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Folk Stories of Sri Lanka

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George Keyt

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PREFACE

The following selection of folk stories were from those related to me in Sinhala by some rural people, students of village schools and ladies of the gentry in the Kandy district. I have attempted, to some extent, to put them down in English as they were related in Sinhala.

A characteristic of these stories is that names very rarely occur, thus eliminating any indication of caste groups; and there is hardly anything to be seen of the bucolic—crudity and coarseness—because the bucolic in the Western sense is very seldom met with. The culture is the same everywhere, and the same polite language spoken whether there is literacy or not. In fact it can be said of Sri Lanka what Havell has said of India, that the illiterate are spiritually literate.

G. K.

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THE GOLDEN CUCUMBER

Once there lived in a house in a certain village a father and his gold coloured daughter and little son. As the mother was dead, the daughter did the household work. When the father went out to the field she cooked the rice and the vegetables, served them on three plates, covered the food, and went and sat rocking on her swing.

At this time, one day, a woman, a stranger, came and said, "Please daughter, give me some coals." The daughter rudely said, "Are coals in my hand? Go and fetch the coals yourself from the fireplace." The woman went to the fireplace to fetch the coals, saw the three plates of rice and ate the father's portion and went away with the coals.

And so for three days the woman came and ate the father's portion of rice and took away coals. The father who had gone hungry for two days seeing this said, "Who is it, daughter, that eats my portion of rice?" The daughter said, "Father, how do I know? A woman came to our house to take coals. She may have eaten the rice."

Then the father said, "Alright, you boil the rice and go to the swing as usual. I shall hide in the loft above the fireplace and watch." He then climbed on to the loft and hid himself there.

That day, too, the woman came and said, "Please daughter give me some coals." And the daughter said, "Have I got coals in my hand? Go and fetch the coals from the fireplace." The woman went and began eating the father's portion of rice. Then the father asked from the loft, "What is this, woman, that you are doing?" And the woman said, "I am hungry and there is no one to look after me." The father said: "Well then, you had better stay here." The woman agreed and both of them, the father and the woman, and the son and daughter lived together in the house.

After some time the gold coloured daughter who used to rock on the swing, had grown up into a very beautiful maiden and looked like a shining princess. The woman could not bear to see this.

She was so jealous that her eyes seemed to be painful with disease when she looked at the gold coloured daughter each time. She hated her and got sick.

One day the woman lay huddled in bed and did not get up. The father came and asked, "What is wrong?" The woman said, "I am sick with the longing of a woman who is to have a child. If I do not get what I want I shall die." The father asked, "What is it you want?" and she said, "I want you to pluck out the eyes of your daughter and make broth for me."

The father was speechless and deeply troubled. He did not know what to do. But he loved the woman and so in the end he called the gold coloured daughter and said, "Daughter, there are yams in the forest; this is the season. Let us go there and dig up yams and bring them." Saying this he went to the forest with the gold coloured daughter. The dog of the house went following them.

They went a long way and felt tired and sat down. The father then said, "Come, daughter, let me search for lice on your head." He made the daughter sit near him and searched for lice in her head. She became drowsy and fell asleep. He quickly tied her to a tree and plucked out her eyes and brought them to the house. He put one eye on the loft over the fireplace and the other eye into the salt pot.

At this time the little son finding a green mango somewhere came to the house and said to the woman: "Aunt, give me a knife to slice this mango." The woman said, "What is this, you scamp, is there a knife in my hand? Go to the loft and take it." The boy reaching up to the loft and groping with his hand for the knife came across the eye the father had put there. He thought, "This is very like my sister's eye." He went to the woman and said, "Aunt, give me a bit of salt to eat this mango." The woman said, "What is this, you scamp, do I have salt in my hand? Go to the salt pot and take it." The boy went to the salt pot and groping in it with his hand for a bit of salt came across the other eye which the father had put there. He took both the eyes and stepped out of the house.

The dog began to bark and beckon the boy to the forest. The boy followed the dog. After going a long way the dog showed him

where the gold coloured sister was tied to the tree. There were ants swarming over the wounds where her eyes had been and she was in pain and crying.

He cleaned her face and untied her. He seated her and standing by her threw the two eyes into the sky and called out, "If I have always been a good and truthful brother, may my sister get back her eyes." All at once the gold coloured sister got back her eyes and they were even more beautiful than they were before. Then she said, "Little brother, we must not return to our home. Let us go somewhere else."

They wandered away from there going a long distance and came one day to the royal park. As they were walking about in the royal park they suddenly saw the king riding there. He had a golden cucumber in his hand and he was playing with it, tossing it up and catching it. The little brother looked at the golden cucumber and said to his gold coloured sister, "Please, sister, ask the king to give it to me." The gold coloured sister said, "Hush, little brother, how can I dare to speak to the king and ask for the golden cucumber? He will get angry and strike us dead." But the little brother said, "I want the golden cucumber."

The king overheard their talk and struck by the beauty of the girl asked, "What were you saying?" The gold coloured sister knelt down and was frightened and said, "Nothing, Your Majesty."

The king then looked at the little brother and said, "I heard you talking. What were you saying?" The little brother knelt down and said, "I would like to have the golden cucumber, Your Majesty." The king said, "Well, little fellow, you shall have the golden cucumber if you give me your sister in return." The little brother said, "Your Majesty, take us both to the palace, my gold coloured sister and myself." The king gave him the golden cucumber and took them both to the palace and made the gold coloured sister his chief queen.

After some time the gold coloured sister was to have a baby. Just then it so happened that the king had to go to the wars. So the king said to the little brother, "If your gold coloured sister has a baby girl dangle an iron chain, and if she has a baby boy dangle a

silver chain and I shall get the news.” The gold coloured sister had a baby boy and so the little brother dangled a silver chain and the king got the news.

When the king was away from the palace fighting in the war, the father and the woman in the village had heard that the gold coloured sister and her brother were with the king. This made the woman very angry. So she went and looked for eggs of cobras and vipers and beat these up and made rice-cakes with them and working a certain charm she took them and went to the palace with the man.

The woman took the cakes to give to the gold coloured sister, but the gold coloured sister said she did not want them. The woman then crushed a cake and pushed it into the mouth of the gold coloured sister. In a moment she became a cobra and crept away to an ant-hill. The woman was happy to see this and both of them returned to the village.

The king won in the wars and returned to the palace and not seeing the gold coloured sister asked, “Where is your gold coloured sister?” The little brother told the king all that had happened and that afterwards as he sang and soothed the baby the gold coloured sister would come in her own form and nurse the baby and put him to sleep in his cradle and again turn into a cobra and creep away to the ant hill.

The little brother then sang as the tears rained:

*“Ran Kekire raja yuddheta yantai
Unnam ave apava nahantai
Ran van bena ande andantai
Ran van akka samini vantai.”*

“Gone to the war the king of the gold cucumber;
Those two came here but they came to kill us;
The gold coloured nephew is crying in his cradle;
The gold coloured sister must come as a lady.”

and began to soothe the baby. The gold coloured sister then came

in her own form and nursed and put the crying baby to sleep and changed again into a cobra.

The king caught the cobra and placed it on a basin of milk that had been brought in and quickly cut it in two with his sword. The upper portion became the gold coloured sister and the lower portion became a cobra and crept away to the ant hill. After that the gold coloured sister did not become a cobra any more. But the king remembered the wrong done to her.

So he sent people to catch a lot of vipers and cobras and he put them into a chest. He then went with the gold coloured sister and the courtiers to the father and the woman in the village taking the chest with him. He said to the father, "See, we have come to visit you and we have brought a gift of great value. Be careful not to let anyone see this gift when you open the chest. First close the doors of the house before you open it." And he gave them the chest and returned with the queen and the rest to the palace.

The father and the woman were very pleased. They took the chest into the house and closed the doors and opened it. The snakes rushed out and bit and killed them.

After that the king and the gold coloured sister lived happily with the little brother and the baby.



THE JEWEL BIRD

There once lived a king in a certain country. A widow and her son lived near the palace. The woman was poor and earned her living along with others by pounding paddy for the palace. She would go in the morning and pound paddy and get some money for her work and bring back the broken bits of rice that fell from the winnowing. The money she spent on their expenses and the broken rice she used for the daily food. Though she was poor she had her son taught by a teacher.

One night the king had a dream in which he saw a golden bird who had eyes of blue sapphires and whose beak and feet were rubies. The king sent for Brahmins to come and tell him the meaning of the dream. The Brahmins said, "Your Majesty, a bird like the one in your dream lives with a *rakshi* seven forests away from here. Who eats that bird will never grow old." Then the king wanted to have the bird for himself and had a tom-tom beater sent around the town proclaiming that the person who brought him the bird would be given an elephant-load of treasure and a part of the kingdom.

The people who heard the tom-tom beater said, "It cannot be done. Nobody can bring that bird here," and so nobody stopped him. When the tom-tom beater was passing the widow's house the son said to her, "Mother, I should like to go and get that jewel bird. So tell that to the tom-tom beater." The widow went and stopped the tom-tom beater and the king's men took her and her son to the palace. The king asked the widow, "Why have you come, old woman?" and she replied, "Your Majesty, my son wishes to get jewel bird for you."

The king was pleased and asked the widow's son, "What do you want for the journey?" The son said, "Your Majesty, I want a good horse, a sword and the dress and ornaments of a prince." So the king told his men to give all this to him and the widow also gave him a package of rice for the journey. The son put on the dress and the ornaments and girdled his sword on and looking very

much a prince, he took the package of rice, mounted his horse and rode away to find the jewel bird.

The prince went a long way and passed through two forests and came to a third. Feeling hungry he looked about as he rode on, for a place where there was water. When he saw a river he stopped and got down from his horse and was about to unpack the rice when he suddenly saw an ascetic and he gave the rice to him. The ascetic did not take the rice. The prince then gave him a portion of it and he took it. The prince ate a little and parcelled up the rest. After the prince had eaten the rice the ascetic asked him, "Where are you riding in this forest?" The prince replied, "I am going to get the jewel bird from the *rakshi*." The ascetic said, "This is a dangerous journey. Those who go to get the jewel bird can never return. So let the jewel bird be and return home."

But the prince did not listen to the ascetic and wanted to go on. Then the ascetic said, "Alright. When you pass through two more forests you will meet two ascetics near a river like this. You ask them and if they tell you to go on, do so." The ascetic then gave him a bit of stone and added, "Keep this in your hand. If a demon or a *rakshi* chases you throw this at him and a big mountain will arise between you and the *rakshi*."

The prince worshipped the ascetic and left that forest. He passed through another forest and met an ascetic near a river. He worshipped the ascetic and offered him some rice, and the ascetic asked him, "Where are you riding in this forest?" The prince told him and the ascetic said, "This is a dangerous journey. No one ever returns from the *rakshi*'s palace. So let the jewel bird be and return home." But the prince replied, "I cannot turn back now. I must go on and get the jewel bird." The ascetic then said, "Alright. As you go on you will meet another ascetic. Ask him also and if he tells you to go, then go on." He gave the prince a thorn and added, "If a demon or a *rakshi* chases you throw this thorn at him and a big thorn forest will arise between you and the *rakshi*."

So the prince took the thorn and worshipped the ascetic and went on. He passed a forest and came to another forest and met the third ascetic. The prince went and worshipped him. The ascetic did

not talk. The prince sat there and talked but the ascetic did not talk. Then the prince took some rice from the package and put it into a brass pot and washed it and placed it on two stones and tried to cook, but the brass pot fell down and the water that spilt with the rice blew out the fire. The prince was angry with the fire and scolded it and set about placing the brass pot on the two stones once more and it fell down. He was about to do it a third time when the ascetic said, "You fool, why not place three stones?"

Then the prince said, "It is not the fire I want," and bowing to him again asked, "Why were you silent all this while?" Then the ascetic replied, "I know why you are on this journey. It is so foolish of you to try to get the jewel bird. No one ever returns. That is why I kept silent and did not give you words of cheer." The prince said, "It is useless telling me not to go. I have made up my mind and I must go. So if you feel for me tell me how I can safely return from the palace of the *rakshi*."

The ascetic took a piece of charcoal and gave it to the prince and said, "Alright then. Go carefully. But after sunset you should not go to the palace of the *rakshi* because the great *rakshi* is there at night. What you do, you must do very cleverly. If the *rakshi* chases you while you are returning, throw this piece of cinder at her and a great fire will arise between you and the *rakshi*."

When the prince came to the palace the great *rakshi* was not there but her daughter was there. When she saw the prince she liked him very much. She came running forward and asked, "Brother, where are you going?" The prince pretending to be a lost wayfarer, said, "I am not going anywhere, sister. The truth is I have lost my way. Will you let me sleep here tonight?"

The *rakshi*'s daughter said, "Why did you come to stay here? This is the house of a *rakshi*, who is my mother. She comes home at this time. Go away quickly or she will eat you up." Then the prince replied, "Now that I have lost my way and have come here I have no wish to go anywhere else. If I die in the house of a lovely princess like you, what does it matter? Please let me stay here."

The *rakshi*'s daughter was happy to hear this and said, "We should not be seen talking now as my mother may come at any

moment. When my mother goes tomorrow morning we can talk. Until then climb up into the loft and hide yourself." The prince climbed up into the loft and hid himself.

The great *rakshi* came home after she had caught and eaten up some people and seeing the horse tied in the courtyard, she asked, "Whose horse is that?" The daughter said, "It is nobody's horse. It must have strayed here from the forest. I thought it would be nice for me to ride on and so I tied it."

