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THE BAITAL PACHCHISI.

INTRODUCTORY TALE.

THERE was a city named Dhārānagar, the king of which was Gandharb Sen. He had four queens, and by them six sons, one more learned and more powerful than another. Fate ordaining, after some days the king died, and his eldest son, Shank by name, became king in his stead. Again, after some days, a younger brother, Vikram, after slaying his eldest brother, himself became king, and began to govern well. Day by day his dominion so increased that he became king of all India;¹ and, after fixing his government on a firm basis, he established an æra.

After some time the king thought to himself that he ought to visit those countries of which he had

¹ *Jambudwip* is the name of one of the seven divisions of the world, and implies the central division, or the known world; according to the Baud dhas, it is confined to India.

heard.¹ Having determined on this, he made over his throne to his younger brother Bharthari, and himself assuming the guise of a devotee, set out to wander from land to land and forest to forest.

A Brahman was practising austerities in that city. One day a deity brought and presented to him the fruit of immortality. He then took the fruit home and said to his wife, "Whoever shall eat this will become immortal; the deity told me this at the time of giving the fruit." Hearing this, the Brahman's wife wept excessively, and began to say, "This is a great evil we have to suffer! For, becoming immortal, how long shall we go on begging alms? Nay, to die is better than this; (for) if we die, then we escape from the trials of the world." Then the Brahman said, "I took the fruit and brought it; but, hearing your words, I am bereft of understanding. Now I will do whatever you bid." Then his wife said to him, "Give this fruit to the king, and in exchange for it take wealth, whereby we may enjoy the advantages of this world as well as that to come."

Hearing this speech, the Brahman went to the king and gave him his blessing; (and) after explaining the circumstances of the fruit, said, "Great king! do you take this fruit and give me some wealth; there is happiness for me in your being long-lived." The

¹ *Lit.*—The king thought in his mind, "I should travel over those countries whose names I am hearing."

king having given the Brahman a lakh of rupees and dismissed him, entered the female apartments, and giving the fruit to the queen whom he loved most, said, "O queen! do thou eat this, for thou wilt become immortal, and wilt continue young for ever." The queen, hearing this, took the fruit from the king, (and) he came out into his court.

A certain kotwāl was the paramour of that queen: to him she gave the fruit. It so happened that a courtesan was the kotwāl's mistress; he gave the fruit to her and described its virtues. That courtesan thought to herself that the fruit was a fitting present for the king. Determining this in her mind, she went and presented the fruit to the king. His majesty took the fruit and dismissed her with much wealth; and contemplating the fruit, and pondering within himself, he became sick of the world, and began to say, "The perishable wealth of this world is of no use whatever; for through it one must ultimately fall into hell. Preferable to this is the practising of religious duties and the biding in the remembrance of the Deity, whereby it may be well in the future."

Coming to this determination, he entered the female apartments and asked the queen what she had done with the fruit (he gave her). She replied, "I ate it up." Then the king showed the queen that fruit. She, on the instant of setting eyes on it, stood aghast, and was unable to make any reply. After that, the

king having come forth, had the fruit washed, and ate it, and abandoning his kingdom and throne, assumed the guise of a devotee, and betook himself unaccompanied, and without holding communication with a soul, to the jungle.

The throne of Vikram became vacant. When this news reached king Indra, he sent a demon to guard Dhārānagar. He kept watch over the city day and night. To be brief, the report of this matter spread from country to country, that king Bharthari had abandoned his government and gone away. King Vikram, too, heard the news, and immediately came to his country. It was then midnight: he was entering the city at that hour, when that demon called out, "Who art thou? and whither goest thou? Stand still (and) mention thy name." Then the king said, "It is I, king Vikram; I am entering my own city: who art thou, to challenge me?" Then the demon replied, saying, "The deities have sent me to guard this city: if you are really king Vikram, first fight with me, and then enter the city."

