

**THE  
LION-KINGS OF LANKA**

**A POEM IN TWO EPISODES**

**By  
THEO. W. LA TOUCHE**

(WITH A FOREWORD BY  
M. PAUL DARE, NEWS EDITOR OF *The Times of India*.)

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## FOREWORD

IT is with some trepidation that I pen this foreword to the work of my friend and colleague, Mr. La Touche, whose knowledge of Indian mythological literature so far transcends my own. Proof-reading is usually an ordeal, but when I responded to his kind request that I should see the proofs of this work through the press, I found it a sheer delight, for the story grips one as one reads, and surely no more appropriate form for its setting could be chosen than that adopted by the author: the Spenserian epic metre. There is indeed in this story a breadth of canvas, a noble scale that, could they have read it, would have appealed spontaneously to the hearts of Malory and Spenser, and Mr. La Touche has effectively conveyed it, without losing any of the deep and essentially Hindu symbolism that underlies all these mythological epic tales.

As he himself remarks, the resemblance to certain Greek legends is so striking as to render comment upon it almost superfluous; but one notes also how much more refined and spiritual is even the story of the union between the princess and the lion than any parallel in the materialistic Greek deology. One feels that Hellenistic culture borrowed much from Eastern sources, transformed, and in many cases degraded it; and the fact that the *Mahawamsa* only dates from the fifth century A.D. means nothing, for

all great epic traditions are handed down orally for centuries before they are codified into writing.

Students of Hindu mythology will be struck by the extraordinary resemblance between the central portion of *The Lion-Kings of Lanka* and the *Mahābhārata* story of Kṛishṇa as the eighth incarnation of Viṣṇu at the end of the Dvāpara, or third age of the world. According to this legend, not given in the earlier portions, but found in the Purāṇas, particularly book 10 of the Bhāgavatapurāṇa, Kṛishṇa was the eighth son of Devakī, one of the two wives of Vasudeva, who was the descendant of Yadu and Puru, founders of the Lunar Dynasty. It was predicted that one of these eight sons would kill Kansa, king of Mathurā, and cousin of Devakī. Kansa therefore imprisoned Vasudeva and his wife and slew their first six children ; the seventh, Balarāma, however, was magically transferred from the womb of Devakī to that of Rohiṇī, the other wife, and was thus saved. The eighth was Kṛishṇa, born with a black skin and the mark called Śrivatsa on his breast. With him his father Vasudeva escaped, by the aid of the gods, and found a herdsman named Nanda, whose wife Yaśoda had just given birth to a daughter, which infant Vasudeva took to Devakī in substitution, while Nanda brought up the child Kṛishṇa with his own sons. And then in the *Bhāgavad-gītā* we find Kṛishṇa as the nephew of Paṇḍu and cousin of Arjuna, the hero of the epic, whose chariot he consents to drive, and who gives counsel when Arjuna has qualms of conscience about wading to a throne

through the blood of his kindred in the struggle between the families of Paṇḍu and Dhṛitarāshṭra. This counsel, usually called *The Song of the Adorable One*, is one of the most beautiful and sacred pieces of all Indian literature. So far as I can discover, not one of all the Sanskrit scholars and editors of the epics has noticed this analogy.

Some association between all these ideas and myths there must surely be; in part they are all recognisable as a folk-memory of some actual struggle between two great Kshatriya tribes for supremacy, so far as the "action" portions of the story go; but, traced to their dimmest beginnings, we find their origin in the twilight of the gods and the dawn of man's speculation on the Infinite, in his veneration of the sun-god and the moon-god, the corn-spirit and the great Earth-Mother; and through it all there runs that silver thread, surely of divine inspiration, of a noble faith in the ultimate triumph over evil of true love, and good, and justice.

*The Times of India,*  
BOMBAY, 15th January, 1933.

M. PAUL DARE.



# INTRODUCTION

**R**EFERRING to the Mahawamsa, or the Great Chronicle of Ceylon, in his "Ceylon," one of the most comprehensive and authoritative works written about that interesting island, Sir James Emerson Tennent observes: "It stands at the head of the historical literature of the East; unrivalled by anything extant in Hindustan, the wildness of whose chronology it controls; and unsurpassed, if it be equalled, by the native annals of China or Kashmir." His opinion has since been endorsed fully by all eminent oriental scholars.

In his editorial preface to Prof. Wilhelm Geiger's literal English translation of the Mahawamsa, Prof. T. W. Rhys Davids, the well-known Orientalist, has observed: "It is true there is considerable literary merit in the original poem, and it may be possible hereafter to attempt a reproduction also in English unrhymed verse."

While admitting the justice of his remarks, it must be stated with equal fairness that a complete metrical rendering of the Mahawamsa, though possible, will be of little interest to the general reader of narrative poetry, interwoven as it is with the history of the introduction of the Buddhist religion into the island, and its subsequent development. The only exceptions, to my mind, are the portions dealing with the advent of Wijaya and the founding of the Great Dynasty.

It is for this reason that I selected the story of the dynastic pioneers, who were Kshatriya Hindus from Bengal, for metrical treatment in two episodes. Any one who looks for a faithful adherence to the original in my work will be utterly disappointed. I have taken the original as a mere outline and worked in the details. Further, I have even taken great liberties with proper names found in the original, some of which I have altered to suit the exigencies of English versification, while I have entirely changed others, and invented a few. But in doing all this I have aimed at congruity.

I need scarcely point out the remarkable similarity between the story of Wijaya and the Yakkhni, and Homer's account of Ulysses and Circe. Sir Emerson Tennent says: "the resemblance is so striking that it is difficult to conceive that the Singha- lese historian of the fifth century was entirely ignorant of the works of the Father of Poetry." It is equally probable that Homer himself borrowed the story from Eastern sources, especially from India, which is the home of story-telling. The story treated in my second episode may be taken as a pendant to the Greek story of "The Doom of King Acrisius," which William Morris has so elegantly retold in his *Earthly Paradise*.

There appears to be abundant evidence to show that the Great Kings of Ceylon belonged, not to the Brahman or priestly caste, as asserted by some writers, but to the Kshatriya or warrior caste. The famous

Chohan princess, Padmini, who married one of the Ranas of Chitoor in Rajputana, was the daughter of a prince of Ceylon. It is clear that the Singhalese kings of "the Superior Dynasty," founded by Wijaya, claimed to be the descendants of the Sun, as do the Ranas at this very day. They were, therefore, the inheritors of all the chivalry that is associated with the Kshatriya character.