The great *rakshi* believed this and said, "Good," and came in and prepared to sleep. But she looked about and sniffed and asked, "What is this I smell? Is there anyone here?" The daughter replied, "What is this you say, mother? When you eat people all day and come here there will be that smell." The *rakshi* said, "That is true," and went to sleep.

The prince in the loft did not sleep because he did not know at what moment the *rakshi* would wake up. He kept thinking about the jewel bird all the time and where it could be. Then he heard a cock crowing and knew it was dawn. He listened carefully to find out from where the cock was crowing for a third time. He realized that the sound was coming from the *rakshi's* room. The prince kept this in mind and went to sleep.

The following day the *rakshi* went away and her daughter helped the prince to get down from the loft and both of them began to talk for a long time. The prince inquired, "What is that cock that was crowing last night?" and the *rakshi's* daughter replied, "That is the bird which she keeps under her bed." The prince asked, "What kind of a bird is it?" and the *rakshi's* daughter replied, "A jewel bird." The prince said, "I have never seen a jewel bird. Will you let me see it?" "You may certainly see it," said the daughter and took him to the room and showed him the jewel bird. The prince quickly took the bird into his hand and said to the *rakshi's* daughter, "I came all this way to take this bird, and I shall take it. You must not make a noise and cry out." The *rakshi's* daughter begged, "Oh brother, you must not harm me. You can have the bird. But take me also with you. I love you very much. And besides, my mother will come and kill me."

So the prince agreed and took the jewel bird and the *rakshi's* daughter and rode off quickly. But the *rakshi* returned and not finding the bird and the daughter she chased after them.

When the prince had gone some distance he saw the *rakshi* running after him and he remembered the bit of stone the ascetic had given him and threw it at her. A big mountain arose. But after a while the *rakshi* climbed the mountain and came after the prince again. Then he remembered the thorn the second ascetic had given him and threw it at her and a big thorn forest arose, but the *rakshi* broke her way through it and came running after the prince. Then he threw the bit of coal the third ascetic had given him and a big fire arose. This frightened her and she could not leap over it, and so the prince came back with the jewel bird and the *rakshi's* beautiful daughter.

The prince came home and gave the jewel bird to his mother and she took it to the king and the king gave her an elephant-load of treasure and a part of the kingdom and she lived in comfort after that with her son and the *rakshi's* daughter.

THE TWO JEWEL BOXES

There once lived a man and his wife near a beautiful stream. Their small cottage was made bright by three clumps of *dang* berries which had grown in their garden during the time of *Vaishaka*.

The man was good and kind but his wife had a tongue like a flaming fire-brand and she was wicked and cruel.

The man once found a little bird fallen near the cottage and brought it in and reared it and loved it like his own child. But the woman was angry about it and hated the bird and thought: "I shall do something to that bird."

She waited till the man was out of the house, dragged the bird from its cage, pulled out the feathers of its wings and threw it away. The poor bird trying to flap its wings went away from the cottage with difficulty.

When the man returned home he saw the empty cage and asked, "Where is the bird?" The wife said, "I dragged it out of this cage and threw it away because it stole the flour when I was making *roti*." The man was very sad to hear this and he turned back at once and went away from the cottage to look for the bird.

He went a long way asking the animals and birds whom he met where they had seen the bird. Not one of them had seen it, and so he went on and on.

After many, many days he saw the bird, and both these friends, the man and the bird, were very happy to see each other. The bird said, "Come to my house and meet my wife and children. I am married now," and the man went with the bird.

The house was nice and cool and the man sat down there. The bird and its wife and children attended on him and gave him to eat and drink. After the man had eaten and drunk and had rested there, he was ready to go. The bird and its family were sad to part from him.

The bird went into a room and calling the man showed him two boxes and told him to take them as a gift as they had jewels. He

looked at the two boxes and said he could not take both as that would be too heavy for him to carry, and took the smaller box.

When he came home, he found his wife waiting for him, and her face was bursting with anger. She screamed at him and shouted at him and said, "Get into the house and shut the door. Where did you go away leaving me alone for days and days, and what have you got in that box?"

He said that he had gone to find the bird and that the bird had given him the box as a present. She took it and opened it at once and saw gold and silver and pearls and rubies and sapphires. She looked and looked and then asked him, "How do you go to that bird's house?"

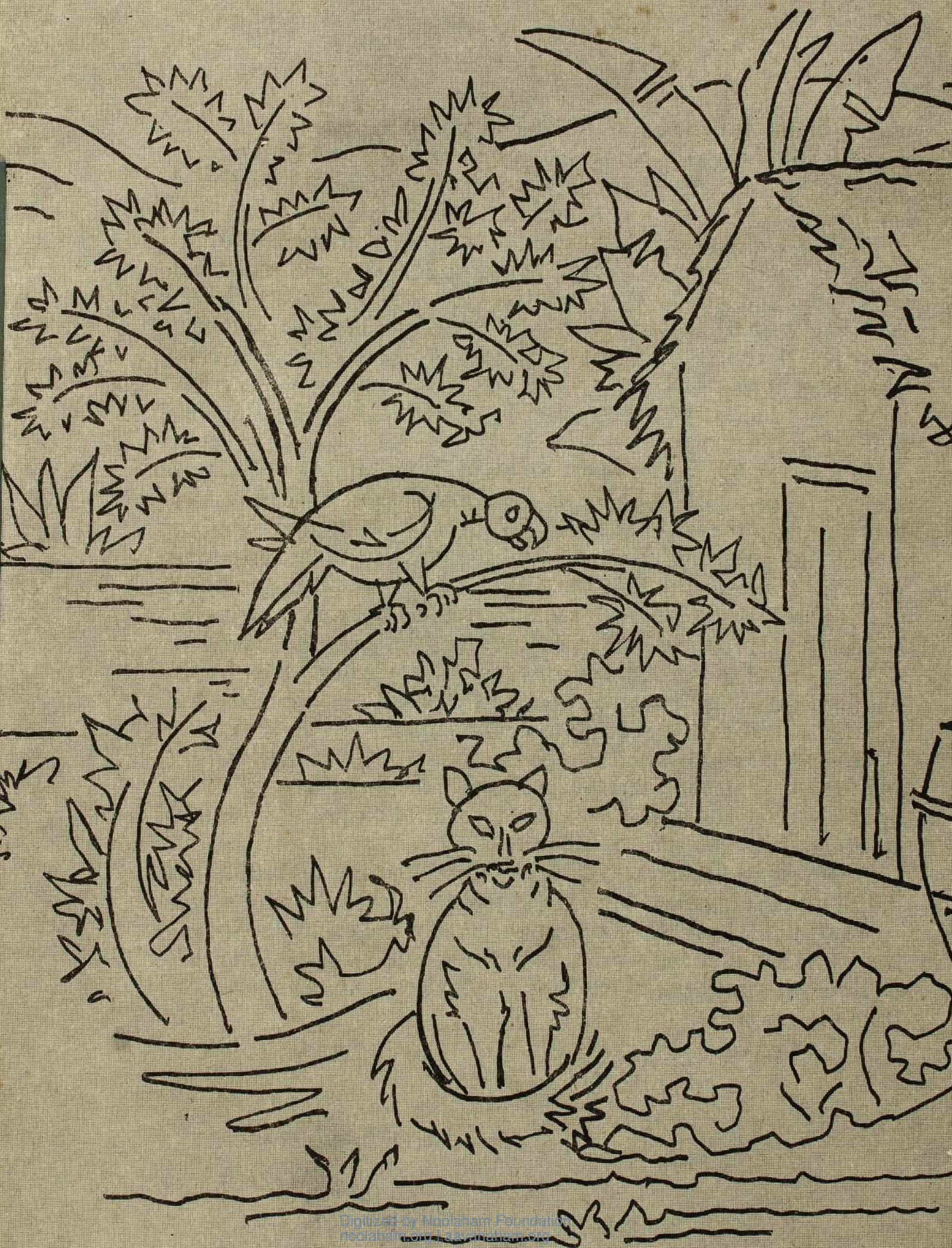
He told her how to go along the road he had found. She went away at once and met the bird after many days. She was very happy to meet the bird because she thought, "I shall now get a box of gold and silver and jewels." But the bird was not so happy to see her. However the bird was very kind and asked her to come to its house. When she went, the bird and its family gave her to eat and drink. Then she waited. But the bird did not give her a present.

After waiting in vain for some time, she asked the bird for a present. The bird called her into the room and showed her two boxes and told her to take what she wanted of the two.

Seeing the bigger box she was greedy for that. "It will have more," she thought, and took that box. Though she found it hard to lift up as it was big and heavy, she carried it with difficulty and went on slowly, resting from time to time.

When she came home at last, very tired and out of breath, she did not wait a moment but closing the doors she opened the box.

What did she see? A great crowd of ugly frogs and lizards and beetles and snakes and worms and other horrid creatures, and they all came swarming out. She tried and tried to send them away but they never went.



AMAL BISO

Long ago a farmer lived with his wife and baby daughter in a certain village. They used to grow vegetables and the cucumbers took up most of the plot. They were the best! The farmer would rise early in the morning and go to the vegetable plot every day to tend to the plants.

Once during the season for cucumbers the farmer and his wife took their baby daughter with them and putting her to sleep in the watch-hut of the field where the vegetables were grown, they went on to gather the cucumbers.

A little while after they had left the baby daughter in the watch-hut a crane and his wife alighted there and were walking about. The crane's wife saw the baby sleeping in the watch-hut. She liked the baby very much and said to the crane, "What a beautiful baby! What if we take her with us and bring her up as our own child?" The crane looked in at the watch-hut and said, "Yes. Such a beautiful baby daughter. Let us take her."

They looked around and no one was about. Saying to themselves that no one was to be seen anywhere and that the baby must have been left there by the father and mother because she was not wanted, they took away the baby to their house which was very nice and which had a *murunga* tree in the garden in front and a river flowing by.

They named her Amal Biso and looked after her very well. She grew into a beautiful girl and called the crane and his wife "father" and "mother", and as the crane and his wife thought the child would feel lonely, they got her a cat and a parrot as her pets. Amal Biso could now help the crane and his wife in some of the work which was easy and which she was able to do. She was happy to be of help and happy to be with the crane and his wife who were so kind to her.

One day the crane and his wife woke up very early and getting ready to go out said to Amal Biso, "Daughter, we are going to the

town to get gold earrings and bracelets and a pearl necklace and anklets for you to wear. You must keep inside the house all the while we are away, and you must keep the door well shut. You must not open the door if anyone comes and knocks. Stay inside all the time till we come back." And the crane and his wife went away to the town.

So Amal Biso stayed inside the house with the door shut and the cat and the parrot stayed with her. When the time came for cooking the midday meal Amal Biso did not know what to do as she had not cooked before. The cat was not pleased because he did not get his food in time and he went and wetted the glowing coals in the fireplace and the fire went out. This had never happened before because in village houses the coals were always kept burning so that the fire when wanted could be made ready immediately.

Amal Biso called the parrot and asked, "Are there coals to be had anywhere close by?" And the parrot said, "I shall see" and flew away. He came back after a while and said, "I saw a house on a hill some way off but not very far, at the crossroads. You have to go from here through a forest. But a *raksha* lives there. So you must not go, as the *raksha* might catch and eat you. Father and mother said that you must not go anywhere, but stay in here with the door shut."

Amal Biso thought awhile and said, "But I have to get the coals for the fire. I cannot cook otherwise. I will bring the coals from that house. I shall come back before father and mother returns." And she went out and walked through the forest and came to the crossroads and saw the house on the hill. She climbed up the hill and went to the house and knocked at the door.

The *rakshi* was inside the house and she asked, "Who is that?" And Amal Biso said, "Please, I have come to ask for some coals as the coals have gone out in our house." The *rakshi* opened the door and came out and saw that Amal Biso was a nice fresh little girl with a round rosy face. She thought, "My husband will enjoy eating this nice tender girl, and I must somehow keep her here until he returns." And she said, "Yes, I shall give you the coals which you want. But first you must do some work for me. I had a lot

of work to do today and was wondering how I was to finish it all before my husband came back." Amal Biso said, "I will help you, but I must go back quickly," for she knew the *raksha* would eat her if he found her.

The *rakshi* said, "It is easy work and you can finish it quickly. You shall go back with the coals when you have finished the work." And then she showed Amal Biso seven bags full of paddy and told her to take out the paddy and boil it and spread it out in the sun to dry and pound it.

So Amal Biso took out the paddy and boiled it and put it out to dry and pounded it, and it was hard work and took up time. But as the *raksha* had not yet returned, the *rakshi* took her to the well and told her to draw water and bring it to the house. Amal Biso did this too.

The *rakshi* could not think of anything else to delay Amal Biso, so she got a coconut shell with a small hole in it and put a lot of ash and two or three live coals in it, and she also gave her some plantains to eat along the way. Before sending her away she asked, "Is there no one at your house that you had to come alone?" And Amal Biso said, "My father and my mother have gone away to the town to bring me gold earrings and bracelets and a pearl necklace and anklets to wear, and I was alone at home, and that is why I came."

Then the *rakshi* sent her away. Some time later the *raksha* came rushing and shouting and asked the *rakshi*, "What is this smell I get? I got it all along the way too. Has anybody been here? Is anyone here? I smell a human being."

