaimal has been insulted and exiled because he defended me. And why do they hate me ? Because I worship Krishna to whom my mother gave me when I was only six years old. How can I give up Krishna ? He's my God, my Lord, my Master. He's everything to me.

NURSE : Oh, what will be the end of this ?

MIRA : Dear Nurse, no one knows the end of anything until it comes.

(*There is a noise in the passage outside. The guards are trying to stop two female attendants from entering the room. Sanyukta goes out and soon returns terrified. The attendants enter carrying a golden glass in a tray.*)

FIRST ATTENDANT : Rana Sanga, the Lord of Mewar, sends the Princess this 'charnamrit' with his blessings.

(*The nurse screams and stands between the attendants and the Princess.*)

NURSE : The Princess shall not drink; she shall not drink out of that glass.

MIRA : Dear Nurse, let me take the 'charnamrit.' The Rana has sent it for me. He has done great honour to me.

(*Sanyukta starts crying. Mira asks the nurse to take her away.*)

SANYUKTA : (*rushing forward*) You can't have that 'charnamrit' till I've tasted it. I must drink some of it.

MIRA : (*sternly*) No, you mustn't. It's a gift from the Rana for the Princess of Merta, and she alone will have it.

(*The attendants present the tray to the Princess and bow. She lifts the cup, puts it on her head gently and then brings it down to her lips. The nurse and Sanyukta fall on their knees and cover their faces with their hands. The attendants stand motionless. The Princess empties the cup and awaits her death smiling. Several minutes pass but nothing happens.*)

SANYUKTA : (*in great excitement*) A miracle ! A miracle ! The Princess lives !

NURSE : Yes, she lives, and she will live long. Death cannot kill this whitest lily of a blameless life.

(*Mira slowly walks across the room singing and enters her shrine. The singing continues and the attendants walk out, greatly surprised.*)

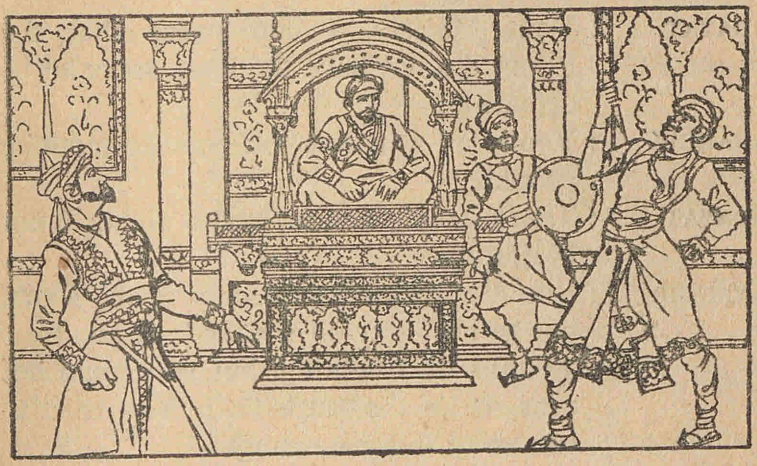
9. THE PRICE OF MY SINS

INTRODUCTION

The fort of Chittor fell into the hands of the Mughals soon after Jaimal was shot dead by Akbar while he was closing the main gate at the end of the day's fight. Rana Pratap Singh, however, continued the fight from the jungles and other forts; and after his death his son and successor Rana Amar Singh fought on for the honour and freedom of Mewar.

Sagar Singh, a brother of Pratap, had gone over to the Mughals and attended the Mughal court at Agra. He was now given the fort of Chittor and was made its Rana. Sagar Singh took charge of the fort and lived there for some years; but he was not at all happy. The guilt of having been a traitor to his people and to the land of his birth weighed heavy on his mind. He lived in the fort of Chittor in constant fear of the unknown, but he did not know what to do. One day, his daughter Satyawati came to see him. See had left her home and had become a hermit. She had been talking to people all over Mewar about their duty to their motherland. She rebuked her father and explained to him how low he had fallen. Sagar Singh realised his mistake, handed over Chittor to Rana Amar Singh and returned to Agra to meet his death.

