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### **THE POETRY IN THE INVISIBLE** *AN INTERPRETATION OF THE MAJOR ENGLISH POETS FROM SHAKESPEARE TO SRI AUROBINDO*

*With a Preface*

BY

C. F. ANDREWS

AND A FOREWORD BY

Dr. S. K. PRASAD

Professor & Head of the Department of English Magadh University,  
Bodh-Gaya, Bihar

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## **SCENES FROM INDIAN MYTHOLOGY**

BEING A DRAMATISATION OF  
SELECTED INDIAN LEGENDS

BY

SYED MEHDI IMAM

M. A. ( OXON )

MOTILAL BANARSIDASS

Delhi :: Patna :: Varanasi

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SELECTED INDIAN LEGENDS

BY  
**SYED MEHDI IMAM**

M. A. ( OXON )

AUTHOR OF THE POETRY OF THE INVISIBLE, THE FOLKLORE  
OF ANCIENT GREECE, SCENES FROM ISLAMIC HISTORY

*Edited by*

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This book is affectionately

DEDICATED

TO

ISMAT

precious friend and gentlest sister.

## FOREWORD

In six inspired days near the Temple of Govindji, Brindaban, Mr. Mehdi Imam produced his "Scenes from Indian Mythology" in language both poetic and dramatic. The author is well qualified to undertake this work of art. We hear much to-day about Hindu Culture and Muslim Culture, but the writer is the proud inheritor of that culture which sets no limitation upon the vision of man. The poet has said "Beauty is Truth and Truth Beauty. That is all ye know on Earth and all ye need to know." Mr. Mehdi Imam has a universal mind and he can capture Beauty in whatever form it comes to him.

I heartily commend this book to educationists and students. As a means of quickly understanding all that is essential in Hindu Mythology, I think this book can have no rival. The dramatic form in which it is written is unique. The book is essentially a thing of beauty and will be a joy to all who read it.

Santi Niketan,

Patna.

March 20th., 1940.

P. R. DAS



FOREWORD

In six chapters this book tells the story of the Hindu Mythology. The author has written in a simple and clear language. We have much to learn from this book. It is a very good book for the students of Hindu Mythology. The author has written in a simple and clear language. We have much to learn from this book. It is a very good book for the students of Hindu Mythology.

I have read this book with great interest and pleasure. It is a very good book for the students of Hindu Mythology. The author has written in a simple and clear language. We have much to learn from this book. It is a very good book for the students of Hindu Mythology.

P. R. DAS  
Patna  
March 2nd, 1940

EDITOR'S NOTE

The slender book in your hands is but a reprint of what is really pretty old, for it came out, for the first time, in the spring season of 1940, as is clear from the brief but beautiful Foreword by the then eminent barrister of Patna, Mr. P. R. Das, the youngest brother of Deshbandhu C. R. Das. To most Indians, particularly the Hindus, nearly all the varied myths and legends included here are quite familiar. What is more, some of them are also internationally famous and no less familiar to the Europeans and may be, even the liberally educated, cultured Americans. But then had anybody attempted a dramatic version of these myths before? Herein lies the originality of this book, in the first instance. But then, there is no less originality in the selection of the scenes from these familiar myths and legends, by the distinguished Oxonian scholar, Syed Mehdi Imam, naturally endowed with a delicately sensitive poetic mind and an almost Greek and Shakespearean command over the dramatic mode of presentation through just the right kind of crisp dialogue and suggestive powers of narration, description and characterisation, precise and concise enough for the purpose and theme for which these scenes were meant. Even to an Indian, therefore, who is already familiar with these myths and legends the book will be found to be eminently readable, as if he were reading them for the first time in his life.

It is, indeed, a pity that our college and even advanced University boys and girls of today have somehow lost touch with these beautiful and noble legends which constitute, in a deeper sense than is ordinarily realised, the very sap of Indian spiritual



and metaphysical culture. It is time our teachers and students realised that if they really deserve to be called Indians, they simply cannot afford to forget or neglect or foolishly grow indifferent to our enormous, diverse corpus of the Indian folklore whose deeper meaning and message holds good at all times and for all kinds of men, educated as well as uneducated.

I cannot, therefore, help stating, with all the emphasis at my command, that Syed Mehdi Imam has done a signal service to his countrymen by presenting the diverse Indian mythology in an extremely simple, lucid and gracefully poetic language and a concretely living dramatic form. The Ramayana and the Mahabharata and the Jataka tales become, at his magical hands, once more alive to us and it appears as if we are seeing and getting in touch with the personalities of Rama and Sita, Krishna and Radha. Arjuna and Karna, Shiva and Parvati, Lakshmi and Ganga, Pururavas and Urvashi, Nala and Damayanti, etc. in the form of short documentary films.

Though a Muslim by birth, yet Syed Mehdi Imam has been able to attain a highly sustained and pure understanding of the Hindu mythology and culture, firstly, because he is a direct descendant of the Prophet Mohammad and, secondly and largely, because he has had a very liberal European education and upbringing from his very childhood and, in course of time, he came to acquire a truly humanistic outlook and sensibility, Hellenic sense of beauty and exalted rational faculty, the Vedantic and Geeta spirituality and, above all, the modern Aurobindonian supramental visions and illuminations through his personal intimate contact with the living, gracious presence and personality of the Mother of Sri Aurobindo Ashram and the massive and cosmically comprehensive writings of the greatest intellectual and poet and seer of our times, namely Sri Aurobindo, in prose, poetry and drama,

comprising all the conceivable aspects of our individual as well as collective life and *sadhana*, including politics and history and sociology, modern science and technology and the highest human aspiration and ageless dreamings of a perfect society of perfect men and women, of the descent and full flowering of heaven upon earth, here and now. These inherited as well as attained, through personal effort and an intensive discipline or *Sadhana*, scholarly and spiritual qualities of a high order in pursuance of his unceasing desire to be a true Yogi, poet and seer and an humble but completely surrendered divine servitor, have paid our author a rich dividend in this apparently simple but really great and immortal book which he has given us.

It is, therefore, without any hesitation or doubt whatsoever in my mind that I recommend this book for inclusion in the English courses of study at the undergraduate level. I am sure, both the staff and students, not to speak of the general reading public, will find it amply rewarding and aesthetically as well as spiritually stimulating.

S. K. PRASAD

Department of English,  
Magadh University,  
Bodh-Gaya,  
May 25, 1975.



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S. K. KRASAB

Department of English

Madras University

Madras

May 25, 1927

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## INTRODUCTION

"There they are, my fifty men and women  
Naming me the fifty poems finished  
Take them, love, the book and me together :  
Where the heart lies, let the brain lie also."

*R. Browning.*

This is a book of selected scenes from the literature of Indian mythology told in the form of spoken tableaux.

The treatment of the subject is poetic in so far as, without the structure of verse, the language is the language of poetry. It is dramatic in so far as the narration employs the scenes, the characters, and the dialogues of the short play.

The dramatic form is flexible. At one time, it is the form of the theatre, at another the form of the cinematograph, at another the form of the poetic drama free of the rules of Aristotle's unity of time, place and character.

Sometimes the action is quick, as in the earlier scenes of the Mahabharata. At other times the action pauses, and after the model of the "Imaginary Conversations of Landor" gives place to reflections. An instance of this is the scene from the Bhagwat Gita called "Arjuna's Chariot."

These dramatic pieces are particularly suitable for spoken tableaux as the scenes are short and the sentences brief for purposes of acting.

The book may be divided into three sections.

Chapters I and II give selected scenes from the Indian Epics, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. Chapters III, IV and V relate to legends of Buddha, Krishna and Shiva. Chapters VI and VII are ten small legends including Indian Bridal Tales.

Chapters III and VI were written in the shrine of the Mahabodhi Temple at Bodh-Gaya. The remainder of these chapters were written near the Temple of Govindji at Brindaban, in the country of Krishna.

I am much indebted to Professor Sharif of Aligarh who suggested the idea of this book, to the Rajah Saheb of Mahmudabad who lent me books on the subject, and to Mr. P. R. Das who helped me.

This writing was completed in six days. This was due, in no small measure, to the joy and quiet of this city of songs and temples—Brindaban—sacred to the dust of those whom Indian mythology celebrates from a distant past.

The Temple of Govindji,

Brindaban,

Near Muttra.

24th October 1939.

## SCENES FROM THE RAMAYANA

### THE ARGUMENT

The scenes from the Ramayana are told in six parts.

In Part I. Sita and Rama are playing among the lotus blooms, near Ajodhya, in the evening. Rama, the son of Dasaratha, the king of the Kosalas, has drawn the bow of Janaka, the king of Mithila. He has thus won the hand of Sita, the daughter of Janaka. Sita is the main heroine of the story.

In Part II, Manthara, a slave girl of Kaikeyi, the second wife of Dasaratha and step mother of Rama, informs Kaikeyi that Rama is to be crowned king because Dasaratha is getting old. Kaikeyi weeps, and Dasaratha promises to give her anything if she will stop weeping. She asks that Rama be banished to the Dandaka forest for fourteen years and that Bharata reign in his stead. The king grants her request, and Rama goes into voluntary exile with Sita and Lakshmana.

In Part III, Ravana, the prince of evil, sends a beautiful deer to induce Rama and Lakshmana to leave Sita alone in the forest. In their absence, he comes, dressed as an anchorite and reveals himself as he is. He takes away Sita, in his cloud-car, to his kingdom in Lanka or Ceylon.

In Part IV, Hanuman, the child of the wind, discovers Sita in Lanka, gives her Rama's ring, and receives a jewel-token from Sita. He flies away to inform Rama and to rescue Sita.

In Part V, Ravana and Indrajit, the chief of his army, are killed. Rama reaches Lanka in time to save Sita.



In Part VI, Rama is united with Sita at the palace of Ravana. As he hints that she has become impure, Sita climbs the pyre to burn herself. Agni, the god of fire, brings her untouched from the flame to Rama, and thus proves her purity. Agni puts the pair on his aerial car. On this they fly to Ajodhya, where Bharata, Rama's loyal brother, has been waiting to give back the crown to Rama. Rama and Sita are crowned in Ajodhya.

## SCENES FROM THE RAMAYANA

### Characters :

- DASARATHA—King of the Kosalas.  
 KAIKEYI—His queen.  
 MANTHARA—Her maid.  
 RAMA—His son, through queen Kausalya.  
 BHARATA  
 LAKSHMANA } Brothers of Rama.  
 SATRUGHNA  
 JANAKA—King of Mithila.  
 SITA—His daughter.  
 HANUMAN—The child of the wind.  
 RAVANA—The prince of evil.  
 INDRAJIT—The commander of the evil forces.

## PART I

## SITA IN THE MOONLIGHT

## SCENE I

A LAKE OF LOTUS BLOOMS NEAR  
AJODHYA

( Rama has won the hand of Sita. They are returning from Mithila on their way to Ajodhya, and are resting at night on the bank of the lake.)

Rama. (Clasping Sita in his arms.) Moonlight on the bank!

Sita. And on the water!

Rama. And in your eyes!

Sita. (Recollecting.) How strangely we met. King Janaka, my father and lord of Mithila, did not know you!

Rama. But my star did. I came to Mithila and drew the bow of Rudra which none could draw. It was preordained that I would do it, and I did it. You, Sita, put your bridal garland on me. So you chose me. That is the way the plan predestined shapes.

Sita. Where are we now!

Rama. Five miles from Ajodhya. There you will see my father, Dasaratha, and my brothers, Lakshmana, Bharata and Satrugna. My mother, Kausalya, you will love. (Hesitatingly) And you will see Kaikeyi. You will know who she is. We will not speak of her to-night.

Sita. Is Ajodhya a beautiful city?

Rama. Full of fountains. It will be gay for your coming.

Sita. The night is warm.

Rama. Warm as your lips. The lake is sparkling with the lotus. Shall we dive and refresh ourselves!

Sita. (Plunging into the lake.) Find me, Rama!

Rama. (Jumping in and throwing a latus stalk.) This will find you. Where is Sita? Among the lotus how should I find the fairest lotus?

Sita. (Some distance away.) I am here, not there.

Rama. (Swimming towards her) Now find me.

(He submerges)

Sita. (Holding herself over Rama who is below the water.)

Is this the face of Rama or the face of a flower? I shall know by the scent and touch. (She kisses a lotus.) Rama's hands are round my waist!

Rama. With his net of love he draws you to the shore.

Sita. (As both are coming out of the water.) Where shall we sleep to-night?

Rama. Beneath the stars.

Sita. And to-morrow?

Rama. (Shaking his wet garments.) In Ajodhya.

(Sita and Rama retire to their tents which are near.)



## PART II

## THE PLOT OF KAIKEYI

## SCENE I

## THE PALACE OF DASARATHA AT AJODHYA

(*Kaikeyi, the second wife of Dasaratha, and stepmother of Rama, is sitting in her apartment. Manthara, a slave girl, brings her the news that Rama is to succeed Dasaratha on the throne.*)

*Manthara.* (Excited.) Have you heard?

*Kaikeyi.* What?

*Manthara.* Rama and Sita spend this night in Vishnu's Temple for purification.

*Kaikeyi.* What of that?

*Manthara.* Will you allow it?

