

KĀDAMBARĪ

A Brief Tamil Translation of
Bhaṭṭabāṇa's Sanskrit Novel '*Kādambarī*'

by

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Synopsis of the Kādambarī

Pūrvabhāga

First Sarga

Śūdraka, the king of Vidiśā, is in court. An extraordinary girl, belonging to the Caṇḍāḷa caste (a tribe of outcastes), brings Vaiśampāyana, an erudite parrot, and presents it to the king. The parrot starts narrating its life-story to the king. ([Pages 13 – 16](#))

Second Sarga

On the shore of the Pampā Lake in the Vindhya Forest stands a towering silk-cotton tree. When Vaiśampāyana was born there, its mother died due to complications in delivery. The parrot Vaiśampāyana is brought up by its aged father. The old parrot is captured and killed by a hunter, but Vaiśampāyana has a providential escape. Upon seeing the young parrot that had fallen on the path and was struggling for its life, Hārīta, the son of a sage, picks it up, soothes it and hands it over to Sage Jābāli. ([Pages 16 – 21](#))

Third Sarga

Sage Jābāli recounts the history of the parrot to his son and others. A king called ‘Tārāpīḍa’ rules in Ujjayinī. His wife is Vilāsavatī. His minister is Śukanāsa. Sukanāsa’s wife is Manoramā. Being childless for a long time, they both (Tārāpīḍa and Śukanāsa) pray to the gods. The king dreams that the moon has entered Vilāsavatī’s mouth, while Śukanāsa had a dream in which a Brāhmaṇa presents Manoramā with a white Lotus. Both ladies subsequently become pregnant and Tārāpīḍa has a son called Candrāpīḍa, while Śukanāsa has a son named Vaiśampāyana. ([Pages 21 – 25](#))

Fourth Sarga

Candrāpīḍa and Vaiśampāyana successfully complete their education. They remain bosom friends. Candrāpīḍa acquires a rare horse called ‘Indrāyudha’ as his mount. A princess by name Patralekhā becomes the confidential companion of Candrāpīḍa. ([Pages 25 – 29](#))

Fifth Sarga

Śukanāsa gives paramount advice to Candrāpīḍa. After being made the crown prince, Candrāpīḍa goes on a victory tour and, on completion, rests with his army at Suvarṇapuram, near the Kailāsa Mountain. ([Pages 29 – 32](#))

Sixth Sarga

While going on a hunt riding his horse Indrāyudha on the slope of the Kailāsa Mountain, Candrāpīḍa sees a pair of Kinnaras who disappear when he goes in their pursuit. He then sees the Acchodam Lake. As he is relaxing on the shore of the lake, he hears divine music. When he goes in search of the melodious sound, he comes across a Śiva temple in a grove called Caitraratha and sees the ascetic Mahāśvetā reverently worshipping Lord Śiva. He admires the power of her austerities and, being her guest, accepts her hospitality. ([Pages 32 – 35](#))

Seventh Sarga

Candrāpīḍa enquires Mahāśvetā about her life-events and she narrates them. Giving details about the families of Gandharvas, she explains that she is the daughter of Harṁsa and Gaurī, that she was named ‘Mahāśvetā’, that she met Puṇḍarīka and Kapiñjala on the shore of the Acchodam Lake, that she and Puṇḍarīka are in love with each other and that Taraḷikā has brought her a letter from Puṇḍarīka. ([Pages 35 – 38](#))

Eighth Sarga

Kapiñjala informs Mahāśvetā about the pitiful state of Puṇḍarīka and beseeches her to save him. Accompanied by Taraḷikā, Mahāśvetā goes on a moonlit night to Puṇḍarīka on the bank of Acchodam. There, seeing Puṇḍarīka dead due to grief, she becomes inconsolable. A divine being carries away the body of Puṇḍarīka to the orb of the moon after informing that he will come back alive. Kapiñjala also goes after the divine being. The dejected Mahāśvetā practises asceticism and worships Lord Śiva in the forest while observing austerities. Candrāpīḍa counsels the sorrowing Mahāśvetā. She narrates the story of Kādambarī to Candrāpīḍa. ([Pages 38 – 43](#))

Ninth Sarga

Taraḷikā and others come from Hemakūṭa to meet Mahāśvetā. Taking Candrāpīḍa with her, Mahāśvetā goes to Kādambarī. Candrāpīḍa sees Kādambarī in her pavilion and love blossoms between them. In the crystal palace atop the Pleasure Mountain, Kādambarī displays her love and respect for Candrāpīḍa and gives him a pearl necklace called ‘Śeṣahāra’. Madalekhā gracefully utters solicitous words and Candrāpīḍa replies to them. ([Pages 44 – 47](#))

Tenth Sarga

When Candrāpīḍa leaves Hemakūṭa and returns to the bank of the Acchodam Lake, his army has also reached that place and he spends a day with them at that spot. Keyūraka returns and

takes Candrāpīḍa to Hemakūṭa, where he (Candrāpīḍa) sees Kādambarī in sorrow due to his absence. Patralekhā, who had accompanied Candrāpīḍa, befriends Kādambarī. Leaving Patralekhā with Kādambarī, Candrāpīḍa returns. As he reaches the shore of the Acchodam Lake, a messenger brings a letter from Tārāpīḍa that orders him (Candrāpīḍa) to return. Leaving Valāhaka (Tārāpīḍa's army commander) with some messages for Kādambarī and handing over a major portion of the army to Vaiśampāyana, Candrāpīḍa leaves for Ujjayinī with a small section of the army. On the way, there is a Kālī temple in a jungle. The temple and the Tamil priest serving there appear very unusual. The prince spends the night there and then reaches Ujjayinī after a few days. As Candrāpīḍa stays in Ujjayinī, saddened by his separation from Kādambarī, Meghanāda brings Patralekhā from Hemakūṭa. Patralekhā recounts the torment of Kādambarī due to being away from him. ([Pages 47 – 52](#))

Uttarabhāga

First *Sarga*

Upon hearing Patralekhā's words describing Kādambarī's anguish, Candrāpīḍa is filled with anxiety. One day, Keyūraka arrives with the news that Kādambarī is suffering from intense mental agony and entreats him to go and meet her without delay. Hearing that the remaining army is on its way, Candrāpīḍa sends Patralekhā and Keyūraka ahead to Hemakūṭa with the assurance that he will come after receiving the army and Vaiśampāyana. ([Pages 53 – 55](#))

Second *Sarga*

Expecting Vaiśampāyana's arrival, Candrāpīḍa goes to Daśapuram to receive him. When he meets his army that had returned from the Acchodam Lake, he is disappointed to find Vaiśampāyana missing. When some members of his army tell him that Vaiśampāyana had a change of heart and resolved to stay back on the bank of the Acchodam Lake, a worried Candrāpīḍa once again goes to Ujjayinī with his armies. Suspecting that Candrāpīḍa has something to do with Vaiśampāyana's failure to return, Tārāpīḍa is distressed. Śukanāsa disagrees with the king and berates Vaiśampāyana. The king alleviates the minister's grief. Candrāpīḍa seeks his parents' permission to go and bring back Vaiśampāyana. Tārāpīḍa gives his permission to Candrāpīḍa, along with some sage advice. ([Page 55 – 59](#))

Third *Sarga*

Candrāpīḍa proceeds towards Acchodam with his army. Vaiśampāyana is not seen on the lakeshore. Candrāpīḍa goes to Mahāśvetā's hermitage and asks her about him. She said that an infatuated Brāhmaṇa youth had misbehaved with her while she was performing penance,

that he shed his mortal coils after being cursed by her and that she learnt later that he was Vaiśampāyana. Unable to bear the news, Candrāpīḍa dies. Everyone is grief-stricken. At that time Kādambarī comes there from Hemakūṭa with Patralekhā, Madalekhā and others. They too are deeply anguished on seeing the incident. When Kādambarī attempts to immolate herself upon Candrāpīḍa's pyre, she hears an astral voice saying, "Do not do so. Candrāpīḍa will revive". Patralekhā and Indrāyudha plunge into the lake. Instantly Indrāyudha transforms into Kapiñjala and emerges from the lake, to everyone's amazement. Kapiñjala tells that Puṇḍarīka's body is being guarded by the Moon-god in his world and then describes how he acquired the form of a horse, after which he goes to Śvetaketu. ([Pages 59 – 63](#))

Fourth *Sarga*

With utmost respect, Kādambarī preserves the body of Candrāpīḍa on the bank of Acchodam. Tvaritaka and other attendants go to Ujjayinī and apprise Tārāpīḍa about the events involving Candrāpīḍa and others. Tārāpīḍa, along with others, come to the bank of Acchodam and behold Candrāpīḍa's face, undiminished in beauty and lustre. Then, after announcing to the minor rulers, Tārāpīḍa spends his time in penance in the jungle and, together with his ministers and others, comes to see Candrāpīḍa's body every day. ([Pages 63 – 67](#))

Fifth *Sarga*

Sage Jābāli concludes the narrative of the parrot Vaiśampāyana. Vaiśampāyana remembers its previous birth and acquires the ability to speak and read. Kapiñjala returns from Śvetaketu and advises Vaiśampāyana to remain in the hermitage of Jābāli. When Vaiśampāyana leaves the hermitage, it is captured by a Caṇḍāḷa man, who gives it to a Caṇḍāḷa girl. Vaiśampāyana, now caged in the village of the outcasts, is miserable and despondent. ([Pages 67 – 70](#))

Sixth *Sarga*

One day, the parrot Vaiśampāyana wakes up at dawn to see that its wooden cage has become a golden cage and the unkempt village is now a beautiful town. Thereupon, the Caṇḍāḷa woman takes the caged parrot to Śūdraka. Thus ends the story recited by the parrot. On the orders of Śūdraka, the Caṇḍāḷa girl is brought before the king. The girl, whose form is radiant, explains that she is Lakṣmī, that the parrot is Puṇḍarīka and that Śūdraka himself is Candrāpīḍa. She also reveals the reason for imprisoning Vaiśampāyana as well as her other actions. Candrāpīḍa comes back to life and joins Kādambarī. Puṇḍarīka comes to life and unites with Mahāśvetā. ([Pages 70 – 73](#))

Notes on Translation

(Second and Third Editions)

The erudition of ancient poets was unusual as well as faultless. Sanskrit poets like Kālidāsa, Bhavabhūti, Bhaṭṭabāṇa, etc. had mastered the power of expression through their peerless insight. Their poems and novels, which contain biographies of noble persons living at that time, highlight the age-old culture of India and hone the minds of the readers; they are instrumental in enhancing the limited intellect of ordinary people, thus pleasing the learned. It is my opinion that those who do not know Sanskrit should also understand and benefit from the valuable information contained in these works. Therefore, I attempted to first translate the *Kādambarī* twenty years ago. Deciding that it was not possible to translate the entire work and going by the suggestion of Paṇḍit R V Krishnamacharya, I took his summary of the *Kādambarī* as the sole basis of my translation, which I finished and published in 1910 CE.

Having been told by a few friends that my first translation was very detailed and that condensing it would benefit the students, I brought out in 1923 CE a second edition, which was an abridged version the first edition, with a few appropriate revisions. Some experienced teachers and scholars, who went through this second edition and felt that such an ancient and rare work should be taught to school children, stated that compressing it further would be useful. Hence, thinking that a shorter version of this *Kādambarī* would be welcomed by the students, I published this work for a third time in a lucid and simple style.

In this edition, long passages were left out. Sections abounding in romantic or passionate descriptions were not included. Sentences have been simplified to the extent possible. A few choice portions from Abhinanda's beautiful summary, '*Kādambarīkathāsāra*', have also been used here. Besides, in this edition, the *Pūrvārdha* has been divided into ten *sargas* and the *Uttarārdha* into six, thus making it easy for the reader to understand and enjoy the work. The second point to be noted is the Preface, which contains a short analysis of the didactically relevant portions of the *Kādambarī*. Bāṇa's biography, etc. has also been included. The third feature is the useful addition of the summary of each *sarga*. The fourth aspect is the presence of an Appendix containing the episodes found in this version of the *Kādambarī*. The fifth element is an Index of the men, women and places mentioned in the novel. I hope that the discerning citizens of Tamilnadu will enjoy this new edition of the ancient Sanskrit text.

Second Edition

7.3.1923

M. D.

(3rd Edition, 29.5.29)

Preface

Greatness of the Composition

In olden days, not many prose works were composed by eminent poets. Among such works, the *Kādambarī*, a Sanskrit work written by the great composer Bhaṭṭabāṇa, is outstanding in several aspects. There is a proverb by Sanskrit scholars which says that ‘those immersed in the flavour of the *Kādambarī* lose taste for food’*. The elegant style, profound ideas and beautiful descriptions of nature found in the *Kādambarī* are not seen anywhere else. The storyline is extremely engaging and presented in a very unique, subtle and methodical fashion by the poet Bāṇa. Only an erudite scholar who reads the work thoroughly with enthusiasm will understand and appreciate the author’s dexterity in succinctly presenting the conclusion of the story in the initial paragraphs. The descriptions of the culture of cities like Ujjayinī, the scenic beauty of the forests of Vindhya and other places, the pristine grandeur of lakes like Acchodam, the splendour of places such as Hemakūṭa, etc., the lifestyle of the nomads seen in the Kālī temple, the graceful nobility of Mahāśvetā and others, the strange antics of the Tamil priest and the lofty principles conveyed through the teaching of Śukanāsa and others will reveal the poet’s total involvement and knowledge about the ways of this world.

Bhaṭṭabāṇa*, the Author

Belonging to the Vātsyāyana lineage, the eminent poet Bhaṭṭabāṇa was born in a Brāhmaṇa family famed for performing religious ceremonies. His mother and father were respectively Rājadevī and Citrabhānu. Details of his ancestry are given below.

A person by name Kubera, born in the Vātsyāyana clan, was venerated and patronised by wealthy Vaiśyas. He had four sons. One of them was called ‘Pāsupata’. Pāsupata’s son was Arthapati. One of Arthapati’s eleven sons was Citrabhānu, Bāṇa’s father. The poet Bāṇa’s mother died during his early childhood. His father, who lovingly brought him up, also passed away when Bāṇa was fourteen.

Place of Birth

Bhaṭṭabāṇa was born in a village called Prītikūṭa, situated on the western bank of the Hiraṇyabāhu or Śoṇa River, which originates from the slopes of the Vindhya Mountain.

* ‘*kādambarīrasajñānām āhāro ’pi na rocate*’

* In several books, the author’s name is mentioned as ‘Bāṇabhaṭṭa’. But since Pandit M Duraiswami Aiyangar has given the name as ‘Bhaṭṭabāṇa’, the same name is used in the English translation too.

Though blessed with ancestral wealth and lovingly revered by his relatives, he left his house on a journey, eager to see many places. He was joined by hundreds of friends proficient in several vocations. Since he was roaming like a nomad, unmindful of his ancient and noble lineage, he was scorned by his relatives as well as the learned. However, due to his extensive travels, he gained practical experience in several areas and became an incomparable scholar. Within a few days of returning home, he was once again lauded by everyone. In those days, he was patronised by Śrī Harṣa, who famously ruled over the entire northern part of the country from Kānyakubja*. Though the king initially rejected Bāṇa because of the latter's conduct, the efforts of the king's brother, Kṛṣṇa – who knew of Bāṇa's sterling qualities – caused him to subsequently appreciate Bāṇa's erudition and make him a scholar in his court.

Bāṇa's Period

The information that Bhaṭṭabāṇa served in the court of Śrī Harṣa, together with several other accounts, leads to the conclusion that this poet lived before 1300 years. There are many authentic evidences to show that Śrī Harṣa ruled between 606 AD to 648 AD‡. Hence it may be inferred that this poet lived in the period between the end of the 6th century and the early part of the 7th century.

Works of Bāṇa

Bhaṭṭabāṇa has written another prose work like the *Kādambarī*, titled '*Harṣacaritam*', which is an acclaimed Sanskrit composition. Some people attribute the authorship of the devotional poem called '*Caṇḍikāśatakam*' to him, while others say that it is not his work. It is believed that, in the past, a few well known poets meditated upon Kālīkādevī and acquired proficiency. Among them, Kālīdāsa may be regarded as the greatest. Similarly, Bāṇa could also have worshipped and sung in praise of Kālī. Besides, this poet has provided vital descriptions about the Kālī temple in the *Kādambarī* and about the Caṇḍikā Forest and other places in the *Harṣacaritam*. Hence it may be believed that, being a devotee of Kālīkādevī, he could have composed the *Caṇḍikāśatakam*. There are many who opine that it was Bāṇa who authored the dramas *Pārvatīpariṇaya* and *Mukutaṭāḍitaka*; there are also others who feel otherwise due to several reasons. It is also said that the famous drama '*Ratnāvalī*' was written by this poet in Śrī Harṣa's name. He is also held as the author of the '*Subhāṣitāvalī*', a didactic work. The poet Kṣemendra mentions in his work *Aucityavicāracarcā* that Bhaṭṭabāṇa has written the *Kādambarī* in verse as well.

* The immensely prosperous kingdom of Kānyakubja was situated on the bank of the Gangā, near Kānpūr, in North India (in the United Provinces).

‡ Śrī Harṣa was also known as 'Harṣavardhana'. The era of Harṣa is followed in Nepal.

The Last Days of Bāṇa and the Two Parts of the *Kādambarī*

It is learnt that Bhaṭṭabāṇa's life ended before he completed the *Kādambarī*. His son Bhūṣaṇabāṇa* continued from where Bhaṭṭabāṇa had left and completed the work. That is why this work is divided into *Pūrvabhāga* and *Uttarabhāga* and not due to any other reason since, in fact, no event is concluded between these two sections. Even as Patralekhā informs Candrāpīḍa that Kādambarī had earlier confided about her mental agony to Patralekhā – with the conversation still incomplete – the part composed by Bhaṭṭabāṇa ends with the sentence that contains the topic of death. Hence it appears as if the poet Bāṇa hinted at his own end in those lines*. Just like his father, Bhūṣaṇabāṇa has adeptly composed and concluded the rest of the novel. Despite this, he has stated in the introductory verses, with a befitting example, that he does not have as much talent as his father and that he wrote the novel only because he felt duty-bound to complete this wonderful work which his father had begun. Maintaining that there is no demarcation or difference in style between the section composed by his father and the part written by him that justifies referring to them as '*Pūrvabhāga*' and '*Uttarabhāga*', Bhūṣaṇabāṇa has explained in the opening verses that these two sections are conjoined and continuous like the forms of Pārvatī and Parameśvara, where the dividing line cannot be comprehended. All aspects that form the basis of the story of *Kādambarī* are contained in the *Pūrvabhāga*, where the descriptions are also extensive. Comparing the size of the *Uttarabhāga* with the plot, it will be clear that, in this section, the narrative is very less and the details of the storyline are more. The hidden facets subtly hinted in the *Pūrvabhāga* are revealed systematically in the *Uttarabhāga*, resulting in a surprising conclusion.

Basis and Significance of the Storyline

A study reveals that the chronicle of Vaiśampāyana, which is one of the important stories in the *Kādambarī*, is somewhat similar to the life-story of Bhaṭṭabāṇa. It is believed that Bāṇa composed the novel based on an account in the *Bṛhatkathā* about an intelligent parrot which was presented by the wife of the hunter-chief to a king named Sumanas. The stories about King Sumanas and the parrot can be found in the book titled '*Kathāsaritsāgara*' written by Somadeva. However, the beauty and finesse with which Bhaṭṭabāṇa has developed the plot induces amazement in scholars. The significance of extensively describing an apparently unrelated king Śūdraka in the beginning despite Candrāpīḍa being the hero of the story and, likewise, the purport of focussing on the story of Mahāśvetā while the heroine is Kādambarī will not be understood unless the *Kādambarī* is studied meticulously. Only those who read this novel carefully and thoroughly will discover, to their amazement, that the narrator

* Some say that Bhaṭṭabāṇa's son was known as 'Pulinda'.

* '*jñāsyasi maraṇena prītimitiyasambhāvyameva*' – this is the last sentence of the *Pūrvabhāga*.

Vaiśampāyana is indeed Puṇḍarīka and the listener Śūdraka is the hero Candrāpīḍa himself and that the unwillingness of the youthful Śūdraka to even look at women was due to his love for Kādambarī in his previous life.

Ethics and Rules

Some average scholars may assume that Bhaṭṭabāṇa wrote this novel only for entertainment. However, learned scholars who read this work conscientiously from beginning to end will vouch for the fact that the poet composed the *Kādambarī* only to convey several moral and ethical principles through a beautiful story that can be easily understood by everyone. The poet Bāṇa has been extolled by ancient scholars for incorporating in the *Kādambarī* the components that define exceptional poetry, sections that expertly explain ethics, doctrines of righteousness that please the learned, esoteric truths that aid the evolution of those who believe in the afterlife as well as all the useful aspects that are found in worldly activities*. Serialised below are a few points that should be studied and understood by today's citizens.

1. The implication of the statement that King Śūdraka was 'indifferent to women' despite being unrivalled in wealth, youthfulness, good looks and virility should be noted. Was it not Candrāpīḍa who, due to a curse, became Śūdraka for a short time? Even if *māyā* (the force of illusion inherent in the material world) prevented Śūdraka from realising that he is Candrāpīḍa, the intense and enduring love that he, as Candrāpīḍa, had for Kādambarī subconsciously exerted its control even in his subsequent, short life as Śūdraka and precluded him from developing fondness for other women. This is the vital aspect that is indicated here. By describing the mental states of Śūdraka and Vaiśampāyana, this book emphasises the moral principle that it is improper for a man to desire another woman when he has already married a woman willingly or loved her intimately. The poet thus states that, just as fidelity to husband (*pativratādharma*) is a requisite virtue for women, a man should also have only one wife (*ekapatnīvratam*) to whom he should be faithful.
2. The poet has very skilfully characterised the hunters (page 18) and the Tamil priest (page 50) to convey that indulging in killing, cruelty or repugnant acts is not compatible with common sense, civilised behaviour and good nature.
3. Through the character of Hārīta, who rescues and revives the parrot Vaiśampāyana, the poet advocates that it is the duty of discerning people to show kindness and mercy towards the distressed – even other creatures – and to protect them (pages 19 – 20).

* 'bāṇocchiṣṭam jagatsarvam'

4. The disciplined vows observed by Vilāsavatī (page 23), Mahāśvetā (page 42) and Kādambarī (page 64) serve to show that those who maintain purity of body and mind, perform their designated duties as a worship of God and practise charities and austerities will achieve even their greatest desire.
5. Next, the excellent student-life of Candrāpīḍa and Vaiśampāyana is worthy of mention. Modern intellectuals will be amazed at the wisdom of setting up the school outside the city, in healthy surroundings, viz. on a riverbank, the way it is constructed, the probity of its teachers as well as the grand arrangements to facilitate learning – all of these to develop physical and mental health and to impart flawless knowledge, right from a young age, without any impediment, (page 25).
6. The hero Candrāpīḍa’s mother herself appoints Patrālekḥā, a princess, as his personal assistant. One of the points to be noted is that, though both of them were young and very close to each other, they confined their relationship to that of master – assistant or friends. The people, who saw their conduct, did not suspect their friendship of being anything else (page 29). Similarly, while reading that the young man Keyūraka was the personal assistant of the heroine Kādambarī (pages 44 – 45 and 53), it is quite clear that, apart from married couples, normal friendship between strong-willed women and men was accepted with an open mind and goodwill even in olden days.
7. It will be very useful if every student assiduously studies the invaluable counsel of Śukanāsa to Candrāpīḍa (pages 30 – 31). The minister’s pragmatic and priceless words of advice about the perils of inherited wealth, youthfulness, comeliness and sovereignty can be found only in this book and nowhere else.
8. Everyone should know about the problems that can result from thoughtless action. Reading about the disappointment and anxiety of Candrāpīḍa who went in pursuit of the Kinnaras during a hunt will surely be a lesson to an impatient man (pages 32 and 33).
9. Kapiñjala’s advice to Puṇḍarīka not only underlines the duty of a friend to rescue someone who deliberately or unwittingly takes the wrong path but also explains the method to be followed in such a situation (pages 38 – 40).
10. Mahāśvetā and Kādambarī were noble ladies. Both of them married men of their choice. They had great devotion and respect towards their parents and elders. They were aware of their duties. Nevertheless, they decided whom to marry and their decisions were greatly appreciated by their parents. The manner in which Mahāśvetā and Kādambarī got married illustrate that, right from olden days, women in India enjoyed independence

on several fronts, that they were nonetheless loyal and learned and that many men have lost their lives in the cause of their irreproachable wives (pages 37 – 38 and 46 – 47)*.

11. Then, we should observe Candrāpīḍa’s discretion, valour and acumen. We would like to convey to the present generation the significance of Candrāpīḍa’s advice to Mahāśvetā. Today’s public will be surprised to know that, even in those ancient days, scholars like Bhaṭṭabāṇa condemned the cruel practice of ‘*satī*’ (the practice of women immolating themselves on the funeral pyre of their husbands) (pages 42 – 43).
12. The welcome given to the prince Candrāpīḍa upon his arrival to Kādambarī’s palace is also noteworthy. The manner in which Kādambarī sends Madalekhā – fit to be described as Kādambarī’s alter-ego – to Candrāpīḍa with the gift of the Śeṣahāra, Madalekhā’s words of welcome and advice to Candrāpīḍa and, finally, the quality of Candrāpīḍa’s reply should be read and enjoyed by everyone (pages 46 – 47).
13. The poet’s experience and talent in making the readers laugh can be gauged from his satirical account of the Tamil priest, while his powers of expression can be assessed from his descriptions of the unusual activities at the Kālī temple (page 50).
14. The conversation between Śukanāsa and the king regarding the indiscriminate conduct of the former’s son Vaiśampāyana are worthy of being keenly studied by those who desire to know the tenets of good behaviour (pages 57 – 58).