The *rakshi* said, "A nice little girl came here to get coals and I delayed her quite a lot so that you could catch and eat her. But in the end I had to let her go. I gave her coals and ash in a coconut shell with a hole in it and also plantains to eat along the way. So you will see ash strewn and also plantain skins fallen along the path she went. You had better go and look carefully. Her father and mother have gone to the town to get her gold earrings and bracelets and a pearl necklace and anklets to wear. She is all alone."

The *raksha* was very happy and he went at once, and seeing the

ash and the plantain skins on the path, he was able to find the house where Amal Biso lived. He saw a cat by the stone steps and a parrot perched on the *murunga* tree near the house and the river flowing by.

He was impatient to eat Amal Biso and his mouth began to water at the thought of eating a fresh young girl. He ran to the door and began knocking, but he got no answer. Then he knocked again and said:

“With gold earrings for your ears,
Gold bracelets for your hands,
Pearl necklace for your neck,
Gold anklets for your feet,
Father has come, mother has come—
Open the door, daughter, open the door.”

The cat heard this and said:

“No gold earrings for your ears,
No gold bracelets for your hands,
No pearl necklace for your neck,
No gold anklets for your feet,
No father has come, no mother has come—
Keep the door closed, sister, keep the door closed.”

The *raksha* got angry and caught the cat and dashed him against the stone steps and killed him. Then knocking again at the door, he said:

“With gold earrings for your ears,
Gold bracelets for your hands,
Pearl necklace for your neck,
Gold anklets for your feet,
Father has come, mother has come—
Open the door, daughter, open the door.”

The parrot heard this and said what the cat had said:

“No gold earrings for your ears,
No gold bracelets for your hands,
No pearl necklace for your neck,
No gold anklets for your feet,
No father has come, no mother has come—
Keep the door closed, sister, keep the door closed.”

The *raksha* got very angry and caught the parrot and twisted his neck and killed him. Then the *raksha* knocked again, and said:

“With gold earrings for your ears,
Gold bracelets for your hands,
Pearl necklace for your neck,
Gold anklets for your feet,
Father has come, mother has come—
Open the door, daughter, open the door.”

The *murunga* tree heard this and shivered and rustled and said:

“No gold earrings for your ears,
No gold bracelets for your hands,
No pearl necklace for your neck,
No gold anklets for your feet,
No father has come, no mother has come—
Keep the door closed, sister, keep the door closed.”

The *raksha* got angry and taking up an axe which he saw leaning against the wall of the house, he cut down the *murunga* tree. And then he knocked again and said:

“With gold earrings for your ears,
Gold bracelets for your hands,
Pearl necklace for your neck,
Gold anklets for your feet,
Father has come, mother has come—
Open the door, daughter, open the door.”

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The river heard this and paused and said in ripples:

“No gold earrings for your ears,
No gold bracelets for your hands,
No pearl necklace for your neck,
No gold anklets for your feet,
No father has come, no mother has come—
Keep the door closed, sister, keep the door closed.”

The *raksha* got angry and running to the river he stopped down and said, “I shall stop this river flowing here” and he began to drink it. He drank and drank, but the river could not be stopped. He drank so much in the end that his stomach could hold no more and it burst and he died.

The crane and his wife came and knocked at the door and when they spoke Amal Biso knew their voices and she opened the door to them. They gave her the ornaments and she told them all that had happened. They wept with joy to find her safe and they also wept to hear about the cat and the parrot and the *murunga* tree, and they went and blest the river.

THE FOOLISH PEASANT

There was once the wife of the landlord of a village who bore him a son very late in life, so that when the son was grown up the landlord and his wife were old. The son grew up to be a very foolish man.

One day the landlord's wife was looking at her son who was always doing some foolish thing and thought: "If he has a wife, perhaps he will be like a grown-up person. Besides, my husband and I are now old, and while we have life we should see that he gets married." So she called her husband and said, "Our son is grown up and we should get him a wife." The landlord agreed. "Yes," he said, "I think it is time we did that. We may die any day."

So they went to a neighbouring village and arranged a match and brought a wife for the son. Not long after this the landlord fell sick and died, and there were only his widow and their son and his wife living in that house.

The wife did not like staying in that village and said to her husband, "We cannot go on living like this always. What if we go to my village and work the fields there?" The landlord's son agreed and said, "That will be good. Let us go to your village."

When they had gone and were living in that village, the wife fell sick. Her body was covered with boils and she lay in bed. The landlord's son then asked her, "What is your sickness?" to which she did not reply. He looked at her carefully and went and consulted a *veda* who examined her and gave some medicine to rub on her body. The landlord's son did this every day, but the sickness became worse. Then the landlord's son said, "This medicine is not so good. It would be better if we go to my village and get medicine there." She agreed and so both of them started to go to the landlord's son's village. While they were going they saw a man on the road taking a bull along with him.

The landlord's son asked, "Where are you taking that bull?" and the man replied, "I am taking this bull to my village. And

where are you two going?" he asked. The landlord's son said, "We went to my wife's village to work the fields. But my wife got sick and boils covered her body and the medicine given there made her sickness worse. So I am taking her to my village to get better medicine." The man saw that the landlord's son looked foolish. So he said, "Let me see the boils. I know about medicine." The landlord's son showed the boils on the wife's body. Then the man said, "This is too bad. No medicine will put her right. The boils will get bigger and bigger."

Hearing this, the landlord's son thought: "What is the use of such a woman," and he did not want the woman any more. He turned to the man and said, "What if you take this woman and give me the bull in return?" The man was pleased, for that was what he wanted. So he said, "Alright. I shall take the woman and give you the bull in return," and he gave the bull and took the woman, who began to weep, and led her away. While going he turned and said over his shoulder, "Be careful with the bull, how you drive it on, because its stomach is full of water."

The landlord's son looked at the bull and taking off his shawl he bound it round the stomach and thought: "I must be careful about the bull's stomach as it is so full of water." A man who was passing by on the road with an axe on his shoulder laughed and inquired, "Why are you doing that?"

The landlord's son replied, "The stomach is full of water, and I have to be careful." The man laughed and was about to go when the landlord's son called out, "What is that thing on your shoulder?" The man said, "It is an axe." The landlord's son asked, "What work can you get out of it?"

The man realizing the foolishness of the landlord's son, said, "Why, quite a lot of work. If you take a package of rice and a pot of water and take the axe and go away to the forest, the axe can even cut down all the trees of the forest."

The landlord's son thought: "What a wonderful thing the axe is," and he liked to have it, and he said, "If I give you the bull will you give me the axe?" The man smiled and said, "Well, you may have the axe for the bull, even though its stomach is full of water."

So the landlord's son took the axe and gave the man the bull and went away.

The landlord's son took the axe and went to his home in the village. Early next morning he took a package of rice and a pot of water and went to the forest. Finding a flat stone there, he put the package of rice and then the pot of water on it and placed the axe by these. "Now," he said, "get up, axe, and cut down the forest."

But the axe just lay there and did not move. Then the landlord's son thought: "I suppose it is because I am looking on. It must be shy. I shall go home and in the meanwhile the axe will get up and eat the rice and drink the water and begin to work cutting down the trees." So he went home and had his meals and came back when it was noon.

The axe was just where it was and the rice and the water were also there, untouched. The landlord's son thought awhile and asked, "Are you sick?" and went and touched the axe. It was very hot as it had been in the sun. "Aha," he thought, "Of course it is sick. It has fever and is very hot." So he went running to a *veda* and said that his axe was very hot with fever as it had lain a long while in the sun, and asked for medicine. The *veda* laughed and said, "The best medicine is this, a basin of water, and you must put the axe into the water and the fever will go after some time."

So the landlord's son got a basin of water and put the axe into it and it got cold after some time. "It is now well," he thought. "Perhaps it is not good to make it work so soon after its sickness," and he took it up and went home.

The following day the landlord's son got sick and he had fever and felt his whole body very hot. "I know the medicine," he thought, "and I need not go to trouble the *veda* again." He went to a pond and got into it and lay down a long time there and when he felt cold he got up and said to himself, "My fever has gone."

When he came home he got very sick that night, began to shiver and died of the fever.



KALU HAMI

A man and his wife once lived by the sea in a village in the south. They had a daughter whom they called Kalu Hami because she was dark in colour, but she was a beautiful girl. She was their only child and they loved her very much. They said, "It is true she is so dark. But for us she is more beautiful because of that. Is it not said that the night is dark but that it has the stars? Our daughter is like that."

One day when the girl went to play by the sea, she saw a pretty shell as a wave rolled back and she ran to get it. While trying to scoop it out of the sand another great wave came on her suddenly and she was dragged into the sea and was drowned.

Her parents were so sad missed her so much that they were always talking about her and saying, "Our beautiful daughter, we shall never see her again." Not a day passed but they kept talking about her. The mother would take out the girl's clothing and jewels and all the little things she liked and look at them and begin to weep. And so it went on, and every year on the day when the daughter Kalu Hami died they would have a big *dana* ceremony to the monks to which were invited the others in the village.

One day as the mother of Kalu Hami was sitting in the verandah of her house and looking out at the sea and thinking of her lost daughter, a beggar came to ask for food. He was very thin and dirty and had a wicked sly look. But the mother of Kalu Hami was a simple good woman, and she asked the beggar, "Why are you so thin? Your very bones are showing. Have you been sick?"

The beggar who had been very ill and close to dying said, "When a man has gone to the other world by being so sick as I was, and has been able to return, will he not look thin?"

Kalu Hami's mother did not know what he meant but thought that he had really gone to the other world where some people go when they die and are not born again in this world. So she asked,

‘When did you go to the other world?’ The beggar realized that she was a foolish woman and replied, ‘Oh, it is some time now. I only came back a few days ago. I got leave to come but have to go back there.’

Kalu Hami’s mother at once thought of her lost daughter and said, ‘When you were in the other world, did you by any chance see my daughter? She was called Kalu Hami. Everybody has seen her here. Did you see her there?’

The beggar looked down and smiled and seemed to be thinking for some time. ‘Her name you say was Kalu Hami? Was she a dark girl?’ The mother said, ‘Yes, and did you see her?’

The beggar suddenly hit his forehead with his hand and said, ‘Yes, now I remember, a dark girl called Kalu Hami.’

Kalu Hami’s mother, who was very happy to get news of her daughter, now asked, ‘Please tell me how she is?’ The beggar said, ‘Well, she is in a good place because she was a good girl. She is happy where she is.’ The mother asked, ‘Does she think of us?’ and the beggar said, ‘She thinks of you always and she asked me whether I had seen you two, her parents, and how you were.’ Then the beggar said, ‘Lady, it is getting late. I have not long to stay here. There is only a little time left for me to go back to the other world. I hope I gave you good news of your daughter. What am I to say to her, and is there anything you would like me to take to her?’

The mother of Kalu Hami said, ‘Wait a little, I will not delay you any more. Of course you gave me good news of my daughter. I am thinking whether you can take something to give her when you go back.’ She then went in and made a package of Kalu Hami’s jewels, clothing and other things, and gave it with a gift to the beggar saying, ‘Please, when you go to the other world take this parcel and give it to my daughter. Tell her we think of her always.’

The beggar put the parcel into the big bag slung over his shoulder and said, ‘Yes, I shall take this for your daughter when I go back and give it to her, and I shall tell her that you two, her parents, keep remembering her.’

The beggar took his leave and went away quickly, looking back

from time to time over his shoulder to see whether Kalu Hami's father was after him.

In the meantime, Kalu Hami's father came home and saw his wife looking happy and with a smile on her face. He was surprised. He had never seen his wife look like that before, not from the day that Kalu Hami died. So he asked her, "What is this? How can you be happy? I can never be happy like you without our Kalu Hami."

She said, "I am happy because I just met a man who saw Kalu Hami where she is in the other world. He told me that she is in a good place because she was a good girl, and is very happy. But she keeps thinking of us all the same."

The father of Kalu Hami asked, "Really? And you believed all that? Who was the man?" She said, "He was dressed like a beggar, but he must be a *sadhu*. He said he had to go back to the other world and had very little time and wanted to know whether he could take and give Kalu Hami anything I wished to send her." The husband asked, "And did you give him anything?" She said, "Of course I gave him. I was so happy to be able to do so." And the husband asked, "What did you give him?" She said, "I gave him the jewels and clothes and other things." The husband grew very angry and said, "How can you be so foolish? What a thing you have done giving away our daughter's jewels and clothes and other things to that thief of a beggar. That was all we had to treasure thinking of her, all we had to look at and think of her, all that she left behind for us. What a bad man he must be to make such a fool of you telling you those lies to get all that. Which way did he go?"

Kalu Hami's mother cried, "Then it was not true?" And the husband said, "How can it be true? But tell me which way he went." Wiping the tears which came to her eyes, Kalu Hami's mother said, "There along the road, he went straight on."

The husband went and quickly saddled his horse and rode along the road looking for the beggar, and asking people if they had seen him. After some time he saw in the distance the beggar with a bag on his shoulder turning into a lane, and began to ride quickly. The

beggar hearing the horse coming looked round and knowing he was being chased ran to a tree close by and began climbing it. When Kalu Hami's father came the beggar was up in the tree.

Kalu Hami's father came to the tree and called out, "Come down at once, you thief." The beggar began to climb higher up. Then Kalu Hami's father said, "If you will not come down I shall climb up to you and take what you have stolen and push you down from the tree so that you will break your neck."