On hearing these words the king girt tight his waist-cloth and challenged the demon. Thereupon the demon, too, stood up to him. The battle began. At last the king threw the demon and sat upon his breast. Then he said, "O king! thou hast thrown me; I grant thy life as a boon." Upon this the king, laughing, said, "Thou art gone mad; whose life dost

thou grant? Did I will, I could slay thee; how canst thou grant me life?" Then the demon said, "O king! I am about to save thee from death; first attend to a tale of mine, and thereafter rule over the whole world free from all care." At length the king set him free, and began to listen attentively to his tale.

Then the demon addressed him thus: "There was in this city a very liberal king, named Chandrabhān. One day he went forth casually into the jungle; when, what should he behold but an ascetic hanging, head downwards, from a tree, and sustaining himself by inhaling smoke alone—neither receiving anything from any one, nor speaking to any one. Perceiving this state of his, the king returned home, and seating himself in his court, said, "Whoever will bring this ascetic (here), shall receive a lakh of rupees." A courtesan hearing these words, came to the king and spake thus: "If I obtain your majesty's leave, I will have a child begotten by that ascetic, and bring it here mounted on his shoulder."

"The king was astonished at hearing this speech, and binding the courtesan to (the fulfilment of her contract to) bring the ascetic by giving her a flake of betel-leaf,¹ dismissed her. She went to that wild,

¹ I am obliged to render thus periphrastically the words *tapasvī ke lāne ke wāste bīrā dekar*. The *bīrā* is a betel-leaf, made up with a preparation of areca-nut, chunam, cloves, &c. It is given and accepted as a pledge for the performance of an act.

and reaching the ascetic's place, perceived that he was really hanging head-downwards, neither eating nor drinking anything, and that he was withered up. In short, that courtesan prepared some sweetmeat, and put it into the ascetic's mouth: he, finding it sweet, ate it up with zest. Thereupon the courtesan applied more (to his mouth). Thus for two days did she continue feeding him with sweetmeat, by eating which he gained a certain degree of strength. Then, opening his eyes, and descending from the tree, he inquired of her, 'On what business hast thou come hither?'"

"The courtesan replied, 'I am the daughter of a god; I was practising religious austerities in heaven; I have now come into this wild.' The devotee said again, 'Where is thy hut? Show me it.' Thereupon the courtesan brought the ascetic to her hut, and commenced feeding him with savoury (*lit.* six-flavoured) viands, so that the ascetic left off inhaling smoke, and took to eating food and drinking water daily. Eventually Cupid troubled him; upon which he had carnal intercourse with her, (and) vitiated his austerities; and the courtesan became pregnant. In ten months a boy was born. When he was some months old, the woman said to the devotee, 'O saint! you should now set out on a pilgrimage whereby all the sins of the flesh may be blotted out.'"

"Deluding him with such words, she mounted the

boy on his shoulder, and started for the king's court, whence she had set out, after taking up the gage to accomplish this matter. When she came before the king, his majesty recognised her from a distance, and seeing the child on the shoulder of the devotee, began saying to the courtiers, 'Just see! this is the very same courtesan who went to bring the devotee!' They replied; 'O king! you are quite right; this is the very same; and be pleased to observe that all that she had stated in your majesty's presence ere she set forth, has come to pass.'"

"When the ascetic heard these remarks of the king and courtiers, he perceived that the king had adopted these measures to disturb his religious meditations. With these thoughts in his mind, the devotee returned from thence, and getting out of the city, slew the child, repaired to another jungle, and began to perform penance. And after some time that king died, and the devotee completed his penance."

"The short of the story is this, that you three men have been born under one asterism, one conjunction, and in one moment. You took birth in a king's house; the second was an oilman's (child); the third, the devotee, was born in a potter's house. You still govern here, while the oilman's son *was* the ruler of the infernal regions; but that potter, bringing his religious meditations to thorough perfection, has killed the oilman, turned him into a demon in a burning-

ground and placed him hanging head-downwards on a siris-tree, and is intent on killing you. If you escape him, you will rule. I have apprised you of all these circumstances; do not be careless with respect to them." Having narrated thus much, the demon departed. He (the king) entered his private palace.