Though there is insufficient space to describe several other unique elements, I would like to briefly mention the following points.

The Errors of Puṇḍarīka

The poets of yore were well aware of the dictum ‘the result indeed takes on the qualities of its material cause’*. Bāṇa cites Puṇḍarīka’s conduct as an example here. Goddess Mahālakṣmī, captivated by the unsullied effulgence of the sage’s face (Śvetaketu), absorbed it and gave birth to Puṇḍarīka, whose radiance was comparable to that of the sage. But he was subtly defiled by the impureness of his mother’s body, which was somewhat sullied by her impious

* Puṇḍarīka’s gesture of adorning Mahāśvetā’s tresses with the bunch of Kalpaka flowers which he had worn on his ear and his exchanging his prayer-beads with hers are crucial indications of their wedding. The statement that ‘Mahāśvetā held the rosaries before they fell down’ also conveys this. Similarly, the act of Kādambarī giving the Śeṣahāra – worn earlier by her – to Candrāpīḍa and making him wear it is also a sign that their marriage had taken place.

* *Naiṣadhacarita* (3.17): ‘*kāryam nidānāddhi guṇānadhīte*’

desire and passion. This defect, latent in him, surfaced when the right time and objective came together, causing a similar yearning and infatuation in him too. Despite being the son of a sage, Puṇḍarīka fell in love with Mahāśvetā the moment he saw her. He got angry with the Moon-god and cursed him. As a minister's son (Vaiśampāyana, in his next birth), he stayed in another country without his father's permission. Though he agreed to be the commander of the prince's army, he failed in his duty. He lost his composure and became infatuated with Mahāśvetā. Even after he was reborn as a parrot, he disobeyed the words of his father, Sage Śvetaketu, and flew away from Jābāli's hermitage. These imprudent actions caused much suffering to Puṇḍarīka as well as to Kapiñjala and others due to their association with him.

The Virtuous Candrāpīḍa

Candrāpīḍa was a repository of all virtues. Even though the Moon-god was needlessly cursed by the sage's son, neither the Moon-god nor Candrāpīḍa were guilty of any crime. Unlike Puṇḍarīka, who was physically as well as mentally afflicted in both his subsequent births, the Moon-god did not suffer from any defect. The love which Candrāpīḍa had for Kādambarī was not in violation of either his nature or conduct. Even though his love was reciprocated by Kādambarī, he did not thoughtlessly or hastily try to marry her; nor did he forsake his other duties. He was not one to act without the permission of his parents. Was he not an epitome of faultless and noble character, knowledge and beauty? Hence the poet chose him as the hero.

The Title 'Kādambarī'

Mahāśvetā's fidelity has been particularly discussed by the poet. She was extremely loyal and incomparably beautiful. Despite her youthfulness, she had the fortitude to practise austerities, like an ascetic, for her husband's sake. However, it was unbecoming of her to select an emotionally weak man as her husband, focussing only on physical appearance and disregarding other merits and demerits. Apparently, this flaw of her was the only reason Bhaṭṭabāṇa chose not to name this work after her. It appears as though the poet Bāṇa intended, through this book, to educate women in the virtues required of them. Kādambarī's loyalty was exemplary. She was a noble Gandharva lady and extremely prudent. She chose an eminently learned, upright and impeccable man as her husband. She was on par with the hero Candrāpīḍa in all aspects. Therefore the poet felt it appropriate to name his novel after this remarkable lady.

Vepery, Madras
29.5.1929

M Duraiswami Aiyangar

KĀDAMBARĪ

Pūrvabhāga

First Sarga

In the Māḷava country, there was a city named Vidiśā whose splendour caused envy even in the celestial world. The eminence of the city gave the impression that all the virtues of Kṛtayuga, dreading the atrocities of Kaliyuga, took refuge and dwelt there without fear. The city was surrounded by the majestic Vetravatī River which captivated the minds of the onlookers by the presence of the constantly raucous black swans residing on its banks.

Long ago, there lived a famous king named Śūdraka, who was the emperor of the earth's entire landmass, whose prowess was unparalleled and who had the city of Vidiśā as his capital. While several kings were deferential to him fearing his valour, there were many rulers who respected him for his exemplary traits. He was thoroughly learned in all branches of knowledge. In short, he was endowed with all virtues so as to be considered divine.

This king had conquered the whole world; he lovingly took care of his people. His minister, who was descended from several distinguished lineages, was well versed in ethical literature, always enthusiastic and full of love and concern. Since the king's reign extended over the entire world, he handed over most of the responsibility of ruling the kingdom to his minister and lived happily without any worry.

Sometimes he arranged for a musical gathering where he enjoyed playing on the *mṛdanga* and singing soulfully. At other times, he focussed on the intricacies of drawing. Occasionally, he summoned scholars and composed a poem. At times, he discussed the esoteric principles with philosophers. He sometimes went on a valorous hunt to the forests. On other occasions, he paid homage to the ascetics who had come to see him. Despite being young and endowed with great beauty, he was extremely strong-willed and possessed the ability to control his five senses. Hence he was inclined to view the company of women as a folly. In this way, he spent his days delightfully in the company of eloquent friends and scholars.

One day, when the king was seated in his court shortly after sunrise, a portress, with a sword suspended from the left side of her waist – contrary to the practice of women – presented herself to the king, knelt down and spoke thus: “Lord, a Mātanga (Caṇḍāḷa) woman from the southern country is standing at the entrance of the hall bearing a parrot in a golden cage. She seems to be an embodiment of the royal glory that had slipped away from Triśanku who, repelled by a furious Indra, was left dangling in the southern direction. Claiming that her parrot is a very unusual bird, she requests that she would like to present it to you and to see you. It is Your Majesty's decision”. Hearing these words, the king, whose curiosity was

aroused, looked around at the other kings seated nearby and ordered, “What is the harm? Bid her to enter”.

The doorkeeper immediately ushered the Mātanga lady in to the court. Shunning, as it were, the touch of others due to her appearance, the lady entered the hall and beheld the emperor seated on a small couch studded with moonstones, in the midst of thousands of kings. Ropes of pearls swung from the four gem-encrusted legs of the couch. A white silken canopy was fixed above. With his attractive eyes as wide as Lotuses, his broad face exceedingly handsome and his distinguished form befitting a noble birth, he appeared majestic.

From a little distance away, the lady gently tapped once on the ground with a bamboo stick to announce her arrival. Hearing the sound of the stick, everyone in the royal assembly turned their gaze from the king to the lady, like a herd of wild elephants at the sound of a falling palm frond. The king also gazed at the Mātanga lady with amazement. Preceding her was an old man who, despite being long past his youthful days, still sported a sprightly physique due to constant physical labour. Following her was a Caṇḍāḷa boy with dishevelled side-locks, holding a golden cage. Wearing a black garment that extended to her heels, her head covered with a thin red veil and a string of heavy pearls around her neck, the lady, who was in the fresh bloom of youth, possessed a bewitchingly radiant form.

At that moment, the surprised emperor’s mind was filled with these perplexing thoughts: “Oh, why did Brahmā create this superior beauty in an unsuitable caste? When (the loveliness of) her form surpasses human ideals, how can she be regarded as belonging to the Mātanga caste?” Even as the king was engrossed in such thoughts, the girl bowed to him gracefully, like a noble woman – in the process slightly dislodging the sandalwood sprout that she had worn on her ear – and sat on one side of a jewelled platform. Immediately, the old man who had accompanied her placed the caged parrot respectfully in front of the king, knelt down and spoke thus deferentially:

“Lord! This parrot possesses profound knowledge on all subjects. It has thoroughly learnt poetry, drama and other works; it can also compose them; it is fully proficient in music; it is well versed in the rules of polity and is capable of appropriately applying them; in short, this bird is a rare gem in this world; it is called ‘Vaiśampāyana’. Holding that all treasures of the land belong to the king, our chieftain’s daughter has brought it here, to be offered to Your Majesty. So Your Highness should accept this”. Saying thus, he left the cage in front of the emperor and courteously withdrew.

After he moved away, the remarkable bird emerged from its cage, turned towards the emperor, reverentially raised its right leg, delivered a benediction in very clear tones and spoke as follows: “O Emperor of the world! Bathed in a cascade of tears, positioned near the

heart that is seared by grief and completely renouncing ornaments*, the breasts of your enemies' wives appear to be observing a vow”.

Upon hearing that, the astounded king turned to look at his chief minister Kumārapālita, who was sitting near him, and exclaimed, “Did you hear its sweet tone and clear diction? Is it not greatly unusual that this little bird should articulate the short and long vowels correctly, as though it has diligently practised them, and intelligently speak these words to one who is appreciative?” Smiling slightly, Kumārapālita replied, “Lord! What is so remarkable in this? You know that parrots and mynas have the ability to repeat whatever they hear. Besides, these birds may develop such proficiency either as a result of practice in earlier births or due to the excellent effort by people, which is not surprising. God’s creation contains several such rare occurrences”. While he was saying thus, there arose the loud noise of drums-beats that herald the end of the hour, accompanied by the sound of conches being blown at midday. Hearing that, the king got up from the assembly hall to go for his bath. With the other kings also taking leave, the emperor, looking at the Caṇḍāḷa lass, said, “Take rest” and then instructed the woman bearing the betel-box, “Take Vaiśampāyana to the inner chambers,” before going into the palace with a few close princes.

There, he removed all his ornaments, appearing like the sun divested of its rays. He then went to the exercise hall with some princes of his age and spent a pleasant time practising fencing. Soon after, led by a forerunner who dutifully moved people aside – even though there was no crowd in the palace – he went to the bath-house. After a delightful bath in perfumed water, he wore new silken robes. He paid homage to the manes, chanted incantations, propitiated the Sun-god through oblation with very pure water and offered special worship to Lord Śiva. He then happily enjoyed a repast in the company of a few eligible rulers. Completing his meal with a ceremonial sip of water, he rested on a jewelled platform and chewed betel-leaves. After relaxing for a while, he once again went to the assembly hall and sat on a soft cushion, its fine cover perfumed by flowers. He spent that duration in interesting conversation with those ministers and kings with whom he could discuss confidential matters.

Thereafter, eager to know about the parrot, he ordered a portress to bring Vaiśampāyana from the inner chambers. She immediately brought the caged parrot and placed it reverently before the king. Behind her came a chamberlain, clad in a white robe and holding a golden staff. Bowing to the king, he said, “O King! The queens have sent word that, as per Your Majesty’s

* Taking the Tamil word ‘*ampūṇ*’, ‘*am*’ means ‘beautiful’ and ‘*pūṇ*’ means ‘jewel’. The verse describes the breasts of the ladies as being bereft of jewels. Splitting the word as ‘*ambu*’ (the letter for ‘*p*’ and ‘*b*’ are the same in Tamil; its pronunciation depends on the word) and ‘*ūṇ*’, the meaning is ‘water’ and ‘food’ and can be taken to describe a vow of complete fasting. (The Sanskrit word in the verse is ‘*vimuktāhāra*’, which can be split as ‘*vimuktā*’ + ‘*hāra*’ – which gives the meaning ‘the ladies are devoid of necklaces’ – and ‘*vimukta*’ + ‘*āhāra*’, which means ‘having forsaken food’.)

instructions, Vaiśampāyana has been bathed and fed and is now sent to Your Majesty's presence" and withdrew.

Addressing Vaiśampāyana, the emperor enquired, "In the inner apartments, did you taste any food to your liking?" The parrot replied, "Lord! There is nothing that I did not taste. I drank sufficient quantity of the sweet juice of the black plum, which shone like the eyes of tipsy cuckoos. I ate my fill of pomegranate seeds that were as lustrous as pearls mixed with the blood oozing from the torn temples of intoxicated elephants. What is the use of needless talk? Everything that was offered by the gentle hands of Your Majesty's queens tasted like nectar". Gently interrupting the parrot's words, the king asked again, "Let these things be; I am keen to know your complete life-story; please narrate it. Where were you born? Who gave you this name which is fit for a Brāhmaṇa? Who are your parents? How did you acquire scriptural knowledge? How did you learn science and arts? How old are you? Is this a boon? Or are you a sage in a bird's body who is aware of previous lives? Where did you live until now? How were you trapped by the (members of the) fifth caste? Why did you come here?" Hearing the avid questions of the king, Vaiśampāyana thought for a while and then carefully started speaking. "Lord! This story is very lengthy. However, if you are interested, you may listen".

Second Sarga

"Sire! Your Majesty is aware of the Vindhya Forests which extend horizontally between the eastern and western coasts. The innumerable groves of these forests house towering trees, whose crowns rise to the sky and are adorned by bunches of beautiful flowers that resemble clusters of stars caught among their peaks, as it were. A part of that forest is the great Daṇḍaka Forest. The illustrious Sage Agastya, who had digested the cunning and evil *asura* Vātāpi, has his hermitage – which is a sanctuary for virtues – in the middle of the forest, on the bank of the Godāvarī. The tall and wide trees in that hermitage were watered and nurtured by the sage's wife Lopamudrā herself, as if they were her own sons. Is it not at Pañcavaṭī, located here, that Śrī Rāma, in deference to his father's wishes, spent some time happily with Sītādevī for a short while in the charming hut built by Lakṣmaṇa, worshipping Sage Agastya?

Close to the hermitage is an exceptionally beautiful Lotus-lake called 'Pampā' that appears like a reservoir of water. Drenched by droplets of water from the waves of the lake – which is as turbulent as the ocean – its shores are constantly cool, as though during monsoon. The gurgling sounds emanating from the pitchers being filled with water by the sages on one side of the pond combine with the splashing noises made by the gambolling elephants as they suck the water through their trunks on the other side. Did not Sugrīva, after being banished by Vālī, spend his carefree days on the Rṣyamūka Mountain, living on the fruits and vegetables on the bank of this lush pond?

On the west bank of the lake stands a huge silk-cotton tree, which reaches for the sky and extends widely in all directions and which, therefore, can be described as a ‘balcony’ from where the forest-deities can view the whole world. The thick creepers that have spread all over the tree, right from its base, make that aged tree comparable to an old man whose torso is crisscrossed by thick blood-vessels. The pythons, frequently seen curled up at the foot of the tree and resembling the trunks of elephants, make it appear as though a trench has been neatly constructed around it. An ancient and wide clump of palm-trees, which were felled by the arrows of Śrī Rāma, can be seen nearby. The numerous gaps found among the branches, in the crevices on its bark and in the hollows of its trunk, together with the fact that the tree was huge and hence unscalable, enabled flocks of parrots to come there from many places and nest fearlessly. Though the tree had only a few leaves here and there, having shed most of them due to age, the packed colonies of parrots gave the impression that the tree was thick with green leaves and shoots. Each day, the birds used to get up at dawn, take to the sky in rows – looking as if several rainbows have appeared – forage for food, eat to their hearts’ content, return to the tree, lovingly feed their chicks with the fruits, etc. brought by them and then spend the night peacefully.

My father lived with his wife in one of those ancient hollows of that tree. Fate caused me to be born as his son in his old age. Unable to bear the labour pangs, my mother unfortunately died during childbirth. My father, already physically enfeebled due to old age, was shattered by his wife’s death. However, suppressing his burgeoning sorrow with fortitude, he focussed on protecting me. Having lost the ability to fly, he would, with his worn out and broken beak, gather the food-grains that had fallen to the ground from the nests of other birds and feed them to me; every day, he would make a meal of my leftovers.

After some time, as a result of the loving care of my father, feathers started sprouting on my body and the eagerness to explore the outside world grew in my mind. This being the situation, a new day dawned. The forest showered dew drops and flowers on the tender leaves that resembled palms folded in homage, as though it was offering them to the sun as oblation. As the sun rose and spread its rays, the parrots left their nests and flew in desired directions in search of food. My father and I remained in the hollow. Suddenly, a thunderous sound of hunt arose in the great forest, making the trees and animals tremble. Being young, I was terrified and sought shelter under the tattered wings of my aged father. The entire forest seemed to be shaken by the resounding roars of lions felled by the spears of the hunters, the heartrending cries of panic-stricken deer mauled by hounds and the cacophony of the agitated birds flying in all directions. Within a short while, the commotion subsided completely.

After slowly recovering from fright, I peeped out from under my father’s wing and looked eagerly towards the direction of the sound. On that morning, in the jungle, I saw a large group of fearsome hunters advancing towards my tree, like a horde of demons whose appearance

portends calamity. How can I describe the intemperate lifestyle of these hunters! Propitiating their deities with flesh, moving around with hounds, wandering about as desired, revelling in drinking toddy, stealing for a living – what depraved morals! Among those hundreds of savages, I espied their freshly youthful leader. His limbs were sturdy and looked as if they were cast in iron. He gave the impression that he was Ekalavya himself, reborn as the monarch of hunters. Hounds of different colours, looking like lion cubs without manes, came running after him, their tongues hanging out due to exhaustion. His curly locks extended to his shoulders and were waving about. A diamond earring shone on his left ear to indicate that he was the leader. Though his fierce traits made him look like an personification of Kaliyuga, he had a very majestic bearing. I heard later that his name was ‘Mātanga’. To get rid of the exhaustion of roaming in the forest, he came to the shadow of the silk-cotton tree and removed the bow from his shoulder. Immediately, the servants hurriedly spread some tender leaves on the ground for him and he sat on it. Another young hunter sped to the pond and returned with cool water in a cup made of Lotus-leaf as well as some tender white Lotus-roots, which he offered to his leader. After drinking the water and eating the roots, he recovered from his tiredness. The other hunters also drank the water from the pond and regained their strength. Then the leader got up and, along with the others, slowly went away from that place in a chosen direction.

The most barbarous among all of them was a fierce-looking old hunter who, unable to obtain meat from the other hunters, lingered under the silk-cotton tree to look for flesh. After the leader disappeared into the jungle, the old hunter, like a big vulture acutely desirous of birds’ flesh, examined the tree from top to bottom for a short while. At that instant, it seemed as though the flocks of petrified parrots took their last breath. Merciless people can perform any cruel act easily! Though the towering tree was as tall as many palm trees, the wicked man somehow effortlessly climbed it, as though on a ladder. I crouched among the feathers of my father whose body, already tottering with age, started quivering twice as much with fear upon seeing this danger. Bereft of any other recourse in that unfortunate hour, my anxious father held me close to its chest with its frayed wings and huddled deep in the hollow. The evil hunter removed the parrot chicks one by one – as though plucking fruits – from the many hollows and crevices of branches. Some of them were only one or two days old. Several of them were yet to grow feathers and acquire the ability to fly. He mercilessly slaughtered them and threw their bodies on to the ground.

Systematically leaping from branch to branch and capturing and butchering the young parrots, the fiend reached my hollow. As he thrust his left arm – which resembled an old black snake and whose fingers stank of the acrid chyle of boars – into the cavity, my struggling father pecked at his hand and screeched piteously. The heinous killer dragged it out and murdered it. May be because I was very small or may be because my body was even more shrivelled or may be because I was destined to live for some more time, he did not see

me clinging to my father's wings. Alas, the despicable sinner wrung the neck of my dead father's body and threw it on the ground! Due to some merit, I found myself falling, together with my father's body, onto a heap of dried leaves that the wind had collected on the ground; is it not the reason my body was not shattered? Before the brute could descend from the tree, I callously left my father's body and, naturally frightened and agitated due to my extreme youth, slowly limped towards a nearby dense Tamāla tree (*Cinnamomum Tamala*) and hid among its roots; is it not natural, at that moment, to feel that I had escaped from the jaws of death? After a short while, the vile old man came down, picked up the bodies of the parrot chicks, tied them together with creepers and scurried away in the direction of his leader.

After he went a long way, I thought that I had survived. Already exhausted by the fall from a great height and tormented by the sorrow of having lost my loving father, I was plagued by a thirst so acute that it made me forget both my exhaustion as well as my sorrow. Utterly lacking the ability to fly, I started crawling from the foot of the Tamāla tree towards the Pampā Lake. Terrified of the slightest movement of the grass, which made me fear if the loathsome old man has returned, and also tumbling at every step due to my inexperience in walking, I sighed and slowly dragged myself along. In an instant, I forgot my father who, despite his advanced age, lovingly protected and nurtured me! It is strange that this desire to stay alive compels me to search for ways to quench this thirst without a trace of gratitude! For the self-centred, nothing is more important in this universe than their own wellbeing. What can I do, oh Father! With the scorching midday sun emitting rays like sparks of fire, how can I move on this forest floor to reach water? The pond too seems to be far away. Alas! Will the ruthless gods take away my life now, even though I did not ask for it? Feeling despondent, I struggled for my life in the intense heat.

At that moment, Hārīta, the son of the great sage Jābāli who resided in a hermitage a short distance away from the pond, came along that way by chance with a few of his friends for a dip in that very pond. His dazzling form made him appear like another sun; the youthful ascetic lad resembled Agni, the God of fire who came disguised as a young Brāhmaṇa student, desiring to burn down and consume the Khāṇḍava Forest. Noble people are, by nature, very affectionate towards all creatures; seeing me in that pitiful state, the merciful ascetic told his nearby friend, "This parrot chick, whose wings have not yet developed, has somehow fallen from this tree; or it could have fallen from the mouth of an eagle. It has plummeted from a great height and is languishing in the sun. It is also flapping its tiny wings with great effort. Let us take it to the water before it dies; pick it up". I was then taken to the lakeshore. There, placing on the ground the pitcher that was in his left hand and the stick of the Palāśa tree (Flame of the forest, *Butea Monosperma*) from his right hand, he took me in his palm, gently lifted my limp face and, by trickling drops of water with his fingers, made me drink it; he also sprayed cool water on my body. I immediately revived slightly and got my life back. The benevolent man then placed me in the cool shadow beneath a Lotus-leaf

growing on the shore and completed his ceremonial bath. After paying homage to the Sun-god with Lotuses and handfuls of water, he started from that place. Lovingly picking me up and followed by the other ascetic youths, he slowly proceeded towards his hermitage, drying his wet matted hair.

After travelling a short distance, I saw a beautiful hermitage surrounded by lush and fragrant flower gardens and groves of tall trees bearing bunches of various fruits. This hermitage also is located in a region of the Daṇḍaka Forest. The very old sages with poor eyesight were led by hand from place to place by the tame monkeys belonging to that area. How can I describe its splendour! The age of Kali could not enter that place. Students were chanting the *Vedas* in one area. A few sages were debating on the *Dharmaśāstras*. Elsewhere, a few were analysing the meanings of several religious treatises. In short, the hermitage was like another Brahmaloaka on earth, created by the glory of the sages.

In the middle of such a hermitage stood a magnificent Aśoka tree (*Saraca Asoca*) whose extensive, close-knit branches and thick foliage provided substantial shade. Beneath the tree, I beheld Sage Jābāli, his topknot white with age, his body smeared with ash, his lips moving in prayer and his fingers counting the beads on a rosary. I felt that, by this vision of him, I had right away achieved the fruit of having survived and was filled with joy. The brilliance of his form prevented me from directly looking at it. His dense, white beard extended until his navel. Several ascetics, looking like the personification of compassion, were surrounding the venerable sage and worshipping at his feet. Though detached from everything and utterly serene, his immense eminence made everyone fear approaching him. He was an axe for the jungle of the vines of desire. He was the sun to dispel the darkness of ignorance. He was a treasure-house of penance. His greatness was such that the creatures there relinquished their natural mutual enmity and lived together in peace. Shunning their inherent wantonness, the monkeys delighted in bringing sweet fruits and giving them to the young ascetics after their purifying bath. A few fawns, leaving their mothers, were happily playing with lion cubs whose manes had not yet grown.

While I was enraptured in watching these, Hārīta left me under the Aśoka tree, prostrated in front of his father and sat down on a mat made of Darbha grass (Halfa grass, *Desmotachya Bipinnata*) at a short distance. Seeing me, all the sages there turned to Hārīta and asked, “Whence and why did you bring this parrot-chick?” He replied, “As I was going for my bath, I saw that it had fallen from its tree on the shore of the lake and was struggling in the heat. Knowing that I cannot place it back in its nest on the giant tree, I brought it here out of compassion. Until it grows wings and is able to fly, let it stay in a hollow in a tree in this hermitage so that we can look after it. Later, it can choose to either fly elsewhere or remain here itself. Is it not our duty to take care of those who have no protector?”

Sage Jābāli also heard this conversation. Fixing his kindly gaze upon me, he was engaged in deep thought, as though intently trying to recollect some past incident. Then, with a smile, he shook his head and said, “This is merely experiencing the results of its own transgressions”. Due to the power of his austerities, the eminent sage had acquired the ability to perceive the events of the past, present and future as well as the three worlds as though they were happening before his eyes. The hermits there were aware of this. Hence, surprised at his words, all of them eagerly and reverently beseeched him to recount the history of the bird’s earlier birth. Looking at them, the sage replied, “This story is very strange and quite long. The day is going to be over. All of you perform your austerities. After finishing your worship and peacefully partaking of the fruits and roots, you may come to me in the evening. I will leisurely narrate everything about this parrot. Even as I recount, this bird will remember all that had happened in its previous birth, as if seeing in a dream. Take this parrot also, feed it and quench its thirst”. So saying, he got up and, along with the other sages, proceeded to perform his religious duties. By this time, the day also ended.

Third *Sarga*

Eventually, it was dusk. The sun, falling from the firmament into the western ocean, as it were, caused the stars to immediately appear in the sky, like a rising spray of sparkling water. Except the minds of the sages, all objects were enveloped by darkness. The moon too rose in the east, its refreshing rays dispelling the blackness that had spread over the region, brightening and cooling it. After I too had my food, Hārīta, surrounded by other sages, carried me to the spot where his father was seated. In a part of the hermitage, which was well illuminated by the moon, the sage was sitting on a cane seat, gently fanned by a pupil named Jālapāda who was wearing a ring made of Darbha grass. Approaching the sage, Hārīta requested, “O Father! All these sages have eagerly come to listen to this extraordinary chronicle. Please tell us the story of this bird’s previous life as well as the future events”. The eminent sage intently looked once at me, seated in front. Then, turning towards the gathering with the words, “If you are interested, listen”, he started his narration.