*Kaikeyi.* Allow what?

*Manthara.* Rama wears the crown to-morrow with his bride Sita. Dasaratha is too old to rule.

*Kaikeyi.* Then I shall cease to be a queen!

*Manthara.* And Bharata, your son, will never be king. I have a plan.

*Kaikeyi.* Speak.

*Manthara.* You must pretend to cry, and I will call the king. When he comes, do not stop crying. Ask of him a favour—the crown for Bharata. Forgetful, he might grant it, and the king could never break his word.

(*Kaikeyi begins sobbing. Manthara calls the king.*)

*Dasaratha.* (Entering.) What is the matter?

(*Kaikeyi remains silent.*)

You must tell me. Are you unwell? Speak.

*Kaikeyi.* If I speak, will you grant my asking? Promise.

*Dasaratha.* Yes, I will.

*Kaikeyi.* (Suddenly lifting her eyes.) Banish Rama to-morrow to the Dandaka forest for fourteen years. Let Bharata reign in his place.

*Dasaratha.* I gave my promise.

*Kaikeyi.* And as a king you must fulfil it.

*Rama.* (Entering and seeing *Kaikeyi* sobbing.) There is gloom in this house.

*Kaikeyi.* Because your father will not keep his promise.

*Rama.* (Surprised.) What is his promise?

*Kaikeyi.* To exile you for fourteen years to the forest of Dandaka so that Bharata may reign in your place.

*Rama.* (Speaking nobly.) I am the pledge for my father's word. I will fulfil the promise for him by going willingly.

*Sita.* (Following *Rama* with *Lakshmana*.) There is too much sobbing in your father's city.

*Rama.* (Turning to *Sita* sadly.) In fulfilment of my father's pledge I quit Ajodhya at dawn.

*Sita.* I will follow.

*Rama.* To the Dandaka forest?

*Sita.* Anywhere with you.

*Rama.* For fourteen years?

*Sita.* For all time with you. As the shadow is to the substance, as the body is to the spirit, so the wife is to her lord. Rain or sunshine, we shall be together. Roofed or roofless, we shall be one.

*Lakshmana.* (Overhearing the conversation.) Palace or forest, I will choose the shelter that *Sita* chooses—I will be her guard, her watch, her friend.



*Sita.* Sita needs no shelter except the arms of Rama.

*Rama.* Rama needs no home except the eyes of Sita.

*Dasaratha.* (*Angrily at Kaikeyi.*) They go, but you will repent this plot. Rama is banished from my land, but Bharata and you are exiled from my heart.

(*Rama, Sita and Lakshmana depart from Ajodhya the next day. They become hermits. Bharata, who is still loyal to Rama, is unwillingly crowned.*)

## PART III

## THE RUSE OF RAVANA

## SCENE I

## OUTSIDE THE FOREST OF DANDAKA

(*Ravana has sent his brother, Maricha, in the form of a gold deer, to decoy Rama and Lakshmana, and in their absence, to abduct Sita. It is sunset, and Sita, outside the hermitage, sees the tips of the horns of the deer.*)

*Sita.* Did you see, Rama ?

*Rama.* Yes, a crown of silver antlers !

*Lakshmana.* It was a deer.

*Sita.* With a coat of stars and a front of sapphire-footing the woodland dew with shy steps. Bring it, Rama, to me. I will feed it and love it with my own hands as long as I live.

*Rama.* Wait. I will bring it.

*The deer slips into the thicket. Rama pursues it. He hits it with his arrow, and the dying deer imitates the voice of Rama in distress.*)

*Sita.* It is Rama's cry—the cry for help and not the voice he wooed me with. Good Lakshmana, go with the filled quiver and save him from his foes.

*Lakshmana.* It is the voice of a fiend mimicking the cry of Rama. This wood is full of fiends. I suspect the deer was the shape of the Evil One to lure Rama from this cottage.

*Sita.* (*Angrily.*) You will not help ? I sense the trick. Do you not love me ?



*Lakshmana.* (*Unsuspecting*) I do.

*Sita.* (*Still more angry.*) You confess it too. It is this body that you want—this body, pure from God and pure for Rama only.

*Lakshmana.* I do not understand.

*Sita.* (*Stamping on the ground.*) You understand well. If Rama dies, you are the next-of-kin and will sue me for this sinless flesh. That is why you will not rescue Rama.

*Lakshmana* (*With great dignity.*) Think as you like. I have Rama's mandate to be here to defend you from the unseen dwellers of the forest. I will obey Rama's word. I mind not what you think or say or do.

*Sita.* (*Desperate.*) Coward! I will take the bow.

*Lakshmana.* (*Taking the bow from her hand.*) No! No! The beasts will kill you if you go alone.

*Sita.* I will remain quietly here, if you consent to bring Rama to me.

*Lakshmana.* (*Much against his will.*) Very well. I will leave you but for a moment.

(*As Lakshmana goes out to rescue Rama, Ravana comes in dressed as an anchorite.*)

*Ravana.* (*Counting his beads.*) I am old and infirm. There is a sacred text on that. What was that text? My memory so poor, specially for sacred texts.

*Sita.* (*Innocently.*) Welcome, father. Here is a bowl of milk.

*Ravana* (*Coarsely.*) I do not like milk. I like your hands.

*Sita.* (*Shrinking back*) You must not touch me. I am married.

*Ravana.* (*Exaggerating.*) You are scented as the jasmine, as shapely as the lotus, and pure-bosomed as the lily.

*Sita.* Do not speak to me. I am a wife and you are an anchorite.

*Ravana.* (*Disclosing himself.*) An anchorite of a different order! Rama and Lakshmana have deserted you. Will you take me as your husband or not?

*Sita.* Never.

*Ravana.* I am the prince of all the powers of the air. Lanka, washed by the restless tide, is my abode. Look on my form and fear.

(*Ravana throws off his disguise and appears as a huge demon with ten heads.*)

*Sita.* (*Repenting.*) I wronged Lakshmana. He loved me as if I were his mother. This fiend loves me for my flesh.

*Ravana.* Will you share my empire? Choose quickly; Lakshmana may be here soon.

*Sita.* (*Highly inflamed.*) Tear the cub from the lion's den, ere you tear me from my Rama. Touch the hooded cobra's fang ere you touch his Sita. Pluck the stars from midnight ere you pluck me from my Rama. I was, am and ever will be Rama's wife.

*Ravana.* I will pluck you by the hair and lift you to my cloud car that waits.

(*Ravana rises with Sita in his arms into the cloudcar to take her to Lanka. The royal eagle, Jatayu, attempts to rescue Sita in the air from Ravana, but falls to the ground wounded.*)

*Sita.* (*Speaking in the air from the arms of Ravana.*) Poor wounded beak, as defenceless as I. My necklace drops. In God's time Rama must find me.

(*Sita drops all her ornaments from the air and is borne away to Lanka.*)



PART IV  
THE SEARCH FOR SITA

SCENE I

THE ASOKA GROVE AT LANKA

*(Hanuman, in the form of a monkey, discovers Sita who is imprisoned here by Ravana. Sita is sitting alone under the asoka tree.)*

*Hanuman.* *(Chattering.)* Rama ! Rama ! Rama !

*Sita.* Am I overhearing my own thoughts ?

*Hanuman.* Silly.

*Sita.* *(Looking up.)* Can you talk ?

*Hanuman.* Soft-eyed Sita, sad-eyed Sita. Rama ! Rama !  
Rama ! I can speak more if you want.

*Sita.* Why do you not say more ?

*Hanuman.* At the Dandaka forest, soon after Ravana bore you to Lanka, Rama and Lakshmana returned from the chase, killing the deer, and anxious for you. They saw the trail of Ravana's feet and your ornaments on the ground. The bleeding vulture told them the rest.

*Sita.* Ravana flew with me across the sea, and laid me down, worn and broken, on Lanka's dust. His guards watch me by day ; and by night he comes to press his plea. I will not wed him.

*Hanuman.* *(Dropping a ring.)* Do you know this ring ?

*Sita.* *(Recognising it.)* It is the ring of Rama, lettered with his name, which he put on my forefinger on the bridal evening. You must be Rama's messenger !

*Hanuman.* Rama's army is ready. He wants to know where you are, and I, who have found you, will tell him.

*Sita.* *(Taking the jewel from her brow.)* Take this jewel. Rama will remember it.

*Hanuman.* I will give it him. Rama with his whole host will be here soon and will vanquish Ravana.

*(Hanuman flies away to tell Rama to collect his forces for the rescue of Sita.)*



PART V

THE BATTLE FOR SITA

SCENE I

THE BATTLEFIELD NEAR LANKA

*(In the middle of the plain, Indrajit, the chief of Ravana's army, is seen by Rama driving a chariot with the head of Sita on the wheels.)*

*Rama. (Much shocked.)* There is Indrajit, with the bleeding brow of Sita slung on the spinning axle ! He has killed her.

*Lakshmana.* Fear not. It is the likeness of Sita's countenance framed by his magic to make us despondent in the fight. Indrajit cannot kill her because Ravana sighs for Sita's lips. Sita must live so long as Ravana's passion lives.

*Rama. (Fiercely.)* Or so long as we let them live.

*(At this Lakshmana shoots at Indrajit and kills him. Ravana seeing this, comes to aid Indrajit, and rains arrows on Rama and Lakshmana.)*

*Rama.* I will not spare Ravana. Right must triumph in right.

*Ravana.* It is the flaming dart and not the flaming word which heralds victory.

*Rama.* Brahma's weapon is not stopped by plates of mail. Take this bolt laden with Brahma's lightning.

*Ravana.* Though I am struck, still I will strike.

*Rama.* You strike my armour made by Brahma and proof from hurt.

*Ravana.* I sink.

*(There is a cloud burst, accompanied by thunder and lightning, as Ravana sinks to the ground and dies.)*

*Lakshmana.* Angels of rain and lightning, help us !

*Rama.* He is dead, his whole army is in full flight. We will pass the city gates without resistance and claim at last my long-lost Sita.

*(There is a blast of trumpets. Rama, with his troops enters the city.)*



PART VI  
THE REUNION OF SITA AND RAMA

SCENE I

THE PALACE OF RAVANA

*(Rama has assembled a court near the palace of Ravana to receive Sita. Sita is quietly walking towards Rama on his throne. Behind her is a funeral pyre kindled for the dead.)*

*Sita. (Touching Rama's sandals.)* Your long-sought Sita lies at your feet. Your spears have found me at last.

*Rama.* But in Ravana's palace,

*Sita. (Shuddering, as with pain.)* His hands have never stained me.

*Rama.* They tried to stain you.

*Sita.* Pure was I in Janaka's palace, and as pure under Ravana's roof.

*Rama.* I did not doubt that.

*Sita.* But you hinted that. I will prove my purity by the pyre. If I be impure, may my body burn to ashes. God, who knows and sees all, will save me from the fire.

*(There is consternation in the Court. Sita rushes out, climbs the pyre, and lights it.)*

*Rama.* O God, she is burning. I did not mean to say what I did. Quench the blaze!

*Sita. (Confidently from the pyre.)* Flames devour the sinful, not the sinless.

*Agni, the god of Fire*

*(Lightly bearing Sita up from the flames and setting her down before Rama.)* See her tresses free of fire, see her vesture free

of flame, see her body free of burns. This stainless maid, this taintless wife, this sinless queen,—take your Sita. In this car, Sita with you seated, glide smoothly through the air, above Lanka's towers till you alight safely on the soil of Dasaratha, there to be crowned by Bharata's hand. Bharata, your loyal brother, waits to give you back the kingdom.

*Rama. (Taking Sita by the hand and stepping into the magic chariot of Agni.)* We will rise together.

*(Agni disappears, His car slowly rises in the air, and bears Rama and Sita to the city of Ajodhya where they are crowned by the hands of Bharata.)*



## THE ARGUMENT

The story of the Mahabharata is given in seven parts.

In Part I, Sanjaya, the spiritual teacher, is showing Dhritarashtra, the father of the hundred Kuru brothers, the mock fight between the Pandavas and the Kurus. As their tournament becomes serious, Duryodhana, eldest of the Kurus, and Arjuna, the third of the Pandavas, are stopped from fighting. A stranger, Karna, the disguised child of the sun-god, challenges Arjuna. Arjuna refuses to fight with him as Karna will not disclose his lineage which the laws of the tournament require. The games close, and Duryodhana proclaims Karna victorious.

In Part II, Arjuna and his brothers are, by the scheming of Duryodhana, exiled from their home to the palace of Lac. A stranger friend informs them that the building is made of inflammable material and is to be burnt that very night by the secret messengers of Duryodhana. Arjuna and his brothers themselves burn the building and escape by a secret stair-case. Duryodhana thinks them dead.

In Part III, which describes the bridal choice of princess Draupadi, Karna draws the bow. The princess refuses him as he does not declare his birth. Arjuna, leading the Pandavas who are disguised as Brahmans, bends the bow and wins Draupadi. There is a fight between the Kurus and the Pandavas. But Krishna intervenes and shows the king that these Brahmans are really the Pandavas returned from the forest, and escaped from the burning palace.