Customs and manners change very slowly in the East, especially in India, if they ever do change; and the customs and manners illustrated in these episodes are almost the same as those prevailing at the present day. I have appended a few notes to help Western readers not acquainted with the East.

THEO. W. LA TOUCHE.

SECUNDERABAD (Deccan),

*16th September 1932.*



# THE LION-KINGS OF LANKA

## EPISODE I.—*The Coming of Wijaya.*

WHO thrills not with delight when fair Ceylon  
Is named—the brightest gem of all the isles  
The Indian ocean girts with sapphire wave !  
All nations of the earth from earliest times  
In singing of her loveliness have joined ;  
The Rishis, in their epic rhapsodies,  
Of Lanka the Resplendent sung ; the Buddhists,  
E'er dreaming of their Land of Bliss, extolled  
Her as the peerless pearl on India's brow ;  
The proud Celestials called her Isle of Jewels ;  
The Greeks, the Haycynth and the Ruby Land.  
The Persian and Arabian mariners,  
Bewitched by vistas that before them lay,  
Chequered with scented meads, pellucid lakes,  
And fruitful groves, and streams, and winding vales  
All opening seaward ; and the woods that flowed  
Like a green mantle from the soaring peaks  
And met the waves—by such fair landscapes charmed,  
They lingered many months within her *Gobbs* (1),  
Serene of coral, canopied by palms ;  
And to their barren coasts returning rich  
With cinnamon and precious stones and pearls,  
Diffused soul-thrilling tales of Serendib,  
Where mankind's exiled parents lived consoled  
For loss of Eden, in their new-found bliss  
Forgetting it as if it ne'er had been.

And then, the venturous navigators famed,  
Of Europe, sweeping round the Indian shores,  
In eager search of trade, stood wonder-wrapt  
To breathe the fragrance wafted from her groves,  
When far at seaward of the island yet  
They hung ; and reaching her enamelled strand  
Beheld the Eldorado of their dreams !

Such is the Isle where, in the misty past,  
A lion-born race of kings held sovereign sway :  
Their glorious state, the greatness of their minds,  
Are blazoned still by cities, lakes and fanes,  
All wondrous in their beauty of design,  
In thought sublime ; in skill of workmanship,  
Though rivalled other-where, yet unsurpassed.  
Whence came these royal builders to the isle,  
Whose tangled woods primeval, legends say,  
Were peopled by the Yakkhas (<sup>2</sup>), a wild race  
Demonic, skilled in magic lore profane ;  
And how, by gods befriended, they set up  
A prosperous kingdom, famed for every art  
Of peace and war—it is our aim to tell  
In numbers simple as the *slokes* inscribed  
On palm-leaf books, wherefrom the tale is culled.

What time Lord Buddha walked this tearful earth,  
There reigned o'er all the fruitful Wanga land,  
Through which the sacred Ganges flows, a king  
By all his people loved. The daughter fair  
Of the Kalínga monarch was his spouse ;  
Their only child a daughter ; passing sweet

She was, and very amorous withal ;  
No lotus-bud unfolding 'neath the moon  
Could rival her in beauty. At her birth  
The seers foretold her marriage with the king  
Of beasts ; whereat the king and queen were vexed  
With grief and shame. They watched her like a miser  
His gold : but who could strive against the stars ?  
Yearning for joy of life from trammels free,  
She stole forth from the palace unobserved,  
Despite all vigilance, and joined forthwith  
A convoy that for Maghada was bound.  
By all her royal father's searchers keen  
Untraced, she journeyed. After many days  
The caravan, drawn by the slow-paced oxen,  
Entered the Lala country's forest glooms,  
When from the shadows sprang a lion ; huge  
Of bulk and limb he loomed ; his copious mane  
Descending from his massy head, like tawny  
Cascades adown a hillside, brushed the ground  
On either flank. With flaming eyes and roar  
Of thunder fell he on the caravan ;  
This way and that, in dire confusion fled  
The panic-stricken folk, unto their gods  
Loud-screaming for protection ; but the fair  
Kamala, driven by the inward urge  
Of destiny resistless, fled along  
The very path whereby the lion had come.  
Returning cloyed with prey, the jungle king  
Beheld the princess from afar ; straightway  
Love for her seized him, quelling all his rage ;

And he, with waving tail and ears laid back,  
Approached her, as a hound his master would,  
And she, remembering her horoscope,  
Dismissed her fears and, boldly stepping forth,  
Caressed him fondly, stroking flank and limb.  
Beneath her tender touch his blood caught fire  
Like forest grass in summer-time, and roused  
To fiercest passion, her he promptly took  
Upon his ample back, and speedily  
Conveyed her to his dreaded mountain cave,  
And there espoused her. By the union strange  
Twin-children did the princess bear in time—  
A daughter and a son. Sihahbahu,  
The lion-armed, she named the boy, because  
His hands and feet a fair resemblance bore  
To lion's paws ; the girl, unlike her brother,  
Displayed a dainty shape, that shone like gold  
New-burnished ; so the princess in her joy,  
Her Ranliya—" The Golden Creeper "—named.

Within that cavern, opening on a glen,  
But buried deep from view by jungle growth,  
The princess reared her children ; their sole fare  
The flesh of wild beasts by the lion slain,  
With berries supplemented, and the shoots  
Of bamboos, honey pillaged from the bees ;  
Their drink the silvery stream that tumbled down  
The clefts and formed a limpid tarn below.  
Thus nurtured plain, the twins grew up apace,  
And soon knew every nook of the ravine,

But broke not bounds, obedient to the wish  
Of their dear dam ; though strong the urge to see  
What lay beyond—urge whetted by their dreams,  
Deep tintured with the wondrous tales they heard  
Of ancient chivalry, from lips of her they loved,  
And ever worshipped. But when rains sixteen  
Had come and gone, and fragrant-vestured Spring  
Reigned o'er the wilds again, the stripling showed  
Uncommon prowess : stones that needed five  
Strong men to raise, he used like playing-balls ;  
And tore stout saplings up. No less agile  
His sister ; blending with a dryad's charms  
The litheness of a deer, with him she vied  
In swimming in the lake, or clambering up  
The dizzy crags for honey ; and their minds  
Lagged not a whit behind the body's growth.