But the beggar did not come down. So Kalu Hami's father tied the horse to the tree and began to climb up. When the beggar saw this he waited for some time until Kalu Hami's father was half way up the tree and then stepped on to a branch which was just over the horse and going along that branch he made it bend down and lowered himself on to the horse. He quickly set himself on the saddle, untied the horse and before Kalu Hami's father could climb down again he rode off.

Kalu Hami's father came down and stood at the foot of the tree a long while, thinking, "Now what am I to do? Wickedness seems to win in this world. If I go back on foot without having taken my Kalu Hami's jewels and clothes and other things, what will people think? Some will feel sorry for me, some will laugh at me. What do I want of their pity or their laughter?" So he stood thinking there.

Then in the end he thought of a way how he could go back. He returned on foot and when the people saw him coming like that they were surprised, and asked him, "Did you catch the beggar? Did you get Kalu Hami's jewels and clothes and other things back?" But he told them, "As my wife had given the beggar my Kalu Hami's jewels and clothes and other things, and a gift also, I thought I might as well give him my horse too to speed him on his way."

THE GREAT AND THE LITTLE LIAR

There was a man in a village who was known as the Great Liar because he told such great and wonderful lies, and he was very clever too. People used to go to hear him talk when no work took up their time and when he was resting. They went to be surprised and to laugh. In the end he could not walk along the street but people who had nothing to do would run after him and get talking with him, and the Great Liar had not a moment to himself even at night.

At the same time there was another liar living in another village close by and he too was known and used to be called the Little Liar. The Great Liar and the Little Liar had never met but they had heard of each other and had a regard for each other.

The Little Liar thought: "It is time I went and met the Great Liar to pay him my respects. We may even have a lying match and I may become better known." So he went one day to the village of the Great Liar and found his house. There was a boy in the garden making a toy. He asked the boy where the Great Liar was as he had come to meet him. The boy looked at him and asked him who he was. He said, "I am known as the Little Liar." The boy had heard of him.

Then the boy said, "My father the Great Liar has gone to the sky to make some fences there." The Little Liar smiled and asked, "Where then is your mother?" The boy replied, "She went this morning to darn a tent in the sky. Both my father and mother went together." The Little Liar was surprised at the boy.

The Little Liar asked, "When will they return?" The boy said, "How can I say that? But I can call them." The Little Liar asked, "How can you call them if they are away in the sky, and how can they come?"

The boy laughed and said, "That is easy, I can yell out and say 'hoo' and they will climb on the sound sent up to them and come riding down on it. But I shall not call them now because they have not finished their work in the sky and they will be angry with me for

calling them so soon. So you had better come on another day.”

The Little Liar was very surprised at what the boy said and he thought: “If the small son of the Great Liar can talk like this what must the father be.” And he put his hand to his cheek and looked at the boy. Then he took his leave and went away.

In the evening the Great Liar and his wife returned from the field where they had gone to work. Then the boy told them that the Little Liar had come from his village on a visit. The Great Liar asked, “What? The Little Liar? Are you sure?” The boy replied, “Yes, I am sure.”

The Great Liar asked, “Why did you let him go? I so want to meet him. What did you tell him?” The boy replied, “I told him that you had gone to the sky to make fences and that my mother had gone to the sky to darn a tent there, and that I could call you by yelling out ‘*hoo*’ and that you would come riding down on the sound sent up to you.”

The Great Liar got angry and said, “Is that the kind of wretched lie you are able to tell people. O, What kind of lies are those, you stupid fellow? I am ashamed of you. I thought you could do better than that. You are a disgrace to me, telling such silly lies. If you are my son you ought to be able to tell better lies than that. You are not fit to be my son. You are spoiling my name. And you will go on doing so. You must be put an end to.”

And the Great Liar got a long cord and tied the hands of the boy and pulled him along by the cord to the well. “This is where I am going to put you,” said the Great Liar, and lowered him down into the well.

When the boy was up to his neck in water in the well and was going further down and was trying to keep himself afloat, he cried out to the Great Liar, “Father, stop a moment. I see a big *lula* fish. Let me catch it.”

The Great Liar stopped lowering the boy further down and said, “A *lula* fish? Catch it, then.” He was very fond of eating *lula* fish which is found in the lakes. The boy said, “Take me up quickly. It is trying to slip away from my hands which are tied and I cannot get a proper hold on it.”

The Great Liar quickly pulled up the boy and asked, “Where is the *lula* fish?” The boy laughed and asked, “Am I such a fool to bring up the fish? I cooked it in the water and ate it.” The Great Liar said, “How could you do that in the water? Where was the fire?” The boy replied, “The fire? Why the fire was the heat that arose in me on account of my fear of getting drowned. A great fire arose in me and I cooked the fish and ate it. I can eat lots of *lula* fish in the well like that.” The Great Liar looked at the boy and laughed.

He was very pleased and said, “Son, you are not as bad as I thought. You are fit to be my son. I am pleased with you. I did not mean to drown you. I only did that to see how you would get out of that difficulty.”

And he patted the boy on his head and took him home and told him to try hard to be a liar like himself so that he would take the place of the Great Liar when the Great Liar was no more.



THE WICKED DAUGHTER-IN-LAW

A man once lived in a village by a river. He lived with his mother who was a widow. He cared for her and attended on her and did the cooking and even bathed her. He did whatever she told him to do. Whenever he had no work in the field he would not sit in the bazaar like the others and gossip, but would stay at home and help his mother in the housework.

His mother seeing all this began to think, "What a lot of work my son does every day although he has no one to help him. What if I get him a wife who could work and help him? I am myself old and not strong anymore." So she went to a village close by and looked for a woman who could work and brought him a wife from there to help him. Her mother came too.

As time went on three children were born to her daughter-in-law and they all lived happily together. Some time after this the wife began to change her ways. She stopped living happily with her mother-in-law and looked on the house as her very own. She did not attend on her mother-in-law and did not like her any more. She did not like the way her husband cared for his mother. In the end she found fault with whatever her mother-in-law said and did. She disliked herself being called "daughter" and her husband being called "son". She did not like to see her mother-in-law taking her meals and resting at times. She spent a lot of time telling her husband that his mother was bad, and found fault with her in every way.

But the mother-in-law did not hate or harm the daughter-in-law in any way and never did any of the wrong things the daughter-in-law said she did. She was happy that she had brought her for her son now had less work to do when he returned from the field, and so she kept quiet when her daughter-in-law was rude.

One day the daughter-in-law said to her husband, "I cannot go on suffering like this from day to day. What is my life worth being such a slave? I have to do all the house work and cook and look

after the children, and while doing all this I have to hear your mother scolding me, which is the way she thanks me for all the work I do. She eats and drinks and sleeps and does nothing else. I have had enough of this. I cannot go on any more. If your mother means to stay here I cannot live in this house. I shall go away with my mother."

The husband said, "But, woman, if my mother does not stay here where is she to go? Will she stay so long? She is old and weak. For the little time she lives let her stay." Then the wife screamed and shouted, "Let her stay? Then let me go." The husband said, "Woman, what is it you want me to do?" and the wife replied, "As she has to die, what does it matter when she dies? I want her to be thrown into the river to be eaten by the crocodiles."

The husband could not believe what he heard. He asked, "What is it you say? Do you know that she is my mother?" The wife asked, "It is because she is your mother that she should be thrown into the river. If she was somebody else, we could have just chased her away. But your mother must be thrown into the river. When we throw her into the river she will not suffer but be eaten up at once by the crocodiles."

The husband thought a long while and then asked, "But how are we to throw her into the river?" The wife replied, "When she sleeps tonight we can carry her out on her bed and throw her into the river." The husband said, "Alright. But your mother and my mother both sleep in the same room. We must be able to find my mother in the dark. So let us tie a string to the bed on which my mother sleeps." The wife agreed and went at once and tied a string to the bed of her mother-in-law and came and told her husband that she had tied the string.

The husband said, "But we will have to wait till it is safe. We cannot do it now. People in the village may see us carrying away the bed with my mother. We must wait till everybody is asleep." The wife agreed, "Alright. I am sleepy. I am going to bed. Wake me up when it is time for what we have to do," and she went and slept.

The husband thought for some time and he went and untied the

string from his mother's bed and tied it on the bed of his wife's mother. Then he woke up his wife and said, "It is time. Nobody is about." Both of them went into the room in the dark. They groped about looking for the string. Coming across it took up the bed, carried it out and threw it into the river. It was the wife's mother who was thus thrown into the river, and the helpless woman was at once swarmed upon by the crocodiles and eaten up in a moment.

The following day the husband's mother was seen as usual in the house but the wife's mother was not seen. When the daughter-in-law saw this and realized that it was her own mother that had been thrown into the river, she was very angry. She screamed and said, "Must your mother still live when my mother is dead? We must quickly kill your mother. We must do it somehow." The man asked, "How are we to do it? If it is the luck of a person to live in this world it is not so easy to put an end to such a life till the right time comes for that person to die. That is how we made this mistake." But the wife replied, "Enough of all that clever talk. We must be quick now and kill your mother. If we cannot put her into the river we must take her to the cemetery and burn her there while she is still alive."

The man agreed and waited till his mother was asleep and both of them, the husband and the wife, carried her away to the cemetery. Then the man said, "What is this, woman, we have no fire to burn my mother. Let me go and bring some fire." "I cannot stay here alone," said the wife. "Let us both go."

So they went leaving the mother there. The cold breeze of the night woke her up and she sat up. She looked around and saw in the starlight that she was in the cemetery. She was frightened. She realized she was about to be killed in some way, so she left the bed and ran away and hid in a bush. She kept looking about and saw a dead woman lying close by, left there by some poor people who could not burn her, and she took off her own clothes and dressed the dead woman, placed her on the bed, and naked, went and hid again in the bush.

The son and his wife came and set fire to the bed, heaped faggots

and went away. The mother hiding in the bush saw this and sighed. She went away towards the forest and saw a cave there and sat near it thinking, "Now what am I to do?" This cave was used by thieves who were not there in the night as they had gone about their business of stealing. Early in the morning the thieves came and saw the naked old woman seated near the entrance. They were frightened and they said, "This is not a *manushyaya* like us but a *yakshini*. Let us go and call a sorcerer to drive away this *yakshini*," and keeping away from the cave they went and brought a sorcerer. When the sorcerer saw the naked old woman he said, "I know how to chase away this *yakshini*," and began to chant a *mantra*. The old woman replied, "I am no *yakshini*." "Put out your tongue, then, like this," the sorcerer said, "so that I can see for myself," and he put out his own tongue. The old woman jumped up caught his tongue and bit it off. The sorcerer got frightened, screamed and ran away and the thieves ran after him in fear crying out, "We have never seen such a bad *yakshini*."

Then the old woman gathered all the things the thieves had brought and went into the cave. She saw gold and silver and jewels and silk shawls and other good clothing. She took costly bracelets and earrings and necklaces and put them on and dressed herself in rich clothes. She then put all she could of the other riches in a bag she found in the cave and turned back and returned to her house.

The daughter-in-law saw the richly adorned mother-in-law coming in and ran forward in surprise. She knelt down and worshipped her and said, "How is this, aunt, that you come when last night we burnt you in the cemetery?" The mother smiled and said, "Have you not heard that when a person is burnt alive in a cemetery she lives again and becomes very rich? If you had burnt me longer I would have got even more treasure. Who taught you this wonderful thing?"

The daughter-in-law heard this and was surprised and said to her foolish husband, "I too would like to get rich. So burn me alive in the cemetery. Take me on my bed and burn me at once and burn me longer so that I may get more than your mother." The husband agreed and took her as she wished and set fire to the bed with her

and placed a great heap of faggots to make her burn more. Then he returned home and waited and waited, but his wife did not return.

It got darker and darker and he thought: "Perhaps she must be taking time to gather so great a heap of riches." But yet she did not return. Then his mother laughed and said, "My foolish son, I brought you into the world and I cared for you and reared you with love, and I also brought you a wife to help you. But you listened to that wicked wife of yours and in return for my being your mother you tried to kill me. The gods would not allow it. Foolish child, try to live better after this. We are rich now and you need not have to work so much."

The son fell down before his mother and worshipped her and asked her to forgive him. He attended on her as before and became the good son he used to be.

STORIES OF A COURT JESTER

1

There was a court jester called Andaré whom the king and queen liked very much. He could always go and see the king in the palace even when he was not called to make the king laugh, as was the way with court jesters.

One day while Andaré was walking about in the palace grounds he saw people putting out great heaps of white sugar on mats to dry. He looked at the sugar and felt like eating a lot of it. So he stood thinking for a little while and then went to the palace. He knew where the king would be and went there and saw the king and worshipped him. The king smiled and asked, "What is it Andaré?" Andaré said, "Your Majesty, while I was walking in the palace grounds I saw people spreading out great heaps of some white stuff like flour on mats, but it was not flour, it looks more like sand. What is it, Your Majesty, and what is it for?"

The king sensed Andaré knew it was sugar that was being dried, but thought awhile and said, "I suppose Andaré, it must be white sand for scattering on the garden paths." Then Andaré took his leave and went away saying that his wife was sick.

He went home and told his son that he must come to the palace grounds where white sugar was being spread out in the sun and shout and say, "Father, mother has died." When Andaré had gone back to the barns of the palace where the sugar had been put out on mats, his son came running and called out, "Father, mother has died."

Andaré inquired, "What, my wife has died?" and the son said, "Yes, father, she has died." Then Andaré loosened his hair knot and let his hair stream down. He pulled off his shawl and threw it away and wept loudly and called out and cried, "Then it is better that you and I eat sand. My poor wife! Then it is better that both of us eat sand," and he caught his son and they both fell down and

rolled about. They went rolling on to the mats with the sugar crying, "It is better that we eat sand," and Andaré began to push handfuls of sugar into his mouth and that of his son.