“In the world-renowned country of Avantī, on the bank of the Śīprā River, is situated the great city of Ujjayinī, a home to the greatest auspiciousness. It is a famous holy place for Lord Śiva who has spurned his abode in Kailāsa and chosen to reside here proudly bearing the name ‘Mahākāla’. Around the temple, the rugged and towering white ramparts, painted with lime, gives the impression that the Kailāsa Mountain, aware of the Lord’s glory at this place, has decided to materialise here as the wall. The city, with its moats unfathomable like the ocean, its exquisite gardens verdant and cool, with thousands of mansions among them, caused even the celestials to desire residing there.

In the acclaimed city ruled an upright king called ‘Tārāpīḍa’, who was fit to be hailed as an embodiment of righteousness and who ensured that no harm befell anyone. Comparing him to the moon because of his serenity and benevolence and to the sun due to his lustre and valour that wards off wickedness, wise people spoke of him in wonderment as a truly remarkable emperor in whom these seemingly contrasting excellences co-existed peacefully. Marvelling at his handsomeness, many declared him to be another Manmatha, created by the merciful Maheśvara who relented to the piteous wails of Ratidevī. He had conquered the entire world through his valour. He had flawlessly learnt the scriptures. He was superior due to his intellectual prowess. People constantly recounted his exploits with delight. Increasingly loved by everyone for his governance, he felt that his very birth was worthwhile.

His minister was a Brāhmaṇa named ‘Śukanāsa’, who had been with the king since childhood and who was very affectionate towards the latter. Fully conversant in all sciences, he took up every task with unflinching enthusiasm and keenness. He was incomparably skilled in the aspects of polity and a man of his word. He was to Tārāpīḍa what Vasiṣṭha was to Daśaratha and Dhaumya to Yudhiṣṭhira.

The emperor despatched thousands of spies to all corners of this entire earth over which he ruled and, through them, was constantly and acutely aware of every action – even breathing – of the kings as well as others, as though occurring at his own place. He established a competent system which rendered his reign unshakeable. He attained satisfaction upon fully realising that no action was left incomplete in his kingdom. Thereafter, he handed over the kingdom to his minister and, with a peaceful mind, spent his time enjoying domestic bliss. Śukanāsa also actively and ably administered the empire with great responsibility and astuteness, thereby gaining the praise of everyone in the kingdom. Though Tārāpīḍa spent several years enjoying pleasures that equalled those of the celestial worlds, he was denied the happiness of gazing at the face of his son who would perpetuate his lineage. Despite having several kings ready to do his bidding, the lack of a son would make him feel desolate and sad.

Like the crescent moon on Lord Śiva and the brilliant Kaustubha gem on Lord Viṣṇu’s chest, a lady by name ‘Vilāsavatī’ was the chief queen of the king. Once, the king chanced to go to her dwelling. There he found her in deep sorrow, slumped on a small couch, devoid of ornaments and, with her Lotus-like face resting on her left arm, shedding unceasing tears that drenched her upper garment. Not far from her, a few old ladies of the inner chambers were consoling her. When she attempted to rise on seeing the king approach, he stopped her and made her remain on the couch before sitting down with her. With a distressed mind, he made her wipe away her tears and asked her, “O Queen! Why are you weeping? I am worried to see you shorn of jewellery! Have I committed any mistake? Or have any of the attendants erred? My dear! Please first tell the cause of sorrow”. As Vilāsavatī gave no answer and continued to grieve, he turned to a nearby attendant and asked her the reason for the queen’s sadness.

Then, Makarikā, a lady who bears the betel-box, approached the king and said, “My Lord! Would there be even the slightest fault on your part? How can the thought of committing a mistake arise even in the minds of servitors? The truth is: the queen is regretting that, being childless, she has wasted a large portion of her life. Despite harbouring this grief in her heart for several days, she did not reveal it for fear of upsetting you. Today being the fourteenth day (*Caturdaśī*), a day of penance, she went to worship Mahākāla. There, while listening to a recitation of the *Mahābhārata*, she heard the statement, ‘since a son prevents his parents from falling into the hell called ‘Put’, he is known as ‘*putra*’; there is no redemption for those who do not have a son’. Like ghee poured on a small fire, these words greatly intensified her sorrow. Since her return, she has been in acute distress like this. This is the fact”.

The king heard these words in silence and, drawing a deep sigh, spoke thus: “O Queen! My mind too is tormented by this affliction day and night. We have not been blessed with the joy of holding a baby. Is this not God’s doing? What is the use of lamenting about it? It is only proper that we do whatever is humanly possible of us. Please pay homage to the preceptors, extend your hospitality to the sages and worship the deities earnestly. Are not sages as great as gods? Was it not due to the blessings of Sage Ṛṣyaśringa, the son of Sage Vibhāṇḍaka, that long ago Emperor Daśaratha begot four sons even at an advanced age? Relinquishing this sorrow, perform sacred rites with confidence and enthusiasm so that our prayers are answered”. Consoling her thus with kindness, the king stayed with her until she had calmed down and then repaired to his abode.

Assuaged by the king’s advice, Vilāsavatī resumed her daily tasks with the usual enthusiasm. From then on, she prayed to the gods with great fervour. She waited on elders with utmost respect. She arranged for the chanting of the *Vedas* by Brāhmaṇas. She circumambulated and worshipped holy trees such as the Fig (*Ficus Religiosa*). She wore amulets sanctified by *mantras*. She took holy baths in renowned ponds. Every day, she offered golden pitchers filled with sesame seeds and the nine gems to those who recited the *Vedas*.

Some time passed in this fashion. One night, during the last quarter, the king had a dream in which he saw Vilāsavatī on the white terrace and the full moon entering her mouth. Waking up immediately, the astonished king summoned Śukanāsa and related this news to him. The delighted minister said, “My Lord! Our prayers will be well answered. In just a few days, you are going to enjoy the bliss of beholding your son’s face. Just now, I too dreamt that a Vedic scholar, clad in white garments, placed a white Lotus-blossom on the lap of my wife Manoramā. What can be more pleasurable than this? Dreams occurring at the end of the night seldom go unfulfilled”. Even as he spoke, the king took his hand and went to Vilāsavatī’s chambers, where both of them related their dreams and gladdened her.

After a few days, through the blessings of the gods, Vilāsavatī conceived. With her developing pregnancy, her gait slowed down, like a water-laden cloud. Already endowed with great natural beauty, her body increasingly took on the glow of the fragrant Screw Pine (*Pandanus Odoratissimus*) flower. With these signs, the handmaidens of the ladies' quarters were able to confirm her pregnancy. The chief of the handmaidens was called Kulavardhanā; the old lady had a lot of influence in the inner chambers as well as with the king. Once, when the emperor was seated in the assembly hall amidst several kings and ministers and talking to Śukanāsa sitting in front of him, she approached him and whispered in his ear about the pregnancy of Vilāsavatī.

His face radiant, the overjoyed king turned towards his minister. After keenly analysing the situation, the minister moved his chair slightly closer to the king and softly asked him, "What! Has the dream come true? The arrival of an excited Kulavardhanā, together with Your Majesty's hitherto unseen rapturous countenance, conveys only that auspicious news. I request you to please tell me". The king replied, "If Kulavardhanā's words are true, we can surmise that the dream has indeed borne fruit. However, are we so fortunate? Get up; we will go directly and find out" and left for the queens' quarters with Śukanāsa after presenting Kulavardhanā with his gold chain. There, the abode of Vilāsavatī was freshly whitewashed and clean. Beneath a canopy of white silk, she was lying on a bed that was covered by a soft bedspread. A few old ladies of the gynaeceum were twirling a golden pot filled with flowers over her in a ritual known as '*nīrāñcanam*'. Upon noticing the king approach, she hastily clutched at the extended arm of an attendant and, with her other hand pressed against her left knee, slowly got up. The king, who saw this, stopped her saying, "Stop, O Queen; there is no need for ceremony," made her sit and took his place on the same cot. The minister also was given an elevated seat. After seeing that the queen was pregnant, the elated king playfully asked her with a smile, "Devi, Kulavardhanā has been saying something. Śukanāsa would like to know if it is true". In response, the queen laughed softly and lowered her head. After staying with her for a short while, the king and the minister went to their respective abodes.

Eventually, it was time for Vilāsavatī's confinement. Coincidentally, the day happened to be an auspicious one. The astrologers were frequently and accurately noting the hour to determine the ascendant. At a propitious moment, Vilāsavatī begot a son who would later delight and amaze the populace. On that occasion, various instruments were played not only at the palace, but all around. Everyone – those in the inner quarters, kings, youth, old people – gathered in groups and danced with joy.

The king, who longed to see his infant son's face, hastened with Śukanāsa to the queens' quarters at the time specified by the astrologer. Two gem-encrusted pots, filled with water, were placed on either side of the entrance of the lying-in chamber. Garlands made of flowers and wreaths made of leaves were suspended on the doorway. In one corner, Neem (Margosa,

Azadirachta Indica) leaves were being burnt so that its smoke would ward off any kind of evil. While Vedic scholars were reciting the *Sahasranāmam* (a thousand names of God) on one side, old ladies were melodiously singing auspicious songs on the other side. The king as well as his minister gazed unblinkingly at the newborn, lustrous and charming like the rising moon. Turning to the king, Śukanāsa said, “O King! Did you notice that, even in this tender state, the infant’s eyes are like red Lotuses, his nose is sharp and pronounced, his forehead is as broad as a sheet of silver, his palms bear the signs of the conch and the discus and he has other symbols and marks of an exceptional emperor? Listen to his cries that are deep like the sound of a conch”.

At that moment, an attendant by name Mangalaka came running to the king with excitement and joy, saluted him and informed him that the minister’s wife Manoramā too had been delivered of a son. This news caused the king’s happiness to multiply manifold and he said, “The birth of a son to Manoramā at this juncture reminds me of the birth of Paraśurāma to Reṇukā. May these two sons be like Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma! It is true when people say that joy follows joy and sorrow pursues sorrow”. With these words, he playfully snatched away a silken shawl from Śukanāsa as a gift. Both of them immediately went to the minister’s mansion, followed by musicians singing panegyrics and the entourage playing on many musical instruments and, with increasing joy, beheld that infant too. Then, on the tenth day, the emperor had an auspicious bath and gave away cows and gold in great measure. Since the child was conceived after a dream wherein the full moon entered the mother’s mouth, the king named his son ‘Candrāpīḍa’. Next day, the minister also performed the religious rites for his son and, in accordance with the king’s suggestion, named his son ‘Vaiśampāyana’, as befitting a Brāhmaṇa. Later, ceremonies like tonsure, etc. were also completed. These two children were brought up very well in the palace and gradually grew out of their childhood.

Fourth Sarga

Desiring to impart an exceptional education to his son, Tārāpīḍa established a school, spread over half a mile and endowed with unmatched facilities, on the bank of the Śīprā River, away from the city. Several buildings were constructed in it for teaching various subjects, for practising fencing and for games. A stable for horses was also built a little further. The entire school was girt by high, limewashed walls. An entrance with wide doors was provided only from one side. He took great pains to recruit many wise instructors, proficient in all sciences, and made them reside in the premises. On an auspicious day, he entrusted both Candrāpīḍa and Vaiśampāyana to the teachers and, like letting lion cubs into a cage, arranged for their stay in the school itself. The two lads were provided with an entourage consisting only of the sons of his teachers. Every day at dawn, the king, together with Vilāsavatī, would go to the school to see his dear son.

Putting in their full efforts, the teachers eagerly taught the respective subjects to Candrāpīḍa, who was endowed with a sharp intellect and an unruffled mind. He systematically attained unparalleled mastery over grammar, logic, the doctrines of *Vedānta*, law and ethics, polity, music, using weapons, mounting elephants, equestrianism, fencing, mechanics, mining, several languages, all scripts and other arts. Naturally very well built, he could, by himself, easily fence with an iron rod so heavy that it needed ten people to lift it. With each swish of his sword, he could chop down palm trees as effortlessly as though they were Lotus-stems. Except in physical might, Vaiśampāyana too attained the same proficiency as Candrāpīḍa in all aspects. They were so affectionate towards each other, even more than brothers, that they could not bear separation from one another.

While still studying, he became a youth, which increased his natural handsomeness several times. Upon learning that the teachers had certified him as having completed his education in all subjects, the king sent Valāhaka*, his army commander, on an auspicious day, to bring Candrāpīḍa from school. Accordingly, Valāhaka went and, having obtained permission from the gatekeeper, entered the premises, approached and saluted the prince and then took a seat there with the prince's approval. Pulling his chair close to the prince, Valāhaka respectfully conveyed the following message from the king: "O Prince! You have learnt all the sciences. You are now well versed in everything. You have also acquired incomparable competence in weapons training. All the teachers have permitted you to leave the abode of learning. All aspirations of your parents and others have been entirely fulfilled. Let the people of the world and those in the inner quarters satisfy their long-standing desire of beholding you. It has been ten years now since you started residing in the school. You entered the school in your sixth year and now you are sixteen. After paying your obeisance to your preceptors, you may, from now on, free yourself from all disciplines and enjoy the royal pleasures".

"Besides, the king has sent for you a superior horse named 'Indrāyudha'. It is said to have emerged from the ocean and was given by the king of Persia as a befitting gift to your father. Thousands of kings are waiting at the entrance to see you," concluded Valāhaka. Respectfully obeying his father's orders and wanting to go to the palace, Candrāpīḍa commanded in a deep voice, "Bring Indrāyudha here". Immediately, two horsemen, each holding on to a golden bridle, brought the animal to the prince. Candrāpīḍa was amazed at the sight of the horse. It was so huge that even a very tall person could not mount it easily. Mottled with patches of black, red and green, it shone like a rainbow. The tip of its nose was quivering. It was arching back its ears, which resembled two red Lotuses. In short, the whole world could be given in exchange for the horse. Upon seeing it, Candrāpīḍa rose from his seat wondering: "O! What immense glory my father has! He gets such unattainable treasures as gifts! This animal's

* The Sanskrit text gives the name as 'Balāhaka'. However, in keeping with the Tamil summary, the name 'Valāhaka' has been used throughout.

magnificence, brilliance and unparalleled strength make me think that this is a rare creature of divine origin. Even celestials are known to have been born as a horse due to a curse. I have heard that long ago, a great sage called Sthūlaśiras imprecated the celestial dancer Rambhā, who left the heavenly world, took birth from a mare and lived on the earth for a long time with the name ‘Aśvahr̥dayā’, serving the king called ‘Śatadhanvā’ in the city of Mṛttikāvātī. Therefore, this too, must be such a being”.

Thereafter, he accepted and wore the garlands offered by Valāhaka. Taking leave of all his teachers after obtaining their blessings, he made Vaiśampāyana bestride an excellent horse and then approached Indrāyudha. He inaudibly prayed to it, “O exemplary horse! I bow before you, whoever you are. Please forgive me for committing this sin of straddling you”. Indrāyudha too nodded its head up and down and neighed, seemingly understanding his intention and granting him permission. He immediately mounted the horse and set off, feeling as if the earth was but a span in length. As he emerged (from the school premises), the extensive cavalcade that was waiting outside for him reared up in a single movement, like the ocean-wave leaping at the sight of the rising moon. All the kings assembled there discarded their umbrellas and paid their homage to him one after another. As Valāhaka announced the names of the kings and introduced them to Candrāpīḍa, the prince too appropriately honoured all of them. Then, followed by Vaiśampāyana on his horse and surrounded by the kings, he started towards the city. He was shaded by a white umbrella, its edge adorned by strings of undulating pearls, its ferrule decorated by the image of a lion and its shaft made of gold. The bards and others went ahead, extolling him with the words “May you be long-lived and victorious!” Thousands and thousands of citizens, pausing in their tasks, gathered on either side of the prince’s path and joyously paid their respects to Candrāpīḍa, who had a truly divine bearing. Candrāpīḍa, together with Vaiśampāyana, slowly reached the entrance of the palace and dismounted from his horse.

Holding Vaiśampāyana’s hand, Candrāpīḍa entered the palace. The commander Valāhaka preceded them, showing the way. There, the sword-wielding gatekeepers, standing immobile like statues, bowed as soon as they saw him. Going past the stables that housed the cavalry, the huge building where the royal elephant Gandhamādāna resided, the armoury, with its rows and rows of weapons capable of instilling fear in the onlookers, the courts where the judges, clad in robes befitting their dignity and occupying appropriate seats, conducted hearings, and other offices where the royal duties were being executed, he went inside. The entire palace was adorned by wreaths of pearls and cooled by mechanical sprinklers. When he finally reached the assembly hall in the palace, he beheld his father seated on a small, white couch, surrounded by bodyguards on all four sides.

Bowing his head, he paid his obeisance to his father. Extending his arms from afar, Tārāpīḍa joyfully welcomed his son with the words, “Come, my dear! Come!” and embraced him.

Pushing aside, with his foot, the folded silken cloth hurriedly placed by the betel-box bearer as a seat for him near the emperor's footstool, Candrāpīḍa sat on the floor instead. The emperor received Vaiśampāyana also as lovingly as a son and made him sit on a chair nearby. After happily spending some time with his father, Candrāpīḍa took his permission and, with a small entourage, left with Vaiśampāyana to meet his mother and others in the inner quarters. Seated amidst a group of aged female ascetics, his mother was attentively listening to them as they spent their time in noble activities such as narrating pious stories, reading the *Purāṇas* and teaching the concepts of virtue. As he saw her and fell at her feet, Vilāsavati got up swiftly, kissed his forehead, gave him a ceremonial welcome by waving in front of him a pot of water containing a burning lamp (called 'nīrāñcaṇam' in Tamil and 'avataraṇamangalam' in Sanskrit) and conferred many blessings on him. After she greeted Vaiśampāyana too with great affection, all of them took their respective seats. Making Candrāpīḍa sit next to her and caressing his head and back, she experienced endless delight in repeatedly looking at his face. Then, turning to her son, she said, "My child! Even when very young, you were not keen on games which children naturally enjoy; I am impressed to see that you submitted yourself to the restrictions of your teachers and unperturbedly completed your education in that school. You have become a versatile genius due to the great efforts of your father as well as your own ability. In a few days, I would like to see you married to a worthy lady". Hearing this, he lowered his head with a bashful smile. After granting audience to everyone in the queens' quarters, he departed.

Reaching the entrance of the palace, Candrāpīḍa and Vaiśampāyana mounted their respective horses and, with a retinue of many princes as before, went to the minister's dwelling to pay their respects to him. Dismounting at the doorway, Candrāpīḍa took Vaiśampāyana's hand and went inside. He approached and prostrated in front of Śukanāsa who, just like his own father, was surrounded by several kings and assiduously performing the administrative tasks of the kingdom. Vaiśampāyana also did the same. Śukanāsa got up immediately and received them with delight. Seeing the minister on his feet, the kings too followed suit. Shedding tears of joy, Śukanāsa eagerly embraced the prince and Vaiśampāyana. Refusing the jewelled throne designated for him, the prince sat on the floor; Vaiśampāyana too did likewise. Except Śukanāsa, all the kings pushed away their chairs and sat on the floor. After spending some time in thought, Śukanāsa, his heart brimming with happiness and hair standing on end, said these words to Candrāpīḍa: "My dear! Candrāpīḍa! What can I say! It is only now that our beloved emperor has obtained the full benefit of his sovereign rulership. All good deeds have borne fruit only now. How can those with no stock of merit beget a world-renowned son like you? For where is your age! Where is this ability of rapidly imbibing all skills! May you, together with your father, famously rule over this earth for many, many years!" After blessing the prince thus, Śukanāsa adorned him with a garland, presented him with clothes and jewels and then bid him farewell. Candrāpīḍa then went to the inner quarters, paid his respects to Manoramā and then came out.

He then mounted Indrāyudha and repaired to the grand palace specially built for him by his father. There, he sat for a while on a couch in the recreational hall called ‘Śrīmaṇḍapa’. Then, in the company of other princes, he finished all his activities, right from bath to dinner. He arranged for a stable for Indrāyudha inside the palace, near his own bedroom. The day ended on this note. The priests were emerging after pronouncing their blessings for the king. Candrāpīḍa returned after meeting his father and mother and spent the night in his palace.

He woke up at daybreak and, with his father’s approval, went on a hunt to the jungle with several hounds, cavalry and foot-soldiers armed with bows. There, he felled wild boars, leopards and lions with exceedingly sharp arrows. With his extreme valour and might, he captured alive other wild animals even as they leapt around. Indrāyudha also became very exhausted by this hunt. Despite this, it travelled at such a speed that the horses of the cavalry could not keep up with it. While returning to the palace with a few princes who accompanied him on their horses, he discussed the unusual sights encountered during the hunt. Several attendants came running and helped him remove the garments he had worn for the hunt; fanned by a few others, he sat down on a couch and rested for a short time. He then had his bath, worshipped the deities and had his meals, conversing with other princes as well as Vaiśampāyana. After taking a ceremonial sip of water (which signifies the end of a meal), he went to Indrāyudha and offered it some hay with his own hands. He met his father again before retiring for the night.

The next morning, Kailāsa, the chamberlain of the queens’ apartments, came to Candrāpīḍa with a beautiful young maiden, who had a very noble appearance. Reaching him, the chamberlain bowed before him and said thus: “Sir! Long ago, when our emperor conquered the kingdom of Kulūta, he espied this girl among the captives and handed her over to the queens in the inner quarters. This girl is the daughter of the king of Kulūta. She is named ‘Patralekhā’. Your mother treated her like a princess and brought her up as a daughter. Believing that she is eligible to be your trustworthy confidant and betel-box bearer, the queen has instructed me to leave her with you”. When Kailāsa finished speaking, Patralekha bowed deeply to the prince. Candrāpīḍa gazed at her for a while and, with the words, “As my mother commands,” he dismissed the chamberlain. The moment Patralekhā saw him, she became very attached to him for some unfathomable reason and joyfully agreed to serve him. From then on, she was like his shadow, never leaving his side. Candrāpīḍa was also pleased with her nature and looked upon her as his second self in all activities.

Fifth Sarga

After some days passed thus, the king, wishing to anoint Candrāpīḍa as the heir apparent, consulted Śukanāsa and directed all officials to procure the necessary items and complete the requisite tasks. One day, Candrāpīḍa, who was to be crowned in a few days, went as usual to

have an audience with Śukanāsa. Deciding it to be the right time, Śukanāsa imparted the following advice to him.

“My child! Candrāpīḍa! You have now learnt everything. You have studied the scriptures flawlessly. There is no advice that can be given to you now. Even then, it is my duty to tell you a few things. You are blessed with inherited wealth, fresh youth, peerless good looks and superhuman abilities. Each one of these is enough to destroy one’s probity. It is needless to explain the consequence if they join forces. In youth, the mind becomes agitated despite being purified by the ‘waters’ of the sacred texts. Only people like you are eligible for counsel. Like moon-rays permeating a blemishless crystal, these words of advice can only percolate an unsullied mind. Those who do not possess the virtues lauded by elders cannot benefit from learning or noble birth. The advice of a preceptor is like a waterless bath that washes away all impurities of the mind. It is an ageless elderliness, without the grizzly hair and other signs of old age. This advice is even more imperative for kings. But there are few in this world who can advise them. Even learned people merely echo the words of the kings, whatever they are. Even if someone is bold enough to offer them guidance, the tumour of unbridled pride that completely blocks their ears prevents the wise words from entering them.

Never underestimate the arrogance that wealth can engender. It never stays with one person but keeps moving about hither and thither. It considers a noble philanthropist worthless. Nor does it cast its glance upon the lofty-minded, as though deeming them inauspicious. Like a flame that emits more soot as it burns higher, the more this fickle wealth shines, the more corrupt are its effects. It is the song of the hunters to lure away the deer in the form of the five senses; it is a bed for the colossal serpents of wickedness. Scorched by the heat of affluence, the rich lords leap and struggle. Declaring gambling as a great pastime, wine as a celebration of happiness and disobeying the words of the elders as a sign of complete independence, these people swagger around, claiming evil actions as good and wrecking the world.

As if these were not enough, when such barons are beset by utterly selfish people professing friendship – like vultures swooping on meat – their ensuing decimation is guaranteed. Hailed as Indra and Parameśvara by such ‘friends’, who gather in the royal assembly like cunning cranes surrounding a lotus, these affluent individuals are taken in by their words and start pretending to be noble. They believe that merely granting an audience is a blessing conferred (upon others) and voicing their command is a boon granted. They listen only to one who pays obeisance to them day and night, extols them as deity and attributes non-existent virtues to them. They shower only him with wealth and ultimately end up disillusioned.

Finally, what I say is this – during a king’s reign, many forms of such troubles visit him of their own accord. You are at the youthful age, which baffles and overpowers even the wise. You should strive to conduct yourself in such a way that you are not deceived by

knaves or entrapped by sensual pleasure or scorned by the people or censured by elders, but in a manner that the world hails you as a great emperor. You are, by yourself, steadfast. Due to your father's great efforts, you have been trained as well. My delight on seeing your virtues impelled me to say these. May you be installed as the prince-regent with all auspiciousness, and ably rule this kingdom that has been in your family for a long time! Even though your father had already won over the entire world, you should also, after coronation, go on a victory tour around the earth". Listening to Śukanāsa's advice, Candrāpīḍa felt his perception broaden and his mind clear. After conveying his happiness to the minister, he took leave of the latter and returned to the palace.