It chanced one day when the fierce noontide sun  
Drove birds and beasts to seek the shadows cool  
Of bower and grot, and hushed the valley lay,  
Alone the princess and the twins repaired,  
As was their wont, unto the limpid lake  
Now flecked with lotus-blossoms. There canopied  
By creepers stretched from tree to tree and laced  
So closely that the sun but filtered through  
To make a soft green twilight all around,  
They lounged ; the young folk listened to a tale  
Their mother told of human princess reft  
Long ago, from the bosom of her lord  
Beloved, and prisoned by a monster vile,

Pined many a day. Not tardy to perceive  
Grief's quaver in his mother's flutelike voice,  
The youth, disturbed by galling doubts, inquired :  
" Wherefore are you, dear mother, and our sire  
So altogether different in all ways ;  
And why, confined within these savage wilds  
We stay, like joyless hermits, all inert,  
When much is to be won of noble fame  
Through valour in that jostling world of men  
You oft-times told us is not far from here ? "

She poured forth all the story, hiding nought,  
And warned him of his mighty father's will,  
Standing betwixt them and the world of men  
Than loftiest mountains more immovable,  
More perilous to cross than shifting sands.  
But he, no whit afraid, and vext therewith,  
Yet breathing not a word more, lifted her,  
As though she were a babe, onto his shoulder  
Ample, and ran full swiftly from the place,  
His sister running by his side with ease.  
Ere sundown they had covered many a league  
And left their native mountains far behind ;  
Nor slacked their pace nor rested even then,  
But tireless plied their legs beneath the moon.  
Dawn found them where the jungle stopped and tilth  
Began to show. Here halted they at last.  
With needed rest refreshed, and ripening corn  
From cobs, they wrapped their nakedness about  
With glossy plantain leaves, and so approached

A border-village of the Wanga realm.

Here at the time sojourned the Princess' cousin,  
A chieftain in the royal army who  
Was given lordship over border-tracts.  
He sat that morn, a rough-hewn stone his seat,  
Under a many-shafted banyan tree,  
Dispensing justice to the rustic folk,  
Who on the ground before him sat, their hands  
Conjoined respectfully. Now, when he saw  
The princess and her children there arrived,  
Their sylvan garb amazed him much ; but more  
The women's beauty took him ; wonderstruck  
He questioned who they were and whence arrived.  
They simply answered, " We are forest folk."  
Thereat he bade his people give them clothes  
And food ; then lo, those garments coarse became  
Resplendent, and the leaves whereon the food  
Was served, turned into plates of shining gold—  
So potent is the touch of innocence !

Then wonder grew to awe ; for they were deemed  
Beings divine in mortal guise, come down  
Upon some errand from on high, to bless  
Or ban, who knew ? With palms together joined  
The chieftain prayed them say their hest sublime :  
What sacrifice was wanted, or what gifts,  
Or shrine, however costly, to appease  
The mighty gods, and he, their servant meek,  
Would do it straightway ; but the princess smiled

Thereat, and told him frankly who she was,  
Her family and clan. His fears gave place  
To joy intense, and love for her. Forthright  
He took her and the twins upon his car,  
And, sending tidings to the king, ahead,  
He set out for the Wanga capital.  
Its gates he entered, midst rejoicings great,  
That greater waxed, when on the following day  
Her noble cousin did the princess wed,  
And all the city rang with feast and dance.

Now when the lion, from his daily hunt,  
Returning to his cavern, missed his mate,  
And children dear, grief beat upon his heart  
Like a madman on a drum ; afar he roamed,  
Disconsolate, and seeking after them  
He raided villages ; and everywhere  
He came, the folks fled at his very name ;  
Leaving their homes and husbandry, they fled,  
And hastening to the king, complained against  
The tawny terror. He in duty bound  
His subjects to protect as his own children, had  
His elephant paraded through the streets,  
While heralds shouted : “ Lo, this wealth is his  
Who dares to bring the king the lion’s head.”  
But none came forward, so the king enhanced  
The guerdon twofold and then threefold. Twice  
Did Sihabahu’s mother hold him back ;  
The third time, he, his mother’s leave unasked,  
Took on the task to bring down his own sire.

Then spake the king to him and said : “ Young man,  
If thou shalt slay the terror of my realm,  
Even my kingdom will I give to thee  
The moment thou accomplish this great deed.  
To witness which here is my royal signet ring :  
No sacrifice too great I reckon, if thereby  
My people’s welfare is assured.” So saying  
He from his finger drew the golden ring  
Set with a blazing ruby rare, and slipped  
It on the prince’s, wishing him good hap.

And so dismissed with blessings by the king  
The prince, well armed with bow and arrows, reached  
The lion’s cave. The great beast saw him come,  
And sped to meet his son, his drooping heart  
With joy now fraught, and love untold.  
The prince let loose a shaft ; it took his sire  
Full ’twixt the eyes, but like a talisman  
The beast’s love for his son (³) did blunt the shaft  
That, harmless, bounded off. And so it fell  
Out thrice ; then wrathful grew the king of beasts ;  
And the next arrow found his heart, and down  
He rolled at his son’s feet ; but ere death closed  
His eyes for ever, gasping faint he said :

“ My son ! although thy hand hath laid me low,  
My evil *Karma* (⁴) urged it to this act ;  
For in a former life, a tyrant fierce,  
I ruled a mighty realm, and hunting down  
My people like wild beasts was my chief sport,

Till they, grown desperate as a cornered wolf,  
Conspired and slew me as their worst of foes ;  
And lo, the lion's shape, which now I quit,  
Is of my *Karma's* fruit the milder part :  
The worser part is to be slain by thee,  
The darling of my heart—my tale is told."

This said, the lion died ; the prince returned  
Triumphant to the city, bearing high  
The lion's head, its once-proud flowing mane  
Now grimed, but to those folk a pleasant sight.  
He found the Wanga king had passed away  
What time he slew the lion ; but the lords,  
Rejoicing greatly at his deed, redeemed  
The monarch's pledge, and crowned him king.

Not long he held the sceptre, when the love  
Of his own native land, possessing all  
His soul, he to his mother's husband passed  
It on, and with his sister and a train  
Of trusty folk left for the mountain wilds ;  
There built the thriving city, Sihapur—  
The Lion Town—and cutting down the woods  
For miles around, established villages,  
That shewed like islands midst a rolling sea  
Of corn and pasture. There held sovereign sway  
Great Siha, king of all the Lala realm,  
When he,—as was permitted in those days,—  
Had taken his twin sister, Ranleya  
To wife.