In Part IV, Yudhisthira, the eldest of the Pandavas, during a game of dice gambles away his brother, himself, his lands and the princess Draupadi to Duryodhana, who exposes Draupadi in public. On the intervention of Dhritarashtra, the Pandavas and the princess are restored their lives, but are exiled from the kingdom.

In Part V, Arjuna, who has returned with his brothers from the forest to fight for his kingdom, refuses to kill his kinsmen. Krishna, his charioteer, shows himself in his divine form and explains that Arjuna does not slay but man's Karma slays. Arjuna is enheartened and goes into battle.

In Part VI, Arjuna kills Karna. The army of the Kurus is defeated and the Pandavas triumph.

In Part VII, Vyasa, the sage, by prayer and vision shows that the whole battle of the Mahabharata was an illusion. The people are comforted. Yudhisthira begins the golden reign of India with Draupadi as his queen.



SCENES FROM THE MAHABHARATA

*Characters :*

- DHRITARASHTRA—The blind king, father of the hundred Kuru brothers.  
DURYODHANA—Eldest of the Kurus.  
DUSHASANA—Youngest of the Kurus.  
KARNA—Son of Surya, the sun-god.  
YUDHISTIRA—Eldest of the five Pandavas.  
BHIMA—One of the Pandavas.  
ARJUNA—One of the Pandavas.  
KRISHNA—The god attendant on Arjuna.  
SANJAYA—A spiritual teacher.  
VYASA—A seer.

PART I

THE CROWNING OF KARNA

SCENE I

*THE FIELD OF TOURNAMENT*

*(Sanjaya is describing to the blind king, Dhritarashtra the mock tournament which is being played on the open green between the Kurus and the Pandavas.)*

*Sanjaya.* Bhima, the second of the Pandus, O king, is rushing upon his charger with uplifted mace.

*Dhritarashtra,* Against whom ?

*Sanjaya.* Against Duryodhana, the chief of the Kurus.

*Dhritarashtra.* Are they in earnest ?

*Sanjaya.* They seem to be.

*Dhritarashtra.* We proclaimed a mock fight. Will they clash ?

*Sanjaya.* They might.

*Dhritarashtra.* Stop the games, Bring my children to me.

*(The attendants stop the games, and the Kurus and the Pandavas are brought to the king's presence.)*

*Duryodhana.* *(Before the king.)* We were but playing. We play according to your rule publicly proclaimed.

*Dhritarashtra.* Play may lead to war. I will not permit battle between brother and brother. Now both of you, depart from the lists.

*Karna.* *(Making obeisance to the king.)* I am a stranger,  
*Arjuna,* *(Following him.)* I know not the man.



*Duryodhana.* (To the king.) Karna is not our kinsman. May he not fight? I fling the challenge, Arjuna.

*Arjuna.* And I take it.

*Dhritarashtra.* The games will continue. Karna and Arjuna will display their feats of arm.

(*Karna and Arjuna enter the lists. Sanjaya describes their combat to the king.*)

*Sanjaya.* Arjuna has taken his station with shield and sword. Karna opposes him. They are loudly railing one against the other.

*Dhritarashtra.* Call them.

(*The attendants bring Karna and Arjuna to the pavilion quarrelling.*)

*Arjuna.* I must know his lineage.

*Karna.* I will not tell that. What has lineage to do with valour in arms?

*Arjuna.* Decide, O King. The law states that no one of base birth may enter the lists. I claim to know his birth, and will not fight till I know.

*Dhritarashtra.* That is the law. (*Speaking gently to Karna.*) Tell us who you are?

*Karna.* (*Crestfallen and unwilling to declare his secret birth through the sun-god.*) That I cannot say. Look at me and judge.

*Dhritarashtra.* (*Viewing Karna carefully.*) A strange beam hovers above him. His brave armour is steeped in sunlight. Yet his head seems to droop to the ground, like a dewladen lotus, in deep abasement at the question that I ask. (*Looking at Arjuna.*) A rain cloud hangs over Arjuna's face. (*Kindly to Arjuna.*) Arjuna, look!

*Arjuna.* (*Firmly.*) I will not look. He must declare who he is, as the law decrees.

*Dhritarashtra.* There will be no fight to-day.

*Duryodhana.* Arjuna has devised this excuse to evade the affray. He fears Karna. Karna is victorious.

*Karna.* (*Speaking to Duryodhana.*) I want only your friendship.

*Duryodhana.* Take this signet ring from my finger as the token of my friendship. At another hour, when the stars are more propitious, we will meet Arjuna, not singly but together.

(*The games are closed. Half the people shout victory for Karna and half for Arjuna.*)



## PART II

## THE PALACE OF LAC

## SCENE I

## A ROOM IN THE PALACE

(*Arjuna and his brothers are gathered together in the main room of the palace. It is evening. There is a hush of expectation as Arjuna speaks.*)

*Arjuna.* Exiled!

*Bhima.* Because Duryodhana trapped us into a quarrel and tried to lure us into a combat which we refused.

*Yudhisthira.* This was all the scheming of Duryodhana.

*Bhima.* We have every comfort here. The place is richly furnished. We have food, attendants and all that we can wish for.

*Arjuna.* This wall smells strangely! (*Cutting the wall*) Beneath the white is tar. (*Examining it more carefully.*) Is there no brick here? The wall is full of hemp and straw. Within the straw are rods of wood covered with resin!

*Yudhisthira.* (*Also examining.*) The mortar is blended with pitch.

*Bhima.* (*Who has been walking in all the apartments.*) It is the same in every room. They are all ready for firing. It was the thought of Duryodhana, and not the king, to bring us here.

*A stranger.* (*Who has come into the room unobserved.*) You guess rightly. This building is built to be burnt. Duryodhana

planned it, and to-night, when you are sleeping, his secret emissaries will fire it. Now listen to me.

(*Ariuna and his brothers gather round the stranger in rapt attention.*)

*Arjuna.* The escape?

*The stranger.* Yes, the escape. (*Pointing to a trapdoor in the floor.*) Lift this.

*Arjuna.* (*Lifting the trapdoor.*) There is a passage below.

*The stranger.* It is the secret stairway. It leads below the ground to the river. You yourselves are to set fire to this building now. All your guests have gone. It is evening and there is a rising wind. When the palace is in flames, all of you, with torches lit, will silently follow me to the end of the subterranean corridor where I will wait for you. I go before you to prepare the boat which will take us safely from this dungeon of death. Duryodhana will think you dead, the people will think you dead. Duryodhana's scheme will miscarry. Do your work and I will do mine. (*As he is descending the secret stairs.*) When you have fired the place, put the stone floor back so that nothing is seen or suspected.

*Arjuna.* (*Quickly apprehending the situation.*) The building must be fired immediately. I will set the first light in this room. Go each of you, from room to room, kindling the red flame whose tongues shall lick the ceiling. Go quickly. Return quickly. Follow me down the secret stairs. There is not a moment to be lost!

(*All the brothers go from room to room firing the whole building which begins to shoot with long sheets of flame.*)

*Arjuna.* I am choked with the fumes. The vapour is thicken-



ing around me. The lived flame is hissing at every step. I lose all foothold. Are all here ?

*All the brothers.* All are here.

*Arjuna.* Come carefully down the steps.

*(Arjuna and his brothers escape by the secret passage and sail away in the boat with the stranger. They go to a forest to live in concealment.)*

## PART III

## THE MARRIAGE OF DRAUPADI

## SCENE I

## THE PALACE OF DRUPADA

*(The suitors for the hand of Draupadi are assembled in the open Court. On one side are the Kurus headed by Duryodhana and Karna. On the other side are the Pandavas, disguised as Brahmanas and led by Arjuna. Some distance away is Krishna silently watching the situation. In the centre is King Drupada, on a glittering throne with the princess Draupadi, holding the bridal garland for the husband whom she is going to choose.)*

*King Drupada.* *(Speaking slowly with a royal accent)* Princess Draupadi of the drooping eyes will wed him who bends the bow best.

*Krishna.* *(Thinking silently.)* There will be confusion now.

*King Drupada.* Let the suitors stand there and shoot  
*(One suitor follows the other but not one can pull the bow. All the Kurus try the bow in vain till Karna steps forth.)*

*Princess Draupadi.* *(Seeing him.)* I dread him. May he miss the mark.

*Karna.* *(Holding the bow easily and taking sure aim.)* Is it hard ?

*Princess Draupadi.* *(In much fear.)* Stop. What is your lineage ?

*Karna.* *(Amazed.)* My name is Karna.

*Princess Draupadi.* Your lineage I say. The king's daughter, born a Kshatra, cannot wed you.



*Karna.* (Letting slip the bow and looking at the sun.) I retire.

*Arjuna.* (Springing swiftly behind Karna, disguised as a Brahmana.) I claim the next chance. Hear this hiss.

(Before any one can speak, Arjuna has shot the bow and hit the mark.)

*Princess Draupadi.* (With much excitement before the king can speak.) The eyes of the bride fall on you as sweetly as this encircling garland.

(The princess puts the garland on Arjuna as the token of her choice.)

*Duryodhana.* (Coming from the ranks of the Kurus.) This is a priest. (Pointing to Arjuna in disguise.) He cannot marry.

*All the Kurus.* (Shouting together.) He cannot marry.

*Karna.* I will resist it with the sword.

*Bhima.* (Stepping out of the ranks of the Pandavas.) I will defend her with my might. (The Kurus and the Pandavas come to blows.)

*Krishna.* (Separating the parties.) I foretold this. (Addressing the king) Can you not recognise them? This is Arjuna. This is Bhima. This is Yudhisthira.

*Duryodhana.* (Recognising the Pandavas as Krishna takes off their disguise.) Alive? Escaped?

*Krishna.* Alive and escaped. These are your brothers the royal Pandavas dressed as hermits, who survived the fire you made for them.

*Drupada.* I decide the bride as Arjuna's. Let us depart. The soldiery shall see that there be no clash on the bridal night.

(All retire. The soldiers keep the two parties from fighting, and the scene closes.)

## PART IV

## THE FATAL DICE

## SCENE I

HASTINAPUR, THE PALACE  
OF DURYODHANA

(Duryodhana has invited Yudhisthira, with the Pandavas, to play dice. Yudhisthira is anxiously watching for the falling of the dice.)

*Yudhisthira.* I Will not play any more.

*Duryodhana.* The last throw.

*Yudhisthira.* I have lost my kingdom, gambled away my brothers and.....

*Duryodhana.* Yourself?

*Yudhisthira.* Well. I will stake myself.

*Duryodhana.* (Throwing the dice.)

You see the dice?

*Yudhisthira.* Yes. Fate is not with me. By the play my life is yours—forfeit to you.

*Duryodhana.* (Who has all along been cheating.) I play fair. I will return your kingdom, your brothers, and yourself if.....

*Yudhisthira.* (Anxious.) If?

*Duryodhana.* If you stake the last prize—the princess Draupadi.

*Yudhisthira.* (In the heat of the moment with the gambler's instinct.) I do.



*Duryodhana.* (In triumph as the dice fall in his favour.) All are mine at last, even (laughing) the princess. (Speaking to Dushasana, his youngest brother.) Call Draupadi from her chamber instantly. I want her.

(All the Pandavas are standing astonished. They can do nothing as Duryodhana's armed men are in the room. Dushasana drags Draupadi in and throws her into the room.)

*Dushasana.* There!

*Princess Draupadi.* (Beseechingly to the helpless Pandavas.) Will none protect?

*Duryodhana.* None save me.

*Princess Draupadi.* I am not yours by law. Yudhisthira staked himself first and lost. A slave cannot stake a wife of queenly birth. I am not yours.

*Duryodhana.* (In anger.) Sit on my knee or I will tear the robe from your flesh.

*Bhima.* (Blenching and speaking to himself.) I will break his knee in battle, drain from his limbs every drop of blood for words such as these..... but not now..... (Looking at Duryodhana's armed guards.) Now we can do nothing in the presence of these spears.

*Princess Draupadi.* (With flaming eyes.) Foully you brought Yudhisthira to this palace. Falsely you loaded the dice. Shamefully you stripped him of his kingdom, his brethren and.....

*Duryodhana.* (Anticipating her.) And stripped him of his wife. (Jeeringly.) Is not your attire loose?

*Princess Draupadi.* Shameful speech.

*Duryodhana.* The shameful act is yet to come.

*Princess Draupadi.* (Shrinking.) You will not dare to touch me.

*Duryodhana.* I will not, but my menials will. (Ordering his attendants.) Disrobe her!

*Princess Draupadi.* (In prayer to Krishna.) In this need extreme, help and save.

*Duryodhana.* Open her vest, bare her body to all beholders. (Krishna is invisibly multiplying her vests as the attendants are undressing her.) Vests within vest? (Turning his eyes to her sari.) Break the sari's middle knot, unbind the full silk. (As Krishna is invisibly multiplying her sari.) Interminable roll of muslin! Foiled? I will seize her robed.

(As Duryodhana is about to seize the princess his father, Dhritarashtra, hearing the noise comes into the room.)

*Dhritarashtra.* (Surprised.) What is this?

*Duryodhana.* (Speaking to his father.) I have won her by the rules of the game which we have been playing as you know. Yudhisthira has lost all.