Within a few days, the accession ceremony of Candrāpīḍa was conducted on a propitious day with much grandeur. The consecration hall was packed with thousands of kings, Brāhmaṇas and elders. With overflowing happiness, Tārāpīḍa, along with Śukanāsa, anointed Candrāpīḍa with the sacred waters collected, for that purpose, in gold pots from many rivers and oceans, while many people sang religious songs and the priests chanted Vedic incantations. Then Vilāsavatī arrived with the ladies of the gynaeceum and completed the *nīrāñcaṇam* and other auspicious rituals. Then, with his father himself holding a staff and performing the duty of clearing a path for him (a task normally done by the chamberlains), Candrāpīḍa entered the assembly hall, amidst the sounds of the various musical instruments, and occupied a high golden throne, appearing like a full moon atop a mountain-peak. All those present were overjoyed by this spectacle. The kings offered innumerable priceless treasures to the prince. Tārāpīḍa too generously gave away gold, land and cows as gifts. The emperor and others happily accepted the honours bestowed on them.

Even as the prince was seated on the throne, his impending victory tour was announced with majestic drum rolls. Candrāpīḍa immediately arose from his throne. Hailing him, everyone chorused, "Victory, victory". Vilāsavatī completed the auspicious rituals for his journey. After paying homage to his parents, Śukanāsa and other elders and receiving their blessings, he mounted Indrāyudha, which was adorned with gems and gold ornaments, and emerged from the palace, followed by several kings. Preceding him was Patralekhā, seated on the fully bedecked royal elephant. Thousands of soldiers on foot, horses and elephants, armed with various war-weapons, marched stridently in formation before and after them. In this manner, the prince embarked on his victory journey and first headed eastward.

Similarly, Vaiśampāyana too underwent the auspicious rituals before emerging from his mansion and mounting a swift-footed elephant. Shaded by a white umbrella and accompanied by kings and a large army, he looked like a second prince as he joined Candrāpīḍa. Upon seeing the battalions of armies, which moved like an ocean that had overrun its shores, Vaiśampāyana was somewhat taken aback. Candrāpīḍa then reached the camp a little further away, on the bank of the Śīprā River, where rows and rows of tents, festooned in multi-

coloured trimmings and crowned by beautiful flags, had been set up for him and his retinues. After dismounting, he entered a large canvas-cabin and spent some time chatting pleasantly with Vaiśampāyana and the princes, thereby forgetting, to some extent, the sadness of leaving his parents. After some time, night fell. He spent a mostly sleepless night, conversing with Vaiśampāyana and Patralekhā, who were lying on his either side.

He woke up early morning, completed his ablutions and, with bugles sounding, began his victory tour. Travelling in all directions and to all regions, he invaded and conquered his enemies, adding their armies to his own forces. He tore down forests and levelled uneven land. He built lakes and ponds at several places. He defeated the wicked and made them bow to him. He lovingly welcomed those who sought refuge. He acquired rare treasures in plenty. He collected tribute-money. He enacted proper laws in all the countries. He built monuments at many locations to commemorate his visit. He inscribed great decrees. He enhanced the mutual affection and harmony of all the people in the world. He caused his valour and fame to be spread everywhere. Accomplishing these tasks, he sequentially conquered the eastern region first, then the south, then the west and finally the north in circumambulation. In three years, this great warrior circled the earth and captured all the continents before victoriously completing his tour. Thereafter, he reached a beautiful place called ‘Suvarṇapuram’, which was situated close to the eastern shore. It was the abode of hunters called ‘Hemajaṭas’, who used to roam the nearby Mount Kailāsa. He stayed there peacefully for a few days so that his entire army, exhausted after roaming the earth, could take rest.

Sixth Sarga

While spending his days relaxing at Suvarṇapuram, Candrāpīḍa once mounted Indrāyudha and went on a hunt. As he was roaming in the jungle, he chanced to see a Kinnara couple descend from the mountain slope and eagerly advanced to capture these unusual creatures. The Kinnaras, not having seen humans, took fright on seeing him and began to run. Spurring Indrāyudha into a gallop, Candrāpīḍa left his army behind and went very far in pursuit of the Kinnara couple. As the horse could gallop extremely fast, Candrāpīḍa crossed fifteen *yojanas* (around 120 miles) in a short time. Even as he looked, the Kinnaras quickly ascended a hill that rose in front and vanished from his sight.

Only then did he turn to look at the path he had traversed. Since the area abounded with hills and huge rocks, he could not go further. He therefore reined in his horse and came to a stop. He then observed Indrāyudha and himself. Its body covered with sweat, the horse was extremely exhausted. Dispirited, he thought thus: “Why did I tire myself like this in vain like a small boy? What will I gain by capturing those horse-faced individuals? And what have I lost by not doing so? Alas! What foolishness! How could I impulsively and indiscriminately act thus? Abandoning my royal duties and thoughtlessly deserting my armies, I have travelled

this far like a man possessed! This Indrāyudha too covered a great distance in a trice. Due to the extreme speed of the steed, combined with the fact that my focus was solely on the Kinnara couple even while riding the horse and that the thick creepers and trees along the route had strewn the entire path with dried leaves, I am unable to find a way out of this dense jungle. Even if I wish to ask someone the direction to Suvarṇapuram, I do not see even one person here, despite searching assiduously”.

He further pondered, “I have heard Suvarṇapuram mentioned as the northernmost border of the earth’s landmass and that, beyond it, is an uninhabited forest and still further is the Kailāsa Mountain. This, then, is Kailāsa. So I should now carefully retrace my steps, keeping the southern direction as goal. After all, I should experience the consequences of my own sins”. Reflecting thus, he pulled at the reins with his left hand and made the horse turn around. By then, it was noon and the heat was fierce. He decided to water his horse at some brook and let it graze, while he too could quench his thirst and rest awhile before returning. As he was going in search of water, he noticed a very extensive, luxuriant and magnificent grove, resembling a billow of dark clouds, situated to the north-east of the Kailāsa Mountain. Proceeding towards it, he felt a mild breeze, heavy with cool water-droplets and the fragrance of Lotuses, blow upon him, making him conclude that a creek should be close by. He entered the grove, intending to find relief from the heat of the day and to enjoy seeing the cool region.

In the middle of the grove, he saw an enchanting lake by name ‘Acchodam’. Even though it was a Lotus-pond, it was as boundless as the ocean. It appeared as though the Himālaya Mountain itself had melted and transformed into this pond. Revived by the sight of it, he thought thus: “O, I deplored that my pursuit of the Kinnaras was in vain; however, having seen this lake, my troubles have been rewarded. I have beheld the greatest limit of scenic beauty. It feels as though this lake is welcoming me with the sweet words of the noisy swans, which are intoxicated by the honey from the innumerable Lotuses”. With these thoughts, he dismounted from his horse at a sandy and pleasant patch in the southern part of the shore.

After he removed the bridle from Indrāyudha, the animal rolled on the ground, browsed on the fresh grass and drank the cool water from the lake. Thereafter, he gave it a refreshing bath and secured it beneath a tree with a long gold chain, before using his sword to cut down the long blades of grass growing there and offering it lovingly to the steed. Then he too had a dip, offered salutations to the Sun-god, munched on tender stems and roots of the Lotus, drank some water and came ashore. Choosing an area that was thick with creepers, he spread some lotus-leaves upon a rock to serve as a bed, placed his folded upper garment on it as a pillow and lay down for a short rest. At that moment, he saw that Indrāyudha, its food untouched, was standing motionless, its neck stretched, face uplifted and ears pricked, listening to some melodious music wafting from the north. Upon hearing the beautiful notes, accompanied by the sound of a lute, he too was filled with amazement.

Keen to know the source of the music, he got up eagerly, mounted Indrāyudha and, taking the forest path on the western shore of the lake, proceeded in the direction from which the music emanated. After a short distance, the region was full of woodlands containing fruit-trees, shrubs covered with scented flowers and arbours that provided cool shade. In a corner of the western shore, belonging to the Kailāsa Mountain Range, is a place named ‘Candraprabhā’, which is as brilliant as the moon. There he saw an isolated and immensely enchanting Śiva temple, free from human movements. He got down from the horse and slowly entered the temple. Inside was a luminous tetrastyle, whose pillars were made of quartz crystals. In the centre, installed on a gem-encrusted pedestal, he beheld a four-faced idol of Lord Śiva.

In front of the south-facing visage of the Lord, a divine lady was seated in a half-Lotus posture, observing the vow of worshipping him and fervently singing his praise while strumming on a lute placed on her lap. Her body was pristinely white, as though carved out of ivory. She was the very quintessence of that colour. She appeared to be an embodiment of the *Vedas* who had retired to the forest in great frustration upon seeing the forces of Kaliyuga destroy all aspects of righteousness, much revered by noble people. She was wearing a crest-jewel with Lord Śiva’s name and the image of his feet engraved in gems. Being divine in nature, it was impossible to guess her age, though she seemed to be eighteen.

After tethering Indrāyudha to a nearby branch, he went a little closer, bowed deeply to Lord Śiva in obeisance and once again gazed intently at the celestial lady. He mused, “O! Amazing events are occurring unexpectedly! It was by chance that I espied the two Kinnaras while hunting. As I was pursuing them, I came across this beautiful grove and other places, unseen by humans. Then, my search for water led me to this pond that delights ascetics. When I was quenching my thirst, I happened to hear music. Trying to locate its source, I reached this temple and beheld this ethereal lady in the porch. I have no doubt that she is divine. How can such stunning beauty and these dulcet tones be found in this mortal world? She may vanish suddenly; before that happens, I should know her history”. Deciding thus, he sat near a pillar in the hall and waited for her song to end.

Soon after, having finished her paeon, the lady got up, circumambulated and paid her homage to Lord Candramauli (Lord Śiva, wearing a crescent moon on his head) and then saw the prince who was seated a little further away. She immediately exclaimed, “O! I am indeed fortunate. Welcome! You seem to be of a noble birth; you have somehow come so far! Please be kind enough to accept my hospitality”. Considering himself honoured by her request, the prince arose, bowed to her and replied, “Lady! As you command” before following her like a disciple. After walking a hundred feet or so, he saw a wide cave there. Cooled by the thickly grown medicinal trees and mountainous cascades, the place was very appealing. Pitchers made of crystal were kept on one side of the cave, while an alms bowl, made of shell, occupied the other side and a gourd of ashes was seen elsewhere. At her bidding, he sat on a

rock at the entrance of the cave. After placing her lute in a corner, she brought water from the mountain-falls to wash his feet, which he received with humility.

Later, the lady sat on another rock and gently asked Candrāpīḍa about himself. He narrated all the events that led him there – right from his embarking on the victory-tour to his pursuing the Kinnara couple and reaching that place. She then got up, took her alms bowl and strolled here and there under the trees of the hermitage. Within a short time, the bowl was filled with sweet fruits that fell of their own accord. Offering them to Candrāpīḍa, she requested him to accept them. Filled with amazement, he thought, “O! This, indeed, is the power of penance! Is there any better miracle than this? These trees of the jungle, though inanimate, express their love by supplying fruits”. He fetched Indrāyudha and secured it in shade, had a bath in the falls and consumed the fruits. After completing his meal with a sip of pure water from the cascade, he sat on the rock. The lady too partook of the fruits and tubers, drank some water and settled down on the other rock.

Seventh *Sarga*

Later, Candrāpīḍa paused for a while in thought and respectfully enquired of her, “Dear lady! You have been exceedingly kind towards me; this kindness has stirred my curiosity, a natural trait of humans; hence I ask: If you are not too tired, I beseech you to recount your history. Which celestial group was honoured by your birth? Why did you take up this vow at such a young age? What is the reason for residing in this uninhabited, vast jungle? How did you acquire such a hitherto unseen radiance, like that of the moon? I implore you to answer me”. On hearing his questions, she fell into a reverie and then let out a heavy sigh. A few moments later, tears welled up in her eyes. On seeing this, Candrāpīḍa sadly reflected, “Ah! No one is exempt from sorrow. Noble souls like her would not grieve uncontrollably over petty matters. By reminding her of her forgotten sadness, I have rekindled it”. Controlling her deep distress, she wiped her face with the edge of her bark-garment, took a deep breath and spoke thus:

“Prince! I am an unlucky and hard-hearted person. You wish to hear my sorrowful tale. So please listen: You may have heard of the famous divine maidens called Apsarasas in the celestial abode. Originating from the Moon-god, nectar, the Wind-god, the Sun-god, Dakṣa Prajāpati, etc., they belonged to fourteen families. Of these maidens, two were born to Dakṣa Prajāpati; one was called ‘Muni’ and the other was ‘Ariṣṭā’. Muni begot sixteen sons, the eldest being Citrasena; the noblest and youngest of them was Citraratha. Even at a young age, he became the king of all Gandharvas. Not far from here, to the north of this country of Bhārata, is the region called Kimpuruṣa wherein lies the mountain ‘Hemakūṭa’. That mountain is the abode of Citraratha. Protected by the strength of his arms (*viz.* his valour), lakhs of Gandharvas have taken up residence in that place. It was he who constructed this

exceptionally exquisite garden, known as ‘Caitraratham’, as well as the pellucid lake named ‘Acchodam’. The idol of Lord Śiva too was installed by him at this place.

Among the six sons born to Ariṣṭā, including Tumburu, Haṁsa was the eldest. Renowned for his intelligence and virility, he was crowned by Citraratha himself as the king of another Gandharva family. He too lives in Hemakūṭa, with several retinues of Gandharvas. These two Gandharva rulers have gained the friendship of Indra and are greatly respected by him. Did I not mention that one of the families of Apsarasas had originated from Candra, the Moon-god? In that family was born a lady called Gaurī, the brilliance of whose form could be likened to that of the moon. Haṁsa married her and she became the leader of his harem. To that noble couple, I was born as the lone daughter, only to experience sorrow. As I was born after a long period of childlessness, my birth was seen as superior to that of a son and celebrated by everyone as such. Considering the incomparable glow of my body and the fact that I was born in the lineage of the Moon-god, my father named me ‘Mahāśvetā’. During my prattling childhood, when I was unaware of the joys and sorrows of life, I was passed like a lute from lap to lap of the women, who delighted in dandling me. Over time, like the spring season bearing new shoots and flowers, and the flowers yielding fragrance and honey, I too attained youth and acquired a strikingly beautiful form.

One day during the enchanting spring, which captures the hearts of all beings, I came with my mother to have a bath in this Acchodam Lake. The wind blew softly, gently rocking the tree branches. The trees showered honey-filled and fragrant flowers. Carpeted with those flowers and their pollen-dust, the ground of the Acchodam lakeshore was lovely and soft. Captivated by the scenic beauty of the cool woods on the shore, I wandered for a while with my companions. At a particular spot, I detected an exquisite fragrance, hitherto unknown to me, which surpassed the perfume of all other flowers.

As I walked a little further, desiring to know the origin of this unusual fragrance, I espied a youthful ascetic coming to the lake to bathe. His form was bewitching like that of Manmatha before the latter was touched by the fire from the forehead of the Three-eyed God. He wore three lines of ashes on his forehead, a sacred thread on his shoulder and a girdle made of Muñja grass (*Saccharum Munja*) around his waist. He had a pitcher in one hand and a crystal rosary in the other. He could be described as an ornament to the vow of celibacy. A delicate spray of flowers, like the constellation Kṛttikā, adorned his ear. I knew then that it was that bunch whose aroma had eclipsed the scents of all the other blossoms.

My mind, enamoured by the fragrance of that rare flower, was involuntarily smitten, several times over, by his matchless beauty. I stood rooted in wonderment, gazing at him with unblinking eyes. The state of my mind was such that I was unwilling to discern his virtues or otherwise, but was completely mesmerised by his comeliness alone. Despite attempting to

move away from there, I was unable to do so. I lost the ability to control my senses. Thinking that it is rude not to pay homage to ascetics, I neared him, as though propelled by someone, and bowed my head, causing my gem-encrusted earrings to sway. What else can I say? Youth is the abode of indiscretions. Catching sight of me as I bowed down, the ascetic too fell into Manmatha's clutches and became flustered. The agency of Destiny is inevitable. Recognising the signs of his obvious confusion, I decided that this was the right time and made bold to ask him about his origins. Another young ascetic, equal to him in age and lustre, was following him, collecting flowers. I prostrated to him too and humbly enquired, "Sir! Who may this youthful ascetic be? Whose son is he? What is the reason for coming here? To what tree does this bunch of flowers belong?"

Hearing this, he smiled and replied thus: "Lady! If you are so keen to know the story, listen to me. You may know of the illustrious sage Śvetaketu, who is revered by the gods and the demons in the celestial world. He is an exceptionally handsome man. One day, he entered the river Ganga to pluck Lotuses for worshipping God. Goddess Mahālakṣmī, seated eternally on a thousand-petalled Lotus there, beheld his unmatched beauty with astonishment and fell in love with him. Immediately, a lovely baby issued forth from her. She promptly brought the infant to the sage and said, "Sir! He is your son; please accept him". Perceiving the facts through his divine vision, the sage took the newborn and brought him up, naming him 'Puṇḍarīka', as he was born on a white Lotus. When he grew out of childhood, his father performed all religious rites and imparted knowledge to him as well. This is that Puṇḍarīka. Now I will tell you about this spray of flowers. Today being the fourteenth day, both of us came from the celestial world to offer worship to the Consort of Pārvatī at Kailāsa and were traversing the flower-garden. At that time, the guardian deity of the garden appeared, saluted and followed Puṇḍarīka, offering him this cluster of flowers from the Pārijāta tree and requesting him to wear it on his ear, stating that, by this act, she would consider the flower as having achieved its purpose. Even though wearing flowers is inappropriate while observing the vow of celibacy, I made him wear it on his ear, explaining that refusing the deity's request would be improper. This is the story of this flower-bunch".

As he spoke thus, the (first) young ascetic (Puṇḍarīka) looked at me with a half-smile and said, "Why do you ask so many questions? If this pleases you so much, you may wear it". With these words, he came close, removed the flower-sprig and placed it on my ear. As his fingers touched my cheek, they became weak and tremulous. His bashfulness as well as the rosary from his fingers slipped away at the same time; he did not even realise that. Even before the rosary fell on the ground, I caught it and playfully wore it around my neck.

In the midst of this, my umbrella-bearer came there to inform me that my mother had finished her bath and requested that I too should have mine as we have to return to our abode. Though I did not have the heart to leave that place, I went for my bath in deference to my mother's

orders. At that moment, Puṇḍarīka’s friend, seeing him falter, said thus: “Puṇḍarīka! This is unbecoming of you. You have suddenly and completely lost your composure. What is this distraction? You have not even realised that the rosary had slipped away from your hand and that the maiden has appropriated it! Please prevent her from stealing your heart as well”. He (Puṇḍarīka) replied, “Friend! Kapiñjala! Why have you misunderstood me?” Then, turning towards me with feigned anger, he said, “Lady! I will not allow you to take even one step from here without returning my rosary”. With a coy laugh, I removed my pearl necklace and gave it to him saying, “Here is your rosary”. With his glance riveted on my face, he extended his hand unconsciously and accepted it.

As my companions were watching these incidents, I was filled with shyness and went for my bath as though compelled by somebody. Later, with my mind rushing back to the young ascetic, I returned numbly with my mother to my residence. Citing some illness, I dismissed my friends and, with my mind totally infatuated, entered a room and fell on a bed, unaware that I had even reached home.

After a short while, my friend Taraḷikā, who had accompanied me to the lake, came into the room. Seeing me thus, she said, “My lady! I have some news. The ascetic who had placed the Pārijāta flower on your ear followed me, unbeknownst to his friend, and asked me about you. I disclosed your name, your nobility, residence, etc. to him. Thinking deeply, he asked me, “Lady! You appear to be sincere. Will you grant me a favour?” I replied, “My Lord! Your bidding is a blessing for me. I will dutifully execute your order. Please state it”. Immediately, he tore a piece from his bark-garment, wrote a letter on it with some leaf-juice and asked me to give it to you in private, unknown to others. Here is the letter”. So saying, she took out the letter from the betel-box and handed it to me. On it was written the following lines:

“Just as a swan of the Mānasa Lake is led far away by the white lotus-fibre in its excited search for food, my restless mind is lured to you, enticed by your string of pearls, in the hope of seeing you.”

Like a river churned by floods, my mind was thrown into complete turmoil by this letter. I eagerly read it several times and spent the whole day talking to her about the ascetic.

Eighth Sarga

Eventually, it was nearing dusk, with the orb of the sun dipping in the western horizon. The umbrella-bearer who had come to the lakeshore appeared and said, “Lady! One of the two ascetics seen there is standing at the doorstep. He says that he has come for the rosary beads”. Hearing the words ‘young ascetic’, I immediately concluded that it must be him and had him escorted inside. Within a short time, he reached my room. I then saw that he was the second

ascetic. He appeared anxious and tired. As soon as he entered, I saluted him and respectfully offered him water. He occupied a chair while I sat on the floor. Desiring to tell me something, he looked at Taraḷikā who was standing beside me. Knowing his thoughts, I said, “She is not separate from me. You may speak without hesitation”.

Seemingly embarrassed, he began his narration: “I am Kapiñjala, the friend of Puṇḍarīka, with whom I have played and moved since childhood. What can I say? Shame renders me tongue-tied. Whither the serene life of an ascetic, who lives on the fruits and roots of the forest? And whither this world, deeply enthralled by sensual pleasures? What should I do? I have undertaken this odious errand only to save my friend’s life. On seeing his conduct, did I not reprimand him in your presence? After your departure, I hid myself and watched his actions. Within a short while, I lost sight of him. Fearing that he may endanger his life due to guilt and despair, I searched for him all over the place. I was aghast to find him on the shore of the lake, stretched out senseless on a rock-slab in a thicket that abounded in a variety of enchanting flowers and looked as though it was the birthplace of spring. His face was pallid like the moon at dawn. I thought to myself, “How could such a transformation occur in one who was an epitome of good conduct from childhood? Alas! This is a jolt!” and went and sat near him. Despite knowing all the reasons for his plight, I decided that I was duty-bound to rescue an erring friend and bring him back to the right path and so spoke as follows:

“Friend! Puṇḍarīka! What is this? Did the preceptors teach this course to you? Or is it the result of having studied several texts on ethics? Or is this a new method of meditation? How can you even think of this vile path? Unable to control your senses and mind, have you not let them run amok? Compose your mind, remember the lofty principles of asceticism and take courage, O Puṇḍarīka”. Thus I advised him in many ways. Looking at me with bloodshot eyes that resembled the Red-lotus, he heaved a hot sigh and said, “O Friend! Having seen everything, do you need explanation? It is easy to advise others. I have long since lost the ability to act sensibly in this matter. What can I do? My mind and body are burning as though trapped in a raging fire. It is enough if you can provide any help to release me from this misery”. With these words, he fell silent. Realising that counselling is useless now, I started taking the steps necessary to sustain his life. I spread tender Lotus-leaves and made him lie on it. I applied sandal-paste all over his body. I fanned him with plantain leaves to reduce sweating. My mind was filled with numerous thoughts: “Where is the ascetic who resides in the jungle, performing severe austerities? Where are the ladies like Mahāśvetā who live in palaces, enjoying all pleasures? What an unpleasant development! If God wills, he can unite the natural with the artificial. He can combine light and darkness. Why do I have such unnecessary thoughts? Elders have said that it is one’s duty to use any means, proper or improper, to save the life of a friend who is in danger. I do not have any option. I will go to Mahāśvetā and plead with her”. With this decision, I rushed here without his knowledge. It is

up to you to do whatever is right in this dire situation, respond suitably to such love, make my visit fruitful and act as you deem fit". Having said this, he stood looking at me for a reply.

When I heard this, I was immersed in a great ocean of boundless joy, feeling that my wish had been fulfilled. My thoughts ran thus: "If Puṇḍarīka is really in that state, is there any help that God has not done for me? What reply should I give to Kapiñjala?" Even as I was deliberating, the gatekeeper suddenly entered and said that my mother, having been informed that I was unwell, had announced that she was coming to see me. Kapiñjala, on hearing this and feeling that the place might become crowded, got up immediately and said, "O Princess! Much time has passed. It is almost twilight. I will take leave. I beseech you with folded hands to save my friend". Saying these words, he left. Preoccupied with Kapiñjala's description of Puṇḍarīka's state, I was completely unaware of my mother's arrival, her words or her return.

By then, night had descended and darkness enveloped the world, as it did my mind. Within a short while, the moon rose, flooding the place with light and coolness though, strangely, it filled my mind with only darkness and fieriness! Extremely confused, I asked Taraḷikā, "You can see that I am very distressed. And you also heard Kapiñjala's words. You must tell me what I should do now. Should I, like other women, cast away my shame, ignore the disgrace and desert my modesty and offer to marry him without my parents' permission? Will I not be committing the great sin of disregarding the elders? Or else, if I end my life out of a sense of duty, I will be betraying Kapiñjala, who honoured me by coming here of his own accord and who has placed his trust in me. Besides, if Puṇḍarīka, being disappointed in me, endangers his life, I would be the main cause for the death of an ascetic, which is a grievous iniquity. What shall I do?" Even as I was talking, I fell into a swoon.

Due to the cold remedies promptly administered by Taraḷikā, I recovered. As I opened my eyes and looked at her, she turned towards me and consolingly replied, "Lady! Do not get flustered. Please be patient. There are several noble women who have married men of their own choice. They were very famous for their blemishlessness. This is not tantamount to disrespecting the parents. Scholars have described this kind of marriage, which is common to Gandharvas, as being fully permitted in the scriptures. So kindly allow me. I will go and fetch your beloved now. Or, please get up. Both of us will go to him" she requested earnestly.

Hearing her encouraging words and deciding it right, I changed into the appropriate attire, covered my head with a red cloth, left with Taraḷikā through the backdoor to avoid being seen by others and headed to the ascetic's location. At that moment, my right eye throbbed. Even as I was hastening, my mind filled with anxiety at this bad omen, there fell on my ears a wail that arose in the jungle, "Ah! My friend! Puṇḍarīka! Abode of great penances! You have rendered the world destitute by your death! Ah, wicked Mahāśvetā! Besides stealing his rosary, you have cruelly taken his life as well! Oh righteousness! You are now orphaned! Oh

heaven! You are now ruined!” These and many more such laments of Kapiñjala pierced my ears. Exclaiming, “Taraḷikā! What could this be?” we both blindly hurried to the place, as though impelled by someone.