In time the queen bore thirty sons  
And two, of whom the first was Wijaya named ;  
And in due time the king elected him  
Prince-regent. Gifted with a lion's strength,  
And pluck, the worst traits of the beast alone  
He shared, and comrades even like himself  
He owned ; so many were his evil deeds  
And heinous, that the people, galled beyond  
Endurance, begged the king redress their wrongs.  
Appeasing them with honied words, the king  
Rebuked his son. But all fell out again  
Worse than before, until to fury lashed,  
The citizens demanded of the king  
To either slay his son or banish him  
For ever. Grief poignant gripped the king,  
For dearly did he love his errant son,  
Yet dreading insurrection, of the two  
Courses he chose the milder. Causing half  
His son's head to be shaved, as slaves are wont,  
And likewise all his boon companions' heads,  
He thrust them on some barks at Sopra port ;  
And so in dire dishonour sent them forth  
To seek a home beyond the rolling seas.

Now when Lord Buddha, Beacon of the World,  
His saving mission compassed, and the stage  
Utmost of blissful rest attained, upon  
The mystic threshold of Nirvana lay,  
By twin-like sala-trees o'ershadowed, he,  
The Sage omniscient, seeing there the gods

About him hovering all in reverent awe,  
Spake to their sovereign chief, even to Sakra (<sup>5</sup>),  
Whose sceptre is the thunderbolt, and said :

“ O Lord of gods ! Wijaya, banished son  
Of Sihabahu, king of the Lala realm,  
Has even while I speak, with all his train  
Of twice a hundred men, the coral strand  
Of Lanka reached ; so it was fore-ordained,  
That, tossed by wind and wave for many a day,  
By numerous woes and perils sorely tried,  
He should be tempest-driven after all  
To Lanka, there to found a glorious line  
Of kings, and plant the banner of my faith.  
Vouchsafe thy guardian care, him and his folk  
To shield from every harm ; though fair the isle,  
And pleasant as thine own celestial groves,  
And though not peopled by aught human race,  
Hospitable or hostile, great the risk  
To strangers from the evil powers that lurk  
Unseen, than venomous snakes in flowery meads  
More prompt to strike unwary treaders down.  
Wherefore deign thou to hasten to their aid :  
To thee their welfare I consign entire.”

The last word barely left the Blessed one's lips,  
When Sakra vanished thence, and reappeared  
That self-same moment in far Lanka's isle,  
Cleaving the air with his ethereal wings,  
Thought-swift. In full view of the stranded folk

He sat beneath a tree, and seemed a sage  
In contemplation deep. To him they went  
With hands conjoined and said :

“ O reverend Sire,

Forgive the rude intrusion, and be pleased  
To tell what land this is whereon the fates  
Relenting, landed us, sad wand'ers long  
On ruthless seas forlorn.”

The sage replied :

“ This Island fair is Lanka called ; no men  
Inhabit here ; but fear ye nothing, for  
No mischief will befall ye, so the stars  
Proclaim in sooth ; but rather all good hap,  
Full compensating all your troubles past,  
Nathless, to make my bodement doubly sure,  
Take now this matchless charm ; possessing it  
All powers malign of heaven and earth, or both  
Combined, however subtly potent, must,  
Against their nature, bend to work your weal.”

So speaking, Sakra bade them all draw nigh,  
And water sprinkling on them from a jar,  
Bound Wijaya's wrist with talismanic thread,  
And melted into air. Then for a god  
They knew their kindly guide, and marvelling much,  
That Heaven should befriend them, graceless waifs ;  
Yet cheered withal, returned they to their barks,  
Now riding calmly in a quiet cove.

The evening meal, from remnants of their store  
Prepared, they ate, and night descending fast,  
Some stood at guard, for much their wary chief  
Dreaded the unknown terrors of that land,  
Despite the hermit's charm ; the others prone  
By heavy toil outstretched, soon slumbering lay.

Embosomed in the mountains was a dell  
Completely hidden from all view ; most fair  
It was, with lush grass carpeted, and pranked  
With flowering shrubs, and trees fruit-laden ; in  
The 'midst thereof a pool pellucid gleamed,  
By ever-purling streamlets fed, and flocks  
Of water-lilies graced ; the livelong day  
Resounding with glad notes of bird and bee,  
That glen a corner seemed of paradise  
In sooth. Alas, therein no angels dwelt,  
But fell Kuweni ; for of a Yakkha town  
It was the outpost, and the sorceress  
The warden ; chosen for that very task  
Because she all the women of her tribe  
Excelled in magic arts ; unnumbered were  
The hapless seafarers she ruthless lured  
To their destruction ; much the precious spoil  
She garnered from their heavy-laden ships,  
No vessel passing there escaped her eye ;  
No human wight, once landed in the isle  
E'er lived to leave its shores, or make his home  
Thereon. Engrossed the witch was, even now,  
A trap devising for the new-come folk.

With her hand-maidens, agents of her wiles,  
She sat, conferring in a cave the best  
Part of the night, her accents blending with  
The screech-owl's racket, the lugubrious howl  
Of jackals on the prow, and panther's cough  
Terrific ; and when the stars began to pale,  
Her wicked plot complete, she duly set  
Her creatures each to play her rôle assigned.

Meanwhile, Prince Wijaya and his folk awoke,  
To find the sun had climbed a spear's length  
Above the eastern peaks : they rose refreshed  
By sleep, but hungry ; empty was their bin.  
So they to gather berries, roots and nuts  
Abounding on the isle, of divers kind,  
Dispersed ; but not before their careful chief  
Forewarned them not to roam beyond the reach  
Of earshot from the ship, nor stray too far  
One from the other ; but among them one,  
More headstrong than his fellows, spied a cur,  
Black-coated, passing by, and heedless quite  
Of Wijaya's wholesome warning, trailed the dog,  
Taking its mere presence for a sign  
That nearby was a village, where arrived  
He better fare would find than forest fruits.

So dreaming, he the mongrel dogged ; unscared,  
The creature, at an easy lope, led him,  
By mazy paths into Kuweni's dell ;  
For she a Yakkhni damsel was, that shape

Assuming to decoy ; with wagging tail  
She sought her mistress' feet, and there lay down  
Amongst her fellows, even like herself  
Of canine form.