THE PRICE OF MY SINS



Characters

SAGAR SINGH : a brother of Rana Pratap Singh
JAHANGIR : the Emperor of Hindustan
HIDAYAT ALI : a General of Jahangir
Two armed guards.

[*The court of Jahangir. The time is morning. The Emperor is talking to Hidayat Ali.*]

JAHANGIR : I shall never forget this defeat in my life. I do not know what has happened to

Parvez. Could he not face even a few thousand men of the Rana? How was he defeated ?

HIDAYAT : Your Majesty, I can swear that the Prince did not have the least desire to be defeated.

JAHANGIR : You're all a useless lot; good-for-nothing people.

HIDAYAT : That's true. You're quite right, Your Majesty.

JAHANGIR : You had become a prisoner of the Rana, but he took pity on you and set you free. Abdulla died fighting, but you could not even die in the battle-field. You tried to run away and were caught.

HIDAYAT : Your Majesty, this humble servant of yours wanted to die in the battle-field, but his wife did not like the idea at all.

JAHANGIR : Be quiet.

(*Sagar Singh enters.*)

JAHANGIR : Here comes Raja Sagar Singh ! Raja Saheb !

SAGAR : Sir !

JAHANGIR : I made you the Rana of Mewar and sent you to Chittor, but it is said that you have handed over the fort of Chittor to Rana Amar Singh.

SAGAR : I have, sir.

JAHANGIR : By whose permission ?

SAGAR : I didn't think it necessary to get any permission for it.

JAHANGIR : Why ?

SAGAR : I thought that Rana Amar Singh was the lawful ruler of Chittor.

JAHANGIR : You thought ?

SAGAR : Certainly, sir. I had heard that Emperor Akbar did not conquer Chittor. He deceived Jaimal and killed him.

JAHANGIR : Raja Saheb, when did you become competent to take such decisions ?

SAGAR : The day when I saw a new light.

JAHANGIR : A new light ?

SAGAR : Yes, sir, I saw a new light. The veil suddenly lifted from my eyes, and I was able to see Mewar through the centuries—from the days of Maharaja Ramchandra till now. I saw the victories of Bappa Rawal, the sacrifices of Sagarsingh and Churaji, and the brave deeds of Kumbhaji. Then suddenly there was mist all around, and in that mist I saw a sword glittering. It was the sword of my brother Pratap Singh. I saw all this and started cursing myself.

JAHANGIR : What happened next ?

SAGAR : I said to myself, "You belong to the

family of these great men and yet you have gone over to their enemies," and I was filled with sorrow and hatred for myself. I tried to think hard and justify my actions; but a few days later I saw a more wonderful sight. (*Stops.*)

JAHANGIR : Carry on. What did you see ?

SAGAR : What I saw this time does not belong to ancient times or the 'purans' or history. I saw my daughter—the daughter of this slave of the Mughals—dressed in rags and wandering about in the jungles for the freedom of Mewar. There were tears in my eyes, and I could not speak at all. I had a mixed feeling of pride and shame, love and humiliation. I could not control myself any more. I handed over the fort of Chittor to my nephew and returned to Agra.

JAHANGIR : Have you come prepared to die, Raja Saheb ?

SAGAR : I have, Your Majesty. I've come fully prepared to die. I used to fear death, but that day I learnt a new lesson.

JAHANGIR : What new lesson ?

SAGAR : The lesson of self-sacrifice. There are two kinds of empires in the world. One is called selfishness and the other, self-sacri-

fice. One is born of hell and the other of heaven. The ruler of one is Satan and the ruler of the other is God. I lived in the world of selfishness, but that day I saw the world of self-sacrifice. Its rulers are Rama, Buddha and Jesus ; and its laws are love, faith and charity. In this world, administration is based on service ; and men are punished with kindness and rewarded with self-sacrifice. Since that day I have become a citizen of this world. I had not held a sword in my hand before, but that day I held it to defend some poor people. The robbers struck me hard with their swords on the shoulders, but I felt no pain.

JAHANGIR : What happened after that ?