O Prince! How do I describe my misfortune! When I reached the lakeshore, I saw the noble Puṇḍarīka, alas, lying lifeless on a bed made of flowers and leaves of the Lotus spread on a slab of moonstone. His appearance unaltered even in death, he seemed to be reclining in frustrated silence, thinking, “As you were inattentive and did not come to see me for a long time, I no longer have anything to do with you”. My mind then sank into the sea of misery; with the veil of darkness descending over my eyes, I collapsed on to the earth. After a long time, I regained consciousness and found myself writhing on the ground, as though fallen into a fire, bereft of thoughts. At that instant, I could not believe that he was dead, while I lived. “Oh! It is because of me that you ended up in this state! Fie upon me! I should be set ablaze! Why should I care about my parents now? How can anyone else help me? O God! Please cast your merciful glances upon me! Will you bless me with a husband?” I continued to wail in this vein, like someone possessed”. As Mahāśvetā recounted her heartrending history, she seemed to relive the events and faltered, losing consciousness and falling on the ground. Candrāpīḍa was acutely mortified, as if he had committed a mistake. Immediately he sprinkled cold water on her face and fanned her with banana leaves, thereby reviving her.

When Mahāśvetā slowly opened her eyes, Candrāpīḍa, his heart filled with sympathy, said, “Lady! Please forgive me for rekindling the memories of your past grief. Enough; I have no courage to hear anymore”. Holding back her profound sorrow, Mahāśvetā then disconsolately continued, “Prince! Since no evil befell me even on that cruel night, I will not come to any harm now. Besides, is there anything more difficult to utter or hear than what I have said until now? Please listen to the miracle that occurred after that calamity. That incident provided a mirage of vain hope, causing me to sustain this odious body that seems alien to me.

After rolling on the ground and wailing near the lifeless person of Puṇḍarīka, I got up and decided to immolate myself with him and so ordered Taraḷikā, who was plunged in deep sorrow and standing bewilderedly, to quickly stack the logs. At that moment, there descended from the moon a celestial being, the effulgence of whose form was brighter than the moon and illuminated all the shores around the lake. With his muscular arms that were as cool as snow, he lifted the body of Puṇḍarīka, rose to the sky and announced in a resonant voice, “O lady! Mahāśvetā! Please abandon your intention to die. You will unite with him again”. After these kind words, which were uttered with fatherly affection, he flew into the sky. Fearful and surprised, I asked Kapiñjala, “What is this?” Kapiñjala got up swiftly and, without replying to my question, wrathfully shouted, “Who are you? Are you taking away my friend?” Then, girding his loins with his upper garment, he rose into the sky in pursuit of the celestial being. Even as I looked on in amazement, all of them flew upwards towards the moon and vanished.

With the disappearance of Kapiñjala too, I was distraught being left alone on the lakeshore with Taraḷikā. I enquired of her, “What is this strange incident?” Poor Taraḷikā, trembling and afraid that I would die, said reassuringly, “Lady! This is the biggest of all miracles. When the celestial being was heading back, he earnestly comforted you. All these have happened right before our eyes. Will the divine being’s words go in vain? Moreover, Kapiñjala has followed the being into the sky. As soon as he returns, we will know the history of the celestial being, the reason he took away Puṇḍarīka’s body, the implication of his words and everything. Hence it is unwise to harm yourself until he returns”. No one can escape the desire to live; so, finding her words judicious, I did not end my life. I spent the pitch-dark night on this ground, in Taraḷikā’s company. Waking up next morning, I bathed in this lake and decided to adopt the state I am in now. Hearing this, my parents and others arrived here and spent some time grieving with me. Though they insisted that I return to the palace, I refused. I felt it distasteful to live in a mansion without my beloved. So my parents went back to their abode, unable to change my decision. Then, out of love for the ascetic, I took his pitcher for water, his garments to wear and his rosary to adorn my neck. Embracing the vow of celibacy, I have been having a dip in this pond thrice a day, surviving on roots and fruits found in the jungle, worshipping Lord Śiva and living a dismal life in this cave with Taraḷikā. This is my story, the narrative of a great sinner who has killed a Brāhmaṇa”. With these words, Mahāśvetā sighed deeply, her bloodshot eyes brimming with tears and her lips trembling.

Even from the beginning, Candrāpīḍa nurtured great reverence towards Mahāśvetā due to her austerities and other qualities. After listening to her life-story, his respect for her increased manifold. He consoled her deferentially and said, “Lady! It is only those who fear pain, seek pleasures and are incapable of showing gratitude for love that pretend to be affectionate by shedding tears in vain. You have amply demonstrated your love through your action; you forsook your parents and those relatives who know you from birth. Despite having enough wealth to enjoy even celestial delights, you gave up all sensual pleasures. You had the strength to take up such austerities even while young. You agreed to a life in the forest, which is difficult for women. So should people like you weep? Besides, it is my opinion that those who are engulfed by sorrow give up their lives easily. Strong persons, though, put in great effort to sustain life when subject to intense grief. Even otherwise, the practice of following another in death is extremely cruel; it is also useless. It is a desperate act of reckless people. It is a vicious deed denounced by the learned. When life does not go on its own, there is nothing more foolish than forcibly ending it. A careful review shows that taking one’s own life is a selfish act of a person who is unable to find other ways to alleviate unbearable suffering. It bestows no merit on the dead. It is not a means to meet those who have left for the other world, or to revive the dead, or to reach heaven. The soul is inexorably taken to other planes of action based on its past deeds. The great sin of killing oneself is a burden on the soul. When alive, one can offer homage and oblations with water, thereby helping the self as well as the dead. One who commits suicide end up being useless to both.

Let us now come to the current situation. Why should you doubt if Puṇḍarīka will come back to life? You directly heard the celestial being's words that you will be reunited with him. If you analyse carefully, apart from restoring him to life, what other reason could there be for the divine person to take away Puṇḍarīka's lifeless body? We have read and heard of several such incidents. Yes – long ago, when a maiden Pramadvārā, born to the Gandharva, Viśvāvasu, through (the celestial dancer) Menakā, was killed by the bite of a cobra in the hermitage of Sage Sthūlakeśa, the sage's son, Ruru, revived her by giving her half of his life-span. In Ujjayinī, did not Śrī Kṛṣṇa bring back the dead son of Sāndīpini, the Brāhmaṇa, from Yama and make him come to life again? In the same way, you will also delight in beholding Puṇḍarīka once again. Besides, whatever be the case, is there anything we can do? Is not the omnipotent Destiny superior? We cannot even breathe of our own volition. Therefore there is absolutely no reason to hate yourself". With these words of wisdom, Candrāpīḍa soothed and calmed Mahāśvetā.

Then, since it was dusk, Mahāśvetā slowly got up, had a bath, completed the rites prescribed for that period, came back and seated herself on a bed made of tree-barks. Candrāpīḍa too paid his homage to the setting sun, spread some tender leaves to serve as a bed on the same rock he had sat on earlier and settled down opposite her. After thinking for a while, he asked her, "Lady! Now where is your constant companion Taraḷikā who agreed to live in the jungle, accepting all difficulties?" To this, Mahāśvetā replied as follows: "This poor friend will not leave me and go elsewhere. I will explain where she is. Please listen.

I had mentioned earlier that Citraratha, the king of Gandharvas, resides in Hemakūṭa. His wife is the noble Madirā, belonging to the family of celestial maidens who originated from nectar. They have a youthful daughter called Kādambarī, who surpasses Goddess Śrīdevī in beauty. She is my childhood friend, fit to be described as my alter-ego. We learnt music and other arts together. Learning of my tragedy, she vowed in the presence of several of her friends and relatives, "Until Mahāśvetā is united with her beloved and free from sorrow, I will not wed". Even the heartfelt pleas of her parents and others could not change her mind. She too is the only child of her parents. The closer she was to marriageable age, the more worried her parents became. Today morning, Citraratha sent me a message through a palace attendant called Kṣīroda, which said, "Mahāśvetā! While on the one hand we are distressed about your state, your friend's obstinacy torments us on the other. Now it is up to you alone to bring her on to the right path". I immediately sent Taraḷikā with the reply, "My sorrow is different and endless; it is not fair to harass me with your pointless adamancy. If you want me to live, you should abide by your parents' wishes without demur". She has gone with Kṣīroda to Hemakūṭa to convey my message. Within a short time of Taraḷikā's departure, I was fortunate to meet you here," she concluded.

Ninth Sarga

By this time, the moon also appeared. Mahāśvetā eventually went to sleep. Candrāpīḍa too reclined on the leaf-bed. Only then did he start worrying about his army. With these thoughts, he too fell asleep. Thus Candrāpīḍa spent a day in Mahāśvetā's hermitage. The next day, Mahāśvetā woke up, finished her bath and other activities and sat on one side on a Darbha mat, chanting the *Aghamarṣaṇa-mantra* (this is said to remove one's sins and bestow knowledge). Candrāpīḍa too performed all the rituals prescribed for the morning and came and sat there. At that time, Taraḷikā returned, bringing with her a handsome Gandharva youth. The young man would have been sixteen years old. Surprised at seeing the exquisite form of Candrāpīḍa, both of them paid their obeisance to Mahāśvetā and sat in their respective places.

After Mahāśvetā completed her meditation, she asked Taraḷikā, "Is Kādambarī doing well? Did she agree to do as I said?" Her head respectfully inclined, Taraḷikā replied, "Kādambarī is fine. I gave her your message in full. Her tearful reply will be given by Keyūraḅa, who was sent by her". Keyūraḅa then said thus: "This is the message of Kādambarīdevī: "Was your message through Taraḷikā intended to test my mind? Or was it to accuse me of living in a palace? Despite knowing the unbreakable and increasing affection that we cherish for each other since birth and despite possessing a naturally sweet disposition, how could you send such a cruel message? When my childhood friend is in sorrow, suffering an arduous life and engaged in severe austerities, is it right to tell me to get married? You left for the forest with my soul. In future, do not even dream of saying such things". This is Kādambarī's reply". When Mahāśvetā heard this, she thought for a while and then dismissed Keyūraḅa saying, "Keyūraḅa! I will come there in person and do whatever is necessary for her".

Mahāśvetā then turned to Candrāpīḍa and said, "Prince! After meeting you, my long-standing grief has abated. Your appearance and qualities, which gladden the noble-minded, embolden me to ask you for anything. Hemakūṭa is very picturesque. The capital city of Citraratha too is fascinating. The Gandharvas are very good-looking. Kādambarī is also extremely noble and guileless. Your arrival will help in removing her recklessness; if no important business is hindered and if you are keen to enjoy hitherto unseen sights, please accede to my request and accompany me to Hemakūṭa. Kādambarī will be honoured to meet you and you can come back tomorrow". Replying, "So be it. I am entirely at your service" and holding Indrāyudha's bridle in his hand, Candrāpīḍa set out on foot to Hemakūṭa with Mahāśvetā. After a short distance, he reached the Gandharva king's capital city, as dazzling as Amarāvātī (the capital of the celestial world). After entering through a towering arch made of quartz crystal, he crossed the seven courtyards and reached the ladies' chambers. As soon as the servitors saw Mahāśvetā at the entrance, they bowed to her and then escorted the pair inside.

To Candrāpīḍa, the gynaeceum seemed to be an abode of exceedingly beautiful ladies. Situated in the midst of a lush garden, it contained an assembly hall, called ‘Śrīmaṇḍapa’, which had pillars of gems and canopies of pearls. In that hall, he beheld Kādambarī, seated on a blue silk cushion placed on a gem-inlaid couch, her form effulgent like the moon’s rays. She was surrounded and waited on by hundreds of bejewelled and comely maidens. Seeing her beauty, which was unlike anything he had seen before, he marvelled, “The Creator who designs these beauties seems to have an endless warehouse”. Keyūraka, who preceded them, was seated close by, saying something to a very attentive Kādambarī, amazement writ large on his face; Candrāpīḍa inferred that this discussion must be about Keyūraka’s meeting with him at Mahāśvetā’s hermitage. The glow of Kādambarī’s moonlike beauty enthralled the ocean of Candrāpīḍa’s heart, vigorously churning it. Kādambarī too was astounded by the extraordinary majesty and beauty of Candrāpīḍa.

Seeing Mahāśvetā approach, Kādambarī hurriedly rose and welcomed her. As they had not met for a long time, they embraced each other affectionately. Mahāśvetā then turned towards her and said, “Kādambarī! There is a very famous emperor named Tārāpīḍa in the country of Bhārata. This noble man is his son and heir-apparent, Candrāpīḍa. After conquering the whole world with the strength of his arms, which are as powerful as stone pillars, he arrived at my hermitage accidentally, due to my good fortune. He is eminently learned and possesses excellent qualities and vast wealth. His very existence renders the mortal world superior to the celestial world. Desiring that, like me, you too should be acquainted with this great soul who is a repository not only of virtues but also of beauty, I invited him here. I have also spoken to him adequately about you. Hence treat him not as a stranger, but as a very dear friend and the most important relative”. After these words of introduction, Candrāpīḍa and Kādambarī saluted each other.

The attendants promptly brought a golden chair for Candrāpīḍa and he sat on it. Mahāśvetā settled on the couch near Kādambarī. All were silent. Then Kādambarī’s friend Madalekhā, comparable to the former in beauty and age, washed Candrāpīḍa’s feet and feted him. Later, Kādambarī got up to offer Mahāśvetā betel-leaves arranged on a beautiful tray. Upon seeing that, Mahāśvetā asked, “Should we not honour the prince who has newly visited our house? So please proffer this to him”. Upon her insistence, Kādambarī, her head lowered bashfully and tender hands perspiring and trembling, offered the betel-leaf to him, as though she was surrendering herself to him. Candrāpīḍa too was delighted by her touch. Enjoying the sight of Kādambarī’s pet myna, Kālindī, berating and fighting with its husband, a parrot named Parihāsa, Candrāpīḍa spent some pleasant time in conversation with the others.

At that moment, a chamberlain came with the message that King Citraratha and his queen Madirā had summoned Mahāśvetā. Hearing it and desiring to meet them, Mahāśvetā asked Kādambarī, “Where can Candrāpīḍa stay?” With a smile, Kādambarī replied, “Why do you

too ask me this question? Ever since I laid my eyes on him, he has taken over my very being. What can I say about the other things? What can stop him from staying wherever he likes or wherever you deem fit?” After making arrangements for Candrāpīḍa to reside in the jewelled palace on the Pleasure Mountain in the garden near Kādambarī’s apartments, Mahāśvetā left to meet the king of the Gandharvas.

Candrāpīḍa too came out and, amidst the sounds of musical instruments, proceeded to the crystal palace, escorted by Keyūraka and followed by the Gandharva maidens. There he completed his bath and other activities marked for the afternoon. Having enjoyed a repast and other privileges comparable to those served in the celestial world, he was filled with wonder as well as pleasure. He then reclined on a goose-down bed laid on a crystal-slab. Keyūraka and others fanned him, anointed him with scented sandal-paste and ministered to him in many ways. Then, as the sun slowly dipped in the west, Candrāpīḍa climbed the Pleasure Mountain and strolled to his heart’s content in the attached garden, enjoying its splendour. On seeing him there, Kādambarī and Madalekhā went to the terrace of the building and, on the pretext of awaiting Mahāśvetā’s return, delightfully gazed at Candrāpīḍa. Thus Candrāpīḍa and Kādambarī spent some time blissfully drinking in the sight of each other.

Later, Candrāpīḍa sat on an emerald rock at the front of the mountain. Shortly, he espied Madalekhā, accompanied by several ladies and approaching him. A white umbrella was held above her and she was fanned by fly whisks on either side. Keyūraka was walking in front, with two silken garments in his hand. Taraḷikā, walking beside Madalekhā, was holding a tray covered by a white cloth on which rested a lustrous pearl necklace. The brilliance of the necklace was such that it outshone even the brilliance of the moon. When Madalekhā was a short distance away, Candrāpīḍa got up and welcomed her. Madalekhā reached him and sat on a side of the rock. All the others occupied their places on the floor.

Madalekhā then anointed Candrāpīḍa with perfumed sandal, draped the two silk garments and placed a very beautiful Jasmine garland around his shoulders. Then, holding the exquisite pearl necklace in her hand, she said, “Prince! Your incomparable valour and beauty, devoid of pride, has charmed everyone; these admirable qualities induce those whom you love to accomplish anything. Your modesty enthralls us to honour you thus. These offerings may be pleasing to you; or they may be otherwise; what can we do? The very sight of your innately sweet appearance prompts us to act in this manner. Otherwise, will anyone have the courage to approach one who is famous throughout the world and is blessed with wealth and nobility? The services rendered by people like us would only seem improper to someone as regal as you. Besides, you have truly captured our hearts. You came to our dwelling first and granted us an audience, which is not easily obtained. How can we return this favour and make your visit worthwhile? Through this gift, Kādambarī only seeks to display her love, not her riches. Moreover, even becoming a slave to someone like you is a great blessing. Despite offering

herself to you, she will not be deceived. The magnanimity of noble people never rejects the request of their admirers. Deeming your form to be the most eligible for this pearl garland, Kādambarī has wished that it be offered to you. This is one of the treasures that emerged from the Milky Ocean while being churned; being of no use to others, this alone was left with the king of the ocean; so this pearl necklace is named ‘Śeṣahāra’. The king of the ocean offered it to Varuṇa who, in turn, gifted it to the Gandharva king, from whom Kādambarī acquired it. Though your natural good looks and qualities are sufficient to adorn you, the only reason you should wear this is because of Kādambarī’s love. Concluding that Kādambarī is fit for your love, Mahāśvetā has arranged for this necklace to be sent through Taraḷikā. This message is from Mahāśvetā herself: “O fortunate Prince! Please accept this first gesture of Kādambarī’s love””. Saying thus, Madalekhā adorned his chest with the pearl necklace.

Receiving the necklace, the amazed Candrāpīḍa replied, “Madalekhā! What can I say? You are very clever. You know to make me accept the gift. You have shown great oratorical skill by giving me no chance to reply. But I will say one thing. Where do I have the right to accept or reject anything? The time for this kind of talk has ended. I have become an instrument for you, who abound in goodness. You have the right to use me in any way you desire, regardless of whether I find it pleasant or otherwise. The exemplary merits of the noble Kādambarīdevī can enslave anyone”. Later, Madalekhā and others spent some with Candrāpīḍa chatting pleasantly about Kādambarī and then took his leave. Candrāpīḍa, who was seated on that mountain and adorned by the pearl necklace and other ornaments, shone like a moon rising in the east, surrounded by clusters of stars. Kādambarī too was joyfully admiring his exquisite form from the nearby terrace.

As it became dark, Kādambarī came down from the balcony and Candrāpīḍa too descended from the Pleasure Mountain. Finishing her meals distractedly, Kādambarī reclined on the couch and was engrossed in thinking of how her resolve vanished upon seeing him and how her mind was agitated due to love for him. Overcome by shyness caused by these thoughts, she finally went to sleep. Candrāpīḍa too finished his evening rituals and lay down on the bed, recalling the grandeur of the Gandharva world and restlessly pondering if Kādambarī’s engaging appearance and actions related to him alone or if it was a natural trait of all Gandharva ladies. These and such other thoughts prevented him from enjoying a good sleep.

Tenth Sarga

Candrāpīḍa woke up at dawn, finished his bath and morning chores and sent Keyūraka to expeditiously find out Kādambarī’s location. As soon as he returned with the information that Kādambarī and Mahāśvetā were seated on a jewelled platform in the courtyard of the mansion near the Mandara Mountain, Candrāpīḍa set out to meet them. There he saw female ascetics of many faiths surrounding Mahāśvetā and reading from various scriptures. Behind

them sat a Kinnara couple playing on flutes, while Nārada's daughter was melodiously reciting the Mahābhārata, to which Kādambarī was listening.

He approached them, saluted and sat down on a cushion on the same platform. After some time, he looked at Mahāśvetā and tentatively smiled. Immediately guessing his intentions, she turned towards Kādambarī and said, "The prince is captivated by your qualities and is unable to say anything. His army and friends, who have been left behind, will be worried, unaware of his whereabouts. The abiding love you have developed for each other will endure as long as you live, just like the eternal bond that exists between the sun and the lotuses, though separated by a great distance. Now you should not forget one another. Please give him leave to go". To this, Kādambarī replied, "Friend! When I and my retinue are fully in his power, like his soul and body, where is the need for my permission?" She then forthwith summoned the Gandharva princes and directed them to escort Candrāpīḍa to his country.

Candrāpīḍa got up and, after bowing to everyone, looked at Kādambarī and said, "Devī! The world distrusts one who talks too much. So all I ask of you is this: Please remember me when speaking of your servitors". He then left the place. Except Kādambarī, all others followed him until the outer arch and bid him farewell. Candrāpīḍa mounted Indrāyudha and, accompanied by several Gandharva youths, reached Mahāśvetā's hermitage. There he saw that his entire army had reached the banks of the Acchodam Lake. The army had arrived there following the hoof-prints of Indrāyudha. He then sent back the Gandharva princes and dismounted at his tent. On seeing him, everyone in his army was overcome with happiness. He then spent the day in the exclusive company of Vaiśampāyana and Patralekha, recounting the grandeur of Hemakūṭa and the merits of Kādambarī. He was no longer able to derive pleasure in royal glory. Haunted by thoughts about Kādambarī, he spent a sleepless night.

The next morning, when Candrāpīḍa was seated in the assembly tent, he unexpectedly espied Keyūraka entering with the gatekeeper. When Keyūraka, while still afar, deeply bowed to him, Candrāpīḍa lovingly welcomed him and bade him sit. As an offering from Kādambarī, Keyūraka presented Candrāpīḍa with a cup made of Lotus-leaf, covered by a damp cloth and full of large, emerald-like green betel-nuts, light-green betel-leaves, lumps of cool camphor and sandal-paste mixed with musk, etc. Removing from a corner of his upper garment the Śeṣahāra, which he said Candrāpīḍa had forgotten on the couch, he handed it over to the whisk-bearer and said, "O Sire! Mahāśvetā asked me to tell you that your arrival caused great joy to everyone there, that your departure has rendered the entire city dull and inert and that Kādambarī is suffering, tormented by constant memories of your smiling visage. Hence she has requested that you should honour them by visiting them again".

Candrāpīḍa applied the sandal-paste and wore the pearl necklace around his neck with the words, "That I have received the great love of Kādambarī is only as a result of worshipping

Mahāśvetā's feet". Deciding to go to Hemakūṭa, he ordered his horse to be fetched. Parivardhaka, the groom, immediately saddled Indrāyudha and brought it to the entrance. After directing Vaiśampāyana to take charge of his entire army, he mounted Indrāyudha and set off. With Patralekhā riding a white horse alongside him and Keyūraka following him on another horse, he reached Hemakūṭa and alighted at the entrance of the palace.

Entrusting his horse to the gatekeeper, Candrāpīḍa went inside. Patralekhā, who was walking behind him, was also extremely eager to meet Kādambarī for the first time. Learning that Kādambarī was in the winter palace on the bank of the step-well at the base of the Pleasure Mountain, he headed there, led by Keyūraka. As he entered the palace, he felt acutely cold due to the blankets of snow, both inside and outside. In an enclosure made of Lotus-stems and leaves, Kādambarī was reclining forlornly on a flower-bed. Seeing Candrāpīḍa's arrival, she hastily got up from the flower-bed, her eyes brimming with tears of happiness. He neared them and bowed to Mahāśvetā and others, who returned the salutation. They then sat in their respective places. Keyūraka turned to Kādambarī and introduced Patralekhā saying, "Devī! She is Patralekhā, Candrāpīḍa's favourite friend and his betel-box bearer. Patralekhā immediately paid her obeisance to Kādambarī who, surprised by her noble bearing, lovingly said, "Welcome," caressed her back and made her sit close.

After Candrāpīḍa accepted the honours offered to him on arrival, he conversed with Madalekhā and others as befitting the occasion. The gist of the conversation helped Candrāpīḍa and Kādambarī know each other's state of mind. Kādambarī too recovered and appeared happy for some time. Realising that it is not possible to delay any further, Candrāpīḍa took leave of Mahāśvetā and others and came out. As he was mounting his horse, Keyūraka quickly neared him and said, "Madalekhā requests you that Patralekhā be left with Kādambarīdevī for a few days". Candrāpīḍa replied, "It is Patralekhā's good fortune that she has easily gained the favour of Kādambarī" and sent Patralekhā to Kādambarī. He then bestrode his horse and went back to where his army was stationed.

As he was entering his tent on the bank of the Acchodam Lake, an attendant arrived with a letter from his father and handed it to him. Having enquired about the welfare of his parents, he went through the letter. It said that several days had passed since he left on his victory tour and that he should forthwith return to Ujjayinī. He learnt that Vaiśampāyana too had received a similar message. In deference to his father's order, he decided to leave immediately and commanded the drums to announce their departure.

Then, turning to the commander of his army, Meghanāda, the son of Valāhaka – who was the commander of Emperor Tārāpīḍa's army – Candrāpīḍa said, "Keyūraka will escort Patralekhā from Hemakūṭa till here. You should bring her from here to Ujjayinī. Also please convey the message to Kādambarī and others through Keyūraka that, though I return to my country as

per my father's command, my mind yearns to return to Hemakūṭa, and that, if I am alive, I will definitely come to see Kādambārī". Giving the command of the army to Vaiśampāyana and arranging for it to follow later, he took leave of everyone, mounted Indrāyudha and started his journey, accompanied by a small cavalry.