*Princess Draupadi.* Grant, O King, but one prayer that Yudhisthira, his brethren and I, be not the slaves of Duryodhana. We resign our kingdom, and retire to the forest. Only free us.

*Dhritarashtra.* You are all free. Your kingdom is forfeited to Duryodhana. Two masters in one realm make for confusion.

*Duryodhana.* (Thinking to himself gloomily.) I sought to burn the Pandavas. I sought to shame Draupadi. I have failed in all except that the throne is mine. But is the throne safe from the Pandavas hands? Will they not come back from their seclusion to contest with me on the battlefield?

(With brooding fears Duryodhana goes away. Draupadi and the Pandavas are liberated by the king. They retire to the forest.)



## PART V

## ARJUNA'S CHARIOT, OR THE BHAGWAT GITA

## SCENE I

## AT SUNRISE ON THE PLAIN OF KURUKSHETRA

*(The Pandavas have returned from their retirement from the forest, and are gathered on the battlefield to regain their kingdom. Krishna, in the shape of a charioteer, is holding the reins of Arjuna's chariot. Arjuna is about to climb into chariot, when he begins to reflect.)*

*Arjuna.* *(Looking at the sun-rise.)* It is a clear gold dawn.

*Krishna.* Growing into grey.

*Arjuna.* To think that there should be no peace on a sunrise such as this.

*Krishna.* Peace? Duryodhana shamed Draupadi in the public place, sought to burn you in your palace, robbed you of your brothers' land and wife. Still you pause?

*Arjuna.* The sin is his, the Karma his. He will pay his debt in God's time. God, not man, should bring the fruits of retribution. I pause, because I cannot kill my kinsmen. Are they not my brothers?

*Krishna.* They have wronged their mother's womb.

*Arjuna.* For their wrong must I be the slayer? Must I slay and must I sin? Why should the sinless be forced to sin?

*Krishna.* Because of Karma.

*Arjuna.* What have I done?

*Krishna.* Done much in the past, before you were born, which you now forget. By the merit of your past, you were born

a prince. By the fault of your past, you have brothers to oppose and hurt.

*Arjuna.* Then this battle is because I hurt my brothers, and they hurt me in the past.

*Krishna.* The seeds of Karma fructify into the harvest of pain.

*Arjuna.* *(Resisting.)* Still I will not fight. I will not slay my kinsmen. If I wronged them in the past, that wrong is done. I will not wrong them more. Remove the harness. Dismantle the chariot. I will send messengers to stop the battle. I will confer with the Kurus.

*Krishna.* Stay! I will make you see, and take the blinding film from your eyes. *(Dropping the form of the charioteer he appears to Arjuna as Krishna.)*

*Arjuna.* O God!

*Krishna.* *(Speaking with a masterful voice)* He that thinks he slays, knows Me not. He that thinks he is slain, knows Me not. The slayer and the slain are the forms of Maya—this vast illusion—that I make. The world is the field for work. Do your work, careless of the world's regard. Do it, and shrink not from doing it manfully.

*Arjuna.* *(Finding the solution to his perplexity.)* It is the man's own Karma that kills, not I.

*Krishna.* All is illusion. The actors, the acting, and the end of action are shadows. Arjuna, you must act.

*Arjuna.* *(Newly fully elated.)* I will act. Prick the steeds. Speed the wheels. Perish inaction.

*(Arjuna rushes into battle on the chariot driven swiftly by Krishna.)*



## PART VI

## THE BATTLE

## SCENE I

## THE BATTLEFIELD

*(Krishna has stopped the chariot on the battlefield. Arjuna is looking for his main adversary, Karna.)*

*Arjuna. (In full armour, with his bow tense.)* Where is Karna? Bhishma has fallen. Drona has fallen. My son, Abhimanyu, is killed. I must meet Karna.

*Krishna. (Pointing to the distance.)* There is Karna. His flaming crest and gleaming helmet reveal him. A hail of arrows is coming. *(To Arjuna.)* Put up your shield.

*Arjuna. (As he dips his head.)* These arrows are Karna's. I will return a heavier shower.

*(A thick darkness covers the battlefield as the arrows fly from side to side.)*

*The Voice of Karna. (Tauntingly.)* Do you want to know my lineage now? This his will tell you. *(He lets the arrow go with great force.)*

*Arjuna.* It has struck my breast plate and is piercing through the chains to the flesh at my heart.

*Krishna. (Plucking the arrow from Arjuna's breast.)* Steady.

*Arjuna. (Losing grip of the bow and falling to the ground.)* Wait, Karna, till I re-string the bow. It is not fair to strike your falling foe.

*The Voice of Karna. (As he shoots a number of arrows in swift succession.)* All is fair in war.

*(Karna's chariot accidentally slips, and as its axle breaks, Karna crashes to the ground.)*

*Arjuna.* The car has cracked.

*Karna.* This is the work of chance. You cannot justly kill me now.

*Arjuna. (Pointing the fatal arrow at Karna.)* Justly? Was it just to expel the Pandavas? Justice will be done this way.

*(Arjuna lets fly the death arrow which hits Karna on the eye brow and kills him. There is confusion on the battlefield. The whole army of the Kurus is routed and Duryodhana is also killed.)*

*Krishna. (As he sees the whole host flying.)* This red day is the last.

*Arjuna.* I have done my duty, dreadful though it was. I must wash these hands deep-dyed in my brother's blood.

*(Arjuna and Krishna move away in the chariot to the main camp. The battle is over and the Pandavas are victorious.)*



PART VII  
THE VISION OF VYASA

SCENE I

BY THE BANKS OF THE GANGES AT  
SUN-SET

*(After the performance of the funeral rites of the slain, the people have assembled by the river. The prayer is being led by the seer, Vyasa.)*

*Vyasa.* As the sun sinks, let us pray for the souls of the slain.

*Arjuna.* I mourn most for the deeds my hands have done unwillingly.

*Yudhisthira.* The widows weep with you. They will not be comforted. Desolation has walked in our streets. Brother cries for brother, and orphan for parent. Who will comfort them?

*Vyasa.* I will comfort them. I will wipe the tears from their eyes, and their lashes will be filled with the dews of joy. Let each and all with me lift their hand in prayer and say with me. "Peace! Peace! Peace everlasting to those who live and those who have died."

*(The people repeat the words of the saint and there is a stirring of the waves of the river from which shadowy forms gradually rise.)*

*Arjuna.* Can the waves hear our prayer? The lifeless river seems full of life.

*Yudhisthira.* Shapes I see forming into brows that I know.

*Arjuna.* Shapes of warriors slain. Shapes of chariots.

THE VISION OF VYASA

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*Yudhisthira.* Is the armoury of war astir again?

*Arjuna.* Noise of drum and clarion blast!

*Vyasa.* *(Quietly.)* The war was *Maya*—the illusion of your eyes. The slain were not slain. Here they are.

*Arjuna.* What! Karna's form! I did not kill him. and my son Abhimanyu, he lives!

*Yudhisthira.* Bhishma and Drona too!

*Arjuna.* And Duryodhana, whom Bhima foully slew. He looks with eyes seeking forgiveness of me and the princess Draupadi. I forgive, and ask forgiveness of the brethren whom I have slain.

*Vyasa.* *(To the multitude.)* Let lamentation give place to singing. To-night, till the stars set, the dead are with you. Commune with them.

*(There is a long silence. The people are re-united with the dead. Slowly Vyasa raises his eyes in meditation and all the forms vanish. The people look up and see that it is morning.)*

*Arjuna.* It is a new day.

*Vyasa.* Blessings on Yudhisthira whose reign begins this dawn.

*Arjuna.* Blessings on the fearless Draupadi—the queen.

*The People, shouting with one voice.*

We greet thee, O dauntless queen!

*(Yudhisthira and Draupadi, accompanied by Vyasa and Arjuna walk away from the river to the sound of holy chanting. The people follow them slowly and silently.)*



## THE LEGENDS OF BUDDHA

### THE ARGUMENT

This legend is told in four parts.

In Part I, Prince Gautama is shut up in the palace of pleasure by his father King Suddhodana. The prince sees a vision of age, disease and death, and decides to renounce the world, and retire to the forest in order to contemplate on the mysteries of life.

In Part II, he leaves his palace while the princess, Yasodhara, is sleeping.

In Part III, Prince Gautama attains enlightenment and defeats the hosts of Mara, the Evil One.

In Part IV, Buddha passes into Pari-Nirvana, or the trance of death, after having made known his new doctrine to men.

## TRE LEGENDS OF BUDDHA

### *Characters :*

PRINCE GAUTAMA—The Enlightened One.

PRINCESS YASODHARA—His wife.

KING SUDDHODANA—His father.

RAHULA—His son.

CHANDAKA—His charioteer.

KANTAKA—His horse.

ANANDA—His favourite disciple.

MARA—The Evil One.

ANGELS and MONKS.



## PART I

## THE PALACE OF PLEASURE

## SCENE I

## THE PALACE OF VISHRAMAVANA

*(It is morning. The king is thinking of his son, Prince Gautama, who, as the prophecy foretold, was to abandon the world of pleasure made for him.)*

*King Suddhodana.* The sands of time are running fast—little by little, events to be move to their appointed end. Do what I may, I cannot control my son's mind. From the four corners of my kingdom have I gathered seers skilled in the interpretation of dreams; and they all say, as if in concert against me, that my son will renounce the crown of gold for dominion over the souls of men. I have built this palace for him, so that shut away from the sorrows of the outer world, surrounded by companions of beauty and instruments of sweetest tone, he may learn to rule as his forefathers did. Where is the princess?

*Princess Yasodhara, (Entering quietly.)* Here, my lord.

*King Suddhodana.* How is Gautama?

*Princess Yasodhara.* Most unhappy.

*King Suddhodana.* Still moody?

*Princess Yasodhara.* Not moody but troubled. Seven days ago, when the dawn was gray, Prince Gautama eluded the watch, and by the postern gate left the palace. On the way he met a man shrinked of skin and wrinkled of face. The Prince said to me, "What a ghastly sight have I seen to-day, O beauti-

ful Yasodhara. Will you, too, be as that man is in the years to come? Do gray hairs, palsied arm and failing breath await you, Yasodhara; the loveliest form that earth has for me? Is your slowly dying body doomed to drop as the cinders of the funeral pyre?"

*King Suddhodana.* Did you not console him?

*Princess Yasodhara.* I did. I put my new born son Rahula in his arms. The child smiled, but the prince was grave, and went on speaking as if he did not see the child. There, the prince is coming.

*(Prince Gautama, in deep contemplation, enters.)*

*King Suddhodana.* Why are you so sad?

*Prince Gautama.* In the street of this city I saw a man haggard and worn by disease. His face will ever haunt me. I see him by day and by night. Ever in the silence his voice speaks to me, "Prince Gautama, be prince no more. Disease waits on the rich man and the poor. All flesh fades into naught. Leave all, wife child and father, and be the world's deliverer."

*King Suddhodana. (Aside.)* It is vain to argue with him. Disputation will vex him more. There is but one way to alter his present mood. *(Directing the attendants.)* Play the softest music that your hands can command, sing in the lowest key, dance the daintiest steps.

*Five girls begin to play the harp gently in order to distract the prince from his gloom. Another band of girls comes in dancing. The prince is not affected by these sights and proceeds with his previous thoughts.)*

*Prince Gautama.* Further, I saw yasterday the worst sight of all—a dead man being borne to the burning ground on a litter, accompanied by wailing women. I thought "Will this also



happen to Yasodhara, to Rahula, and to you and me, and to all men born or hereafter to be born?" And the voice—the voice that I hear both by day and by night—kept pressing on, "Go forth and see life as it is. See the bodies of men brutally broken by age, disease and death. See suffering, its cause and origin. Seek the uprising of all men's ill. Seek the remedy for all ills. Bring to men the life that really is, a life free from age, free from disease and free from death."

*King Suddhodana.* There is but one way out of suffering—and that is to be happy. I have tried to make you happy, as you must own.

*Prince Gautama.* That you have. But how can I be happy when others are unhappy?

*King Suddhodana.* (*Speaking to the attendants.*) My orders are that the prince is to remain in the palace. The doors are to be bolted and barred. (*King Suddhodana departs in dismay.*)

*Princess Yasodhara.* Prince, you do not understand your father and he does not understand you. I love you and therefore understand you.

*Prince Gautama.* My father stands between me and my destiny. My star calls me and I must answer it. The world wants me and I want the world. I must be the saviour of this city and the world.

*Princess Yasodhara.* Must your child and I suffer for this? O, redeemer from suffering, will you yourself give suffering? Is this the path out of suffering?

*Prince Gautama.* The path out of suffering is through sacri-

fice. You and I must immolate ourselves for the generations to come.

*Princess Yasodhara.* I go with you wherever you go. But consider well your steps, reflect on what you do.

*Prince Gautama.* I will reflect and will not act in haste.