SAGAR : After that I came here to pay for my sins with my life. Previously I was very much afraid of death, but now I am not. A man who loves with his whole heart and has learnt to sacrifice himself, is not at all afraid of death.

JAHANGIR : Very well. Get ready to die. (*Makes a sign to one of the guards. The guard comes forward.*)

SAGAR : You don't need another man to take my life.

(*Takes out his dagger and plunges it into the region of his heart. Falls down and stretches out his hands.*)

This is the price of my sins !

10. THE RETURN OF THE LION

INTRODUCTION

Shivaji was born in 1627 and was brought up with great care and love by his mother Jijabai. When he grew up to be a young man, he conquered one fort after another in the Deccan and in a few years became a powerful ruler.

The Mughal emperor Aurangzeb was alarmed by the rising power of Shivaji. He made some big promises to him and invited him to Agra. Shivaji agreed and travelled to Agra with his son Sambhaji. He was, however, coldly received by Aurangzeb in his court and was given a place among the smallest of the rajas under him. Shivaji felt insulted and made it plain to Aurangzeb that he had deceived him. He was imprisoned but after some time he managed to escape from the prison and returned to his people.

THE RETURN OF THE LION



Characters

SHIVAJI : the Lord of nearly all Maharashtra
JIJABAI : Shivaji's mother
MANTRI : the Chronicler of Shivaji
SACHIV : the Superintendent of Letters
PANDIT RAO
RAM DAS : Shivaji's teacher and companion
SOYABAI : Shivaji's wife and Sambhaji's mother
Foster-mother of Sambhaji
Officers of Shivaji's Court
An attendant in Maratha uniform.

[*A room in the fort of Rajgarh near Poona. Jijabai, Shivaji's mother, is sitting on a small throne. She is surrounded by officers of the court. Among them are the Mantri, the Sachiv, the Pandit Rao and the poet Ram Das who has an open letter on his knee. In a corner,*

Soyabai, Shivaji's wife and Sambhaji's mother, is sitting quietly; and by her side is Sambhaji's foster-mother who is an older woman. The two of them are talking softly.]

JIJABAI : I can't believe that my son is dead. The letter is a hoax.

RAM DAS : But the letter is from Agra.

JIJABAI : And therefore it is a hoax. When did Aurangzeb tell the truth ? Did he not make false promises to my son ?

RAM DAS : It was Jai Singh who made those promises to our Raja.

JIJABAI : I know that; but can Jai Singh ever make a promise on his own ? Surely, the slave spoke for the master.

MANTRI : We're in a terribly bad way. Aurangzeb has laid traps for us everywhere. Bijapur is about to strike. Discontent is spreading among our own men. They may revolt any day. And there is no news about Shivaji. We don't know what to do.

SACHIV : (*sadly*) The letter says that Shivaji is dead, but it doesn't say how he died.

JIJABAI : (*sternly*) Listen ! I, your Raja's mother and your Regent, say the letter is a hoax. Don't speak about it any more.

SOYABAI : (*anxiously*) Does the letter say nothing about my dear boy Sambhaji ?

JIJABAI : Keep quiet, girl. You're not the only

mother here. I say the lion and his cub will soon return to their kingdom. They can't stay long in the fox's den. Mantriji, listen to me. Raise the pay and increase the rations of the soldiers. Send useful gifts to their wives and sweets and toys to their children. I'll pay for everything out of my private purse. And please tell them that the Raja is at Varanasi and will return before long. Tell them also that all the great astrologers at Varanasi have studied Shivaji's horoscope and they all say that nothing can stop him from becoming the lord of the whole of Maharashtra. Keep the soldiers and priests contented and happy, and they will believe your words. (*addressing all those present there in a changed voice*) Friends ! I've grown old and weak. I haven't many years to live. Help me to live till my brave boy returns to me. Don't say he is dead.

ALL MEN : Our Raja's mother will live ! The Queen Regent will live ! Our Raja will return to us. We'll pray for his safe return.

JIJABAI : Well said, my brave friends. Tomorrow I'll say my special prayers to our family goddess Bhawani. She gave him to me, and I'm sure she'll bring him back to me.