When it was morn the king came forth, and took his seat (on the throne), and gave the order for a general court. As many servants as there were, great and small, all came and made their offerings in the presence, and festive music burst forth. An extraordinary gladness and rejoicing possessed the whole city, such that in every place, and every house, dance and song arose. After this the king began to govern justly.

It is related that one day an ascetic named Shāntshil appeared at the king's court with a fruit in his hand, and, presenting the fruit to the king, spread a cloth, and sat down there. After a short time he went away again. On his departure the king thought to himself that this was probably the person of whom the demon had spoken. Habouring this suspicion, he did not eat the fruit, and, summoning the steward, he gave it to him, with instructions to keep it carefully. The devotee, however, came constantly in this same manner, and left a fruit every day.

It so happened that one day the king went to inspect his stable, accompanied by some attendants.

During that interval the ascetic, too, arrived there, and presented the king with a fruit in the usual manner. He began tossing it in the air, when all of a sudden it fell from his hand on the ground, and a monkey took it up and broke it in pieces. So exquisite a ruby came out of it that the king and his attendants were astonished at the sight of its brilliance. Thereupon the king said to the devotee, "Why hast thou given me this ruby?"

On this he said, "O great king! it is written in the Shāstra that one should not go empty-handed to the following places, viz., those of kings, spiritual teachers, astrologers, physicians and daughters, for at these places one obtains benefit for benefit. Sire! why do you speak of a single ruby? As many fruits as I have given you, every one of them contains a jewel." Hearing these words, the king told the steward to bring all the fruits he had given to him. On receiving the king's order, the steward immediately brought them; and, having had the fruits broken open, he found a ruby in each. When he beheld so many rubies the king was excessively pleased, and, summoning a tester of precious stones, began having the rubies tested, saying the while, "Nothing will accompany one (from this world); integrity is the great essential in the world; tell me honestly, therefore, the exact value of each gem."

Hearing these words the jeweller said, "O king!

you have spoken the truth. He whose integrity is safe, his all is safe: integrity alone accompanies us, and that it is which proves of advantage in both worlds. Hear, O king! each gem is perfect as to colour, stone, and form. Were I to declare the value of each to be a crore of rupees, even that would not come up to the mark. Of a truth, each gem is worth a clime." Hearing this, the king was pleased beyond measure, and conferring a robe of honour on the jeweller, dismissed him; and taking the devotee's hand, he brought and seated him on the throne, and began thus: "My whole realm is not worth even one of these rubies; tell me, then, what is the explanation of this, that you, a religious mendicant, have presented me with so many gems?"

The ascetic said, "Your majesty! it is not proper to speak publicly of the following things, viz., magic and incantations, drugs employed in medicines, religious duties, family affairs, the eating of impure meats, evil speech which one has heard—all these things are not spoken of in public; I will tell you in private. Attend! it is a rule, that whatever is heard by three pairs of ears remains no secret; the words which reach two pairs of ears no man hears; while the contents of one pair of ears are unknown to Brahmā himself, not to speak of man." On hearing these words, the king took the devotee apart and began to say, "O holy man! you have given me so many rubies, and have

not once partaken of food even; you have put me to great shame! Let me know what it is you desire." The ascetic said, "Sire! I am about to practice magical arts in a large body-burning-ground on the bank of the river Godāvārī, whereby I shall acquire supernatural powers, and so I beg of you to pass one whole night with me; by your being near me my magic arts will succeed." Then the king said, "Very well; I will come: leave word with me of the day." The ascetic said, "Do you come to me, armed and unattended, on the Tuesday evening of the dark half of the month Bhādon." The king replied, "You may go; I will assuredly come, and alone."