Several soldiers, bearing gleaming spears and riding thoroughbred horses, preceded and followed the prince. On the way, they had to pass through a large forest. It abounded in huge trees, the bases of which contained images of Kālī carved by hunters and others residing in the jungle. The small ditches, which had been dug in the sand by travellers and which had since dried, made the forest floor uneven. From the barking of several dogs and the cackling of poultry, he realised that some settlements existed in the forest. As he proceeded, with the sun setting behind the western hill, he saw a red flag tied atop a towering sandalwood tree in the middle of the forest. A golden trident, with a whisk made of lion's mane, was fixed to the flagpole. A bell, fixed to an iron chain attached to its prongs, pealed loudly and constantly.

He advanced a little towards the flag. There he saw a Kālī temple, located between several Aśoka trees that appeared dark red due to the tender shoots and flocks of red roosters perched on their branches and a grove of Talipot Palm trees that resembled a group of ghouls that had gathered to drink the sacrificial blood. A huge iron image of a buffalo was set on a rock-slab in the front of the temple. With two doors made of the tusks of wild elephants, the doorway was festooned with garlands made of neck-feathers of peacocks and bronze bells with lines of lime drawn on them. With her tongue hanging out, her lips blood-red, her eyes bloodshot and her eyebrows furrowed, the face of Goddess Kālī presented a fearsome sight to the onlookers.

In the temple was an old, cantankerous priest belonging to the Tamil country. He was clad in a black woollen shawl. A network of prominent veins covered his whole body. His face and body were pitted with deep scars of small-pox. His frequent prostrations at Kālīkādevī's feet, due to blind faith, had produced an abscess on his swollen forehead. Attempting to learn alchemy, he had, even before acquiring proficiency, prepared a collyrium which he had applied, resulting in blindness in one eye. His rotten teeth were very long and jutted out. Claiming to be a magician, he had impetuously attempted to exorcise some persons, when a violent slap from one of those possessed individuals had caused his cheek to sink in. His nose was bitten by monkeys when he drove them away for trying to steal the fruits kept for worship. He had a crooked spine as a result of being thrashed by travellers whom he had abused and forcibly prevented from resting in the temple. Playing on a lute made of gourd, shaking his head and dancing, he disjointedly sang a panegyric on the river Gangā in a voice that resembled the whine of mosquitoes. Despite being a doddering old man, he would bow to Durgā and earnestly pray that he should become the king of the southern country. He used to get infuriated by the flower-tray, which would slip from his palsied hands and fall down in the middle of offering worship to the Goddess.

Deciding to spend the night in the temple where the priest resided, Candrāpīḍa dismounted from the horse, entered the temple and circumambulated and prayed to the Goddess. Just then, the Tamil priest came there running and screaming with rage at Candrāpīḍa, trying to drive him away. Though acutely uneasy by the separation from Kādambarī, he was somewhat cheered by the priest's amusing antics. He stopped some soldiers who were scolding and ridiculing the poor priest and uttered soothing words to calm him. When Candrāpīḍa kindly asked him details about his birth and life, the delighted priest boastfully narrated about his past good looks, virility and wealth. After relaxing for some time in this manner, Candrāpīḍa had betel-leaf offered to the priest.

In the meantime, after the horses had rolled on the ground (to relieve their sweatiness caused by exertion and to relax), the grooms gave them an invigorating bath and tethered them to the rows of spears driven into the ground. Indrāyudha was also shackled separately. By this time, night had fallen and the whole world was plunged in darkness. The entire camp was lit by flaming torches and became as bright as day. The soldiers protected the army by taking turns to stay awake during each quarter. Candrāpīḍa too reclined on the bed prepared for him across from Indrāyudha and, his mind confused by thoughts of Hemakūṭa, spent a sleepless night. He arose early in the morning, presented the old priest with enough wealth, departed from there and reached the town of Ujjayinī within a few days.

Learning of Candrāpīḍa's arrival in advance, Tārāpīḍa, accompanied by several feudatory kings as well as an entourage carrying umbrellas and fans, went on foot to welcome him. On seeing his father, Candrāpīḍa immediately got down from Indrāyudha and prostrated at his feet, the rays from the crest-jewel on his head touching the ground. The overjoyed king exclaimed, "My child! Welcome" and held him to his bosom. After saluting the elders standing near the king, he was escorted by the latter to the women's quarters. Vilāsavatī, envired by several womenfolk from the gynaeceum, welcomed her dear son and performed all the traditional auspicious rituals, after which he spent some time with her, describing his victory-tour, before heading to see the minister. He offered his obeisance to Śukanāsa, met Manoramā and informed them that Vaiśampāyana would be arriving later with the army. Returning to Vilāsavatī's palace, he bathed, dined and rested and then went to his mansion in the evening. Even though the citizens of Ujjayinī celebrated his return and honoured him and even though the kings and the residents of the palace treated him with unbounded love, none of these occasions afforded him any pleasure in the absence of Kādambarī.

Some days passed thus. One day, Meghanāda came to him with Patralekhā. After both of them saluted him, he called Patralekha to him and very affectionately enquired her about the welfare of Mahāśvetā, Kādambarī and others. Taking the hint from seeing Candrāpīḍa's expression, Meghanāda and others departed, following which Patralekhā replied thus: "After you left from there, I sat near Kādambarī on the flower-couch. The love that Kādambarīdevī

showed me cannot be measured. That evening, holding on to my shoulders, she left the winter palace and went to the maiden's garden. Her eyes filled with tears, she stood dejectedly on a dais, leaning against a jewelled wooden pillar, clutching a silken rope that hung from the centre of the pavilion and unable to say anything. After repeated requests, I learnt that her condition was caused by being away from you. Realising that she could not bear that sorrow any longer, I told her that I will somehow fetch you. She replied, "Patralekhā! You say this because of your love for me. What can I do? I do not feel confident! I have no doubt you will eagerly approach him and place your request. Fearing the elders, he may abandon me. Or his royal duties may be an impediment to him. Or he may find it strenuous to travel so far again. Or, after returning to his abode, his desire for this place may have waned. Besides, what is the difference between then and now? I am the same Kādambarī whom he saw at the winter palace. He too is the same prince who visited here twice. What can I say about my other sorrow? When I publicly vowed that I will not wed as long as Mahāśvetā is unhappy, my friend had said that the occasion will arise when this promise will be broken. That has exactly happened! It is better to die now and save my dignity".

Uttarabhāga

First Sarga

After that, I consoled her variously and arrived here. In this situation, it is not advisable for you to be away from Kādambarī,” concluded Patralekhā.

Despite his courage, Candrāpīḍa was filled with untold anxiety after hearing the words of Patralekhā and the resolute statements of Kādambarī. The mental state of Kādambarī seemed to have fully transmitted itself to him through Patralekhā. He then said, “Patralekhā! When I was there, my mind was filled with confusion. Let the other things be. Her gesture of making me wear the Śeṣahāra should have made me realise her intention. Hereafter, I will act in such a way that Kādambarīdevī will somehow forgive my sins”. As he was saying this, a female sentry came in, saluted and said that Vilāsavatī would like to see Patralekhā and him.

When he heard this, Candrāpīḍa fretted, “Oh! My life is tossed about by these incidents! My mother cannot tolerate my absence even for a moment! The orders of Kādambarī, who nurtures deep and unconditional love for me, are inviolable. My mind chafes, unable to bear the delay. The path between Hemakūṭa and the Vindhyā Mountains is very long”. With these disturbing thoughts, he followed the gatekeeper and went with Patralekhā to meet his mother. Spending the whole day in the inner chambers with his mother, he returned to his palace and spent the night acutely perturbed. Despite undergoing such constant disquietude, his inherent dignity prevented his feelings from overwhelming him and helped him compose himself. Thus he passed the days.

Then, one day, he went with Patralekhā to the outskirts of the town and strolled for a while on the banks of the Śīprā River. On the opposite bank of the river was a temple dedicated to the six-faced God (Subrahmaṇya). A cavalry troop was racing towards the temple. Curious to know the reason, he crossed the river and reached the temple. In the midst of the riders, he spotted Keyūraka on a white horse and pointed him out to Patralekhā too. Keyūraka, who appeared very worried, was exhausted after a prolonged journey. Lovingly welcoming him and deciding that it would be better to postpone the enquiries until he recovered, Candrāpīḍa mounted the elephant along with Patralekhā and Keyūraka and proceeded to his palace. All of them completed their baths and other duties and then rested for a while.

Then, retaining Patralekhā alone with him, he turned towards Keyūraka and asked, “What is the news from Mahāśvetā and others?” Keyūraka respectfully replied, “O Prince! What reply can I give? I do not bear any news from Kādambarīdevī or Mahāśvetā. I escorted Patralekhā from Kādambarīdevī and handed her to Meghanāda near Mahāśvetā’s hermitage. Meghanāda conveyed your message to me, whereupon I returned to Hemakūṭa, informed Mahāśvetā that

you had gone back to Ujjayinī and also relayed the message that Meghanāda gave me. Sighing deeply, Mahāśvetā sadly said, “Well, is that so?” and repaired to her hermitage to perform severe penance once again. Stunned by this news and unaware that Mahāśvetā had already left, Kādambarī frowned and told me disgustedly, “Tell this good news to Mahāśvetā” before going to bed and spending the day in sorrow.

When I approached her the next day, she glowered at me. Her disapproving look seemed to tell me, “While you are hale and hearty, I am undergoing this agony”. Taking it as her silent gesture for me to leave, I left without telling her and came here seeking your feet. Please save Kādambarī, for whom you are the sole refuge. All discussions around Kādambarī are only about you. Kādambarī takes to her bed frequently only because she hopes to meet you in her dreams”. These words of Keyūraka lowered Candrāpīḍa’s courage. His eyes filled with tears. Looking at Keyūraka, he said, “Sir! Patralekhā, who arrived before you, has already briefed me of all these. Is it proper on her part to remain silent when I was in front of her, and then grieve thus? Having heard it now, what can I do, since the journey also takes many days? Looking at the perverse turn of events, I do not think the accursed Providence will stop with this. Otherwise, why did I pursue the horse-faced Kinnaras without considering the benefit? Why did I reach the uninhabited forest and chance upon the Acchodam Lake to quench my thirst? Or listen to the melodious notes of the divine lady? While looking for the source of the music, why did I get to meet Mahāśvetā? Why did I accompany her to Hemakūṭa and set eyes on Kādambarī, who cannot be visualised even in a dream? Why did my father summon me before my wish was fulfilled? This God, who can accomplish the impossible, has raised me high only to dash me down! I will attempt to console the lady by some means”.

As they were conversing, dusk fell. All of them had their meals in the palace itself. After seeing the magnificent scenes of Ujjayinī, the superb architecture of the palace, the glory and wealth of the king, Keyūraka went to sleep thinking, “It is God’s blessings that Kādambarī has invested her emotions at the right place”. Candrāpīḍa too planned his visit to Hemakūṭa. His mind was filled with these questions: “How can I go without bidding farewell to my parents? It is not correct that I should sadden to my father by my departure. Besides, when I have been assigned the duties of managing the kingdom, how can I move from here? Again, how can the army, exhausted by their extensive travels to other countries, undertake another long journey with me? If I am to take leave of my father, what reason can I give him for my travel? Without giving a proper excuse, how can I free myself to go? These problems should be sorted out only with the help of an ally. Right now, my friend Vaiśampāyana is also not here. What should I do?” Perplexed by these thought, he spent the night without sleep.

As soon as he woke up, he heard that his army had reached Daśapuram. He believed that God had blessed him by arranging for his confidante Vaiśampāyana to be come back at the right time. When Keyūraka came to him, a delighted Candrāpīḍa said, “Keyūraka! It appears that

Vaiśampāyana too has arrived. We can assume that things will fall into place”. Upon hearing that, Keyūraḥa felt that his return journey would be delayed. However, he replied, “This is good news” and, sitting near Candrāpīḁa, requested, “Sire! When the eastern direction lightens, is there any doubt if the moon will rise? Similarly, your appearance, which has become pale due to anxiety about Kādambarī’s condition, announces that you will soon come to Hemakūṭa. But you will embark on your journey after Vaiśampāyana returns and you have apprised him of the developments. Instead of tarrying here until then, if I return earlier and announce your arrival to Devī (Kādambarī), it will greatly reassure her. Besides, there is nothing I can achieve by being here. Hence please permit me to go”.

When he heard that, Candrāpīḁa said, “Who else will act appropriately like this, taking into account the time and place? Very well; it is better that you start immediately, considering the wellbeing of Kādambarī. To indicate that my arrival will not be delayed, let Patralekhā go with you. She is the first recipient of Devī’s grace”. Saying thus, he looked at Patralekhā, who was seated behind him, and asked, “Is it alright?” With bowed head, she replied, “Would I refuse your command?” and started making arrangements for her imminent departure. Summoning Meghanāda, Candrāpīḁa instructed him, “Go with Patralekhā and leave her at the same place from where you brought her last time. I too will embark on my journey after meeting Vaiśampāyana”.

Then the prince gifted his earring to Keyūraḥa and made him wear it. Turning towards Patralekhā, he said, “Patralekhā! Kādambarī possesses very pleasant traits. It is her sincerity that has enthused me to confidently send this news. Please tell her that if my visit should be beneficial to her, if the world should remain fortunate, Kādambarī should not harm herself in any way. Being away from me, you too should not worry. Take care of your health. Do not go alone anywhere. Go carefully”. Again, he told Keyūraḥa, “I will come there soon. You too should come with Patralekhā to Mahāśvetā’s hermitage”. Saying thus, he bid them farewell.

Second *Sarga*

He then went to his father to obtain permission to receive Vaiśampāyana. As he saluted his father and Śukanāsa, the king, who was delighted on seeing his handsome and youthful son, turned to the minister and said, “Sire! By the grace of God, we are lucky to behold a dear son after such a long time. My heart desires to perform his marriage and see my daughter-in-law”. Śukanāsa replied respectfully, “Good planning, Your Majesty! Our Candrāpīḁa is highly intelligent. He has acquired proficiency in all fields, earned the love of the people and also accepted the responsibilities of the kingdom. He has gone around the world and returned victorious. Now there is nothing remaining. As he is at the proper age, it is now imperative to arrange his wedding”. Listening to all this with a bowed head, Candrāpīḁa thought, “O! Their words are like the rays of a beacon for a person entering pitch darkness. When Vaiśampāyana

arrives, I can consider myself married to Kādambarī”. He gently informed Śukanāsa and, through him, got his father’s permission to go and meet Vaiśampāyana.

He spent the day in his mother’s apartments; night fell and two quarters were over. The moon also arose. The ambrosial moonlight covered the whole world in brightness and coolness. Within a short time, the conch sounded for the prince’s departure. He mounted Indrāyudha, which was waiting in the palace porch and, preceded by several cavalry troops in formation, travelled on the meticulously laid path to Daśapuram. By the time he covered three *yojanas* after crossing the Śīprā River, the night ended. Just as the sun was about to rise, he saw an army approaching at a short distance, like the incoming waves of the ocean. Urging Indrāyudha to go faster, he neared the army. Spotting Indrāyudha and recognising him even from a distance, several liege kings in the army got down from their horses and surrounded him. Their faces were dull and anxious.

Candrāpīḍa eagerly asked them about Vaiśampāyana’s whereabouts. Looking at one another and not knowing what to say, the kings remained silent. The commander Valāhaka then came forward and said, “You should dismount and sit under this tree. I will explain everything”. The manner in which Valāhaka spoke plunged his mind into intense sorrow. All at once his body swayed unconsciously. The kings held him up, lifted him off Indrāyudha, made him sit beneath a nearby tree and revived him. Again turning to Valāhaka, he asked, “After I came back, did Vaiśampāyana engage anyone in battle? Or did my dearest friend succumb to some serious disease?” Valāhaka and all the kings closed their ears and exclaimed, “No, no; may Vaiśampāyana live for a hundred years”. Hearing this, the prince became somewhat calm and said, “When Vaiśampāyana is alive, he will not stay away from me like this! What happened to him?” Valāhaka then said thus.

“The day after you left Mahāśvetā’s hermitage, the drums sounded for our departure. At that time, Vaiśampāyana called us and said, “The Acchodam Lake is sacred; before proceeding, we will have a bath in it and offer worship to Lord Śīva who resides here. When can we again see this holy place, which belongs to the celestials?” He then went for a stroll on its shores. While looking around the area as he walked, he chanced upon a bower, which seemed to be the source of all the enchanting sights there. Gazing unblinkingly at the bower, as though it was a long-lost friend who had suddenly reappeared, he eagerly sat before it, tears streaming from his eyes. Noticing that he was strangely drawn to that place, we went to him and requested, “These are indeed very beautiful places. Seeing them has brought us considerable delight. The kings and the rest of the army are ready to start. Please come”.

Still staring at the bower, Vaiśampāyana told us reprovingly, “I cannot leave this place. Since Candrāpīḍa has left, you should not hold this huge army here even for a while”. Shocked and confused by his incongruous words, we again tried to persuade him: “It is true that we should

not linger here! But it is apparently very appropriate for you – the son of the renowned Śukanāsa and a childhood friend of Candrāpīḍa, who is closer to you than a brother and who considers you his dearest friend – to stay here! It is to you that he entrusted his entire army. Besides, even if you desert us and the troops, how can we face the prince after leaving you in this uninhabited place? Abandon this distraction and get up so that we can go”. With a blank face and completely altered demeanour, he looked at us and said, “Do you have to lecture me so much? What can I do? My physical and mental strengths seem to have vanished in a moment! If you carry me by force, if I move away from here, I feel that I will not be alive. If I remain here, my life may be sustained by an inexplicable energy that surges in my mind. From now on, may all of you at least enjoy Candrāpīḍa’s company and be happy”. When we asked, “Do you not need to have a bath or food?” he replied, “Candrāpīḍa has boundless love for me”. He then had a bath in the pond and partook of some bulbs, fruits and roots suitable for life in the jungle. We too had our meal and spent the day with a heavy heart. Hoping that he would change his mind, we stayed there for three days and now came back disappointed”.

The prince was naturally dismayed upon hearing this news. Then he pondered dismally, “I do not know the reason for his reclusiveness at this early age. I have not offended him in any way. Forsaking marriage and a householder’s life, neglecting his parents who brought him up lovingly, why did he take such a step?” Entering a tent built for him, he discarded his upper garment and slumped onto the couch. He then thought, “It is not right for me to leave without my father’s permission to bring back Vaiśampāyana. If I go without consoling the minister and Manoramādevī and without knowing their point of view, I too would be acting like Vaiśampāyana. It is better to get the permission from everyone at the palace before leaving”. He consoled himself with the thought that Vaiśampāyana’s conduct was conducive for him to go to Hemakūṭa, though it was as distasteful as taking a medicine to cure a disease. He spent the day resting there with the others, woke up before dawn and, without sounding the drums to signal the start of their journey, reached Ujjayinī with all of them.

The news about Vaiśampāyana had spread everywhere through a few who had returned to the city before Candrāpīḍa. His heart was crushed on hearing the wails, “What a tragedy! What a blow!” Upon reaching the entrance of the palace and learning that his parents had gone to the minister’s house, he too went there. With his head bowed, he sat a little away from his father and Śukanāsa, who were tormented by grief. Glancing at his son for a moment, the king said bitterly, “Candrāpīḍa! Most people will not believe that even loved ones can sometimes cause sorrow. Considering Vaiśampāyana’s virtues and his love for you, I do not believe that he would have the courage to go separately if you had not neglected him”. Even as he spoke, Śukanāsa, his face dark with indignation at the king’s words, refuted the latter’s words thus:

“How can you blame Candrāpīḍa? Can the moon ever emit heat? It is Vaiśampāyana who is disloyal to his friend. Nothing causes greater anguish than unjustly accusing a righteous

person. Even virtuous persons are condemned by associating with the wicked. Noble birth, education and wealth serve as instruments for such people to commit sins, not for acquiring merit. Ignoring the fact that he is the childhood friend of Candrāpīḍa, that he is the only son of his parents and that he has not obtained permission from the elders, that fool has forsaken everything and isolated himself without thinking. We nurtured this unintelligent being like a parrot and also educated him in vain. He actually deserves to be born as a senseless creature”. Saying this, he sighed deeply.

Hearing these words, the king said, “Sire! You are very high-minded. But, like a great river muddied by rainfall, even the wise are troubled by sorrow. It is rare to find a person who spends his youth without turmoil. Can we denounce our children in this manner? Just as the blessings of the noble become boons, harsh words spoken in anger may turn into curses. Even the trees we grow receive our love. Do not be displeased with him. What we regard as vice may prove to be virtue. We should first investigate the reasons for his behaviour. So let us try to bring back Vaiśampāyana by any means”. With these words, the king calmed the minister.

Candrāpīḍa slowly turned to the minister and said, “Sir! Since my father suspects that I may be at fault, please assign to me, through my father, the task of bringing him back, which would be my atonement. After appointing Vaiśampāyana the commander of a large army, I had told him to return with the others. I did not expect such a situation. Despite thinking of proceeding directly from Daśapuram to fetch him, I came back here only because it was not proper to do so without the approval of elders. Please give your consent now”. Listening to Candrāpīḍa’s plea, Śukanāsa looked intently at the king. Knowing the minister’s intention, the king said, “Sir! We had happily planned to perform the marriage of my son. Due to the perverse nature of Providence, we are faced with this strange plight. No one else is capable of bringing him back. Without him, Candrāpīḍa’s mind too will not be at rest. Candrāpīḍa, then, should serve as the raft to cross the ocean of adversity. As the distance is very long, let the travel be arranged after the astrologers decide on an auspicious day”. Saying thus, the king returned to his palace. Candrāpīḍa too took leave of the minister and went back to his abode. Summoning the astrologers, he told them in confidence that, if the minister or his father asks, they should suggest a date that would enable him to depart immediately. They declared, “Analysing the current positions of asterisms, it is not at all favourable for your travel. But if your mind is clear, you may start now. Scholars consider the ruler as an instrument of time”. Candrāpīḍa replied, “In matters of urgency, how can people like me search for auspicious days? Hence tell them that I can leave tomorrow”. They did as instructed by the prince.

Candrāpīḍa passed the day with great effort. When the moon rose at night, he went to his mother, who was with Manoramā, saluted them and announced that he would be leaving to bring Vaiśampāyana. Manoramā said, “My child! You seem to be consoling me by telling that you are going in person! If you also leave, who is there to comfort us? You should not

go". Vilāsavatī remarked, "Manoramādevī! It is your excessive love that makes you speak thus; but is it proper for him to be away from Vaiśampāyana? The sadness of not seeing both of them for a few days is much less than grieving daily upon seeing the face of Candrāpīḍa, who is disconsolate due to Vaiśampāyana's absence. Let us both bid him farewell. Please rise". Looking at her son, she said, "My child! Go and return safely. But for some reason, I am uneasy about your journey this time! Even your first travel did not worry me so much. Knowing my anxiety, you should not stay elsewhere for long like you did before". Saying so, she performed the auspicious travel rituals and saw him off.

He then went to take leave of his father and fell at his feet. Looking at his son apologetically, he said, "Child! Please do not be upset that I accused you. I handed over the kingdom to you not merely because you are my beloved son, but also due to your virtues. You are well aware that governing the world is not easy. The kingdom does not rest with one who is incapable, insolent, irrational or impulsive. The royal sceptre will only remain with him who can, as it were, bind everyone with his numerous virtues. It is our duty to satisfy the people of the world. A discerning person like you would have known that this was my only reason in speaking to you like that earlier. I have administered this position for a long time without any lapses. We were delighted by your birth and the fact that you are fit to accept the kingdom. Now I have three wishes that can be easily granted: One is to find a suitable bride for you and get you married. The second is to hand over the complete responsibility of the kingdom to you. The third is to follow the path of detachment like our ancestors. You should return swiftly and fulfil these desires without any delay". With these words, the king saw him off.

Third Sarga

Presently, Indrāyudha was brought before him so that he could start. As if unwilling to travel, it walked a short distance further and stood there looking downcast. Focussing on the task and unmindful of these things, he mounted the horse and headed out. Leaving those kings and soldiers who were exhausted by their earlier travel, he took with him Valāhaka, who insisted on accompanying him due to his devotion and loyalty, a few petty kings and a small army. His eagerness in seeing Kādambarī, coupled with his anxiety about Vaiśampāyana, made him regard the great distance between Kailāsa and the Vindhya Mountains as a very short route. Effortlessly traversing jungles filled with thorny shrubs and trees, several hills and rivers, he rode night and day. He encountered the monsoon on the way, like a cobra across the path. Water-filled clouds appeared, spreading darkness in the skies and in Candrāpīḍa's heart. But even the torrential downpour did not deter him from continuing his journey.

When a third of the distance was still remaining to reach the destination, he saw Meghanāda approach him from the opposite direction. When Meghanāda neared them and saluted the prince, the latter asked him, "Did you see Vaiśampāyana on the shore of Acchodam?" In

reply, Meghanāda said, “O God! I never heard until now that Vaiśampāyana had come near the Acchodam Lake! Seeing that the rains had started even before we reached Acchodam, Patralekhā and Keyūraka sent me back, fearing that you may not come. I have therefore come to hasten you. Fortunately, you have come this far. By now, Keyūraka too would have reached Hemakūṭa along with Patralekhā. Spurred by these words, Candrāpīḍa brushed aside the rainy season, travelled the remaining distance in just a few days and reached the Acchodam Lake. Completely transformed by the monsoon, the lake, now murky, filled with submerged and torn lotuses and surrounded by dilapidated gardens, did not afford him any delight. Calling a few soldiers of the cavalry, he said, “Vaiśampāyana may be discomfited to meet us and so may secretly go somewhere else. Hence surround the lake”. Then, riding Indrāyudha, he went around the lake and the gardens, but saw neither Vaiśampāyana nor any sign of him. His anxiety increased. He could not bring himself to proceed without finding his friend. Thinking that Mahāśvetā would know about him, he went to her hermitage.