When this was told to the king he laughed and said, "It is one of his tricks. His wife is very much alive. He wanted to eat the sugar and that is why he came to ask me what the sugar was."

2

The brother-in-law of Andaré was once seen in the palace grounds trying to steal something and he was caught by some guards. The king ordered him to be punished. The ministers and others tried to save him, but the king insisted that he be punished. When Andaré heard about it he went to the palace, but the ministers and others said that it was of no use, that the king meant to punish his brother-in-law even though they had begged the king to let him go. But Andaré said, "I shall save him. I shall go to the king."

He was going towards the king's room when the king saw him coming and called out, "Andaré, no matter what you say I will not do what you want me to do." Andaré heard this and thought awhile. Then he said, "Your Majesty, my brother-in-law is a good-for-nothing man. He spends his time getting drunk and he goes about stealing. He is a bad man. Your Majesty, I came to ask you to punish him."

The king saw that Andaré had got the better of him. He had told Andaré that he would not do what Andaré wanted him to do. So the brother-in-law was set free.

3

Once when Andaré was in the palace making the king and queen laugh at his jokes, the queen said, "Andaré, what a happy woman your wife must be. You are always doing and saying such funny things. I should like to see your wife. Will you bring her here for me to see?"

Andaré said, "Your Majesty, my wife is a little deaf and she will be troublesome to talk to. One has to talk loud and shout out to her." But the queen replied, "That is no trouble, Andaré. I shall

talk loud and if necessary, shout out to her. Bring her here.”

Andaré went to his wife and said, “Woman, what do you think! The queen wants to meet you. But, as you know, the queen is a little deaf, and when you speak to her you have to talk loud and shout to her.” The wife said, “I never knew she was a little deaf. Anyway, take me to her. I shall talk loud.”

So Andaré took his wife and to meet the queen, and the queen talking loud greeted her and said, “I am happy to meet you.” Andaré’s wife answered her, talking loud and shouting, and all their talk was like that, each shouting to the other. There was such a noise in the queen’s room that the people of the palace and others within hearing began to crowd around the room and wondered what could be happening. Even the guards of the palace came rushing there thinking there was some trouble.

When the king was told about it he came there and listened to the noise of the two shouting in the room. He listened a little and realizing what was happening, began to laugh. He told the people that it was one of Andaré’s jokes and that Andaré had told the queen that his wife was deaf and he must have told his wife the same thing about the queen. They all laughed.

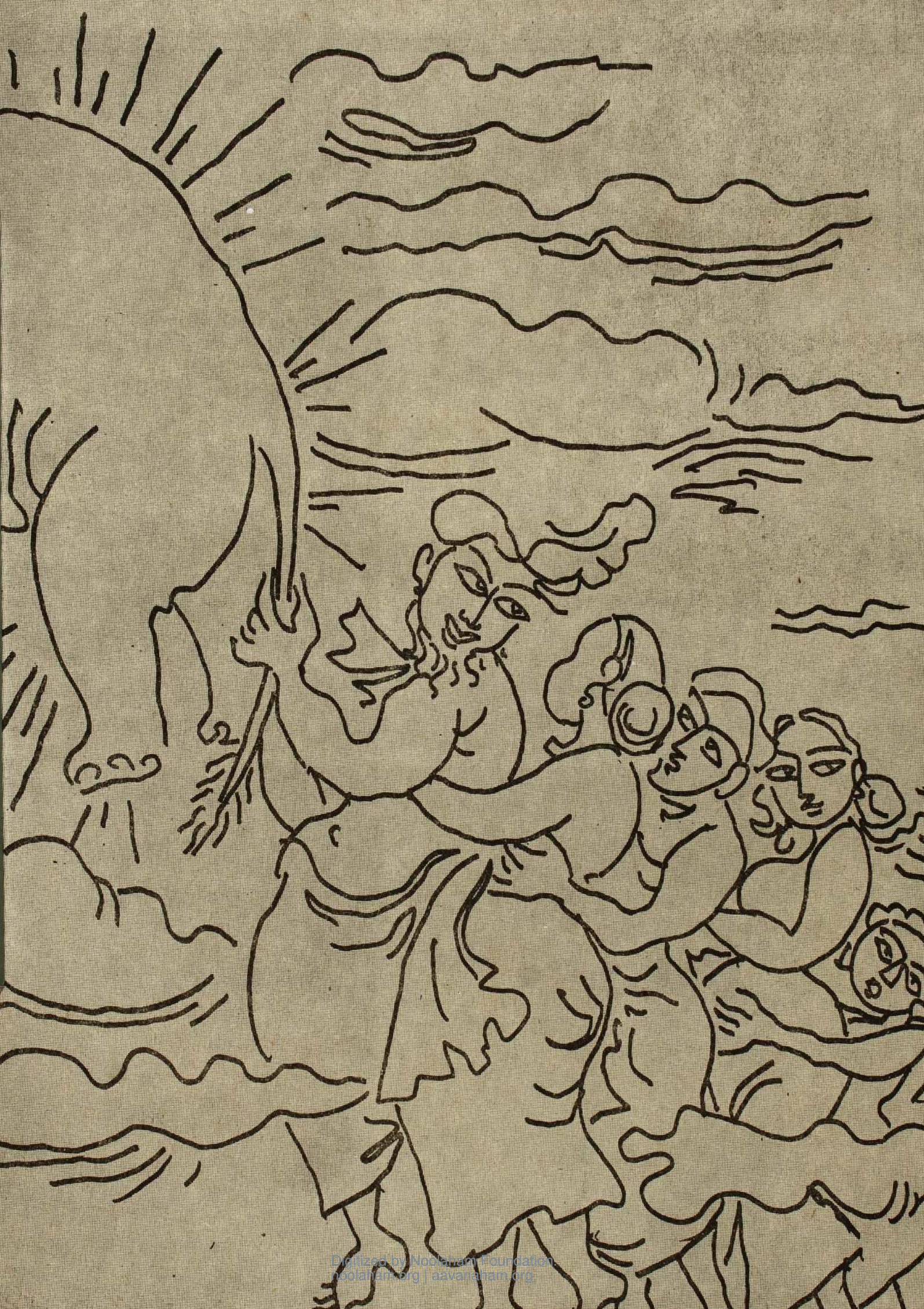
4

A little way from Andaré’s house there was a landlord of the village who had a *kitul* palm tree in his garden. When the *kitul* tree was in flower, he tapped it and hung a pot there to get toddy. He went every evening and took the toddy. Andaré came to know of this and he climbed the tree in the morning before the landlord and drank the toddy. But he climbed with a bag slung over his shoulder and a sickle stuck in his waist.

When the landlord went afterwards to get his toddy he saw that there was very little left in the pot, and thought: “There is some thief who comes here and drinks my toddy. I must catch him.”

So he went very early next morning and hid near the tree and kept watch. Andaré came with his bag slung over his shoulder and his sickle stuck in his waist and climbed the tree and drank the toddy.

He had almost climbed down when the landlord came out suddenly and shouted at Andaré, "What is this you are doing, climbing up and down my *kitul* tree?" Andaré replied, "I have not done anything. I only went up to the *kitul* tree to cut grass." The landlord got very angry and shouted, "Are you trying to play the fool with me? How can there be grass on a *kitul* tree?" and Andaré replied, "That is why I came down from the tree. I saw that there was no grass there." And he walked quietly away.



HOW THE LANDLORD WENT TO HEAVEN

A landlord used to go every morning to his paddy field to look after the tender rice plants which were growing and to keep away straying cattle.

One day when he went he was surprised to see a portion of the field in a bad state, with the rice plants either eaten up or damaged and uprooted. He saw large imprints in the mud as if a mortar had been taken about there and pressed down all over the place.

He was very angry and went among the village people asking, "Why do you allow your mortars to get into my field? Why not be more careful if your mortars are like that, and why not tie them up at night?"

The village people at first laughed at him as they thought he was joking, but knowing him to be a foolish man, they went to the field and saw the large round imprints. They said, "Sir, these are the footprints of an elephant. You had better keep watch tonight."

The landlord replied, "There are no elephants here, we have none, and there are no wild elephants this side. How can it be an elephant?" But the villagers said that it was an elephant that had come to his field and that he should keep watch for it in the night.

So that night the landlord went out and stood among the trees on a side of the field and kept looking out for the elephant. After a long time a glow like moonlight fell on his field and he looked up and saw a shining elephant the colour of silver coming down slowly from the sky. He could not believe his eyes.

As it came down and stood in his field, he ran to his house crying, "There is a chance of going to heaven. Come, all of you, come soon. We can go to heaven." His wife heard this and asked, "What, is it you say, to go to heaven?" The landlord said, "Yes, lady, come soon and call the others too." So she called the grandfather and the aunts and the daughter and the son-in-law and the children and they all ran off following the landlord.

He took them to the field and showed them the wonderful elephant which was by this time walking about the field eating up the tender rice plants and trampling lots of them and making holes everywhere with its large feet. "This elephant came from heaven," he said. "I saw it come down. Listen. I shall go and cling to its tail, and you lady, cling to me, and one by one all the rest of you cling after that. It will go back to heaven."

He ran along the banks of the field and his wife and the others followed him and he clung to the tail of the elephant. His wife clung to him and one by one the rest clung after that.

The elephant began to climb up into the sky with the landlord and the others all clinging on behind. As the elephant rose higher and higher and was going through the clouds, the landlord told his wife, "It will be wonderful up there." She asked, "Will there be nice paddy fields?" He replied, "Of course there will be paddy fields and much better than the paddy fields which we have." She asked, "Will they be bigger than the ones anywhere here, and do you think the rice plants are bigger too and better than ours?" He said, "Of course it must be so."

Then she thought awhile and asked, "What about the way they measure? Are the measuring boxes much bigger than ours? And how big?"

He said, "Oh well, as big or bigger than this," and he spread his hands out wide to show how big the measuring boxes were in heaven. He let go the tail of the elephant and suddenly fell and all those clinging to each other fell. The whole lot fell and down they went and landed with a big splash in the mud of their paddy field.

HOW THE YAM DIGGER WAS FOOLED

In a village among the hills a poor man lived with his wife. In front of their hut there was a rushing stream and on the other side of the stream there was a big forest. The man and his wife had a small paddy field and a cow. As the paddy field did not give them enough rice they also had to live on *kathal* and yams when these were in season, and the few vegetables they grew in their small piece of land.

It so happened once that during the rainy season the man had to go to the forest to dig up yams. He had to cross the rushing stream to go to the forest. It was very difficult work. There were marshes and thorny thickets in the dense forest and rocky places to climb, and there were wild animals and snakes. But he had to go looking for the yams. The rain at the time made the work more difficult.

Going to look for the yams that day he came at last to a full grown creeper which seemed to have a lot of yams beneath the earth. He dug very deep to get all the yams. He had to be careful as otherwise the yams would be cut up. After a long time, he dug up a very big yam, and carried it home.

While he was bringing it he met a friend. That man looked at the yam and said, "What a big yam you are bringing, friend!" The yam digger did not look happy. His friend added, "You should be happy to get such a big yam. It will do for food for two days."

The yam digger replied, "You know, friend, I get yams like this so big and long, but when I give them to my wife to cook I seem to have brought small yams." The friend asked, "How can that be?" The man said, "I cannot understand it, friend, but I always get only small pieces to eat."

The friend said, "It is strange. Your wife cannot be giving away the yams to others and only keeping a little." The man replied, "No, she never does that. She is very careful." Then the friend said, "It may be you will have to find out how it happens."

The man asked, "How can I do that?" The friend thought awhile and added, "Well, my friend, when you go back today say you are feeling sick and keep to your bed. And this is what you must do afterwards. I shall give you some ghee in a leaf. When the yams are being cooked and the water from the pot is drained off and the pot is put back on the fire, you must say you are feeling cold and come and sit by the fire to warm yourself. As soon as your wife goes to get the plantain leaves to serve out the yams, you must quickly put the ghee into the pot and close it again before she returns, and you must not tell your wife. You may then see what happens to the big pieces."

So the man got the ghee from his friend and went home with the large yam and gave it to his wife to cook. He then said he was feeling sick and went and lay down. When he thought that the yam was cooking, he said he felt cold and came and sat by the fire to warm himself. The wife went to get the plantain leaves and the man put the ghee into the pot.

The wife came back with the plantain leaves and asked the man, "Are you feeling better now?" He replied, "Yes, I am better. You see, I had so much to do getting that big yam, and I was so tired and I got wet too in the rain. That is why I got sick." The wife said, "You are better now. Will you move aside until I warm these leaves over the fire before I serve the boiled yam?" The man moved away from near the fire and sat on a side.

Then the woman made some coconut *sambol* to eat with the boiled yam and taking the pot from the fire she tilted it so that the pieces fell on to the leaf which she had warmed. She was surprised to see that all the pieces, the big and the small, fell from the pot on to the leaf and none remained sticking at the bottom. She did not know that the man had put ghee into the pot while the yam was cooking.

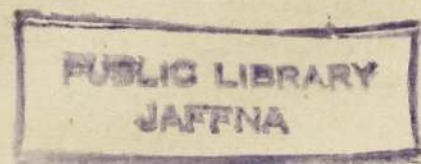
She was troubled and thought, "Now what shall I do? All the pieces have fallen from the pot and the big pieces are not as usual stuck together at the bottom of the pot." Thinking further she looked at the man and began to talk about his sickness and then asked, "Did your mother too get sick like you? Of what sickness did she die?"