Kuweni spinning sat

Under a tree, beside the lotus pool,  
And seemed an ancient woman-anchoret,  
Devoted wholly to a life severe  
Of penance, prayer and toil ; the dogs her sole  
Companions seemed, and guardians too, against  
Unfriendly beasts. Her kindly eyes lit on  
The man invitingly, and he, his hopes  
Of village joys now dashed, but nothing scared  
To see a harmless crone, bathed in the pond's  
Cool waters, drank his fill, and lotus seeds (<sup>6</sup>)  
Delicious plucked. Ere he emerged therefrom,  
Well pleased, Kuweni started to her feet,  
And holding up her finger, " Stop ! " she hissed,  
" Thou art my victim." Baleful gleamed her eyes,  
The while, with all the demon's lust for blood.  
And like the fabled serpent's prey, the man  
Stood conjured stiff beneath her gorgon gaze ;  
But touched by Sakra's holy water once,  
He was unslayable ; so, impotent,  
She gnashed her horrid teeth ; then shooting forth  
Her hand across the pool, full nine ells length,  
She seized her hapless victim by the waist,  
And hurled him, shrieking piteously,  
And reft of wits, adown a chasm dark,  
Whence none of woman born had e'er escaped.

And in like manner with all Wijaya's men  
She even dealt, as they, one after one,  
Came, seeking their companions, to the dell ;  
And, plunged in anguish, there they moaned forlorn.

Now Wijaya, scanning all directions hard,  
Stood long upon his prow ; in dire suspense  
Of mind he stood ; and when the faintest glimpse  
He caught not of his men's return, he feared  
The worst ; but not for nothing was he named  
Wijaya ' the Valiant ' ; so his fears but spurred  
To instant action ; in full panoply  
Of faulchion, battleaxe, bow, buckler, spear ( 7 ),  
Equipped, he hastened to their succour ; reached  
The dell, and there beheld Kuweni by the pool,  
Bending quite harmless o'er her spinning wheel.  
So occupied she seemed, as not to be aware  
Of aught around her. Wijaya, wary chief,  
Perceived no footsteps there but those of men,  
All leading down into the pool, and thought :  
" In sooth this woman must have seized my men ; "  
And asked her : " Lady, hast thou not here seen  
My men ? " Whereto she mockingly replied :  
" What with thy people wantest thou, O Prince ;  
From them what pleasure canst thou e'er derive ;  
Drink thou and bathe, ere thou departest hence. "

Then all his doubts dissolved, he thought : " Forsooth  
A Yakkhni manifest—she wots my rank ! "  
And shouting forth his name, upon her pounced,

Like lioness on the stealer of her whelps ;  
And deftly with his bow lasooed her round  
The neck ; then drew her nigh to him, and seized  
Her locks, and lifting high his sword, that gleamed  
As deadly as his eyes, above her, “ Slave ! ”  
He roared, “ Restore my men to me forthwith,  
Or ere thy wicked head, dissevered, roll  
Into thy pond, food for the fish.”

He spake,

And she, enraged, but by great Sakra's charm,  
That bound his wrist, subdued, despite herself,  
Sunk down in abject panic to her knees,  
Clasped both his feet, and, “ Spare, O spare  
My life, great prince, ” she whined, “ and I will aid  
Thee conquer this fair island, rich with wealth  
And bliss beyond all dreams of earthly men ;  
To reign its sovereign lord and found a line  
Of kings whose fame shall never die ; nay, more,  
Reign thou my bosom's sovereign, and thy will  
Shall be my god, thee shall I worship, serve,  
And fill thy days and nights with happy hours.”

She ceased ; and sobbing sore, his feet bedrenched  
With copious tears ; but he, though inly moved,  
Suspicious still of some more subtle snare,  
Yet longing much the promised rose to pluck—  
If so he might the lurking asp avoid—  
Discreetly said : “ Kuweni, ere I grant  
Thy supplication, and thy proffered love

Accept, seal thou the compact with the oath  
Inviolable, to god Kubera, lord  
Supreme of all thy tribe, whose dreaded name  
Invoked in vain, damns one to endless births  
In lowest planes, than hell or death far worse.”

When she was sworn, to instant proof he put  
Her pledge, and charged her to his presence bring  
His folk ; full quickly she complied ; and, freed  
From musty dungeon gloom, the captives trooped  
Into the golden air ; and as a flock,  
Unpenned at dawn, with merry bleatings seek  
The luscious mead, they, joyful, sought the Prince,  
And stood before him, blinking in the sun  
Awhile : then gratitude past words found vent  
In tears withal, as one by one his feet  
With finger tips they pressed in homage meet,  
And felt like long-lost children to their sire  
Restored ; then he, no less rejoicing, gave  
Kuweni leave to play the hostess. Prompt  
She bustled with her damsels, who returned  
To their own shape, and from her ample store  
Of various victuals, pillaged from the ships  
Whose crews she had destroyed, produced the best  
Of wholesome rice and tempting condiments.  
With these the men, preparing savoury meats,  
And many a confection rare besides,  
Spread first the royal feast before the Prince,  
And then regaled themselves, the pleasant dell  
Echoing with their merry laugh and jest.

Then Wijaya, of the noble Kshatriya clan  
With his own hands, as rules of caste required,  
The Yakkhni's wants supplied. And when she ate,  
The first part of the meal, well pleased therewith,  
She shed her wrinkles, as an actor skilled,  
When playing many parts in sequence quick,  
Shuffles his costumes. Now she stood before  
The Prince, a comely virgin of sixteen  
In fresh bloom of her loveliness confest ;  
With fragrant jasmine garlands crowned, and clad  
In shimmering golden tissue, pearl-besprent,  
That more than plainly hinted what it hid,  
She shone out smiling as the summer sky  
Smiles with the risen moon—a fairy queen !  
Her jewelled trinkets jingling in cadence sweet,  
And breasts a-swaying soft, like lotus buds  
By Zephyrs fanned, she tripped up to the Prince  
And round his neck the marriage-garland threw (⁸),  
And stole his heart with an impassioned kiss,  
And, “ Come beloved ” crooned, “ now that we are  
Wedded Ghandharva-wise, (⁹) why longer stay  
Apart ? Come, let us, sconced in yonder bower,  
Our nuptial love's fulfilment duly seek.”