There, on a rock at the mouth of the cave, he saw Mahāśvetā who, for some reason, lowered her head in shame on seeing him. Taraḷikā too was there, offering words of solace to her. He thought, “I hope Kādambarī has not come to any harm! Otherwise, Mahāśvetā would be happy about my arrival, instead of remaining like this!” He went near and asked Taraḷikā, “What happened?” Controlling her mounting sorrow, Mahāśvetā herself spoke thus: “Prince! What can this senseless maiden tell? Nonetheless, listen! Last time, when Keyūraka informed me that you had gone back to your country, I was disappointed at my inability to arrange Kādambarī’s wedding despite my efforts. My dejection having increased manifold, I came here to perform severe penance once again. While engaged in prayer near my cave, I noticed a young Brāhmaṇa lad come here and wander about, looking as if he had lost something. He resembled you in appearance. Displaying no interest in anything else, he neared me and stared at me as if trying to recall memories about me. He then said imprudently, “O beautiful one! Instead of acting according to your age and form, why do you perform such rigid austerities? Only after enjoying the pleasures here should you think of the other world”. Without replying to his words, I got up and went to another place. As I was plucking flowers for worshipping Lord Śiva, I called Taraḷikā and told her, “There is a Brāhmaṇa youth whose gaze and words are inappropriate. Prevent him from coming here again. Tell him that harm will befall him if he ventures here again”. Despite this warning, his obsession did not lessen.

A few days ago, in the middle of the night, with Taraḷikā asleep on one side, I looked at the moon and pleaded, “Will this moon, whose beatific rays delight the entire world, restore my beloved?” Then, meditating on the illustrious Puṇḍarīka, I reposed on a rock, unable to sleep. In the bright moonlight, I saw the young man slowly approach me. As he neared, he seemed to be caught in Manmatha’s grip and appeared frenzied, noticing which I started trembling. I thought “If he deliberately touches me, this body will have to be torched; my efforts in taking care of this body in the hope of meeting my lord Puṇḍarīka again would then be in vain”.

Even as I was engaged in these thoughts, he came close to me and said, “O moon-faced one! The moon and Manmatha are jointly trying to kill me. Please save me. Is it not the duty of an ascetic to protect one who has sought refuge?” Wild with rage, I rebuked him, “O sinner! How dare you speak to me thus! How is your tongue not shattered! Lord Śiva! Since he is unbecomingly infatuated and prattles in this fashion like a mindless parrot, let him be born as a parrot so that he cannot harm others”. He immediately fell lifeless to the ground like a tree whose roots have been cut off. The moment he collapsed and died, his servants came running and started sobbing. Only then did I learn from them that he was your friend”. So saying, with her heart heavy with mortification and sorrow, she bent her head and wept.

Upon hearing this, Candrāpīḍa said, “Lady! In spite of your great efforts, I was not fortunate enough to marry Kādambarīdevī. I should attain that blessing at least in my next birth”. He was still uttering these words, when his voice faltered and his tender heart, overwhelmed by intense sorrow, burst instantly as though pierced by a spear. Taraḷikā immediately supported him and wailed, “O lady! The prince is inert! His neck too has slumped! Ah! Kādambarī’s beloved! You have given up your life!” Stupefied by the pitiable condition of the prince, Mahāśvetā stared at him with unblinking eyes, forgetting to weep. The kings and soldiers who had accompanied him lamented, “Ah! Cruel ascetic! The noble lineages of Tārāpīḍa and Śukanāsa have been uprooted by you!” Indrāyudha too looked longingly at Candrāpīḍa’s face and neighed loudly. Meanwhile, learning from Patralekhā about Candrāpīḍa’s visit, Kādambarī informed her mother and others that she was going to meet Mahāśvetā. She then adorned herself, held Patralekhā’s hand and, chatting with Madalekhā and following Keyūraka – who was leading the way – arrived at the hermitage, eager to meet Candrāpīḍa.

She was appalled to see Candrāpīḍa’s lifeless form, which resembled the Milky Ocean from which nectar had been extracted, and the Lotus from which the seed-pod had been torn away. As she loudly wept, “Ah! Ah! What is this!” she keeled over and she collapsed. Patralekhā too fell in a swoon. After being revived by Madalekhā, Kādambarī gazed fixedly at Candrāpīḍa, her tears forgotten and her heart benumbed. Seeing this, Madalekhā despaired, “If you do not release this colossal grief through crying, your extremely tender heart will also be torn asunder”. With a weak laughter, Kādambarī said, “O foolish girl! How can this heart, which did not shatter earlier, upon beholding my beloved lying dead, break now, after I have regained my consciousness? Besides, parents, relatives and attendants are only for those who are alive. I am now going to give up my life! I will be free from all sorrows in both ways – by enjoying the company of my beloved if he were alive and by entering his pyre after his death. When, unmindful of the great distance, this noble person has honoured me by coming for my sake and also by losing his life here, why should I demean myself by merely shedding tears? It is unbecoming of me to grieve inauspiciously when my lord is on his way to the celestial world. If you really intend to help me, see that my parents do not die of grief and that they are henceforth able to regard you as their daughter and fulfil their aspirations for me through you.

She then embraced Mahāśvetā and said, “My dearest friend! You hold on to a blameless life in the hope that you will be reunited with your loved one. I have renounced all my desires. So you should be my closest companion in the next life too”. Saying thus, she ordered Keyūraka to fetch firewood and construct a pyre. Her body tense with excitement, she then sat near the mortal remains of Candrāpīḍa and, with hands that were awash with nectar-like perspiration, took his feet and placed them on her lap. All at once, Candrāpīḍa appeared to start breathing and there arose from his body an intensely luminous form which ascended into the sky, lighting up and cooling all directions. At that instant, an incorporeal voice was heard, “Child! Mahāśvetā! I comfort you once again. The body of your Puṇḍarīka is in my world, protected from decay by my cool rays. The body of Candrāpīḍa, which is but another form of mine, is inherently imperishable; besides, the touch of Kādambārī’s hand has revived it even more. Let this body remain here to reassure you. Take care of it until he comes back to life after the curse is lifted”. With these words, the effulgent form vanished. Patralekhā, who was roused by the touch of the light, ran towards Indrāyudha as if possessed, snatched the horse from the groom and, even as everyone watched, plunged into the lake with the animal and sank.

Lo and behold! Suddenly, there emerged from the pond an ascetic, whose matted locks resembled the clumps of weeds caught in the water. He was wearing a bark-garment and seemed terrified as he approached Mahāśvetā. These hitherto unseen incidents left Mahāśvetā and others totally astounded. Looking at Mahāśvetā, the young ascetic asked, “Lady! Do you remember me, now that I have been reborn?” Her mind buffeted by joy and sorrow, she got up hastily, saluted him and enquired, “Sir! Are you not Kapiñjala? How can I not know you? Let that be. Who was the person who took away Puṇḍarīka? Where were you all this time? Why have you come without your friend?”

Kapiñjala replied as follows: “Gandharva princess! Did I not leave you crying here that night and follow the celestial being into the sky demanding an explanation? Without answering me, he flew swiftly and reached the moon. Placing Puṇḍarīka’s body on a platform made of moonstone in a hall named ‘Mahodaya’, he turned towards me and said, “Kapiñjala! Know me as the Moon-god. Even though I was blameless, your friend, while in the grip of anguish caused by Manmatha, unthinkingly cursed me, “Vile Moon! You torment me with your rays, preventing me from marrying my beloved. You will also take birth after birth in Bhārata, the land of redemption (*karmabhūmi*) and, unable to unite with your eternal soul-mate, will die of sorrow”. Instantly seared by the heat of the curse, I angrily thought, “How dare he imprecate me without realising his fault!” In revenge, I pronounced this curse on him, “May you too experience pleasure and pain on earth!” Within a short time, I calmed down and recalled that Mahāśvetā is the daughter of Gaurī, who belongs to the family of celestials which originated from my rays and that she chose Puṇḍarīka as her husband out of her own volition. Since he had said, “birth after birth,” Puṇḍarīka too would have to be born twice with me in the land of mortals. So, to preserve his body until he comes back to life after the curse ends, I brought it

with me to my world. I have reassured Mahāśvetā also. Therefore, let this body remain here safely. Convey this news to the noble sage Śvetaketu. Being immensely capable, he may perform the proper atonement for this”. After this answer, the Moon-god bade me farewell.

Distraught due to the separation of my friend and unable to think, I rushed along the path of the gods towards Sage Śvetaketu. In my haste, I leapt over an angry celestial on the way. Glaring at me as if to burn me down, he said, “O wicked one! How dare you jump over me, even though the whole sky is available to you! Since you bolted like a mindless horse, you will be born as a horse in the world of men”. Taken aback by his curse and realising my sin of discourteously vaulting over him, I joined my palms in salute and pleaded, “Sir! It was my friend’s pitiable condition that made me behave thus; it was never my intention to offend you. Please be kind enough to remove this curse”. Filled with sympathy, he reflected for a while and said, “What I said cannot be changed. But you will be freed from this curse when you drown in water after your rider dies. Besides, the Moon-god will be born as the son of the king Tārāpīḍa, who is performing austerities to beget a child; your friend Puṇḍarīka too will become the son of the king’s minister, Śukanāsa. You will become the steed of the prince himself, who would possess the qualities of the moon”. As soon as he said these words, I fell into the great ocean below and emerged from it in the form of a horse. Even in this birth as a horse, the memories of my past life did not vanish. That is why I brought Candrāpīḍa – who is the Moon-god himself – from Suvarṇapuram to this place. The young man who had professed his love to you due to his continuing affinity from the previous birth and who had died as a result of your curse was indeed an incarnation of Puṇḍarīka.

Hearing this, Mahāśvetā bewailed, “Ah! Lord Puṇḍarīka! Like a demoness, I destroyed you even when you sustained your love for me and blessed me by appearing in a different form! Apparently the infernal Providence has created me and granted a long life only to kill you again and again!” Looking at her kindly, Kapiñjala uttered these words of consolation, “Lady! You are blameless! I have explained that both of you had to undergo this sorrow only because of a curse. Both of you have directly heard the Moon-god’s words. If you continue your penances like you did earlier, both of you will surely attain happiness”. Then Kādambarī too asked Kapiñjala, “Sir! What happened to Patralekhā who leapt into the lake with you, when you were Indrāyudha?” Kapiñjala replied, “After I jumped into the water, I do not know what happened to her. I am now eager to know where and as whom Candrāpīḍa is reborn and what happened to Patralekhā. The only person who can clarify these details is Sage Śvetaketu. So I am forthwith going to him”. Saying this, he rose in the sky and left.

Fourth Sarga

After Kapiñjala left, Kādambarī looked at Mahāśvetā and said, “My dear friend! As the four-faced God (Brahmā) has made us equal even in grief, living or dying does not worry me now.

You must advise me on the action in this situation”. Mahāśvetā replied, “My beloved friend! There is no need for this question. What else should you do besides taking care of the moon-like Candrāpīḍa’s body, which is right now on your lap? Do we not consider the earth, trees and statues as invisible deities and worship them daily praying for welfare? When that is the case, what is the objection in serving the Moon-god, who is present before your eyes as Candrāpīḍa?” The night passed in this discussion.

The next day, after having a purifying bath, Kādambarī, with the help of Madalekhā and others, shifted the body of Candrāpīḍa on to a broad crystal-slab, bathed it with water scented by camphor and other ingredients, adorned it with flowers and worshipped it. Then, summoning Madalekhā, she said, “Friend! I cannot move from this place until my beloved comes back to life. Please convey the news of this wonderful event to my parents and ensure that they do not come to see me until my suffering has ended. If I were to see them, I will be unable to bear my welling sorrow”. Madalekhā then went to Hemakūṭa, explained all that had happened and returned. She said that Kādambarī’s parents had conveyed that they would gladly meet Kādambarī and their son-in-law after the curse ended. Seeing Candrāpīḍa’s body become increasingly beautiful and radiant, everyone encouraged and cheered Kādambarī.

A few days passed thus. The monsoon also came to a close. One day, Meghanāda approached Kādambarī and said, “Since the prince has not returned until now, King Tārāpīḍa is worried and has sent his attendants to find out. Learning about the events, they too are immensely saddened and wish to pay homage at the feet of the prince”. Kādambarī said, “Very well! Unless they see this unusual incident, they will not be able to believe it. Let them come and see my lord’s body”. In a while, Meghanāda escorted the servants, who paid their respects and stood there with tears flowing from their eyes. Addressing them, Kādambarī said, “Attendants! Why do you shed tears when this grief is about to culminate in joy? See how the noble form of Candrāpīḍa is pristine and lustrous! Report everything to King Tārāpīḍa so that his confidence is restored and he is not disheartened. As the prince’s attendant Tvaritaka is the only one who can ably communicate this information, you may take him with you”. With these words, she sent them to Ujjayinī.

Meanwhile, in Ujjayinī, Vilāsavatī, who was deeply worried that she had no tidings about Candrāpīḍa for a long time, went to the temple of Goddess Avantī to pray for his safe return. As she was entering the temple, she caught sight of the attendants coming from the banks of the Acchodam Lake. Thousands of citizens were following them, keen to hear the news. She neared them and, even before they saluted her, she asked, “Sirs! My mind has misgivings about my child! Quickly tell me about him”. Learning about the arrival of the attendants and Vilāsavatī’s visit to the temple, Tārāpīḍa eagerly came with Śukanāsa to the place near the temple and stood before Vilāsavatī. Parting the huge crowd, Tvaritaka presented himself before the king, joined his palms in reverence and started recounting the incidents in detail.

The instant the king heard that Candrāpīḍa had died after his heart had burst, he extended his hands and cried, “Enough! I do not wish to hear anymore! My child! Oh, how you would have suffered when your heart broke!” Vilāsavatī too swooned.

Then, stating that the prince’s body had not decayed, Tvaritaka explained how Vaiśampāyana and others had to be reborn in various forms due to a curse and finally requested that no one should grieve unnecessarily. Revived by her handmaidens and hearing this news from them, Vilāsavatī was amazed and comforted. The king, torn between astonishment and sorrow, looked at the minister. Noble people, even when profoundly sad, hide their grief in a corner of their large hearts and try to assuage their friends’ sorrow. So too, unmindful of the fact that he also lost his dear son like the king did, the brave Śukanāsa said these words to the king:

“O King! This world is a stage for wonders. There is nothing that has not occurred here. So why should you doubt this? Do not think that everything can be analysed and proven through logic. There are several aspects which are beyond the scope of our intellect and which should be accepted only on the basis of scriptural authority. We do see people, rendered comatose by poison, regaining consciousness through chants and amulets! Magnet attracts iron! How can these phenomena be explained with the help of reason? Besides, have we not read and heard about the various curses mentioned in the *Purāṇas*, etc.? Was not King Mahābhīṣa, who resided in the celestial world, born as Śantanu in this world due to a curse? Have we not heard that Nahuṣa, who had occupied the position of Indra, was born as a python due to Sage Agastya’s curse? What else do we need? Was not Śrī Mahāviṣṇu Himself born as the son of Sage Jamadagni? So, the instances of celestials being born among humans are not without precedents. Even otherwise, it was after we dreamt of the full moon entering your consort’s mouth and a white Lotus being placed on Manoramā’s lap that the two ladies conceived. There is no doubt that the Moon-god and the young ascetic were born as our sons. Both of them were under a curse; that proved to be a boon for us to have sons. Therefore, please do not grieve needlessly. If you continue to perform charitable and meritorious deeds, all problems will be solved and you can be happy”.

Even after listening to all this, Tārāpīḍa said, “Sir! Whatever you say is absolutely correct. Yet, the news that my son’s heart split asunder eclipses everything else! Therefore, unless I see Candrāpīḍa’s face, my soul will not rest. If my state is like this, how can I console the queen?” The moment she heard it, Vilāsavatī hastened to the king, joined her palms and earnestly said, “Lord! Why do you still delay? My mind is anxious to see Candrāpīḍa”. The king turned to her and said, “Manoramādevī will not be aware of any of this. Meet her, explain everything fully and offer solace to her so that she does not feel sad for her son. I am going to the palace to order everyone to get ready for the journey. Let Manoramā also come with you to that place”. Saying so, the king went to the palace and prepared to depart.

Thereupon, the king, the ladies, ministers and several kings set out simultaneously in their respective vehicles, travelled for days together without stopping and, led by Tvaritaka on his pilot-horse, reached the bank of the Acchodam Lake. Since Tvaritaka had gone ahead and announced the arrival of Tārāpīḍa, all the minor kings who had accompanied Candrāpīḍa, headed by Meghanāda, swiftly drew near and welcomed the king. On seeing the untroubled faces of the kings and hearing Meghanāda describe the remarkable state of Candrāpīḍa's mortal remains, Tārāpīḍa's sorrow greatly abated. Then, with Meghanāda showing the way, all of them reached Mahāśvetā's hermitage.

Learning that Candrāpīḍa's parents and others had arrived, Mahāśvetā disappeared into the cave, ashamed to face them; Kādambarī too fell to the ground unconscious. In this situation, Tārāpīḍa and others entered the hermitage and saw the handsome form of their beloved son, as though asleep on the moonstone-slab. Vilāsavatī stretched her arms and lamented, "My dear child! Alas, that you should be in this situation! How unfortunate we are! You have gone alone, leaving all of us!" Venting her anguish in this manner, she then placed her son's feet on her head and sobbed. Controlling his sorrow, Tārāpīḍa told her, "He was born as our son due to our good deeds. He is verily of a divine origin! It is not proper to mourn like ordinary humans! Moreover, we should comfort the minister and Manoramā, who are heartbroken by their son's death. Further, who will console your daughter-in-law, who alone possesses the ability to bring our son back to life and who is now lying unconscious?"

Vilāsavatī instantly got up; going towards Kādambarī, she seated the latter on her lap and soothed her saying, "My dear! You are born as the elixir to bring back the lost life of my son Candrāpīḍa! Please get up!" Though regaining consciousness upon hearing the word 'Candrāpīḍa', Kādambarī remained quiet, her head lowered in shyness. Madalekhā then lifted her up from Vilāsavatī's lap and made her pay obeisance to Emperor Tārāpīḍa and others sequentially. The sight of Kādambarī's beauty and nobility filled them with boundless delight which erased the heartache caused by their son's death. Summoning Madalekhā, the king said, "Having seen all of you as well as my son's face, I am completely free from worry. Our presence here is no longer useful. Let the body of Candrāpīḍa be taken care of unhindered by Kādambarī and others". With these words, he came out with the minister and everyone else.

Without going to the dwelling that was prepared for his stay, the king went and sat beneath a tree that was heavily covered with vines and was close to a spotless rock. Calling the other kings who were sharing his grief and who had stayed there for several days for the prince's sake, the king honoured them suitably and then told them, "Friends! You should not think that my present appearance is due to a wave of sorrow. I have already declared that, after getting a wife for my son and freeing myself of the burden of running the kingdom, I would spend my last days peacefully in a hermitage. Destiny has ordained that that wish of mine is being fulfilled in this way. Can anyone conquer Providence? The responsibility of managing

the world continues to rest on the shoulders of god-fearing and noble kings like you all. So the time has come to fulfil my long-standing desire. I request you to approve of my decision". With these benevolent words, he divested himself of all the trappings of an emperor and accepted to the garments and food suitable for a life in the forest. Controlling his senses like sages, he commenced doing penance. From then onwards, every morning and evening, the king, Vilāsavaṭī and Śukanāsa beheld the body of Candrāpīḍa – who was but another form of the Moon-god – and lived happily in the hermitage, totally relieved of all sadness".

Fifth Sarga

Sage Jābāli finished his narrative, paused for a short while and then, with a smile, told the sages, "Just like your minds, mine too was thoroughly enchanted by this story. In my attempt to relate the sequence of events, I took into account the interconnections between the plots of this delightful story and let the narration come a long way. The final phase of this parrot's chronicle is: Gripped by lust, Puṇḍarīka lost his bearing and became a sinner, which caused him to be born in this mortal world as 'Vaiśampāyana', the son of Śukanāsa; once again, due to bad conduct, he incurred his father's wrath which, combined with the curse of Mahāśvetā, resulted in him in being born as a parrot now. This is the life-story of this bird", he concluded.

Hārīta then asked respectfully, "Father! How is it that a person born in the lineage of sages was so overcome by desire that he could not sustain his life? Why did the life-span decrease for one who was born in the celestial world?" Sage Jābāli replied, "I have already said that he was born from a woman's energy alone. It is due to this reason that Puṇḍarīka became enamoured by the female form and caused his own downfall from a superior lineage. It is natural that all effects in this world possess the qualities of their causes. So, he died young not only in his previous birth, but will do so in this one too, as a parrot. After experiencing all the consequences of the curse, he will attain a very long life".

"Lord Śūdraka! Even as the illustrious sage was recounting my story, I remembered my past birth fully in that young age, as though woken up from sleep. I regained all knowledge and acquired the ability to speak clearly. All memories, beginning with my love for Mahāśvetā, returned to me. Acutely desirous of seeing Candrāpīḍa, I requested the sage, "If you kindly tell me the background of his earlier birth, I will somehow go to him". As though angry, Sage Jābāli replied, "O wicked one! Have you not let go of your fickleness yet? You have not even sprouted two feathers! Wait until you grow up and are able to fly in the sky. You may ask me then". Saying this, he looked at the sages seated in front and told them, "Look, the moon has lost its lustre and is disappearing in the west. Engrossed in this story, we have not noticed that the night has ended. Go and perform the early morning duties". With these words, he dismissed the gathering and went away with the others.

Hārīta carried me to his leaf-hut and left me there, before going for his morning ablutions. At that moment, I experienced immense sorrow. “It is due to the accumulated merits over many lifetimes that one acquires human birth. Even in that, it is difficult to be born as a Brāhmaṇa. The status of an ascetic, which is just below the path of immortality, is not easily attained. In addition to all these, it is a great distinction to be able to reside in the celestial world. Despite having all these, I suddenly took the wrong path due to my Destiny. As a result, I cast myself down into this pitiable and utterly useless state! Instead of nurturing this worthless and wretched body of a bird, it is better to die and be rid of it. Let the wish of Providence – which aims to torment me in various ways – be fulfilled”. While I was sunk in remorse and sadness, Hārīta came and said that Kapiñjala had come to see me.

Instantly I was delighted. I asked him eagerly, “Where is he?” to which Hārīta replied that he was with his (Hārīta’s) father. I longed to fly there. But then, I spotted my friend Kapiñjala walking towards me. As he had covered a great distance from the aerial world, he was looking exhausted, his hair dishevelled. I was deeply overjoyed to see him. When he neared me, I addressed him in tears, “My friend! Kapiñjala! I am so lucky to behold you even after two lifetimes! Being in such a deplorable state, I am unable to get up and joyfully embrace you to my heart’s content! What can I do! Despite being young, you did not get caught in the worldly ties. My dear! Please sit down. Is father keeping well?”

As soon as he saw me, Kapiñjala’s eyes welled up with unbounded sorrow. Lifting me up, he kissed my forehead, gently stroked me and said thus: “Father is fine. Through his intellect, he instantaneously knew of all the troubles that we faced. He promptly did reparations for our sins. Only because of those expiations, I was able to leave the body of the horse and pray at his feet again. Knowing that I was initially afraid to meet him, he said, “Child! Do not fear! There is no point in blaming you. I should have performed the rites that would confer a long life to newborns. That I failed to do so is my fault. Be that as it may, I have completed most of the expiatory rites which would end your sorrows. Your friend, who is living as a parrot in Sage Jābāli’s hermitage, has only now remembered his past life. Go to him now and convey my blessings”. Moreover, your mother Mahālakṣmī too is close by, helping in the ritual that will eradicate your suffering. Your father has also advised you to remain in Sage Jābāli’s hermitage and worship him until the results of your sins have run their course”. After his words, we exchanged all news about my previous birth and I rejoiced for a short while in his company, forgetting that I was a parrot. Midday arrived and Hārīta served food to Kapiñjala and me. Kapiñjala stayed for some time and then, looking at me lovingly, said, “My presence too is required in the ceremony. So I will take leave”. Saying so, he rose quickly into the sky and proceeded towards the domain of the gods.

I was fondly brought up by Hārīta and other sages and so, with time, my feathers grew well and I acquired the ability to fly. The repercussions of past actions are indeed inviolable! My

mind was once again drawn to Mahāśvetā. One day at dawn, unbeknownst to anyone, I flew out of the hermitage and headed north, intending to go to Mahāśvetā's abode. Until that day, I was not used to flying even a short distance; since I had just begun to fly, my wings grew tired after I had covered a short distance; I was plagued by thirst and became short of breath. I immediately alighted on the bank of a pool, drank water and assuaged my hunger with fruits and vegetables found there. Deciding to have a short rest, I then perched on the low branch of a dense tree growing there. Due to exhaustion, I fell into a deep sleep. When I woke up, I found myself ensnared in a trap-net. Standing in front of me was a person who was rugged and dark like the God of death. Though feeling hopeless and thinking, "I am done for", I asked him, "Sir! You seem to be a good-hearted person! Who are you? I do not think that you caught me for my flesh. If it were so, you would not have waited until I got up from sleep! If it was done for amusement, let it stop here. Kindly untie these ropes and free me".

He replied, "I am a Caṇḍāḷa by birth. I trapped you neither for your flesh nor for recreation. A short distance away, there is a settlement of outcastes, which has a leader. I am his employee. He has a young daughter. Someone had told her that you are a very unusual parrot. She has ordered several persons to bring you to her. As long as you stayed in Sage Jābāli's hermitage, no one dared to go there. It is my good fortune that you left the hermitage and came into my possession. I will take you to her. She will then decide whether to cage you or free you". I was crushed by his words and thought disconsolately, "Alas! I was Puṇḍarīka, the son of the great sage Śvetaketu and a resident in the abode of gods! As if being born as a bird is not enough, I should now enter the hamlet of Caṇḍāḷas! Fie! I deserve to die!" Addressing him again, I asked, "Sir! I have memories of my previous birth; I was born in the lineage of sages. If you release me from this great peril, you will acquire the highest merit; even in this world, you will not come to harm if you let me go in this jungle without anyone's knowledge". In reply to my pleadings, he said, "Oh! What is this? You are prattling like a fool! As if I can disobey my master's order if no one sees me! Indeed, what ethics have you learnt?" Saying so, he carried me into the settlement.