(*All the characters retire and the scene closes.*)



## PART II

## THE RENUNCIATION

## SCENE I

## THE ROOM OF YASODHARA

*(It is midnight. The prince has come to see his wife and child for the last time. Chandaka, his charioteer, is outside the door awaiting his master's orders. The room is dimly lit. Yasodhara, with her child, is fast asleep, and her attendants, who have been playing music, are also fast asleep.)*

*Prince Gautama.* Every one is asleep—Yasodhara, and Rahula the new born, nestling so close to her. If I kiss the child, I will wake the mother. Yasodhara must not know that I am going. How puzzled I feel in mind. Is my mind set on any noble purpose? Should I leave Yasodhara a widow, and my son an orphan to the care of my good father? An I not come as a thief in the night to steal not ornaments—these are worldly goods which can be repaired,—but to steal the happiness of my wife and child, happiness which, if lost now, is lost for ever *(Struggling within.)* Rahula's smile! It is the infant's smile that I have watched so often. Yasodhara is in a deep slumber. It is better that she should be so. I will not go. *(Breaking down emotionally.)* I cannot go. How can I forsake that which I love most. Surely it must be a sin to forsake one's wife and child. *(Calling Chandaka quietly.)* Chandaka!

*Chandaka.* *(Opening the door silently.)* Here I am, my lord.

*Prince Gautama.* Is the horse ready?

*Chandaka.* Caparisoned and ready.

*Prince Gautama.* Unbridle the bit. I will not leave to-night.  
*Chandaka.* *(Surprised.)* My lord is digturbed. Your bidding will be done.

*Prince Gautama.* *(Still wavering.)* I have not yet decided. Wait outside, *(Chandaka withdraws.)*

*The Voice of the Deva.* "The time has come. The time has come. The time has come."

*Prince Gautama.* This is the voice I am always hearing—the chime which has worn my brain through. I recognise the voice—that slow undertone of words in still space—that sound within the sound which speaks above the fret and stir of this feverish world. It is the whisper which has pursued me since my life began—the whisper incessant that tolls the death of all that I hold most dear.

*The Voice of the Deva (invisible)* If you know us so well, why do you not hear and obey?

*Prince Gautama.* I will obey in all things, but one. I will not abandon my wife and child. The demand of wife and child is more than the call of my own star.

*The Voice of the Deva.* More than the world's want for you? The world needs you.

*Prince Gautama.* Yasodhara and Rahula need me too. I will not go.

*The Devas.* *(Showing the illusory nature of the world.)* All that holds you from us is the shadow of your thoughts. Yasodhara is a shadow. Rahula is a shadow. Reflect and see.

*(Suddenly everything becomes shadowy. The prince realises that the world is an illusion.)*

*Prince Gautama.* *(Falling into a trance.)* Lo! the world has gone. It was nothing. I see the truth.



*The Devas. (Manifesting.)* See more. See us, the invisible presences who guard you from harm, the invisible voices who are leading you to salvation. Will you be the prince of a kingdom that perishes, or the prince of a kingdom that endures for ever? Will you exercise authority over the bodies of men who die, or over the souls of men which live for ever?

*Prince Gautama.* I have made my choice. I see and will help others to see the path to liberation.

*The Devas.* Liberate yourself, and liberation for others must follow.

*Prince Gautama.* I go.

*The Devas.* We will go with you.

*Prince Gautama. (Calling Chandaka.)* Bring the chariot. Rein the horses. I fly now, with all speed, from this city—the prison in which I have inhaled too long the foul air. Tell my father and Yasodhara that I will return—return when I have attained mastery of self. Till then, farewell all.

*(The prince goes away. He is followed by a host of invisible Devas rejoicing along with him.)*

## PART III

## EMANCIPATION

## SCENE I

THE BODHI-TREE AT BODH-GAYA<sup>1</sup>

*(The prince is in a deep trance beneath the wisdomtree. Angels are instructing him on the art of meditation. Mara, the Evil One, is in the seclusion of a bush seeking to tempt him.)*

*The Angel. (Speaking to the prince invisibly.)* Consider the mass of human ills—its uprising and its ceasing.

*Prince Gautama.* How to end them?

*The Angel.* By right understanding.

*Prince Gautama.* What is the right understanding of suffering?

*The Angel.* That suffering is illusory, and that it is possible to free the soul.

*Prince Gautama.* Free it! How!

*The Angel.* Repeat in thought these maxims of the eight-fold path to salvation, right outlook, right aims, right speech, right action, right living, right effort, right watchfulness, right concentration. Repeat, and repeat and repeat.

*(The prince repeats the above utterances. As he reflects on these thoughts, he passes into a state of ecstasy. His mind, suddenly illumined, is filled with the right preception of life. He returns from the trance with a new vision of things. His eyes*

1. Composed near the Bodhi tree at Bodh-Gaya.



are bright. *Mara appears as a messenger from his home, distracting him from this meditation.*)

*Mara.* Your cousin, Devadatta, has usurped the throne. Your father calls you, and the people want you. Come.

*Prince Gautama.* Begone Mara! I know your form, and perceive your thoughts.

*(Mara disappears. He creates the forms of three maidens who sing to the prince and try to distract him from meditation.)*

*First maiden.* *(Singing.)* A soft voice lends wings to thought. O prince!

*Second maiden.* *(Setting the lute to her lips.)* The lute's harmony makes the mind harmonious.

*Third maiden.* *(Dancing.)* The sight of nimble feet draws the soul to higher things.

*First maiden.* He will not hear.

*Second maiden.* He will not listen.

*Third maiden.* He will not see.

*Mara.* His eye and ear and mind are elsewhere, centered in that calm eternal which I hate and which I will perturb.

*(By Mara's magic the illusory maidens disappear. A whole host of evil forces, led by Mara, assail the prince.)*

*Prince Gautama.* The arrows of your army fall in vain, Mara.

*(The arrows of Mara's army hovering all about the prince are changed by the angels of the Bodhi tree into flowers which fall in showers on him.)*

*Mara.* *(Speaking to his army.)* Strike with spears of hate, slay with swords of pain. Smite, and spare him not.

*Prince Gautama.* *(Triumphantly.)* I have no thoughts of hate. I have no sense of pain. In the state of rapture, the trance which is

Nirvana, all thoughts have ceased, all passion spent; and the self within the self is lost in bliss supreme. Go elsewhere, Mara. Your blows are in vain.

*Mara.* One blow I will give—the last and best. With this discus I will split his soul in two.

*(The discus, by the action of the angels, alights on the brows of the prince as a garland of flowers.)*

*Prince Gautama.* *(Addressing Mara.)* Know you not that I have invisible warders?

*Mara.* He has won.

*(Mara retreats in confusion with his whole army. The angels of the Bodhi tree gradually wake the prince, now a Buddha.)*

*Prince Gautama.* *(Slowly waking from the trance.)* The troops of evil have fled. The pure soul did disperse them. This final illumination of mind in which I have seen all suffering cease, I will proclaim to mankind. For what I have done, they can do *(Looking round and seeing Yasodhara.)* Ah! Yasodhara, how came you here?

*Princess Yasodhara.* I followed you step by step till I came here. How could my soul do otherwise?

*Prince Gautama.* And Rahula too.

*Princess Yasodhara.* Both are your disciples—the obedient wife, the obedient son.

*Prince Gautama.* We shall establish together on earth a confraternity of men—the seekers of peace in the heart of turmoil.

*(The prince with Yasodhara and the child go together to spread the gospel of peace.)*



PART IV  
THE LAST TRANCE

SCENE I

A GROVE NEAR KUSHINAGAR

*(It is the month of May. Buddha is dying, having been poisoned by a blacksmith. Princes, nobles and monks have come from all parts of India. Ananda, his favourite disciple, is beside him.)*

*Buddha.* I forgive him.

*Ananda.* What ! The blacksmith who has poisoned you ?

*Buddha.* He has done nothing. All action is the action of our own soul. This man is the means of my attaining the last peace—the peace of pari-Nirvana.

*Ananda.* We will lose you.

*Buddha.* You will not lose my doctrine, nor the truth that I have declared to you. I have founded the doctrine of peace, the brotherhood of peaceful men. This will live after you. Great men are as autumn leaves on the tree of life. The tree sheds its leaves at the shedding season. My time has come, and I go without fear. O my followers, is there anything you would ask of me before I pass ?

*A Monk.* Does the soul live beyond life ?

*Buddha.* I know not.

*A Monk.* Is there a God ?

*Buddha.* I know not.

*A Monk.* Is there a self ?

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*Buddha.* I know not. I neither affirm nor deny a God, a soul, a self. Vain disputes arise from such questions. But I know that right conduct is right. It behoves us, therefore, to act rightly.

*Ananda.* He is sinking. Ask him no more questions. His eyes are closing as they did daily when he went into trance. But they will not open as they always did. The master has passed.

*A Monk.* We will not mourn for him, but rejoice. For he who gave supreme happiness to men, is himself supremely happy.

*(The monks, singing a low chant, bear away Buddha's body.)*



## THE LEGENDS OF KRISHNA

### THE ARGUMENT

In Part I, Krishna takes away the garments of the Gopis and climbs up a tree. He plays on his flute, thus drawing the Gopis to him. The thought of shame is lost in the thought of love, and the Gopis become the devotees of Krishna.

In Part II, on a moonlit night Krishna's flute attracts a number of Gopis, the chief of whom is Radha. Krishna disappears with Radha. All the Gopis search for them. Radha and Krishna reappear as the love of God in each Gopi.

In Part III, a hunter accidentally hits Krishna on the foot during meditation. Krishna ascends to heaven.

## THE LEGENDS OF KRISHNA

### *Characters :*

**KRISHNA**—The youthful god.

**THE GOPIS**—The wood-nymphs.

**RADHA**—The beloved of Krishna.

**A HUNTER.**



PART I  
THE MAGIC FLUTE, OR KRISHNA AND  
THE GOPIS

SCENE I

A LAKE NEAR BRINDABAN<sup>1</sup>

*(Krishna is piping on a summer morning along the road which leads to the lake.)*

*Krishna.* There are five stops on my flute. When I place a finger on this stop, the wind breathes a sound as soft as this. *(He blows beautiful notes.)* When I shut off the air with three fingers thus, the sound flows sweeter still. When I close all the five stops, what a pause is there! This dusty road were dreary without my flute. What is this? A trail of feet, hastening toward the bank. Ah, there they are—the Gopis!

*The Gopis.* *(Jumping into the lake.)* You must not see us.

*(Krishna takes the garments of the Gopis, climbs the Kadamb tree, and plays his flute.)*

*Krishna.* You will never see your garments again. Will you come to me on the Kadamb tree?

*(The Gopis are attracted, but dare not come out of the water for shame.)*

*The first Gopi.* Shall we go to him?

*The second Gopi.* How can we?

*The third Gopi.* We can swim as far as that bed of lotus.

1. Composed near Govindji's Temple, Brindaban.

THE MAGIC FLUTE, OR KRISHNA AND GOPIES 55

With heads above and with bodies hid by the rippling wave, we can hear his song.

*(The three Gopis swim toward the bed of lotus. Krishna is seated on the arm of the tree which extends over the lotus bed.)*

*Krishna.* *(Piping.)* Come to me.

*The first Gopi.* How?

*Krishna.* Take my hand and come.

*The second Gopi.* We are as pure as the lotus flower.

*The third Gopi.* As the lotus opens only to the sun, so we obey only one whom we deem our lord.

*The first Gopi.* As the lotus closes in the sunset, so we are shut from you.

*Krishna.* Shame is of the body. The soul knows not shame. I seek your soul and not your body. Come.

*All the Gopis.* Give us our garments.

*Krishna.* Come and take them.

*All the Gopis.* No!

*Krishna.* *(Piping gently.)* Listen.

*All the Gopis.* Entranced by your music, with dripping feet, we come to you. *(All the Gopis approach Krishna.)*

*Krishna.* Have you forgot your shame?

*All the Gopis.* When soul meets soul as we do yours, the thought of shame is lost in the thought of love.

*(The Gopis become the devotees of Krishna, the emblem of the divinity of love, and are wholly absorbed in the purity of their worship.)*



## PART II

## THE TALE OF RADHA AND KRISHNA

## SCENE I

THE BANKS OF THE JUMNA<sup>1</sup>

(In the month of Kartik, under the quiet light of the moon, Krishna is dwelling on the power of sound.)

*Krishna.* (Meditating on his flute.) Sound ! What a strange thing is sound. This slip of bamboo, cut from its simple stem, is nothing till I put it to my lips. Even then it will not speak till my breath stir the air within. The tune will not flow till my touch give the pause and pace of song. The music—whence does the music come ? Not from the flute, not from the wind, not from my moving fingers—but from my soul, which meditating deep on the quality of cadence it desires, makes the notes which draw the people to this bank. Let me see the influence of sound to-night.

(Half in trance and half awake, Krishna puts the flute to his mouth, and pipes a soul-piercing strain. The Gopis, attracted by the sound, come and circle round Krishna who is unconscious of them.)

*All the Gopis.* (Taking hands and dancing round Krishna.) We have come. We have come. The moon is up, the stars are clear. Let go the flute and dance with us like this.

(The Gopis move round Krishna with miraculous singing and mystical motions.)

1. Composed at Brindaban, near the Jumna.

*Krishna.* (Partly passing out of trance.) What is this ? Why are you here ?

*All the Gopis.* Your flute has taught us to dance and will teach you too.

*Radha,* (Breaking away from the band of Gopis and stepping towards Krishna.) Krishna !

*Krishna.* (Suddenly seeing Radha and instantly falling in love.) Radha !