So saying, she pointed to a lofty tree,  
And lo, beneath it sprung forthwith a gold  
Pavilion, curtained round with rich brocade  
And hung with clustering silver bells, that made  
A tremulous music in the breeze. Thereto  
She led the Prince, who entering, found a couch

Magnificent, of sandalwood, all carved  
About with amorous idylls and inlaid  
With flaming gems. Therein they lay night long  
In bliss immersed, while all around the bower,  
Encamped the Prince's men.

Now, as the night wore on,  
The Prince, roused from his slumber by the sound  
Of music strange and singing, gently woke  
His Yakkhni bride, and asked " What means this rout  
So weird, and whence proceeds it ? " Hearing it  
She thought : What better chance avails than this  
To give dominion to my lord, the Prince ;  
My solemn pledge thus to redeem, and save  
Myself withal. For all the Yakkhas must  
Be quelled forthright, or else, they blaming me  
For opening Lanka to the human race,  
Will certes slay me : wherefore, will I help  
My lord to quell them now and reign sole king,  
With me his queen."

Thus pondering, to the prince  
She said : " Nearby a Yakkha city stands,  
Siriswathu named ; the daughter young,  
Of Kalasena, Chief of all my tribe,  
Who dwells in Lanka City, has been brought  
Hither to wed the Lord of this demesne ;  
And even now, the week-long festival  
To celebrate the spousal rites hath gained  
Its pitch meridian ; hence the noise you hear ;

For a great multitude is gathered there  
In revelry. But hearken to the rede  
That my unbounded love for thee impels  
Me give : the Yakkhas, dulled with wine and feast,  
Do thou, surprising, slay with sword and spear,  
Giving no quarter ; see thou set to work  
Even to-morrow ere the sun drink up  
The beaded dew ; if thou let slip the time  
Auspicious I have named for thy emprise,  
By but a wink, no longer harbour hope  
Of triumph, but prepare for ruin red,  
That surely then must all of us engulf :  
But mount the willing steed of lucky time  
And thou shalt ride to victory and fame ! ”

She spake ; and, dubious, he rejoined : “ How slay  
The Yakkhas who, adept in magic arts,  
Can at their will change shape, or disappear,  
Or baffling by illusion, make me beat  
The empty air till, as in blind-man’s-buff,  
They laugh at me.” “ Trust me,” she answered quick,  
“ ’Tis thou shalt be the laughter ; mark me well :  
Whereso thy Yakkha enemies, viewless lurk,  
There will I also lurking, utter cries ;  
Strike even at the sound with all thy might  
And groans of death will follow every stroke,  
As thy keen weapon, guided by my power,  
Shall cleave their heads. Then stricken lifeless, thou  
Shalt see their corpses stretched prone in the dust.”

She ended : he, delighted with her words,

Close crushed to his her bosom, and betwixt  
Hot kisses murmured out his thankful heart ;  
And so in Kama's toils emmeshed they lay  
Until the jungle-cock's reveille call (<sup>10</sup>),  
Not like the farmyard rooster's clarion, shrill,  
But mellow,—with the golden oriole's  
Soft flutings blending sweetly, woke the pair  
From dreams. Then arming quickly he address  
Him to the fray, and tutored by his bride,  
Upon the Yakkhas single-handed swooped  
Like ravenous lion upon a grazing herd,  
And joyed in slaughter, she his weapons keen  
Directing with her halloo. Priceless spoils  
Untold of gold and gems and raiment fine  
The victor reaped ; of these the royal robes  
Resplendent, of the Yakkha prince and princess,  
He and his consort wore ; the rest among  
His followers divided ; and some days,  
Rejoicing o'er his triumph, Wijaya spent  
With all his people in that pleasant spot.

Appointing then, a governor o'er that tract  
With men and means to rule it in his name,  
He to another region of the isle  
Passed on, and built a mighty city there,  
Naming it Thambraparni from the dust (<sup>11</sup>)  
Of copper hue that covered all that land,  
There dwelt he happy with his Yakkhni mate  
In kingly grandeur, and amongst his men  
Now raised to noble rank, he parcelled out

The realm and each, a baron of wide lands,  
Built cities here and there, both great and small,  
And beast-infested jungles driving back.  
With axe and fire, planted fruitful groves,  
And fields of corn. Their pioneering work  
Accomplished, all the feudal lords then came  
Together at the Prince's court, and spake  
To him with one accord and said :

“ Vouchsafe,  
O Sire, to let us consecrate and crown  
Thee sovereign monarch of this island realm  
With all due solemn ritual, as befits  
The great event ; so we, thy vassals bound  
By sworn allegiance to thyself and throne,  
May help thee lay a basis, for thy heirs  
And ours, to raise an empire, world renowned,  
Thereon. This is our counsel and our prayer  
That, moved by duty, love and gratitude  
Combined, we now submit for thy assent.”

So they importuned ; and he pensive sat  
A space, then thus replied : “ My noble friends !  
And partners staunch of both my joys and woes,  
My heart in this concurs with yours entire ;  
Wisdom and love lie mingled in your rede  
As milk and honey in a jewelled cup !  
Yet never shall I with unholy hands  
Besmirch the kingly sceptre, and offend  
The mighty gods ; for well ye wist, my friends,

The sacred custom of our ancient race,—  
That none durst violate and live in peace,—  
Commands that kingship be conferred on none  
Who to a consort from a royal house,  
Coequal with his own in caste and tribe,  
Is not allied, however just and high  
His other claims. Now, judge, my noble lords,  
If I, enlinked, by destiny constrained,  
To a Yakkhni, am entitled to accept  
Your kindly proffered crown, and still remain  
Within the ambit of the law, from guilt  
Exempt ? My conscience clearly answers, ‘ Nay.’  
Wherefore, though much it nettle me to cross  
Your goodwill, justice this compels me say :  
As some triumphant arch sublime, designed  
To grace a noble structure, is imposed,  
Only when the supporting shafts are found  
Full worthy to uphold its stately pomp  
And splendour ; even so the crowning ye  
Propose must needs depend upon the law’s  
Fulfilment, that rightly aimeth to ensure  
The regal office its authority and strength,  
Inseparable from majesty enthroned ;  
Which else, exposed to scorn, fails in its aim,  
And ends in public scandal and disdain.  
My scruples thus unbosomed, bound therewith  
I needs must patient wait the change of times,  
To square all matters and enfreedom me.”