My heart shuddered upon seeing the unimaginably disgusting hamlet. Nets for catching fish and birds were being woven in one part. The gruesome sight of animals being killed for their flesh by a group of people bearing spears and daggers sickened my entire being. The fences of every house were constructed out of white bones. Garbage mounds filled with skulls, bone shards and tattered skins caused the whole area to emit a foul stench.

Hunters and their womenfolk were drinking alcohol and loitering about at whim. Captured by him, I entered the hamlet as if going into a cremation ground. I fearfully thought, "Will that hunter-woman, refraining from acting according to her caste, mercifully set me free? Am I so fortunate?" Even as I was tormented by such thoughts, he took me to the fearsome-looking hunter-woman, saluted her and handed me over, saying, "Here is the parrot that you wanted".

With a beaming face, she said, “Well done”, took me from him as though lovingly and addressed me thus: “Dear son! You are trapped! Hereafter I will stop you from wandering as you wish”. She then put me in a wooden cage, saying “Stay here without worries!” and suspended the cage with half-dry, foul-smelling cowhide straps. I thought, “Ah! What shall I do now? There is no use pleading. It is only because I can converse intelligently that she had me captured. My ability to speak has proved to be a great danger. Am I her son or brother or relative? Why should she worry if an insignificant creature is hurt? Henceforth, silence is the best option. She may get frustrated and release me. If I open my mouth, she will never let me go. The only reason for these endless troubles is my failure to control my five senses; hence I will tightly restrain my speech as well as other faculties”. Vowing thus, I remained silent.

Then, even though they spoke to me and harassed me by various threats, I did not utter a word but merely screeched. Refusing whatever food they offered, I starved the whole day. Next day too, the mealtime passed; my body and mind were fatigued. The Caṇḍāḷa woman brought different varieties of fruits and cool, fragrant water and, like an affectionate mother, spoke to me thus: “When hungry or thirsty, even animals and birds, which lack intelligence, do not reject food when available. I am aware that you are an unusual bird which remembers its past life and is endowed with intellect; nevertheless, you were born as a bird without the power of discrimination. Is there anything here which you, as a bird, cannot eat? You did not practise wisdom and self-control in the beginning itself. Now, as a consequence of your actions, you have been born as a parrot. Besides, none of the food that I have brought can be shunned as having been handled by an untouchable. Even ascetics accept fruits and vegetables from everyone. So, dear parrot! Do not unnecessarily kill yourself by hunger or thirst”. Surprised by her noble words, which were rare in her caste, I accepted only the food to sustain myself; but I did not give up my silence.

Sixth Sarga

As days passed, I reached adulthood. The hunter-woman continued to nurture me lovingly like a mother. Gradually, I began to suspect that she was some divine lady in disguise. Then, one day at dawn, I woke up to find that the offending wooden cage had transformed into this beautiful gold cage. The entire hamlet was dazzling like a celestial city. King Śūdraka! Your Majesty has seen the Caṇḍāḷa woman. I too was wonderstruck. Eager to find out about this amazing spectacle, I decided to give up my silence. Without giving me a chance to open my mouth, she brought me in this gold cage to Your Majesty. This is what happened. Now I do not know who this maiden is, why she pretended to belong to an untouchable caste, why she caged me or why she even brought me to the royal court. Like Your Majesty, I too am eager to know these things” concluded the parrot.

King Śūdraka was extremely surprised upon hearing this narrative. Impelled by the curiosity to learn the other details, he sent his female gatekeeper to bring the hunter-woman. Shortly afterwards, the woman appeared before the king, stunning everyone present with her radiant form. She then ascended into the sky and, hovering there, uttered these words to the king in a resonantly melodious voice, “O jewel of the world! O lord of Rohiṇī! O beloved of Kādambarī! Through this parrot, you have come to know the story of your past as well as that of this senseless creature. You heard this bird recount its foolish behaviour when, unable to control its mind, it once again disobeyed the orders of its father, Sage Śvetaketu, and left Sage Jābālī’s hermitage in an attempt to go back to its wife. I am Mahālakṣmī, the mother of this wretch. Knowing of its stubborn efforts, I hit upon this plan. No sinner halts his behaviour unless he realises his mistakes and repents for them. To prevent this bird from accumulating further sin after suffering the consequences of its past wicked deeds, I thought it would be wise to confine it to the mortal world and so imprisoned it in the settlement. Now, its earlier vile actions have finished yielding results and the curse that afflicted you both has also been lifted. Since the time for joy has arrived, I decided that it would be good for both of you to be at the same place and so brought it here. To avoid contact with this world, I had to pretend to be an outcaste. May you both be free from old age and disease and enjoy life with your beloved wives”. With these words, she rose into the sky and quickly disappeared.

The entire gathering was awestruck by her radiance, countenance and utterance. Śūdraka instantly and fully recalled his past life. His mind sought refuge in Kādambarī. His face grew pale. Rivulets of perspiration flowed from his body. He lost interest in his royal duties, which utterly surprised and confused Kumārapālita and other ministers. In short, his body ceased all movements and became inert like a log. His soul, luminous like the moon, sped towards the body which was waiting elsewhere for Kādambarī. The parrot Vaiśampāyana too, visualising itself as Puṇḍarīka, remembered its love for Mahāśvetā and shared the same end as Śūdraka.

At the same time, as Kādambarī continued to lovingly and patiently take care of Candrāpīḍa’s body on the bank of the Acchodam Lake, the spring season arrived, delighting the minds of the onlookers. One evening, the body of Candrāpīḍa, who seemed to be sleeping, became more and more lustrous like the moon. Kādambarī bathed the body and adorned it with fragrant flowers, sandal paste and white silk. After having a bath to purify herself, Kādambarī gazed at the noble form of Candrāpīḍa, her heart overflowing with love and eyes with tears, and finally embraced it. At the same instant, life returned to the body and he regained his faculties. Like lotuses blooming at sunrise, the eyes slowly opened. Upon seeing Candrāpīḍa move his limbs and get up from the rock-bed, as though waking from sleep, Kādambarī was taken aback. Looking at her, he asked, “Kādambarī! Why do you fear me? You are born in the lineage that emerged from the nectar; that is why your touch restored my life. Though this body was lifeless for these many days due to the curse, the touch of your ambrosial hands protected it from decay. Now this world and the realm of the Moon-god are ready to delight

you. Besides, the sacrificial oblations made by your dearest friend Mahāśvetā's father have ended her beloved's curse". Even while the Moon-god, residing in Candrāpīḍa's body, said these words, everyone beheld Puṇḍarīka, his form effulgent like the moon due to his stay in the Moon-god's domain, descend from the sky, holding Kapiñjala's arm. The string of pearls that he had got from Mahāśveta and worn when dying earlier was now adorning his chest.

As soon as he touched the earth, Candrāpīḍa hugged him and requested, "Friend! Puṇḍarīka! Though you were my son-in-law in the first birth, you must continue the ardent friendship that we shared in the next birth". Kādambarī ran to Mahāśvetā, embraced her and heartily lauded her great fortune. Keyūraka left for Hemakūṭa to convey the happy news to Haṁsa and Citraratha. Madalekhā too hastened to Tārāpīḍa – who was chanting the *Mṛtyuñjaya-mantram* along with others and praying for his son's life – bowed to them and delighted them with the news that Candrāpīḍa and Vaiśampāyana had come back to life.

Despite his frailness due to old age and austerities, Tārāpīḍa quickly reached Mahāśvetā's hermitage with his wife and ministers, his heart leaping with excitement at this glad news. The moment his father arrived, an overjoyed Candrāpīḍa prostrated at his feet. Moving aside slightly, the king lifted Candrāpīḍa, held him tightly and said, "My dear! You were born as my son either due to your curse or because of my good deeds. Yet, you are the guardian of the world, fit to be honoured by everyone". Even as the king spoke, Vilāsavatī embraced her son and kissed his forehead, thereby experiencing immense happiness. Candrāpīḍa saluted his mother and ministers. Śukanāsa also blessed him joyfully. Candrāpīḍa took Puṇḍarīka by the hand, brought him to his parents, Śukanāsa, Manoramā and others and introduced him with a smile, "This is our Vaiśampāyana". Puṇḍarīka prostrated before Śukanāsa and the others.

At that moment, Kapiñjala approached Śukanāsa and said, "Sir! Sage Śvetaketu has sent this request to you: "Even though I brought up Puṇḍarīka, he is really Śukanāsa's son. He too has developed affinity only for you. Confident that you will treat him as Vaiśampāyana, I sent him to you when his curse ended. He will live as long as the moon exists in this world". This is Sage Śvetaketu's message to you". Śukanāsa replied, "Kapiñjala! I am extremely fortunate. The venerable sage has blessed me with this command". While all of them had gathered and were happily discussing the past unusual events, no one noticed that the night had passed. At dawn the next day, Haṁsa and Citraratha arrived with their wives, Gaurī and Madirā, and a huge retinue of Gandharvas. The two Gandharva kings were elated at having providentially secured the association of the noble Tārāpīḍa and Śukanāsa.

Turning towards Tārāpīḍa, Citraratha said, "O Emperor of Bhārata! When my palace is near, it is not proper to celebrate this special day in this jungle. After we celebrate the marriage of these couples at my house, all of you can go wherever you want". Tārāpīḍa said in reply, "O King of Gandharvas! Even the forest becomes a palace if a joyous event takes place there.

Furthermore, I have handed over all domestic duties to your son-in-law. So please take him to your house and gladly perform his wedding”. Accordingly, Cītraratha took Candrāpīḍa to Hemakūṭa and, along with Kādambarī, delightedly gave away his kingdom as well. Haṁsa too took Puṇḍarīka, performed his marriage with Mahāśvetā and turned over his kingdom to him. But both of them (Candrāpīḍa and Puṇḍarīka), fully content at having been united with their beloveds for whom they had yearned in the last two lifetimes, accepted nothing else.

While they were all living happily thus, one day Kādambarī, looking downcast, asked the Moon-god, who was in the form of Candrāpīḍa, “My Lord! We faced several sorrows before finally uniting. But why is the poor Patrālekḥā absent from our midst?” Candrāpīḍa replied, “Kādambarī! How can she be seen here? She is Rohiṇī. Aware that, being born as the only son in this mortal world, I would feel lonely, she took birth to serve me; she is Patrālekḥā. She desired to accompany me when I was reborn as Śūdraka, but I persuaded her to remain in the Moon-god’s realm. You will see her there”. Hearing this, Kādambarī was consoled.

Thus Candrāpīḍa, after undergoing the auspicious wedding rites, lived very happily for many days in Hemakūṭa. Words cannot not describe the beauty of Kādambarī and Mahāśvetā, both of whom had discarded the ascetic’s attire and were clad in exquisite garments and scintillating jewels. Later, Candrāpīḍa and Puṇḍarīka took leave of their contented parents-in-law, returned to the forest where their fathers were stationed and offered their obeisance. Extolling the kings who had experienced untold sufferings for his sake, Candrāpīḍa then honoured them in various ways and, in their presence, relinquished his kingdom to Puṇḍarīka. From then on, he spent some time in Ujjayinī out of love for his birthplace, a few days at Hemakūṭa due to respect for the Gandharva king, some time in the domain of the moon to gladden Rohiṇī and other times at various other scenic places as per the wishes of Kādambarī, with whom he lived an absolutely felicitous life. Like him, Puṇḍarīka and Mahāśvetā, as well as all others, lived happily for a long time, with no lack of any comfort.

Details of the Anecdotes in the *Kādambarī*

Triśanku: He was a king born in the Solar (Ikshvaku) dynasty and the father of Hariścandra. He prayed to his family preceptor, Sage Vasiṣṭha to perform the sacrifice that would enable him to enter the celestial world in a mortal body. But the sage refused. The king then went to the sage's sons and requested them. They not only turned him away but also cursed him to become an outcaste for arrogantly disobeying their father. When the king approached Viśvāmitra and entreated him, the latter, remembering that Triśanku had earlier saved his family from poverty during famine, agreed to his prayer, performed the sacrifice and made him ascend towards the realm of the gods. After he had risen to a great height, Indra refused him permission to enter his domain and had him pushed down. Viśvāmitra prevented him from falling down to earth and made him stay in the sky. From that time onwards, it is said that Triśanku remains upside down in the southern direction. (*Rāmāyaṇam, Bālakāṇḍam*) [*Kādambarī*, page 13]

Ilvala and Vātāpi: These two were wicked demons. Ilvala would assume the form of a Brāhmaṇa and Vātāpi used to transform himself into a goat. Ilvala would then sacrifice the goat and serve its flesh to many Brāhmaṇas as a part of honouring the guests. After everyone had finished their meal, Ilvala would summon Vātāpi, whereupon the latter would tear their abdomens and emerge in his original form. In this manner, countless Brāhmaṇas fell victim to these demons. Once Agastya went as their guest and, with the power of his austerities, digested the flesh of Vātāpi. That put an end to the suffering caused by these demons to the Brāhmaṇas. (*Mahābhāratam, Vanaparva, chapter 99*) [*Kādambarī*, page 16]

Vālī and Sugrīva: Vālī was an extremely powerful king of the monkeys and the elder brother of Sugrīva. He had worsted Rāvaṇa several times. Once, Vālī went to fight a demon called Māyāvī. Since he did not return for many days, Sugrīva assumed that he had been killed by the demon and ascended the throne. Eventually, Vālī returned and drove away Sugrīva, who hid in the Rṣyamūka Mountain with four of his friends, including Hanuman. Rṣyamūka is a hill near the sacred lake Pampā. (*Rāmāyaṇam, Āraṇyakāṇḍam, sarga 72*) [*Kādambarī*, page 16]

The palm-grove felled by Śrī Rāma: Śrī Rāma promised Sugrīva that He would vanquish Vālī and make Sugrīva the ruler of the monkey-kingdom. Doubting if Śrī Rāma could defeat the immensely mighty Vālī, Sugrīva said that he would believe Śrī Rāma's ability only if the latter could topple the nearby seven palm trees with His arrows. Śrī Rāma mowed down those trees with a single arrow, astounding the monkeys. (*Rāmāyaṇam, Kiṣkindhākāṇḍam, sarga 12*) [*Kādambarī*, page 17]

Ekalavya: The son of Hiranyadhanus, the king of hunters, he approached Droṇācārya, an expert in the science of archery, with a request to teach him the skill. Knowing that he was a hunter, Droṇācārya refused. Nevertheless, Ekalavya unswervingly decided that Droṇācārya would be his teacher. He created an idol of Droṇācārya out of mud, worshipped it daily and practised archery enthusiastically and faithfully in front of the image. Eventually he became extremely proficient in it. (*Mahābhāratam, Ādiparva*, chapter 132) [*Kādambarī*, page 18]

Kāṇḍava Forest: This is a huge jungle and a part of the region Kurukṣetra. It so happened that the Fire-god, Agni, suffered from indigestion after having consumed endless quantities of ghee during the sacrifices that had continued for twelve long years. He prayed to Brahmā, who told him that if he burnt down the Kāṇḍava Forest, he would be cured. Accordingly, when he started to torch the forest, Indrā arranged for rains to prevent its destruction. Once again, following the advice of Brahmā, Agni assumed the form of a Brāhmaṇa and prayed to Arjuna and Kṛṣṇa, whereupon Arjuna discharged a shower of arrows to build an enclosure over the forest so that rainwater could not get inside. This helped Agni to consume the Kāṇḍava Forest and reduce it to ashes. (*Mahābhāratam, Ādiparva*) [*Kādambarī*, page 19]

Rṣyaśṛṅga: He was the son of Sage Vibhāṇḍaka. Once, when the region of Anga reeled under famine, a group of Brāhmaṇas advised King Romapāda to bring Sage Rṣyaśṛṅga to that land, which would produce rains and end the famine. Adopting various ruses, the king brought the sage to his country. Following this, copious rains fell on that region and it once again became prosperous. Delighted with this, the king gave his daughter Śāntā – whom he had adopted from Daśaratha – in marriage to the sage. It was Sage Rṣyaśṛṅga who performed the *Putrakāmeṣṭi-yāga* for Daśaratha, which blessed the latter with progeny. (*Rāmāyaṇam, Bālakāṇḍam, sarga 15*) [*Kādambarī*, page 23]

Paraśurāma and Reṇukā: Sage Jamadagni married Reṇukā, who was the daughter of King Prasenajit. Paraśurāma was born to this couple. He is the sixth incarnation of Viṣṇu. He is known for his strength and resolve. (*Śrī Viṣṇupurāṇam, amśa 4*) [*Kādambarī*, page 25]

Sthūlaśiras: A sage by this name was once roaming in the jungle to cut Darbha grass, when he heard loud, frightening screams, “We have fallen into an abyss. Please save us”. When he looked around, he saw a few emaciated persons suspended upside down in the sky. They told him, “We are your ancestors. Since you are childless, we may end up falling into the hell called ‘Put’ after your lifetime”. He then requested Rambhā to marry him. She replied that she was on an extremely urgent errand for the celestials and asked him to wait until she returned. As she took a very long time to return, the sage cursed her to become a mare. There is no information about the city of Mṛttikāvātī. However, this name has been mentioned by Bāṇa in the 6th *ucchvāsa* of his *Harṣacaritam*. [*Kādambarī*, page 27]

The Kingdom of Kulūta: This ancient kingdom is on the upper bank of the Sutlej River. Today, it is called ‘Kulu’ and is situated to the south-west of the state of Cambā. (Alexander Cunningham, *The Ancient Geography of India*, page 142) [*Kādambarī*, page 29]

Manmatha’s Destruction by Śiva: Once, Lord Śiva was in deep meditation on the Himālaya Mountain. At that time, he was attended on by Pārvatī, the daughter of Himavān. In her youth and exceedingly beautiful, she was acutely desirous of marrying Lord Śiva. The celestials wanted to use that occasion to create a valiant commander for their army. Mahendra, the king of the celestials, ordered Manmatha to make Īśvara (Śiva) fall in love with Pārvatī. Manmatha went to Himālaya, hid himself in the flowering plants during the alluring spring season and, when Pārvatī was charmingly poised in front of Lord Śiva, shot the arrow called ‘Mohanāstram’ on the latter. Immediately, Paramaśiva felt himself attracted to Pārvatī; but as he wondered what could have caused his mind to stray, he realised that Manmatha was responsible for this lapse. He opened his eyes and beheld Manmatha standing in front with his bow bent in readiness. Enraged with Manmatha for having disturbed his meditation and distracted his mind, Śiva opened his third eye, which emitted fire and reduced Manmatha to ashes. (*Kumārasambhava*, sarga 4) [*Kādambarī*, page 36]

Pramadvarā: Long ago, Menakā became pregnant through a Gandharva called ‘Viśvāvasu’. She had a daughter, whom she abandoned on the bank of a river. A sage named ‘Sthūlakeśa’ chanced upon the infant. He took her to his hermitage, named her ‘Pramadvarā’ and brought her up. She was betrothed to Ruru (the son of Pramati), who belonged to the lineage of Sage Bhṛgu. But she accidentally stepped on a snake in the hermitage, which bit her, resulting in her death. Immediately, as per the advice of a heavenly messenger, Ruru offered half his life-span to Pramadvarā, which revived her. (*Mahābhāratam*, *Ādiparva*, chapter 9) [*Kādambarī*, page 43]

Sāndīpini: A Brāhmaṇa and a resident of the city of Avantī, he taught archery to Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma. For his fees, he asked them to bring back his dead son. As the child was killed by the demon named Pañcajana at a place called ‘Prabhāsa’, Kṛṣṇa entered the ocean, went to the netherworld and destroyed Pañcajana. However, Sāndīpini’s son was not found there. Immediately, Kṛṣṇa went to the city of Yama (the God of death), defeated Yama, rescued the son and restored him to his father. (*Śrī Viṣṇupurāṇam*, *amśa* 5) [*Kādambarī*, page 43]

Mahābhīṣa: He was a king who had successfully completed one thousand horse-sacrifices (*Aśvamedha-yāga*) and one hundred imperial sacrifices (*Rājasūya-yajña*). Hence he became one of the celestials. Once, all the celestials went to meet Brahmā; Mahābhīṣa was among them. On that occasion, Gangādevī (the presiding goddess of the river Gangā) appeared before them in her divine and majestic beauty. A gust of wind caused her upper garment to slip off from her body. As it was improper to look at her in that condition, all the celestials,

except Mahābhīṣa, lowered their heads bashfully, Mahābhīṣa continued to wantonly gaze at her. Angered by his unbecoming behaviour, Brahmā cursed him to be born as a human being once again, with Gangā as his wife, and to experience sadness at being unable to enjoy her company. He was reborn as Śantanu and was the father of the venerable Bhīṣmācārya (*Mahābhāratam, Ādiparva*, chapter 96) [*Kādambarī*, page 65]

Nahuṣa: This king was the grandson of Purūravas and the son of Āyus. He had performed special sacrifices. Once, Indra had to hide under the ocean to rid himself of the sin of having committed ‘*Brahmahatyā*’ by killing Vṛtrāsura, a Brāhmaṇa. At that time, a few Brāhmaṇas approached Nahuṣa and persuaded him to take the position of Indra. After he became Indra, he insisted that Indrāṇī marry him. She told him that she would wed him only if he arrived in the palanquin carried by the seven sages, with all the paraphernalia befitting Indra. Abiding by her wish, he set out in the palanquin. Urging them to go faster, he insolently said, “*sarpa sarpa*” (which means ‘hurry, hurry’) and kicked Sage Agastya. Furious at this disrespectful act, the sage cursed him, “May you become a *sarpa*”! (Another meaning of the word ‘*sarpa*’ is ‘snake’.) Nahuṣa transformed into a python and fell to the earth. (*Mahābhāratam, Vanaparva*, chapter 181) [*Kādambarī*, page 65]

Index of Characters in the *Kādambarī*

Male Characters

Candrāpīḍa	Hero; Kādambarī's husband
Vaiśampāyana	Son of the minister; Candrāpīḍa's friend, parrot
Śūdraka	King of the city of Vidiśā
Kumārapālita	Chief minister at the court of Śūdraka
Tārāpīḍa	King of Ujjayinī; Candrāpīḍa's father
Śukanāsa	Minister at Tārāpīḍa's court; Vaiśampāyana's father
Candra	The moon; Rohiṇī's husband
Puṇḍarīka	Son of a sage; Mahāśvetā's husband
Kapiñjala	Son of a sage; Puṇḍarīka's friend
Śvetaketu	Celestial sage; Puṇḍarīka's father
Jābāli	Sage who recounts the history of Vaiśampāyana
Hārīta	Son of Jābāli; Vaiśampāyana's saviour
Jālapāda	One of the disciples of Jābāli
Hemajaṭa	Hunters belonging to Suvarṇapuram
Citraratha	King of the Gandharvas; Kādambarī's father
Haṁsa	Another king of the Gandharvas; Mahāśvetā's father
Valāhaka	Tārāpīḍa's army commander
Meghanāda	Candrāpīḍa's army commander
Mangaḷaka	Minister Śukanāsa's attendant
Parivardhaka	Candrāpīḍa's groom
Mātanga	Leader of the hunters
Kailāsa	Chamberlain of the queens' apartments
Tamil priest	Person of Drāviḍa descent at the Kālī temple
Tvaritaka	Candrāpīḍa's attendant
Kṣīroda	Citraratha's attendant
Keyūra	Gandharva youth who bears Kādambarī's lute
Indrāyudha	Candrāpīḍa's horse

Female Characters

Kādambarī	Heroine; Candrāpīḍa's wife
Mahāśvetā	Puṇḍarīka's wife; Kādambarī's dearest friend
Caṇḍāḷa maiden	Woman who brings the parrot to Śūdraka
Vilāsavatī	Tārāpīḍa's chief queen

Manoramā	Śukanāsa's wife; Vaiśampāyana's mother
Patralekhā	Candrāpīḍa's confidante
Makarikā	Woman who carries the betel-box for Vilāsavatī
Kulavardhanā	Chief of Vilāsavatī's handmaidens
Muni	Citraratha's mother
Ariṣṭā	Haṁsa's mother
Gaurī	Mahāśvetā's mother
Madirā	Kādambarī's mother
Madalekhā	Kādambarī's confidante
Taraḷikā	Mahāśvetā's confidante
Tamālikā	Another friend of Kādambarī
Revatī	The Moon-god's wife
Mahālakṣmī	Puṇḍarīka's mother

Places

Vidiśā	The capital city of King Śūdraka
Ujjayinī	The capital city of King Tārāpīḍa
Avantī	The country whose capital is Ujjayinī
Vetravatī	A river in Vidiśā
Śīprā	A river near Ujjayinī
Vindhyāṭavī	The forest on the Vindhyā Mountain
Agastyāśrama	A part of Vindhyāṭavī
Pampāśaras	A Lotus-lake near the hermitage of Jābāli
Silk-cotton tree	The tree where the parrot Vaiśampāyana resided
Hemakūṭa	Abode of the Gandharva kings
Suvarṇapuram	A city of hunters situated on the northern side
Acchodam	A vast lake near Hemakūṭa
Candrābrabhā	A resplendent place on the slope of the Kailāsa Mountain
Caitraratha	An extensive garden on the bank of the Acchodam
Śrīmaṇḍapa	The royal pavilion of Candrāpīḍa and Kādambarī (each had their own Śrīmaṇḍapa)
Himagṛha	The winter palace in Kādambarī's palace
Kālī temple	Situated between Daśapuram and Acchodam
Daśapuram	A town near Ujjayinī
Mahodaya	The palace hall in the realm of the Moon-god
Subrahmaṇyālaya	A temple located on the bank of the Śīprā River