*Radha.* Give me the lute ; I will play and you will dance.

*Krishna.* Take the lute, but give me your eyes and arms.

*Radha.* I take the lute and give you my eyes and arms and heart too !

(In the rapture of love Krishna disappears into the air with Radha. The music and the dance stop.)

*The first Gopi.* They have vanished.

*The second Gopi.* The print of Krishna's lotus feet is still on the sand.

(The Gopis search the sandy banks for Radha and Krishna.)

*The third Gopi.* Here is a mirror dropped by Radha among the rustling leaves.

*The second Gopi.* In the mirror are Krishna with his restless flute, and Radha with her yearning eyes.

*The third Gopi.* From the mirror the forms of Radha and of Krishna are looking out to us.

(From the mirror Radha and Krishna reappear to the Gopis.)

*Krishna.* I am here.

*Radha.* I am with him.

*All the Gopis.* Where did you go ?

*Krishna.* Nowhere. I was the song in your heart. So long as you sang, I was there. When you ceased singing, I ceased



too. When you loved me, I made the form of Radha who is the form of love. Love is not love till love be lost. So I vanished, and Radha, who is my form, vanished with me too. Look for love and you will find him. You searched for love. Was your searching vain ?

*All the Gopis.* We may lose you yet.

*Krishna.* Not if you dwell on me. I am in your heart and your heart is in me—the seeker, the sought, and the seeking are in me.

*(The Gopis realise that Krishna is the power of God filling their hearts always. They break the dance and return home full of their rapturous experience.)*

## PART III

## THE ASCENSION OF KRISHNA

## SCENE I

## A LONELY FOREST

*(Krishna is seated alone under a tree in meditation.)*

*Krishna.* *(Silently thinking to himself.)* There is a time to be born, and a time to die. There is a season for fruit, and there is a season for the falling of the fruit. Are not the leaves of autumn yellow ? All things must pass ; there is an end for all. Ah, my foot is struck.

*(A hunter's arrow strikes Krishna on the foot.)*

*A hunter.* *(Coming from the thicket.)* I let go the quiver, thinking I saw a stag pass this way.

*Krishna.* *(Speaking softly.)* My foot you hit, unknowingly. The barb's poison is travelling to my heart. Nothing will arrest it, because my day has come.

*The hunter.* I saw distinctly a deer, antlers and all, above the tufts of the longest grass.

*Krishna.* *(Swooning.)* I forgive and ascend.

*(Krishna's body disappears. His spirit is seen ascending.)*

*The hunter.* Strange ! I see the saint rising in a great gust of air. Borne by unseen hands, his apparition mingles with the last cloud of the sunset's close.

*(The hunter walks away quietly reflecting on the scene.)*



## THE LEGENDS OF SHIVA

### THE ARGUMENT

In Part I, Uma is wooing Shiva at the altar. Shiva will not listen. Kamadeva, the god of love, sends Desire and Passion to distract him. Shiva's third eye kill Desire and stuns Passion. Uma is wedded to Shiva without Desire and without Passion.

In Part II, Uma stands before the two eyes of Shiva whose light maintains the earth. Shiva's third eye destroys the earth. Uma covers Shiva's two eyes and the earth is destroyed by Shiva's third eye.

In Part III, Shiva, as the god of destruction, and Vishnu, the god of preservation, appear in the form of man and wife to the Yogis in meditation and, show the eternal dance of the universe. By the vision, the eyes of the yogis are opened.

## THE LEGENDS OF SHIVA

### Characters :

SHIVA—The god of destruction.

UMA—His beloved.

VISHNU—The god of preservation.

KAMADEVA—The god of love.

DESIRE AND PASSION—The companions of Kamadeva.

YOGIS AND OTHERS.



PART I  
THE WOOING OF UMA

SCENE I

THE TEMPLE OF SHIVA

(Before the altar, toward sunset, Uma is praying to be united with Shiva. Shiva, visible to her, is in meditation above the altar. Kamadeva, Desire and Passion, are also watching beside Uma.)

Uma. (Burning a candle.) I light this yellow flame, and this gray fume of incense. (Turning to Shiva in prayer.) Can you see this taper bright with my love for you, and this ascending smoke, pure as my thought of you? Yet rapt in contemplation deep, legs folded, arms crossed and eyes closed, you sit above; listless of what I say and thoughtless of what I do for you. Will your ears always be deaf to me? I see you because the sinless mind brings sight to eyes. Will you never take flowers from this suppliant hand?

Kamadeva. (Speaking to Uma.) He will. I will distract Shiva with sweet sounds, awake him with the murmur of musical feet. Desire!

Desire. I am here.

Kamadeva. Passion!

Passion. I am at your command.

Kamadeva. Desire, blow the flute, and with all your songsters move in a ring round the thoughts of Shiva. Circle him with songs. Meet in the dance and break from the dance.

(Desire and all his company dance about Shiva who is sitting still above the altar.)

THE WOOING OF UMA

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Kamadeva. (Tauntingly.) The statuesque Presence! Will you look now?

(The third eye of Shiva, the eye of destruction, opens.)

Desire. The fringes of his eye-lid are terrible. I and all with me are consumed.

Passion. His eye stuns my senses.

(Desire is killed by Shiva's third eye. Passion falls unconscious.)

Kamadeva, (Regretting the loss of his companions.) Without Desire and without Passion, I am as a soul without a body.

The Voice of Shiva. (In a mysterious whisper.) Love should be desireless and passionless, all soul and no body. And this you are.

Uma. And me—what of me?

The Voice of Shiva. You are mine and I am yours in wedded bliss without desire and without passion.

(Uma sinks into deep prayer and is united with Shiva.)



## PART II

## THE EYE OF SHIVA

## SCENE I

## KAILAS—THE SNOW ABODE OF SHIVA

*(Stowly appear shadowy shapes of the snow-covered Himalayas, and lastly the peak of Mount Kailas. The whole scene is ghostly and unsubstantial, bathed in bright snow light. The form of Shiva is in the centre in deep meditation. The form of Uma and her companions are moving up the snow track to the bright hill where Shiva is seated.)*

*Uma.* *(A glittering form, carrying a shapely pitcher on her head.)* Form the snowy rills I bring pure water for the washing of the feet of my lord.

*Her handmaid.* As you step on the delicate snow, flowers of light spring up behind you.

*Uma.* *(Nearing Shiva.)* His mind is as still as the avalanche before it thunders to its fall.

*Her handmaid.* His eyes are open. From them seems to issue a path of light running perpendicularly to earth.

*Uma.* In that beam all the motes of the world are gathered the ocean, the mountains and the valleys.

*Her handmaid.* And all the creatures that live in the sea or above.

*Uma.* And all fruits and flowers—the whole girdle of earth is enshrined in his love-glistening eyes. Lat me see their stainless blue.

*(Uma passes before the two eyes of Shiva. The light from Shiva's eyes is obstructed from reaching the earth.)*

*Her handmaid.* *(A shadow, as of a coming tempest, overclouds Kailas.)* The light has gone out. Darkness wraps this peak from spur to summit.

*Uma.* The blackness extends to earth whose volcanoes spit in spasms of fearful fire.

*Her handmaid.* *(To Uma.)* Pray to Shiva to save the earth from such rude convulsions.

*Uma.* *(To Shiva.)* My Lord!

*The Voice of Shiva.* Stand aside. By your shadow which lies betwixt my earth and me, is wrought all destruction. My two eyes protect the earth from flame. My third eye destroys.

*Uma.* I cover with this bandage the eye that destroys, and move from your healing eyes the shadow of my presence.

*(As the third eye is covered, the earth which was destroyed returns to its old beauty.)*

*The Voice of Shiva.* Look. Spring returns and with her green covers the land.

*Uma.* Why did you destroy the earth?

*The Voice of Shiva.* I did not destroy it, but you did. It was the obstruction of your Self that destroyed it.

*Uma.* Must I destroy my Self that I may have the world?

*The Voice of Shiva.* You must destroy your Self to be in me. In me you have all the earth. For all earth is me. Possess me, and you have all earth's possessions too.

*(The whole scene gradually disappears into mist.)*



## PART III

## THE DANCE OF THE INFINITE

## SCENE I

## THE SHRINE OF TILLAI

*(The yogis are in meditation by the shrine. Shiva, in the form of a yogi, and Vishnu, in the form of his wife enter.)*

*Vishnu.* *(Looking at the yogis who are all turning to her.)*  
All eyes are on us!

*Shiva.* They are attracted to you.

*Vishnu.* By both of us!

*Shiva.* Although they know not the divinity beyond the forms we bear.

*Vishnu.* *(Addressing the yogis.)* Do you believe in the soul?  
*All the yogis together.* No.

*Shiva.* Do you believe in the universe?

*The yogis together.* No.

*Vishnu.* What do you believe in?

*The yogis together.* In nothing.

*Vishnu.* Do you wish to see a dance?

*Shiva.* The dance of this forest and the spin of earth's orbit.

*Vishnu.* *(Pointing to Shiva dancing.)* Watch his jingling wrist,  
watch his tinkling toes.

*Shiva.* The bell's silvery chime on hand and foot. Listen.  
Listen.

*(Shiva gracefully dances in the centre, ringed round by all the yogis. There is a chime of bells from his ankles and his wrists. The careful curves of the dance induce all the yogis to pass into a deep trance.)*

*The first yogi.* I cannot see the dance or the dancers. Both have vanished.

*The second yogi.* I see instead this universe. whole and entire.

*The third yogi.* And in terrific motion too.

*(Shiva and Vishnu change into their divine forms. They are seen and heard by the yogis in their swoon.)*

*Shiva.* I am that motion. I am that universe.

*Vishnu.* I am the agent of that motion. I am the agent of the universe.

*Shiva.* Without me, the cause, there is no motion.

*Vishnu.* Without me, the agent, there is no motion.

*Shiva.* I destroy the world.

*Vishnu.* I preserve it.

*Shiva.* By destruction, the world continues from change to change, advancing degrees to the perfection which is in me.

*Vishnu.* By preservation of the soul within the altering form the world advances to the perfection which is in me.

*Shiva.* I liberate the mind from the thought of preservation.

*Vishnu.* I liberate the mind from the thought of destruction.

*Shiva.* See the great illusion—the destroyer and the preserver as one. Above them is the Light of Lights—Brahma, the Creator.

*(The vision become less clear. Shiva and Vishnu are reappearing in their human forms.)*



*The first yogi.* I am returning from some height of thought.

*The second yogi.* This shaking forest seems to shake no more.

*(The motion of the universe has ceased to be felt as the yogis come out of the trance.)*

*Vishnu.* *(Appearing in human form.)* For the dance is ended.

*Shiva.* *(Returning to his human form.)* Did you hear the words? Did you see the vision? Did you watch the dance?

*The yogis together.* In thought's swoon, the words we heard, the vision and dance we saw. We also saw the whirl which is at the heart of things.

*Shiva.* And the peace that is in the flux of change.

*The yogis together.* That peace we felt and will ever remember.

*(Shiva and Vishnu disappear. The yogis look at the shrine in amazement and then walk round it singing a hymn.)*

## 1. THE BIRTH OF LAKSHMI

### THE ARGUMENT

Vishnu, by his concentration from the lifeless sea of matter, shapes Lakshmi, and gives her the cup of nectar which contains the dew of life. The Asuras, or evil spirits, run away with the cup. Vishnu transforms himself into a lovely woman over whom the Asuras quarrel. In the quarrel, Vishnu takes the cup and gives back the dew of life to Lakshmi.



THE SHORTER INDIAN LEGENDS

THE BIRTH OF LAKSHMI

*Characters :*

VISHNU—The god of preservation.

LAKSHMI—His bride.

DHANWANTARI—The healer.

ASURAS—Evil Spirits.

SCENE I

VISHNU'S HEAVEN

*(Vishnu, from his heaven, is concentrating on the lifeless sea of matter in order to frame a physical universe.)*

*Vishnu (Meditating.)* I must shape this lifeless mass of matter into forms that will live. *(A bubble from the sea arises.)* This is the moon. I must set her here to shine with a growing crescent. *(Another bubble arises.)* This is the earth with the shapely clothing of lands, and the vast wash of waves. Out of the white foam I make the form of Lakshmi to keep watch and ward over the earth. From this fine froth I conjure up Dhanwantari, the healer. In his hand I place this crystal cup brimful of dewy nectar. *(Addressing Lakshmi.)* Stand forth Lakshmi, the shape most lovely in my creation.

*Lakshmi. (Gracefully rising.)* May I sip the nectar ?

*Vishnu.* Do. It is the dew of life *(Looking at Lakshmi.)* She has drunk it. How her eyes sparkle, gazing into mine as if she were a part of me.

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*Lakshmi.* Vishnu !

*Vishnu.* Lakshmi ! We love.

*(In this interval, the Asuras come from behind and run away the cup of life.)*

*Dhanwantari.* The Asuras have snatched the cup of nectar from me.

*Vishnu. (Changing himself into a maiden form.)* I will bring the cup back. Without it my creation cannot run.

*The maiden-from of Vishnu.* To whom do I belong ?

*The first Asura.* To me.

*The second Asura.* To me.

*The third Asura.* To me.