So he dismissed them ; but they lost not hope ;

For reading clear his argument's main drift,  
Their bent to consecrate him, keener grew ;  
And taking counsel, they speedily despatched  
As embassy unto the emperor,  
Who ruled the Pandyan realms, to seek the hand  
Of his fair daughter for their king-elect ;  
And other maidens nobly born, to seek  
As wives for them, his liegemen tried and true.  
Loading their barks with pearls and precious stones,  
Which Lanka yieldeth plentiful as her fruits,  
The embassy, of all their wisest bards  
Composed, set sail for India's neighbouring coast,  
And reached Madura ; there the emperor  
Of all the Southern kingdoms held his court ;  
Arrayed in splendour like the sun, he sat  
Enthroned, amid the Princes of his realm,  
And Lords a myriad ; at his feet the bards  
Of Lanka laid the priceless gifts, and pled  
Their Prince's suit in numbers sweet, that chained  
All listeners' hearts ; the monarch pleased therewith  
Gave his consent ; and all his councillors,  
No less delighted, applauded all his words  
In unison, and promise made withal  
To let their daughters with the Princes go  
To Lanka, and the barons there espouse.

And so a hundred of the fairest maids,  
All nobly born and reared, the king received  
That selfsame day ; nor did his bounty stop  
Thereat ; he had this proclamation made

By beat of drum : “ If any citizen  
Be willing to allow his daughter go  
To Lanka, he shall ere to-morrow’s sun  
Grow hot, place her with double store equipped  
Of raiments at the threshold of his house.”

Thus did the king obtain a bevy fair  
Of damsels. And when they assembled sat  
Within the royal audience hall, the hour  
Awaiting of departure, they appeared  
The nympholepsy of some poet’s dream  
Come true ; the many coloured blossoms sweet,  
That flaunted in the king’s parterre without,  
Not half so lovely seemed as they ; in rich  
Attire of varied dye, and decked from head  
To foot in clinking gold and gems they shone—  
In sooth the gamut whole of female grace.  
And charm was mustered in that hall, which vied  
With Indra’s gardens filled with Apsarasis.  
Amidst them, like the central ornament  
On beauty’s brow, the dainty princess shone.  
But grief at parting from her parents dear,  
And dreams of coming bliss, like inter-play  
Of sun and shadow on a limpid pool,  
Illumed and gloomed by turns her tender eyes.

The mingled blare and roar of conch and drum  
Announced the king’s arrival in the hall  
To lead his daughter forth with all her train  
Of damsels to the fleet of galleons

That rode upon the swell in proud array,  
And ready to hoist sail ; then mounted all  
On glistening chariots, drawn by noble steeds,  
And hung with chains of flowers, they moved towards  
The ships with minstrelsy ; the princess rode,  
The great procession heading, with her sire ;  
Before the royal chariot paced a band  
Of Brahmans, chanting solemn Vedic hymns ;  
And so along a lane of citizens,  
Who showered blossoms on them, and withal  
God's blessings, came they thus unto the sea  
And filled the ships ; and farewells said,  
The white-winged fleet for Lanka ploughed its course,  
By favouring breezes sped. Beside the freight  
Of damsels and their retinue, were borne  
Horses and chariots worthy of a king ;  
A thousand households of the eighteen guilds, <sup>(12)</sup>—  
All cunning craftsmen—and of precious things  
Great store, besides the princess' marriage dower.

Now ever since he knew his nobles' plan,  
His scruples to annul and make him king,  
Prince Wijaya pondered o'er the best pretext,  
To put away his Yakkhni wife ; and when  
He heard his Pandyan bride-elect set foot  
At Mantota, and Lanka's western coast,  
Kuweni he addressed in honied words,  
Saying : " The hour, dear one, hath struck, when we  
Must part for aye ; for earthly mortals fear  
Superior powers ; and fearing thus, who could

In constant partnership of bed and board  
Live happy all his days ? So go, dear one,  
Leaving behind our children twain, thy gifts  
Of love to me ; for, nothing shall they lack  
Of father's love and duty. Never shalt  
Thou be forgotten by my folk and me,  
Nor by posterity ; lo, in this town  
A fretted shrine to thee shall be upreared  
With lands endowed enow, for priestly keep,  
And worship meet, and daily sacrifice.  
Now let us part in lovingwise, as ships  
In the same haven, lying side by side,  
Their business done, put forth to different parts ;  
Or as two birds of different plumage, perched  
On one tree for the night, wings each his way  
When morning breaks ; so even must we go  
Our separate ways, obedient to the hest  
Of time ; why then regret or bitterness ? ”  
He ended ; pendent stood her glist'ning tears,  
As sighing deep, she said : “ Thy plan, O Prince,  
To cast me off, its why and wherefore, all  
Was known to me, as soon as formed ; then why  
With false pretext of fear excoriate  
My broken heart ? No whit amazed am I  
Thou shouldst forswear me for a Kshatriya queen ;  
But I expected thou wouldst let me still  
Live on beneath thy roof, at least thy slave ;  
And never dreamed thou wouldst requite my love  
And loyal service with the pain extreme  
Of banishment ; thou hast pronounced no less

Than doom of death on me ; for my own tribe  
Will certes slay me, fenceless and forlorn,  
As cause of all their ills ; yet must I go  
Obedient to thy will, true to my pledge  
To serve thee even to the bitter end.  
One boon deny me not, I pray ; our twins,  
Our boy and girl, their mother's banishment  
Let share ; lest a far worser fate befall  
Them, meritless, of step-dame tyranny,  
And scorn, the portion of the lowly-born.  
But ere I go to meet my fate, I must  
Unfold the future to thy view : thy reign  
Shall prosperous be and peaceful ; but unblest  
By children thou shalt die ; nathless, the son  
Of Sumita, thy brother, shall receive  
Thy sceptre, and a line of glorious kings  
Proceeding from him and his Sakya queen,  
Shall make this isle renowned throughout the world.'"