(*turning to Soyabai*) Soyabai, my child, don't worry. Your son as well as mine are soon going to return to us.

(*Footsteps and a slight noise outside.*)

SACHIV : What's that ?

RAM DAS : Perhaps someone wants to see us.

(*An attendant, who is a tall Maratha in uniform, enters and bows three times to Jijabai.*)

ATTENDANT : Rani Saheba, there are three holy men at the gate outside. They want to see you.

JIJABAI : Where do they come from ?

ATTENDANT : I think they're from the north. They say they're bairagi sadhus.

JIJABAI : What can their business be ?

ATTENDANT : Perhaps they've come to beg from you. They must have heard of your charity. They're poor men in rags. Their heads are shaven and their arms and faces are painted grey with ashes.

JIJABAI : They are holy men, and they have come from a far-off place. I cannot say no to them. I need their blessings. Let them come in.

(*The attendant bows three times again and goes out. Soyabai and Sambhaji's foster mother move up nearer to the throne.*)

SACHIV : May I leave now, Rani Saheba ? My secretary must be waiting for me.

JIJABAI : Please stay a while. These holy men have come from the north. Perhaps they have news for us about the Raja. Ah, my heart beats.

(*The attendant enters again with three sadhus who seem to be poor, humble men dressed in rags. Two of them are tall and the third is a small man who does not look up*).

RAM DAS : (*rising and joining the palms of his hands*) Welcome, holy men.

FIRST SADHU : God bless you, holy guru !

SECOND SADHU : God bless this house !

(*The third sadhu joins the palms of his hands in greeting but says nothing. He keeps his eyes fixed on the ground.*)

JIJABAI : (*to the third sadhu*) : Have you no words to bless us with, holy man ? Why don't you say something ?

FIRST SADHU : He has taken a vow of slience, noble lady.

JIJABAI : I see. (*Thinks.*)

FIRST SADHU : Stories of your wisdom and your kindness to the poor have reached distant places. We've travelled a long way to see you.

JIJABAI : You're most welcome to this house and to stay here as long as you wish.

SECOND SADHU : At Varanasi we met a brahman who told us that your son Shivaji had gone to Agra and that you were ruling for him.

JIJABAI : What else did you hear about Shivaji ?

SECOND SADHU : One day we met a band of horsemen. They said the Raja had been put in prison by Aurangzeb.

JIJABAI : The lion won't stay long in that dirty den. What else did you hear ? Tell me.

FIRST SADHU: That's all we heard, noble lady. We wish we knew more, but we don't. We're men of peace and spend most of our time in temples and lonely places.

JIJABAI : True. Holy men have nothing to do with war and fighting. Come, give me your blessings. I need them badly. I'm dying to see my son.

(*The first and the second sadhus bless her. The third does nothing.*)

JIJABAI : (*to the third sadhu*) If you don't want to bless me, you may curse me and I'll die cheerfully. I can't live without my son.

(*He falls at her feet. She passes her hands gently over his face, utters a cry and draws his head to her breast.*)

It's my son ! It's my son ! My son has

come back to me ! Shivaji has come back ! The Lord of Maharashtra has come back ! The lion has come back from the fox's den !

ALL : Long live Shivaji ! Long live the Lord of Maharashtra !

SHIVAJI : (*rising*) Yes, Shivaji has escaped from the fox's den and the vulture's claws. I've come back to my mother, my friends and my people.

SOYABAI : (*nervously*) Dear husband, have you left my son behind in the hands of the enemy ?

SHIVAJI : No, I haven't. He's quite safe with friends. Don't worry about him. He'll be with you in a few days. (*Looks round and sees Ram Das.*) Sir, your pupil has returned to you. Won't you advise him and guide him as you've always done ? (*turning to others*) Friends, come closer. Your Raja has come back safe from the spider's web. Be happy and rejoice. Today we'll give a feast to the poor. Light the torches on the hill-tops and illuminate the palace. Fire the guns and shout that the Raja has returned to his people.

5134

ALL : We'll do all this; and we'll feast and sing and dance. Long live Shivaji ! Long live Jijabai ! Long live Maharashtra !

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