*(While the Asuras are quarreling among themselves, Vishnu steals the cup of nectar, and resumes his shape as Vishnu.)*

*All the Asuras.* The cup has vanished, and the woman too !

*Vishnu. (Returning the sparkling cup of life to Dhanwantari.)* That was no woman. I deluded you, who deluded Dhanwantari. Take the cup, Dhanwantari.

*Lakshmi.* I drink it, and grow keen for life's delight.

*Dhanwantari.* I drink it, and heal those whom life has broken.

*Vishnu.* You both are mine. In me all life's wounds are healed, and all life's joys are magnified.

*(Vishnu departs with Lakshmi and Dhanwantari. The Asuras go away in confusion.)*



## 2. THE BIRTH OF GANGA

### THE ARGUMENT

In answer to the prayer of Bhagiratha, the devotee, for water, Shiva makes the river Ganga flow through his locks into channels to irrigate Hindustan.

## THE BIRTH OF GANGA

### Characters :

BHAGIRATHA—The devotee.  
SHIVA—The god of destruction.  
GANGA—The celestial river.

### SCENE I

#### (A LONELY DELL IN THE HIMALAYAS

(*Bhagiratha is in a snow-cell in deep prayer.*)

*Bhagiratha (With hands uplifted to Shiva.)* I have prayed so long for rain—rain that does not come by prayer. Are the ears of Heaven so distant that they hearken not to men? See the yellow harvest is robbed of grain. The cocoanut stares at the sky for water. The vine does not bud, the pomegranate does not flower, and the orange blossom falls as white wool to the ground. Do the gods look pitilessly on human pain, and bring no rest when rest is needed? Do they hear?

*Shiva. (As a voice in the air.)* They hear and I hear.

*Bhagiratha.* But the water, the water?

*Shiva.* Shall I let free the stream?

*Bhagiratha. (Gasping in trance.)* The water! Men want the water.

*Shiva.* The stream celestial will overwhelm the fields.

*Bhagiratha.* I will take the risk. Release the stream.

*Shiva.* I release Ganga, the heaven-born river, branching three streams to the east and three streams to the west, and one



stream following the line that you, my devotee, will direct See Ganga falling from the rent sky !

*(The devotee sees, in a vision, the whole of the river Ganga pressing upon him and is overcome with fear.)*

Shiva. Are you fearful ?

Bhagiratha. The flood gates have burst. The arrowy race of gray Ganga cannot be restrained.

Shiva. It can be restrained, and I restrain it thus. Look at my hair.

*(The devotee sees the appearance of the head of Shiva which bears the whole burden of the falling water and distributes the force of the stream in equable channels.)*

Bhagiratha. Shiva's dark locks arrest the motion of the flood.

Shiva. See !

Bhagiratha. In the flood I see fish of many colours, the broad backed tortoise, Rakshasas, Gandharvas and Apsaras—the whole brood of the people of the water.

Shiva. Fear never more, Bhagiratha. Henceforth in the rainless day, Ganga will nourish every plot of Hindustan, East and West, by the glistening sweep of her ever-running wave.

*(Shiva disappears, Ganga flows peacefully as a broad stream with many branches watering the pasture lands.)*

### 3. VIKRAMADITYA—THE BEAUTIFUL PAINTER

#### THE ARGUMENT

This king, with a magic brush, makes pictures on the wall which in the night turn to real beings. His queen takes away the brush, and tells him that he should find his ideals in the real world.



VIKRAMADITYA—THE BEAUTIFUL  
PAINTER

Characters :

VIKRAMADITYA—The king.

THE RANI—The queen.

SCENE I

THE KING'S MEDITATION ROOM

*Vikramaditya. (Meditating at midnight in his room.)* I sit here every night in the loneliness of thought undisturbed by human cares, painting figures of beauty on my palace wall.

This brush an ancient seer, deep in learning, gave me. As he gave he said, "O king, whatsoever you paint with this brush on the wall, will at night come to life."

So I paint here just the scenes that my soul wants most. Look ! This maiden-form with a star on her brow, robed in the softest silk from head to foot, steps from the fresco. See one with a viol, one with a lute, and another with a jingling tabred—maidens all with glossy hair and twinkling ankles—follow with light foot from the wall. Other forms—forms of youths with sparkling eyes and downless cheeks—also descend.

The moon which I painted, a thin crescent orbiting to a round, leaves its apportioned setting on the stone, and comes out to greet me. So near it is to me, and so lucid with light, that I can almost touch it.

The garden with its rise of white fountains, flowers drooping in the dusk after the hot day, the grass with the dew fresh upon

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it—the whole circumstance of beauty, just as my brush figured it creep from the painting as shapes of the real.

The apparitions of the wall seem to be returning to the wall. Now they have returned. What has happened ?

*The Rani (Entering.)* It is I.

*(The Rani quietly takes the brush from the king's fingers.)*

*Vikramaditya.* You are disturbing me. Where is my brush ?

*The Rani.* I have taken it, and will not return it.

*Vikramaditya.* Why ?

*The Rani.* Because when I have the brush, you cannot paint.

*Vikramaditya.* If I cannot paint, the apparitions of my fancy will never come.

*The Rani.* I do not want them to come.

*Vikramaditya.* Give me back the brush.

*The Rani.* No. Seek your apparitions of the wall in fact.

*Vikramaditya.* In you ?

*Thi Rani.* In me and in the men and women of the kingdom which you rule.

*(The king departs with the queen, resolved to seek his ideals in reality.)*



#### 4. THE ASHVINS

##### THE ARGUMENT

The Ashvins, or angels of healing, dive in the water with Chyavana, the ancient seer, who has married Sukanya, a young girl. Chyavana is turned into a young man by the angels in the water. Sukanya distinguishes him, by the love in his eyes, from the Ashvins who have made themselves like him.

#### THE ASHVINS

##### Characters :

THE ASHVINS—The twin angels of healing.

CHYAVANA—An ancient seer.

SUKANYA—His young bride.

##### SCENE I

##### THE POOL OF BEAUTY

*(The Ashvins, in the form of two young men, are near a flowering bush watching Sukanya, who is breast-deep among the reeds.)*

*The first Ashvin.* Is she not beautiful as she stands in the water, touching the reeds that hide her ?

*The second Ashvin.* She is swimming with quiet strokes toward the morning-lotus sprinkled by her splashes.

*The first Ashvin.* She breaks the lotus from its struggling stem, and puts it in her hair. Now she is floating, now diving. The grace of her body never loses its beauty. Shall we call her ?

*The second Ashvin.* *(Calling.)* What is your name ?

*Sukanya.* *(Lifting her head out of the water.)* What is that to you ? My name is Sukanya, my husband is Chyavana the seer.

*The first Ashvin.* He is old.

*The second Ashvin.* We are the angels of healing, and we can make him young.

*Sukanya.* I do not want him young. I want him just as he is—wise and loving.



*The first Ashvin.* You are as the summer lightning, he as the gloom on the thunder cloud. Do you not wish him to be like you—young and beautiful? Will you exchange him for a younger lover?

*Sukanya.* No.

*(Sukanya swims away out of their sight. Chyavana, her husband, comes for his morning bath.)*

*Chyavana.* The water is cool. I will swim but a little distance this morning. My limbs have not the force which they used to have.

*(The two Ashvins whisper a prayer over the water which acquires healing properties. Chyavana, as he dives in the water, becomes young.)*

*The first Ashvin.* I will jump in the water too.

*The second Ashvin.* I follow.

*(There is a splash. The two Ashvins and Chyavana come together. They are all young and look exactly like each other. Sukanya comes swimming to the spot.)*

*The first Ashvin.* *(Looking at Sukanya who is approaching.)*  
I am your husband.

*The second Ashvin.* I am your husband.

*Chyavana.* I am your husband.  
*Sukanya.* They all look alike. *(Much puzzled.)* Who is who I cannot tell.

*Ashvins together.* Whom will you choose?

*Sukanya.* My husband.

*The second Ashvin.* How will you know him?

*Sukanya.* By the love in his eyes for me. *(Looking at the two Ashvins.)* There is no love in your eyes. Your eyes and his

eyes are the same in size, shape and look. The eyes of love know the eyes of love. I know my husband. This is Chyavana.

*Chyavana.* I am young.

*Sukanya.* And I too. Moreover, the Ashvins who came between us have flown away.

*(The Ashvins disappear. The pair swim together to the shore, Chyavana looking young and vigorous.)*



## 5. DHĀRUVĀ—THE POLE STAR

### THE ARGUMENT

Dhruva, the princely child, is in search of the Lotus-Eyed in the forest. He cannot find him. Narada, the seer, shows him to be in Dhruva's heart when he concentrates on the Pole Star. In so concentrating Dhruva becomes one with the Pole Star and ever looks down upon earth.

## DHRUVA—THE POLE STAR

### Characters :

DHRUVA—The Pole Star in the shape of an earth-child.  
NARADA—His spiritual teacher.

### SCENE I

#### IN THE HEART OF A FOREST

*(Dhruva is meditating in the forest under a tree in search of the Lotus-Eyed.)*

*Dhruva.* I Was born a prince. But I did not like the princely state and the cares of the princely mind. I loved my mother more than my father.

One day, when my father was angry, I asked my mother—“Is there any one stronger than a father?” She said “The Lotus-Eyed is stronger than a father. The Lotus-Eyed made strength and is therefore stronger than anything that has strength.”

I said to myself, “Where shall I find the Lotus-Eyed.” My mother read my thoughts and said “You will find him in the forest.” I have come to this forest but have not found him here. I have seen the lotus on the lake at sunset. The next morning the lotus faded, and therefore the lotus cannot be the Lotus-Eyed.

*(Seeing a peacock opening its fan-like tail of feathers.)* Are you, O peacock, the Lotus-Eyed? You spread your fair fan of feathers, a cluster of a thousand eyes. Why do you fly from me and die so quickly, if you are the Lotus-Eyed?



(*Looking at a gazelle.*) Shy lashes, do not run away. No one will harm you. Are you the Lotus-Eyed? How can you be the Lotus-Eyed when your heart is so full of fears. The Lotus-Eyed cannot fear.

*Narada.* (*Entering and observing Dhruva.*) What are you looking for?

*Dhruva.*—For the Lotus-Eyed who, as my mother says, is stronger than my father.

*Narada.* You will find Him in your heart.

*Dhruva.* (*Surprised.*) In my heart! Am I the Lotus-Eyed or is He in me?

*Narada.* Meditate on the thought of your heart as if that beating point in your body were the scintillation of a fixed star.

*Dhruva.* (*His eyes closing in meditation.*) I do. I am now absorbed in the thought of the Pole Star,

*Narada.* The Pole Star is absorbed in you.

*Dhruva.* The Pole Star and I are one.

*Narada.* You are one and will remain one till the end of time, unshaken by the chances and changes of the mortal sky.

*Dhruva.* I have found the Lotus-Eyed.

*Narada.* And He has found you.

(*The scene closes. Narada departs. Dhruva remains absorbed in meditation.*)

## INDIAN BRIDAL TALES

### 1. MANASA DEVI—THE WEEPING BRIDE

#### THE ARGUMENT

At dusk, Behula is mourning for her young husband, Lakshmindara, who has been bitten by a snake because his father refused to worship Manasa Devi. Manasa Devi restores him to life and shows that she is the spirit of the universe testing Behula. Every one worships the One of whom Manasa Devi is a guise.



MANASA DEVI—THE WEEPING BRIDE

*Characters :*

MANASA DEVI—The daughter of Shiva.

LAKSHMINDARA—The son of Chand, the merchant prince.

BEHULA—His bride.

SCENE I

*A RIVER AT DUSK<sup>1</sup>*

*(A beautiful girl, dressed in a dark sari, steals from the shadows carrying a small light. Her name is Behula. Her husband, who has died of snake-bite, has been placed on a raft which is moored to the bank of the river. The time is dusk and twilight is growing fast.)*

*Behula.* How can tears flow when the well of tears is full? Manasa Devi, goddess of the serpents, did her worst to you and me.

On our bridal night, before the kiss of love was begun, two snakes, sent by her through our well-guarded chamber, struck at you with cruel fangs, and now you are dead. Here you are, my husband of one night, dead or sleeping, on this raft which will bear you out to the silent sea from my gaze for ever.

I think that you are not dead, but if you are dead, I will die with you. *(Unmooring the raft.)* I will loosen the ropes and float with you down the dark river.

1. Composed at Brindaban, on the banks of the Jumna, in a boat at dusk.

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*(The raft floats down the river. The voice of Manasa Devi, who is invisible, is heard.)*

*Manasa Devi.* Faithful bride, weep not. The end of tears is not tears, but the gladdening of the eyes.

*Behula.* A voice? Is someone calling from the bank?

*Manasa Devi.* *(Invisible.)* I am calling, but not from the bank. Take this lotus as the mark of my presence here.

*Behula.* If you are here, bring my husband to life and I will cry no more.

*Manasa Devi.* I will bring him to life. *(Manasa Devi whispers some spell over the husband's body to bring him to life.)*

*Behula.* Why did you take his life?