Having thus exacted a promise from the king and taken leave, he, for his part, went into a temple and made preparations, and taking all necessaries with him, went and fixed himself in a place for burning bodies; while here the king began to ponder (over what had happened). In the meantime the moment (for him to depart) too, arrived. Upon this the king there and then girt on his sword, tightened the cloth he wore between his legs, and betook himself alone to the devotee by night, and greeted him. The devotee requested him to be seated, whereupon the king sat down, and then perceived goblins, evil spirits, and witches, in various frightful shapes, dancing around; while the ascetic, seated in the centre, was striking two skulls together by way of music. The king felt

no fear or alarm on beholding this state of things; but said to the devotee, "What command is there for me?" He replied, "O king! now that you have come, do this;—at a distance of two *kos* south of this place is a burning-ground, wherein is a siris-tree, on which a corpse is suspended; bring that (corpse) to me at once to this place, where I shall be performing my devotions." Having despatched the king thither, he himself settled down in devotional attitude and began muttering prayers.

For one thing, the darkness of the night was in itself terrifying; more than this, the downpour of the rain was as unceasing as if it would rain for once and all that night; whilst the goblins and ghosts, too, were creating such an uproar, that even daring heroes would have been agitated at the spectacle;—the king, however, went on his way. The snakes, which kept coming and twining themselves about his legs, he used to disentangle by repeating incantations. At length, when after passing somehow or other over a perilous road, the king reached the burning-ground, he perceived that goblins were constantly seizing men and destroying them; witches continually munching the livers of children; tigers were roaring, and elephants screaming. In short, when he noticed the tree, he perceived that every leaf and branch of it, from the root to the topmost twig, was burning furiously, while from all four sides arose a tumultuous cry of "Kill

him! kill him! Seize him! seize him! Take care he does not escape!"

The king had no fears on beholding that state of things; but he said to himself, "It may or may not be so, but (I am convinced) this is the same devotee about whom the demon spoke to me." And having gone close and observed, he perceived a corpse fastened by a string, and hanging head downwards. He was glad to see the corpse, thinking his trouble had been rewarded. Taking his sword and shield, he climbed the tree fearlessly, and struck such a blow with the sword that the rope was severed and the corpse fell down, and instantly began to weep aloud. On hearing his voice the king was pleased, and began to say to himself, "Well! this man at least is alive." Then, descending, he enquired of him who he was. He burst out laughing as soon as he heard (the question). The king was greatly astonished at this. Again the corpse climbed up the tree and suspended himself. The king, too, that instant climbed up, and clutching him under his arm, brought him down, and said, "Vile wretch! tell me who thou art." He made no reply. The king reflected and said to himself, "Perhaps this is the very oilman whom the demon said the devotee had deposited in the place where bodies are burnt." Thus reflecting, he bound him up in his mantle and brought him to the devotee. The man who displays

such courage will (be sure to) succeed in his undertakings.

Then the sprite¹ said, "Who art thou? and whither art thou taking me?" The king replied, "I am king Vikram, and am taking thee off to a devotee." He rejoined, "I will go on one condition,—if thou utterest a word on the way, I will come straight back." The king agreed to his condition and went off with him. Then the sprite said, "O king! those who are learned, discerning, and wise—their days are passed in the delight of song and the shāstras, while the days of the unwise and foolish are spent in dissipation and sleep. Hence, it is best that this long road should be beguiled by profitable converse: do you attend, O king! to the story I relate."

¹ *Betāl* or *baitāl*, is a sprite haunting cemeteries (or, rather, places where bodies are burned,) and animating dead bodies.

TALE I.

"THERE was a king of Banāras, named Pratāpmukut; and Bajra-mukut was the name of his son, whose queen's name was Mahādevī. One day the prince, accompanied by his minister's son, went to the chase, and advanced far into a jungle, in the midst of which he beheld a beautiful tank, on the margin of which wild geese, brāhmanī ducks, male and female, cranes and water-fowl were, one and all, disporting; on all four sides *ghāts* of solid masonry were constructed: within the tank, the lotus was in full bloom: on the sides were planted trees of different kinds, under the dense shade of which the breezes came cool and refreshing, while birds were warbling on the boughs; and in the forest bloomed flowers of varied hues, on which whole swarms of bees were buzzing;—(such was the scene) when they arrived by the margin of that tank, and washed their hands and faces, and re-ascended."

"On that spot was a temple sacred to Mahādeva. Fastening their horses, and entering the temple, they paid adoration to Mahādeva, and came out. While