She knew that the man would talk a lot as he always did about such things. The foolish man began to talk and he told her all about his mother her sickness and how long it lasted, how from day to day he would go to the *veda* and get medicines and how he looked for the herbs and leaves to make the medicines. He went on talking and talking.

In the meantime as he sat on a side talking, the woman served herself the big pieces of yam and began to eat her food quickly while he delayed because he was talking. Then he told her, "Tell me about your mother, how she died." The woman said, "Well, she got sick and the medicine we made for her was no good and she died."

By the time he began his meal there were only a few small pieces left on the leaf for him. He was very hungry and ate the little that was left. There was nothing to show that he had brought such a big yam.

When he was going again to dig for yams he met his friend, and the friend asked, "So, how was it after what I told you to do?" The man said, "Yes, friend, I did as you told me to do. But it happened as before. I only got the small pieces." The friend asked, "What were you doing during the meal?" He said, "I did nothing, friend. I was only talking. My wife asked me to tell her about my mother's sickness and how she died and so I told her everything." The friend laughed. He knew how foolish the man was and how his wife must have got him to talk and fooled him while he talked and talked. So he said, "She has fooled you into talking and eaten all the big pieces. When you go again to dig for yams you had better take her with you so that she could see what hard work it is getting those yams, but be careful not to be so foolish and talk and talk when you sit down to eat."





ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय

SIGIRIS

There was a certain village where some of the people had taken to bad ways and spent their time drinking and gambling, and never did any work.

One day a man called Sigiris came to that village and thought of living there because he saw that it was nice and cool among the hills. He did not know anything about it, but he was told that he could buy land there.

He had some money with him because he was a careful man. He was good in his ways and he was kind to everybody. He came to that village and bought land and paddy fields and became rich and made a big house there.

As he was rich many people came to see him from time to time, and among them the bad people came too. The bad people used to stay on after the others left and told him that his life was very dull for such a rich man, and they asked him to come to their parties.

When he went among them they got up a lot of fun for him and taught him to drink toddy and gamble and to be happy in the way they were happy. Little by little he began to drink toddy and gamble and do the other bad things that they did. And, as he never did all this before and it was all quite new to him, he began to like that idle way of life. They were clever and made him spend a lot and also took money from him when he was drunk, so that in the end he became poor.

At last he was so poor that he had to sell his lands and his house. The money he got from selling all his properties he spent on his food. Finally even that money was over. People did not come to see him any more, and those bad people also kept away from him. No one would help him.

As he had no money to get food he thought: "There is only one way left now. I have to become a beggar. But how can I beg in this village where I was once so rich?" After thinking about it, he saw that he would have to leave that village. He was sad as he liked the village.



He went away and began to beg from village to village. Once when he was going about begging, a woman gave him some rice and curry left over from the night. He put it into his bowl and went to an *ambalama* to sit down and eat it. But the food was old and smelling and a host of flies came swarming over the food. He thought, "Even what I beg I cannot have. See how these flies come to stop me eating." And getting angry, he suddenly waved his hand and struck at the flies. Some flies struck his hand and fell down dead.

He was surprised and looked at the flies lying dead. He counted twenty-five flies and thought, "With one blow I killed these flies." He felt proud of having killed twenty-five flies with one blow. He thought: "I must do something about it," and got a board and wrote on it, "I killed twenty-five at one stroke." He then hung it round his neck and got up and went walking through the village.

The people who saw him coming read what was written on the board, got frightened and moved aside to let him pass. Then someone came to him and asked, "Is it true that you killed twenty-five at one stroke?" He said, "Yes, that is why I have this board saying so." The man suggested, "If it is true you should go to the king. Our king likes sport. He has a strong man to fight people and no one can win against him. If anyone wins he will get a big present of money and be made a captain in the army. Many have come to fight the strong man but no one has yet won. Why not go to the king?"

Sigiris heard this and hitting himself on his chest and looking very proud, asked, "Is there anyone who can win over me? I shall go to the king today," and he went to the palace and said he wanted to fight the strong man. When this was conveyed to the king, Sigiris was called and the king asked, "Can you fight my strong man?"

Sigiris replied, "That, Your Majesty, is a small thing for me to do. I killed twenty-five with one blow. What is your strong man to me?" The king was surprised and said he never met anyone who killed twenty-five with one blow. He sent for the strong man and said, "See, here is a brave man come to fight you."

The strong man looked at Sigiris and asked, "In what way do you

want to fight with me?" Sigiris replied, "Any way you wish. You had better make the kind of fight you want." The strong man said, "Then first of all let us swim to see who will win." Sigiris looked happy and agreed at once though he had never done that before, let alone even step into a stream.

So the king told the strong man to take what he wanted for the swimming match and sent tom tom beaters all over the town to tell the people that there would be a big swimming match. The strong man called Sigiris to the store-room and began to put away food and toddy to last for two days for two people. Sigiris asked, "For how many days will there be the swimming?" The strong man replied, "For two days." Then Sigiris laughed and inquired, "Do you think, that the food is enough? Why, I will want more than that myself for one day? That amount of food may do for my morning meal," and Sigiris began to laugh again. He said, "You may take a big amount of food, rice and meat and vegetables and ghee and the rest, with a big amount of toddy too, even to last for two weeks because I can keep swimming for two weeks without once getting out of the water, or even longer than that. So what do you say?"

The strong man was frightened and thought: "How can I swim with a man like this?" So he said, "Let us leave aside this swimming match," he went to the king and said, "Your Majesty, it is better if we fight face to face with our hands. The swimming match will be too troublesome."

The crowd of people gathered on the seashore who had come to see the swimming match had to go away disappointed, and they were told that there would be a fight between the strong man and Sigiris.

When Sigiris heard what the strong man said, he went to the king and said, "Your Majesty, the fight which your strong man wants will have to take place in about two weeks. I need the two weeks for me to be ready. A big green must be prepared with long sheds all round for the people to watch and a high decorated pavilion for Your Majesty and the ministers and chief people of the palace. We, the strong man and myself, must have a place to stay till then, with two rooms one for each of us, and well stored with food and drink

and betel and other things. We can stay there till all is ready for the fighting match. And tom tom beaters must announce it to the people.”

So the king gave them a place which was divided into two by a wall and stored well with food and drink and betel and he ordered the tom tom beaters to go about the town and make known that there was to be a big fighting match between the strong man and Sigiris in two weeks’ time.

When Sigiris was in his room, eating and drinking and sleeping most of the time, he spent the nights pouring water on the wall on his side, at the height of his chest, and kept soaking it every night. Then he carefully broke the plaster and started taking out the bricks, making a hole, until he came to the layer of plaster on the other side, which he left alone.

He began to cough loud and called out to the strong man, “Friend, I have run out of my betel. I wish to have a chew now. Can you give me some betel?” The strong man answered, “Yes, friend, I have a lot of it. Wait till I come round.” But Sigiris said, “No need of that friend. Here, give it to me,” and he thrust his hand through the thin layer of plaster which gave way and held out his palm as if he had broken the wall with one thrust of his hand.

The strong man was surprised and frightened. He saw the hand suddenly thrust through the brick wall, and it was not harmed in any way. He looked and looked and his fear became greater and greater. He thought, “Can I believe this? If this man thrusts his hand through the brick wall, what can I hope to do in the fighting match? I will be knocked down at once and not a bone will be left unbroken in my body.” He quickly gave the betel, and sat down on his bed. He could not sleep that night. He was very troubled.

It so happened that the fighting match was to take place the following morning. All was ready for it. But the strong man was too frightened to go to the match and get killed there. So he thought: “There is nothing for me to do but to run away now.” And he collected his things and quickly opening the door ran away from the town.

When all the people had gathered to see the big fighting match

and the king and the people of the palace had come to the pavilion, the strong man did not come but Sigiris came alone. The king wondered why the strong man was not seen and asked Sigiris. Then Sigiris said that he had asked for some betel from his room in the night and to save the strong man the trouble of coming round he thrust his hand through the wall breaking it to take the betel. In the morning, he saw that the strong man was not in his room but he had taken his things and run away.

The king was surprised at what Sigiris had done and sent people to look for the strong man, but he was not to be found. The king knew that the strong man had run away through fear because he could not face Sigiris in the fighting match.

So the king gave Sigiris a big present of money and made him a captain in the army, and Sigiris lived thereafter in great state.

THE GOLDEN PUMPKIN

In a city there was a rich woman who was to have a baby. Every day she wanted milk bread as that was what she wished to have, and once when this was being made for her a bitch who was to have puppies came near the kitchen. The bitch was very hungry and seeing milk bread being made ready she asked the woman to give her some of it. The woman told the bitch to go away and that the milk bread was for herself. Then the bitch pleaded, "Give me at least what is thrown away after washing the milk bowl. I am so hungry." The woman said, "No, you go away. These things are not for you." Then the bitch looked at her and said, "I too am like you. See me. You are to have a baby and I am to have puppies. All babies are the same. I shall go away. But you shall know what it is to have either a baby or a puppy. We shall both be mothers and I shall have your baby while you have my puppies." The bitch then went away.

Very soon after this the rich woman had puppies and not a baby, and the bitch had the baby. The bitch nursed the baby, a girl, and loved and cared for her. The girl grew up to be a very beautiful maiden and all the people in the village where she was born loved her. The girl was beautiful and had a melodious voice. She used to go to an *ashok* tree every morning and sit alone under it and sing. She sang so sweetly that the very birds would gather on the branches to listen.

One day as she sat there singing, a prince who was riding out heard her and stopped and listened to her sweet voice. He came looking for her and saw her sitting under the *ashok* tree. He looked and wondered at her great beauty and asked, "Beautiful one, are you a *Sura Sundari* from heaven? Why have you come here?"

She replied, "Lord, I am but a poor village girl and this is where I live." "I cannot leave you here after having seen you," he said. "You must come with me and be my princess," and he helped her on to his horse and took her away to his palace.

The bitch who had left her with a village family when she was a child came as usual to that house to see her but did not find her there, and those people did not know where she had gone. Wandering about and asking people whether they had seen her, someone told the bitch that he had seen the girl going away with the prince.

The girl who had become a princess lived in the palace with the prince who loved her. She used to think of her mother far away in the village and whether anyone tended to her wants. While she was thinking like this one day, the bitch came to the palace. The girl took her in and gave her a room and bathed her and fed her and sent her away from there. She used to come often like this.

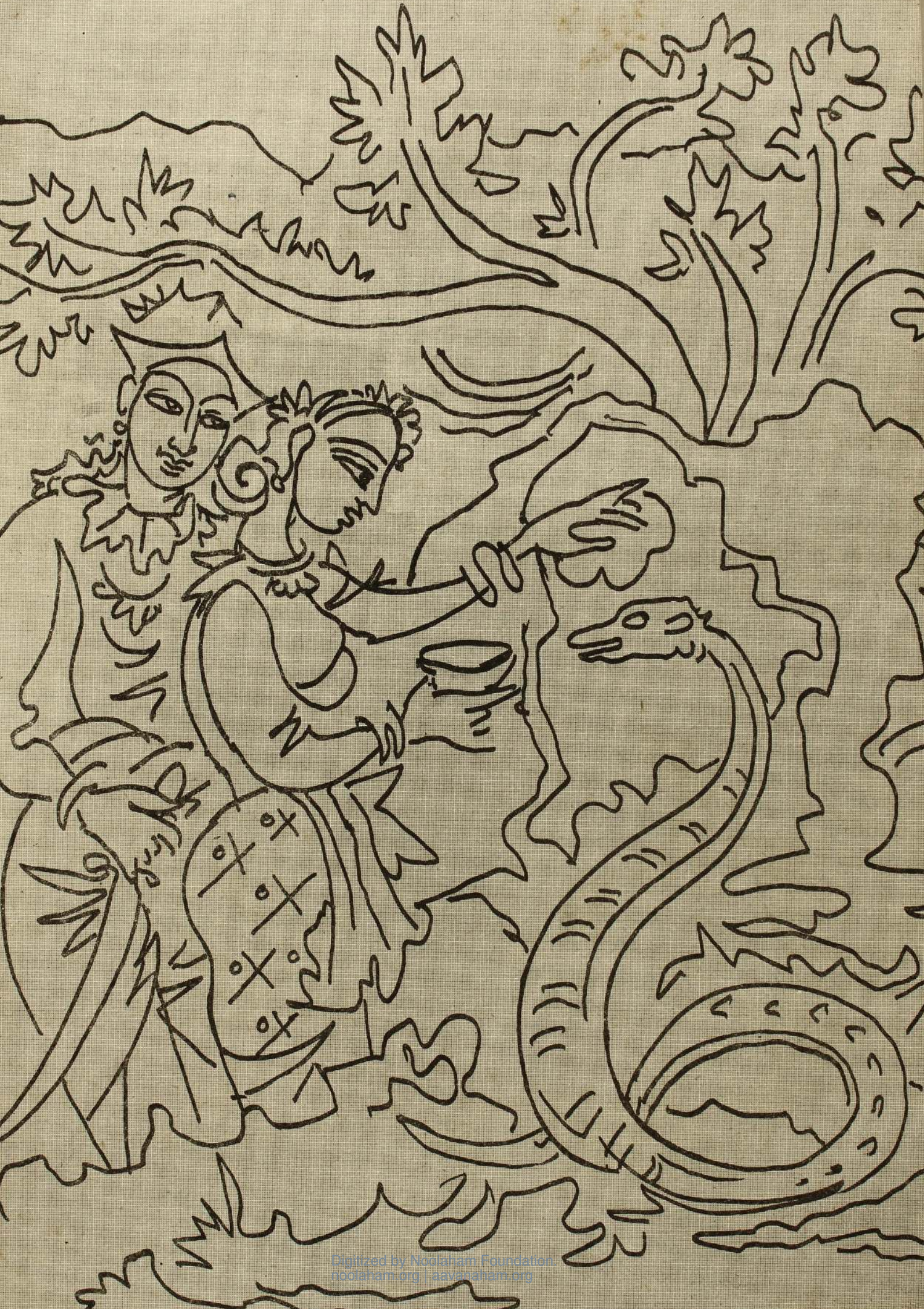
But once when she came to see the princess while the princess was lying down at noon in her own room, she heard the prince coming. The princess quickly hid the bitch under her bed and the prince came and talked and went away.