*Manasa Devi.* Chand, the merchant prince, your husband's father, meditated morning and evening on my sire Shiva, in thinking of Shiva he forgot me—Shiva's peerless daughter. I withered the flowers and blasted the fruits of his orchard. Chand, unmoved by my presence, revived the garden and the flowers and the fruits by incantations which Shiva taught him. I vowed that Chand must know my power.

One evening, after sun fall, when Chand was in a sweet swoon of meditation, I came as a girl before his eyes, danced with merry feet and jingling bangles, and drew from him the secret of the verses of Shiva which he sang.

Once more I deflowered his orchard blooms, killed the seeds, and made the loam so hard that all growth was stopped.

Then Shankara, the saintly seer, came because Chand in thought summoned him. Shankara brought to ripe perfection the garden which I had destroyed. I therefore sought the life of Lakshmindara, his son, and your husband.

*Behula.* And by the snake's venom you killed him, the faultless son and flawless husband.



*Manasa Devi.* Did I kill him? Touch him with the lotus flower.

*Behula.* I will put the lotus to his deep-dyed lips.

*(As Behula touches her husband with the lotus, the body seems to stir.)*

He lives!

*Manasa Devi.* He always lived. Why did you think him dead?

*Behula.* Because he looked as though he were dead.

*Manasa Devi.* Trust not to the seeming world nor the show of things which the eye reveals. I am not the goddess of the serpents nor the daughter of a god, but the Spirit of the Universe seeking, in many guises and by many trials, the steadfast heart of the devotee. I took your husband's life, I stole his father's thought, I broke your bride's desire. I give back all that I took. Will Chand worship me—me the soulless, me the formless, me the One?

*Behula.* Not only Chand but I and all worship the One.

*Manasa Devi.* Go and tell Chand that Shiva and the daughter of Shiva are one.

*Behula.* I will go and bring him as your devotee before your altar flame.

*(The raft stands still. Lakshmindara suddenly throws off the grave clothes, gets up and greets Behula.)*

*Lakshmindara.* Have I been dreaming?

*Behula.* You have. See the tide is taking us of its own will, as if the flood were motioned by God, back to our home where every evening we will light lamps of love and praise.

*(The raft floats back to the bank whence it started. The pair go home, and Chand, by the miraculous recovery of Lakshmindara, is converted to worship the One.)*

## 2. PURURAVAS AND URVASHI— THE VANISHING BRIDE

### THE ARGUMENT

Pururavas was told not to look upon Urvashi because she would vanish, being a spirit and not a woman. He looked upon her and she vanished. She appears to Pururavas as a swan in meditation. By a spell she changes Pururavas into a spirit like herself and they are wedded.



PURURAVAS AND URVASHI—  
THE VANISHING BRIDE

*Characters :*

PURURAVAS—The king.

URVASHI—His mystical bride.

GANDHARVAS—The Spirits of the Air.

SCENE I

THE LAKE OF ANYATAPLAKSHA

*(The Gandharvas, or spirits in the shape of swans, are swimming in the lake at dawn. They are led by Urvashi, who appears in the shape of the fairest swan Pururavas, the king, is meditating near the lake.)*

*The Gandharvas. (In a low voice.) Urvashi !*

*Urvashi. Yes.*

*The Gandharvas. Pururavas, the king, is worshiping on the bank—his eyes unlifted even to see the morning dew on the newly-opened lotus bud. So still is he.*

*Urvashi. I will rouse him. (Suddenly changing into her womanly shape.) Pururavas !*

*Pururavas. (Visioning Urvashi in meditation.) My beloved ! Why did you leave me ?*

*Urvashi. I told you when you wedded me that I was no woman but a spirit with a woman's form. I warned you that the moment you lifted the veil above my forehead to look eye to eye. I would disappear.*

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*Pururavas. I forgot your warning in my love for you. I looked, and you slipped away like the first streak of a cheerless dawn.*

*Urvashi. I am as the wind, passing and re-passing before you in any shape that I will.*

*Pururavas. I love best thy womanly form. Deign to come to me in that form.*

*Urvashi. If I came to you in that form I would again vanish into the air elusive.*

*Pururavas. Then do not come to me. I will go to you.*

*Urvashi. Would you become like us, the spirits of the air, free of the clinging body ?*

*Pururavas. I would.*

*(The lake and the Gandharvas disappear. By the spell of Urvashi, Pururavas is changed into a spirit and is wedded to Urvashi.)*



3. YAMA AND SAVITRI, THE  
WIDOWED BRIDE

THE ARGUMENT

Savitri's husband, Satyavana, is dead. She refuses to leave him till Yama, the god of death, grants three requests, the recovery of Satyavana's father, sons for his father, and sons for herself through her husband. Yama grants the requests and is compelled to restore Satyavana's life in order to keep his promise of giving children to Savitri through her husband.

YAMA AND SAVITRI, THE  
WIDOWED BRIDE

Characters :

YAMA—The god of death.  
SAVITRI—The princess.  
SATYAVANA—Her lord.

SCENE I

THE HERMITAGE OF DYUMATSENA

*(Satyavana is dying. Yama is at his bedside. Savitri, in prayer beside her husband, clearly sees the form of Yama in meditation.)*

Savitri. The pulse has ceased.

Yama. The breath too.

Savitri. *(To Yama.)* I cannot leave him dead.

Yama. You must. Leave him now.

Savitri. I will not.

Yama. *(Drawing Satyavana's soul from the body with the noose of death.)* There. You are bereaved !

Savitri. Yes.

Yama. By me ?

Savitri. By you. I will leave his body, but I will not leave his soul. I have a soul just as he has ; and with my soul I will pursue him till the end of time.

Yama. Desist. My power is over the body. I have killed his body.



*Savitri.* It is his soul that I will pursue and it is there that your dominion ends.

*Yama.* (*Surprised.*) Ends? (*Angrily.*) Leave him.

*Savitri.* The price?

*Yama.* Whatever you want!

*Savitri.* I want that my husband's father recovers his sight and health.

*Yama.* Your desire is granted.

*Savitri.* I wish that he regain his kingdom which was wrested from him by violent hands.

*Yama.* You have it.

*Savitri.* (*Seeing that Yama is moving away.*) Stay one minute! I wish that my father may have children.

*Yama.* Your wish is fulfilled. Now return.

*Savitri.* One boon more! I pray that I may have sons born of my flesh through my husband.

*Yama.* (*In haste, and not understanding.*) It is granted. Go and let me do my work.

*Savitri.* How can you do your work? Satyavana is my husband. He must live.

*Yama.* Why?

*Savitri.* The children to be born to us can never be unless he lives.

*Yama.* By cunning and scheming you have gained his life!

*Savitri.* By devotion, I have won my husband.

*Yama.* As the reward of your devotion you will have him as long as you live. Rise, Satyavana, rise.

*Satyavana.* (*Awakening as Yama disappears.*) Was I sleeping? I seem to have come from a land of mist.

*Savitri.* The mist has gone and the sleep has been overcome.

(*Savitri and Satyavana are united. Satyavana completely recovers.*)

#### 4. NALA AND DAMAYANTI, THE BRIDAL CHOICE

##### THE ARGUMENT

Owing to his anxiety for her, Damayanti recognises Nala among the other suitors, who are divine men. Nala narrates how he released a swan who promised to bring a princess to him. Damayanti tells how the swan came to her with a message about a prince coming to her. She recognises Nala by the light in his eyes.



NALA AND DAMAYANTI, THE

BRIDAL CHOICE

*Characters :*

NALA—The prince of Nishada.

DAMAYANTI—The princess of Vidarbha.

SCENE I

A COURT IN THE PALACE OF VIDARBHA

*(The suitors for the hand of Damayanti, suitably arrayed, stand assembled in the palace. The king is on a throne surrounded by courtiers. Damayanti, a slight figure simply dressed, with a garland of flowers round her neck, comes forth from the ranks of the ladies to chose her bridegroom.)*

*Damayanti.* *(Thinking to herself as she steps up to the line of suitors who are awaiting her decision.)* To-day is my bridal day, and I must chose him whom I love most. They all seem alike—these suitors—with their flowing robes, rich turbans and threads of pearls circling their necks. Every pearl on them looks at me for an answer—the answer which once made is made for ever.

There is the eye of one of them speaking more to me than the eyes of all. *(Looking at Nala.)* What does the bright sparkle in his eye portend? Swans? Ruffle of plumes, sprinkled with the day's first dew? Ah, I am now remembering.....But I forget the thought.....I will make my choice of these five suitors.

*The King.* *(Hearing the decision.)* Let the other suitors pass on. These five may remain.

*Damayanti.* *(To the suitors.)* You all seem the same yet

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you are not the same. I see through your guise. Why not show yourselves as you are?

*The four suitors.* *(Showing themselves in their Divine forms.)*  
Behold!

*Damayanti.* Immortal presence! Godlike forms are made for worship, not for love. Woman is made for love *(Looking at Nala, the fifth suitor.)* He seems different! Drops of anxious sweat bathe his brow. The gods are never anxious, but man is. This must be Nala. *(Turning to the king.)* Him I choose!

*Nala.* *(As the princess puts a garland of flowers over his head.)* It is well.

*Damayanti.* Are you Nala?

*Nala.* I am. Have you forgotten me? One dawn, when I was in profound meditation, a flock of swans, with broad wing and proud beak, settled on the lake by which I was sitting. Because I was vexed, I caught one of them, The swan said, as it struggled, "Do not hurt me, and I will bring to you a princess whom you will love," And so I let the swan go.

*Damayanti.* The swan alighted on my window and said "Princess of the lotus-eyes, do not hurt me, and I will bring you a prince whom you will love for his prowess and his presence." So I, too, freed the swan.

*Nala.* And so you found me.

*Damayanti.* Found you through the swan-light in your eyes.

*The king.* *(As the court is about to disperse.)* To-night will see our daughter wedded.

*(All the courtiers leave, and Nala and Damayanti are left alone in the court. They slowly retire.)*



## 5. SAKUNTALA, THE FORGOTTEN

### BRIDE

#### THE ARGUMENT

In Scene I, King Dushyanta, after a day's hunting, meets the beautiful Sakuntala in a grove of cypresses. He gives her a ring with his name on it, and weds her.

In Scene II he does not return to her but forgets her. Sakuntala loses the ring. Kanva, the hermit, recovers the ring from a fishing net whilst fishing in the river. He brings it to the king who recognises it. He repents of his wrong to Sakuntala and takes her back.

## SAKUNTALA, THE FORGOTTEN

### BRIDE

#### Characters :

DUSHYANTA—The king.

KANVA—The hermit.

SAKUNTALA—His ward.

#### SCENE I

#### THE HERMITAGE OF KANVA

*(After hunting the king has arrived toward evening at the hermitage. Kanva greets him.)*

*Dushyanta. (Looking at the approach to the hermitage.)*  
What a lovely avenue of cypresses filled with fireflies!

*Kanva. (Showing Sakuntala to the king.)* This is the brightest light in my hamlet.

*Dushyanta. (Smiling.)* A glow-worm on a dark night!

*Kanva.* Her name is Sakuntala. She is seventeen summers to-day. I brought her up as my child even before she had learnt to walk. You must be our guest to-night. Sakuntala will look after you. I will leave her with you while I go to pray.

*(Kanva goes to pray. The king is looking at Sakuntala.)*

*Sakuntala. (Innocently to the king who has not disclosed his identity.)* What is your name?

*Dushyanta.* I will tell you later. Where did you get this garland of white buds its with dew?

*Sakuntala.* Every evening I weave the jasmine bloom for strangers.

*Dushyanta.* Your garlands scent the whole air with love!

*Sakuntala. (Looking into the king's eyes.)* Love?

*Dushyanta. (Declaring himself.)* Yes, I am a king. Will you be my queen? This ring, engraved with the word "Dushyanta" is my signet. I put the ring on your finger!



*Sakuntala.* So quickly done ! Yet I am happy.

*Dushyanta.* Fate spins the woof with swiftness. We will be married to-night. To-morrow I return to the palace with my hounds, and will soon come to fetch you with my royal retinue.

*(Dushyanta and Sakuntala are later married by Kanva. The king goes back to his palace.)*

## SCENE II

## THE PALACE OF DUSHYANTA

*(With his infatuation over, the king has forgotten Sakuntala. She passes through the palace guards and throws herself at the feet of the king.)*

*Sakuntala.* Have you forgotten me ?

*Dushyanta.* I do not remember you.

*Sakuntala.* The fireflies and the jasmynes.....the scent, the dew, the night.

*Dushyanta.* I cannot recollect.

*Sakuntala.* But the ring—the ring you gave me lettered with your name.

*Dushyanta.* Where is it ?

*Sakuntala.* I lost it. Carelessly I let it fall from my finger whilst dreaming by the river.

*Kanva. (Entering and looking at Sakuntala.)* So you are here ! I have urgent business with the king. I recovered this from my net this morning. It is a ring with the royal arms on it !

*Dushyanta. (Recognising the ring and remembering its associations.)* It is the ring with my name on it. This fine inscription brings back to me my past, and the wrong I have done. It may be that God punished me for that wrong. But I will make amends by taking back my Sakuntala, seeing her and cherishing her for the scent, the dew, and twilight in that avenue of cypr-esses.

*(The king blesses Sakuntala and receives her as his queen.)* ●