On another day as she lay on her bed at noon the bitch came looking for her. The princess was very happy and was about to take the bitch to the room she had given her to bathe and feed her, when she heard the prince coming. But this time she was not quick enough and as the prince came he saw that she had pushed something under her bed before turning around to welcome him.

The prince asked her, "What have you put under the bed?" She replied, "Oh, I got a golden pumpkin as a present and I put it under the bed." He said, "Let me see that golden pumpkin." The princess did not know what to do, but the prince persisted, "Let me see it," and knelt down and looked under the bed.

There under the bed he saw a golden pumpkin which the bitch had turned into. He took it out and looked at it, and after some time the princess took it from him and put it on the bed.

After that she kept the golden pumpkin in the room on another bed and loved and attended to it as if it was the bitch, and this she did all her life.



THE GLASS PRINCESS

There was a king who had seven sons. When they were grown up the king, their father, sent out royal messengers to bring them wives. The royal messengers going from country to country to find princesses whom the king would like for his sons, found at last in a certain place seven princesses who were the daughters of the king of that country. They conveyed this news to the king.

The king ordered that pictures of the seven princes be made by a painter. Then he called his ministers and gave these pictures together with gifts to be taken to the king of that country asking for the seven princesses for his sons. The ministers went and met that king and said, "Our king has sent these pictures of his sons, the seven princes, and these gifts, and wants to know whether Your Majesty will give your daughters, the seven princesses, to his sons. If Your Majesty likes to do this, our king wishes to have pictures given to us of your seven daughters, the princesses, for us to take back." They then gave the pictures and gifts to the king.

The king of that country was pleased with the pictures of the princes. He had rooms given to the ministers to stay in and much attention shown to them, and had pictures made of the seven princesses. He gave these with gifts to the ministers to take back to their king and told them to say that he would give his seven daughters to the princes in marriage.

When the king saw the pictures of the princesses he was pleased. He asked the ministers all about that country and the king and the princesses. Hearing no fault, he ordered the lucky day and time for the wedding and made ready to go to that country with his people. Decorated elephants were brought for himself and the chief queen, and seven decorated elephants for the princes to ride on. The rest were to go on horseback and on foot. When they were ready to start, the youngest prince gave his sword to be placed on his elephant and said, "I cannot go. Marry the princess to my sword in my place, and if she does not like that let her stay

back.” He then returned to his palace, while the king and the rest went on with the six other princes.

When they had all gone to that country the six princes were married to the six princesses. When the father of the seven princesses asked, “Where is the prince who is to marry my youngest daughter?” his father the king said, “He has sent his sword as he cannot come himself. The princess is to marry the sword in his place if she wishes to, and come. If she does not wish to do that, the prince says she can stay back.” Though the father of the princess was not pleased to hear this, the princess married the sword in place of the prince and was ready to go with the rest. She said, “It is all the same to me whether this youngest prince is a fool or a deaf person or a thief. But I wish to go to him.”

The youngest prince who did not go on the journey and stayed back in the palace had a dream in which a god came to him and said, “There is a lake by the side of the road along which your father, the king, and the rest are coming, and there is a treasure in that lake guarded by a great cobra. If those returning were to get thirsty and drink water from that pool, the great cobra will come and ask one of them to be given to him in return for drinking the water.” When the prince woke up, he quickly went and found that lake and lay hidden near it.

Thus it happened that when the king and the others came to that lake, they stopped and rested and drank water from it. The great cobra came at once from a cave near the lake and said, “This lake is mine, and you have drunk water from it. So give me someone from among you. Otherwise not one of you can return to your homes.”

The king and the others were frightened and were wondering what to do when the youngest prince came from his hiding place and said to the great cobra, “If someone has to stay here, I shall do so, and you can have me.” The great cobra was pleased, and the rest got ready to go. Then the prince said to the princess who married the sword in his place, “You go on and stay in my palace and see to everything there till I return,” and the king and the others all went back to their country. The great cobra called the prince and went with him to the cave.

When they were in the cave the great cobra asked, "Tell me, prince, can you see a wound on my head?" The prince replied, "Yes, I can see it." The cobra said, "It never heals. I want you to make it heal. I wanted someone here to heal the wound. I will not harm you but you cannot leave this place till you do it." The prince made medicines and having washed the wound he put on the medicine twice a day, but the wound did not heal. He tried different medicines but still the wound would not heal.

Then one day, the cobra said, "There is only one way now to heal the wound on my head. But it is not easy. The only medicine left and which will certainly heal the wound is with the Glass Princess who lives far away in a country across a great river. You must go to her and get the medicine. But she has to put it on my head with her own hands, otherwise it is useless. You had better go and bring the Glass Princess here."

The prince agreed and went on the journey to the country of the Glass Princess, asking the way to that country from people he met on the way. He came after a long time to the great river, but it was in flood. He saw a number of rats floating down on the water and they were trying in vain to come to the bank. He went into the river at once and set about helping them and brought them safely to the shore. The rats were very thankful and said, "Your Highness, you have given us the greatest help in life. You have saved us from drowning. If ever you want us to do anything for you, only remember us and think of us and we shall come to you at once." The prince waited till the flood subsided and crossed the river.

He was now in the country of the Glass Princess. By then it was night. He went to a house for shelter and found it occupied by a poor widow. He said to the widow, "Please mother, give me a mat to sleep on. I want to stay here for the night." The widow gladly agreed and said, "I shall give you a mat, son. But stay here longer, not only tonight. I live alone and I feel dull at times and wish to have someone with me." The prince said, "If so, mother, give me some rice too to eat. I shall look out and find a way of getting some money for expenses tomorrow." Then

the widow cooked some rice and vegetables and gave the prince to eat. After he had eaten and rested he asked the widow, "How are things in this country, mother, and what is happening?"

The widow said, "What is there about this country that is not like in other countries? Things are the same." She thought awhile. "But there is one thing that is not the same. Not to be heard of in any other country." The prince inquired, "What can that be? It must be something wonderful." The widow replied, "The strange thing is that our king's daughter is called the Glass Princess and has not yet been given to a husband. The princess knows charms and can take on any shape she wishes. She know the *mantras*. She is so beautiful that not only anywhere in our country but in other countries as well people talk about her beauty. And yet you have not heard of her. Princes come from other countries to take her, but her father the king tells them that they must first step into a tub of boiling water and bathe and after that split an iron pillar in two. The princes cannot do this."

The prince inquired, "Can anyone go to the palace of the Glass Princess?" and the widow replied, "Leave alone a man going there, not even a bird can fly over it." Then the prince asked, "Tell me, mother, why is she called the Glass Princess?" The widow said, "It is because she sleeps on a glass bed. No breath of wind can come near her because all around her in her room there is glass to shut out the air. That is why she is called the Glass Princess." Then the prince asked, "What time at night does she eat?"

The widow replied, "Son, the princess lives on the top storey of the palace all by herself. Her food and the water for her bath and the other things she needs are all taken up there by the women who wait on her. She gets up at eight in the morning and washes and bathes and takes her food after that. She never stirs before eight in the morning."

The prince listened to all this carefully. That night he asked for his mat and took it out to the veranda of the house and made ready to sleep there. He sat down on the mat and instead of sleeping he began to think about the Glass Princess. He thought: "If only there was some way of getting into the palace of the princess. What

of those rats I saved from drowning? Would they come to my help? If they come they can make a tunnel from here to the palace."

Even as the prince thought of them and remembered them a great crowd of rats came suddenly running to him, and others in great crowds followed and joined them. They said to the prince, "See, Your Highness, we have come as you need us. Tell us what it is you want us to do."

The prince was very pleased and asked them, "Can you dig me a tunnel from here to the room of the Glass Princess? It must end under her bed." The rats replied, "Of course we can do that. It is easy work for us." The prince said, "I want it done tonight." The rats said, "You shall have the tunnel tonight," and set about making it. That night the rats made the tunnel and showed it to the prince and went away.

The following day the prince gave a gold coin to the widow and said, "Get things for food, mother, and please give me a plate of rice now." The widow quickly cooked some food for the prince. He ate it and went out into the town and walked about there till noon.

When night came on the prince returned and looked at the tunnel. Opening the door he went into it and closed the door above him. He groped his way in the dark to the room of the Glass Princess on the top storey of the palace and getting out from under the bed he saw the princess asleep on her glass bed. He then went and bathed in the scented water made ready for her. He ate a portion of the royal food kept there for her, and after that he took some of the spiced betel from its tray and chewing that he carefully went back to the tunnel. He got into it and closed the door above him and returned to the widow's house.

The princess woke up at eight in the morning and went for her bath. She saw that someone had bathed there. She went to take her food and saw that someone had eaten a portion of it, and had taken some of the betel too. She thought: "This has been done by a clever person. Perhaps a god has come here. How can a man do this? I know what I shall do if he comes again. I will keep awake and find out."

But the princess fell asleep and the prince came again the following night. He bathed in the scented water, ate of the royal food and taking some of the spiced betel, chewed it and went back through the tunnel to the widow's house. The princess awoke at eight in the morning and saw that someone had come again. So to keep awake during the night she cut her finger and put a piece of sliced lemon on the wound. She was able to keep awake as she was in pain. She kept blowing on the cut on her finger, and as soon as she heard the sound of the opening of the door of the tunnel she lay back quietly in bed as if she was asleep and so saw the prince.

The prince, though he realized that this time she was not really asleep and was awake because her eyelids moved from time to time went in to bathe. When he had finished his bath and was about to partake of the food she got up and came to him with a sword and asked, "Who are you, a god or a man?"

The prince was quite calm and replied, "I am a prince." Then he asked her, "Who are you?" She looked long at him and liked him and joining him at the meal said, "I am called the Glass Princess. Why have you come here?" she inquired. He replied, "I came here for no other reason but to take you away with me." The princess was happy to hear this, and said, "I shall come with you. But you must tell my father the king that you want to have me. He will then tell you to bathe in boiling water and after that to split an iron pillar and only then will he give me to you. But you need not be frightened to do these two things, as the others were who wanted me. Take this jewelled ring and quietly drop it into the boiling water and it will cool down when you step into it. After that you take this tress of hair and you will be able to split the iron pillar easily with it. Then we can go away together." She gave him the jewelled ring and the tress of hair, and he took these and went the following morning to meet the king.

Meeting the king he said, "Your Majesty, I have come to ask you to give me your daughter, the Glass Princess," and the king said, "You can certainly have my daughter the princess, but you must first show me that you are able to do two things I shall ask you to do." He ordered the tub of boiling water and the iron pillar to be brought

into the courtyard and had the people of the palace and other people from the town gathered there. He then told the prince to bathe in the boiling water and after that to split the iron pillar in two. The prince went to the tub of boiling water and quietly dropped the jewelled ring as he was about to step into it and to the surprise of the king and the people he bathed and came out. Going to the iron pillar he easily cut it through in two to the bottom and the pieces fell apart.

Then the Glass Princess came down from her room and the king had a big ceremony and gave the princess his daughter to the prince. He said to him, "If you wish to stay here I would be happy, but if you wish to go with my daughter you may do so." The prince said he wanted to take the princess to his own country, and so they went away.

First he went with the Glass Princess to the cave of the great cobra and said to the Princess, "We must cure the great cobra of the wound on his head. Otherwise he will not let me go. That is my promise to him. Only you and nobody else can do that and you must do it with your own hands." The princess then made the medicine, washed the wound and put the medicine on the great cobra's head with her own hand. The wound healed at once.

The great cobra was happy. He gave the prince all the treasures of the lake and he gave him and the princess his blessing and told them that they could go. So they went to the prince's country, and the king there was happy to see his son. He was more happy to see that now he had another princess also and had brought the treasure. He had a big wedding for the prince and his two wives, and they all lived happily.

THE TWO DISHONEST TRADERS

There were two village traders who were well known for being dishonest and who were very clever at cheating people. They were Raigamaya and Gampolaya. They lived in different villages and though each had heard of the other they had never met.

Once Raigamaya plucked a lot of pepper leaves from a pepper vine and thought: "These leaves look so much like betel leaves that I shall fill a big sack with these leaves and give them to another trader saying they are betel leaves. It would be an easy way of making money." He filled a sack and went away from the village to a crossing of roads some distance off, put down his sack and waited there.

He did not try to sell the leaves in his own village because he had been caught cheating before and had been beaten, and the people were very careful to see whether what he traded was what he said it was.

At that time Gampolaya had been gathering *eeriya* seeds which look just like the arecanut that is used for betel, and he too filled a big sack with these seeds intending to sell them off as arecanuts. Coming along from another road he stopped at the same crossing of roads where Raigamaya was waiting with his sack.

When Raigamaya saw him he smiled and thought: "It would be a good thing if I palm off my pepper leaves on this foolish fellow." And Gampolaya thought: "It would be a good thing if I palm off my *eeriya* seeds on this foolish fellow," as it happened that betel leaves were scarce in Gampolaya's village and arecanut was scarce in Raigamaya's village.

Raigamaya asked, "Will you wait while I go and bring something to eat? It is about lunchtime." And Gampolaya agreed.

One went first and washed his hands and his mouth and ate his meals in an eating-house and returned and then the other went too and did the same. Neither of them told the other that they had

eaten but as both had eaten they did not talk again about the food to be brought.

Then they said they felt sleepy and both of them lay down and pretended to sleep and started snoring. Thinking Gampolaya was sleeping Raigamaya quietly got up and opened Gampolaya's sack and peeped into it and seeing what he thought was arecanut, he thought: "This is just what I want." Tying it up again, he looked to see whether Gampolaya was still sleeping and hearing him snoring he smiled. Gampolaya had seen what Raigamaya had done and thought to himself: "That is just what I want done." Raigamaya took up the sack and put it aside and put his own sack in its place. Then he looked again to see whether Gampolaya was still asleep and said to himself: "Now I must be off before he wakes."

He shouldered the sack and ran off to his village and feeling he was quite safe in trading what was in it which he thought was arecanut, he walked about crying out, "Arecanut! Arecanut!"

People came running to see, but he said it was all for sale at once, the whole sack, so a trader came while the people gathered round, because arecanut was scarce in the village. When the trader took out the *eeriya* seeds and looked well at them he was very angry and cried, "So, Raigamaya, you still think you can do this sort of thing?" and he kicked the sack and all the *eeriya* seeds got scattered. He turned to the people and said, "See, this thief is trying to palm off *eeriya* seeds on us by telling us that they are arecanuts." Raigamaya was surprised, as he really thought it was arecanut in the sack. But how could he say he was mistaken?

The people surrounded him and beat him, just as the people did to Gampolaya when he went to his village to sell the pepper leaves which he really thought were betel leaves.



JACKAL SON-IN-LAW

There was a village so far away from any town that it was very seldom any people from anywhere ever went there, and the people there never went far from their own village. So everything in that village was just the same as it was for hundreds of years and no one there knew or wanted to know how things were in other places. The customs and habits and what they believed in were, just the same as they were with their fathers and grandfathers and great-grandfathers, always the same. If children were told to do a thing they did it whether they liked it or not and never thought of asking why. They did what they were told even if there were no good in it. And if anyone said something that should be done or even said he would do something it was always done. There were no lies told in that village.

A landlord and his wife and daughter lived in this village. They were just like the other people there and in some ways they were more foolish than the rest. One day the landlord got angry with his daughter over some little thing and said, "You are a bad girl. See what I shall do to you. I shall give you to a jackal to marry."

At that moment there was a jackal lying in a clump of bushes near the house. He had come to take anything that was left near the kitchen which he could eat. The jackal heard what the landlord said and was very happy. The jackal thought: "What good fortune for me! How lucky for me. The girl is very pretty. She will make a good wife because she will cook and give me such nice food, all sorts of tasty things, and meat every day, and sweetmeats and milk and curd. She is rich. And the landlord and his lady have so much, and such a big house and good paddy fields. All this will come to me, as they have no children but only the daughter. What luck for me. I am the jackal who heard him say that he would marry her to a jackal. So I shall get the girl." And he began to howl and dance for joy. Then he sat down again and thought: "I shall take her somehow and make her my wife. We shall have a very fine wedding

with all sorts of fine food and lots of merriment and music and people, and I shall dress like a prince of a bridegroom and have her dressed like a queen of a bride. I shall come for her on the right day and of course her father will give her to me as he said just now. What happiness for me." And he ran back to the forest and leapt about there howling and laughing and dancing with joy.

The other jackals thought he had gone mad and asked, "Friend, what has happened to you?" and he said, "What has happened? You will see. Do you know that I am to marry the landlord's daughter? Think of that. Surely that is cause for me to be happy like this." He told them how the landlord had told his daughter that he would marry her to a jackal and that he was the jackal who heard him saying that. Then all the other jackals were very happy and they came and called others too and began to howl and dance and laugh.

The landlord's wife had heard the jackal howling near the house and was frightened. She also heard it howling again, and after that all those other jackals howling far off in the forest. She thought: "This is not good. I have never heard jackals howling like this. It cannot be good for us. There is something bad in this for us. Anyone knows how bad it is to hear jackals howling. Something unlucky is going to happen to us."

She went to her husband and said, "Did you hear the jackals howling near our house? Something bad may happen to us. I think it will be good just now, before it is too late, to marry off our daughter to someone." The landlord replied, "Yes, I heard the jackals howling. What you say is true. We must not delay over this."

So they went and found someone to look for a bridegroom for their daughter and when this was done and they had fixed on a lucky time and day for the wedding, they began to get the house ready for it. The place was decorated and they had arches put up. They made food and sweetmeats for the feast and sent word to their relations and friends to come for the wedding.

Then when everything was ready for the wedding in the evening, and the landlord and his wife were waiting for the bridegroom and their relations to come, a strange person came there. He was walking

on four feet and was dressed in a long silk shawl and had a garland of *champa* flowers round his neck. As he saw the landlord's wife he suddenly stood up on his hind legs and walked up to her without any fear. Joining his two paws he bowed down in worship and said, "Aunt, I am of the clan of the jackals and my name is *Punchi Mahaththaya*. I have come to take your daughter. I see everything is in readiness for the wedding. The landlord, your husband, has promised me your daughter."

The woman was surprised and very frightened and calling to her husband said, "Come here soon. Who is this? He says you gave our daughter to him. What is this about? Is this a bad dream or am I awake? Is this the bridegroom? He is a jackal!"

The landlord came and was as surprised and frightened as his wife. Then he got angry and asked, "Why have you come? Who are you?" The wife asked, "Did you say you would give our daughter to this jackal?" The landlord was silent. The jackal said, "Of course you said that. You told your daughter she was a bad girl and that you would give her to a jackal. I was the jackal near your house who heard you saying that."

The wife asked, "Is it true? Did you say that?" The landlord remembered what he had told his daughter and grew very sad. But he had said it. How could he break his word? That was not to be thought of. He said, "Yes, I said it. There is nothing to do now but give our daughter to this jackal."

So they called the daughter, dressed her as a bride and had the ceremony done and gave her to the jackal. The other jackals who were all waiting outside with the palanquin and music and other things took away the jackal bridegroom and the landlord's daughter and went to the forest.

After some days when it was the right time to do so, the landlord and his wife went to see their son-in-law and daughter taking with them the dowry and other gifts packed in wicker boxes. They also took the hunting dog of the house in a big wicker box, as it was the daughter's favourite pet.

When they got there they met the son-in-law and their daughter and gave them the boxes. The jackal son-in-law greedily opened

the biggest box first, which had the dog in it. The dog leapt out and seeing the jackal son-in-law and the other jackals, he barked fiercely and bit them. The jackal son-in-law and the other jackals got frightened and howled and ran off. The dog chased them and hunted them down in the forest, and they did not come back.

So the landlord and his wife took away their daughter and the things they had brought and came home. After that the landlord was careful when he spoke.

THE PRINCE AND THE MONKEY

In a certain country there lived a king and his queen. They had seven sons. Of these seven sons the youngest was very idle and did not study or play or go hunting. He only ate well and stole into the royal kitchen and slept among the ashes. The other princes studied and played and went hunting.

The king was angry about the youngest son and said one day to the queen, "Our youngest son does nothing but bathe himself with ash. He is quite useless. So I think it is better that I order him to be killed." The queen replied, "What good is there in having him killed? Let him go away from the palace." The king agreed to what the queen said and asked her to send away the prince.

Next day the queen said to the youngest prince, "Your father the king, wants to have you killed. So leave the palace and go away." The prince said, "Then, mother, give me a thousand gold coins and a package of rice. I shall go and become a trader." The queen was pleased and gave him what he wanted.

The prince stepped out into the street and walked along. Going thus a long way he came to an *ambalama* by the roadside and sat down to rest. A man passed by the *ambalama* carrying a monkey. The prince saw this and asked, "Where are you carrying that monkey?" The man said, "I am taking this monkey to throw into the river." "Will you sell me the monkey," the prince asked, and the man replied, "I want a thousand gold coins for the monkey." The prince gave him the thousand gold coins he had with him and took the monkey. The man was happy and thinking, "This is my luck," he went away.

The prince opened the package of rice and shared it with the monkey. Then he went back to the palace with it. The queen saw the prince and asked, "What have you done with the thousand gold coins?" The prince replied, "Mother, I bought this monkey." The queen said, "My son, how very foolish of you. If the king hears this there will be trouble. Go away quickly from the palace."



And she gave him another thousand gold coins and sent him away.

So the prince again left the palace and went to another country and stopped at an *ambalama* and lay there. The thousand gold coins, the whole of it, he spent on his daily food. Then the monkey would go about the town and dance and do tricks and earn and bring coins and things for food which the prince would cook and share with the monkey. The monkey thus kept feeding the prince.

While the prince was living like this the monkey went one day to the king and worshipped him. The king inquired, "What is it, monkey?" and the monkey said, "Your Majesty, lend me a measuring basket to measure gold coins." The king ordered a measuring basket to be given to the monkey and the monkey took it and returned after a month and gave it back to the king.

The king asked, "What is this, monkey, you come after a month," and the monkey replied, "It is so, Your Majesty. There was much to measure." "Have you finished measuring?" the king asked and the monkey said, "I have not measured even half of the gold coins." "What a lot of gold coins there must be. Whose is it?" asked the king, and the monkey replied, "The gold coins of our Ash Prince for whom I work."

That day the monkey danced and got presents from the king. He took the presents and while going, he stole a nice shawl from where the silk shawls were being aired in the sun and brought it all to the prince.

He said to the prince, "Take off that shawl of yours all soiled with ash and wear this nice shawl." The prince replied, "My shawl is good enough," and cast away the shawl the monkey had brought. It fell near the fire and was burnt. Only a small piece remained. The monkey took that piece of the shawl the prince had cast aside, and when he went to dance in the town he went to the king and worshipped him. The king inquired, "What is it, monkey?" and the monkey replied, "Your Majesty, our Ash Prince's good shawl has got burnt. I came to ask for a shawl like that to be woven." The king said, "Bring me a piece of that shawl," and the monkey gave him the piece that was not burnt. The king had a shawl like that made and gave it to the monkey.

Then the monkey said to the king, "Your Majesty, give our Ash Prince your eldest daughter for him to marry," and the king said, "I shall do so but I must see him. Bring your prince to the palace." The monkey went to a house nearby and got two brass jars and filled them with water and bathed the prince and dressed him well and took him to the palace.

The king saw the prince and was pleased with him and had a banquet prepared for him. When the prince sat down to the banquet, the seven daughters of the king came and served him. The prince ate very greedily. The monkey nudged him from behind, whispered and told him not to eat like that, but the prince went on eating greedily and in an untidy way, and ate so much that he could not breathe.

The king who had noticed this, asked the monkey, "Why does the prince eat like that?" and the monkey replied, "Your Majesty, our prince was not able to eat for some time as he was ill. He got a *veda* who gave him medicine as he could not eat. After taking that medicine he is eating like this. But he does not do so always."

The king gave his eldest daughter to the prince to marry and said to the monkey, "Now take the prince to his palace," but as the prince had no palace, the monkey said, "Your Majesty, all this while the prince has been away from his palace as it has to be cleaned and prepared. So give us a thousand mattocks and a thousand spades and a thousand hatchets and three thousand people to work."

The king ordered all this to be done, and made ready to set off with the prince and see him off to his palace. The prince and the princess and the rest set off and the monkey kept going ahead of them and thus they came to a town.

The monkey received the king near the entrance to the town and the king asked the monkey, "Whose town is this?" The monkey replied, "This is our Ash Prince's town to be divided among the people who are to work."

The monkey went on ahead again and when he came to another town he stayed and received the king near the entrance. The king asked the monkey, "Whose town is this?" and the monkey replied, "This is our Ash Prince's town where his ministers live."

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Going thus a great way they came to a forest. Here the monkey went leaping from tree to tree while the rest went riding and on foot. The monkey going ahead saw a palace which he knew belonged to a *raksha* and his wife. The *raksha* and his wife were away from the palace having gone somewhere, and the monkey entered the palace and prepared it and stood waiting aside for the others to come in. Meals were served to the prince and princess and the rest. The king was pleased and spent the night there and returned the following day to his own palace.

When the *raksha* and his wife came back from where they were and saw the palace filled with people and a great crowd standing outside with mattocks and spades and hatchets and other things, they became frightened and ran away. So the monkey got the people to cut down the forest round the palace and make a town and the prince lived there.

After that the monkey said to the prince, "See, all this I have done for you in return for the help you gave me that time you saw the man carrying me away to the river. Is it good?" The prince replied, "Oh, my younger brother, this that you have done for me I shall remember all my life." And the monkey stayed with him and looked after him, so that he did not lose all he had got.

*On Our
Wedding*