She spake, and with her children hastened straight  
To Lankapur ; and even as she feared,  
By her own folk was slain ; her children twain,  
Albeit, fleeing thence, asylum found  
Among the trackless Malya mountain crags ;  
And from them sprang at length the hardy tribe,  
Of hunters skilled in every jungle craft,  
Pulinda called, still peopling those wild tracts,  
Above which soars the peak from Adam named  
And sought by pious pilgrims to this day.  
Meanwhile, Prince Wijaya with a suite of Lords

And warriors, posting, all in royal state,  
Reached Mántota ; and there the Pandyan Lords  
Presented him the Princess with her dower,  
Besides their liege lord's other gifts untold ;  
Next they delivered him the maidens, all  
In order due. This done, the Prince bestowed  
On them resplendent robes of honour rich ;  
And on his lords and vassals, each a maid  
Conferred, according to his rank ; then round  
The sacred fire himself the Princess led,  
While Brahmans chanted nuptial benisons  
And showered saffron rice upon the pair.  
And waving o'er their heads, in Lakshmi's name,<sup>(18)</sup>  
Garlands of emeralds, pearls and rubies rare,  
In handfuls scattered them amidst the guests.  
These joyous rites performed, the brides and grooms  
Mounted on lordly tuskers, richly decked,  
Returned, escorted by a numerous host  
Of horsemen, footmen, charioteers, all armed  
And brightly clad, a dazzling pageantry,  
To Thambraparni. There amidst a full  
Assembly, Wijaya was anointed king  
Of Lanka by his ministers, and, he,  
With his own hands, his consort crowned as queen ;  
And all the city rang with jubilee  
For many days and nights, as high and low,  
Loaded with favours by their bounteous king,  
Cast off the daily fret and grind of life,  
And gave themselves entire to feast and mirth.

So Wijaya, cast upon the perilous waves,

Like worthless jetsom that would sink a ship,  
Did heaven, obedient to Lord Buddha's will,  
Employ to serve the Law sublime ; and he,  
His former evil life forsaking quite  
For righteous ways, reigned there as sovereign lord  
Of Lanka eight and thirty peaceful years ;  
And every year to his sweet consort's sire,  
A wondrous shell-pearl, valued many times  
A thousand gold mohurs, and fit to grace  
An emperor's diadem, he sent as gift,  
In token of the boundless love he bore  
That other peerless pearl that e'er adorned  
The sea of his existence—his fair queen !

# THE LION-KINGS OF LANKA

EPISODE II.—*The Builder of Anuradhapur.*

**K**ING Wijaya, in the autumn of his life  
Arrived, bethought him : “ I am old, and must  
The Mansions of the Sun<sup>(1)</sup> full soon attain ;  
The Yakkhni’s curse still on me heavy lies,  
For childless I am, and this island realm,  
So hardly won and peopled, with my death  
May come to nothing, to no son of mine  
The sceptre passing ; wherefore, fain would I  
My brother Sumita have hither called  
From Sihapur, and to his hands commit  
The sceptre, ere from my death-loosened grasp  
It drop.”

So mused the king and, due advice  
Obtained, a missive to his brother sent ;  
But hardly had the bearer left the isle  
Than it was kingless ; and a regent ruled  
Till Vasudev, the youngest of the sons  
Of Sumita, instead his sire, too old  
To journey far, accepted Wijaya’s call,  
And with a band of youthful knights arrived  
In Lanka. Over him was duly raised  
The royal parasol ; but not before  
He wed Kassena, of the Sakkhya king  
The only daughter ; even as a maid

Compounded all of Champak blossoms sweet,  
And sunbeams, she appeared ; her comeliness  
Enthralled all hearts, and seven kings renowned,  
For lover of her, sent precious gifts to win  
Her hand ; but since the soothsayers forewarned  
Her father that a voyage most happy would  
Befall her ere she wed, upon a ship  
Shaped like a graceful swan of silver plume,  
He placed her with a splendid marriage dower,  
And two and thirty handmaids therewithal,  
And on the spirit-cleansing Ganges launched  
The vessel, saying, “ Whoso can, let him  
Now take my daughter.” Many then pursued,  
And hot the chase, but, like a phantom swan,  
The vessel down the river swiftly rode  
And mocked her suitors : steered by unseen hands  
The Silver Swan soon reached the rolling deep  
And, skimming o’er the billows merrily,  
Stood, even on the second day, upon  
A haven’s opal bosom verdure-girt,  
Her glorious shape thereon portrayed ; so they  
Fair Lanka reached ; and as the stars ordained,  
The Princess Vasudeva’s queen became.

Ten sons the queen bore, and a daughter sole,  
The youngest of them all ; when Brahmans skilled  
In sacred texts beheld her, they foretold :  
“ The son born of this princess, for the throne,  
Will certes slay his uncles.” Scared therewith,  
The brothers, save Abhaya, eldest born,

Resolved to slay her, but Abhaya stayed  
Their hands ; withal they rested not in peace  
Till they their hapless sister saw immured  
Within a rock-hewn cell : access to it  
Was none, but through a passage in the king's  
Bed-chamber, narrow, winding, dark ; but one  
Small window, iron-grated, high above  
The ground without, scarce let the sun and air  
To struggle through. Within the dismal cell  
The heartless brothers placed a serving-maid  
Of their own choosing and without, a guard  
Of hundred soldiers. As a nestling, torn  
From parent birds and caged, frets not nor pines  
For loss of liberty, its loss not knowing,  
And grows and thrives as happy as its free  
Compeers, so even tender Chitra, wrenched  
From her fond mother's bosom by rude hands,  
And prisoned as a potent foe, grew up  
And shewed such maiden plumes and charms,  
That never man could see her, but was fired  
Straightway with frantic longing for her love :  
Wherefore they named her Unmada-Chitra—  
Mad-making Chitra ! As her budded youth  
Unfolded charm by charm, there came to her  
The longing of the blossom for the bee,  
And bird for bird, and maid for man, until  
Her bosom's hunger growing keen, she asked  
Her maid, " Why when the birds and beasts, I see  
Within yon park below, roam where they list,  
Rejoicing with their mates—why I alone

Those pleasures am denied ? ”

The servant-maid,  
Though sworn to serve the princes' cause, bethought  
Her of the sweet young creature's piteous plight,  
And all the woman rushing to her heart,  
Melted in tears ; and she revealed to her  
The truth ; whereat both clasping close wept long,  
The sorrow sharing. Then the hand-maiden,  
Her sense of duty drowned in sympathy  
Entire, a solemn promise to befriend  
The princess uttered, come whatever may.

In vain do mortals labour to avert  
The doom the high gods have for them decreed !  
As well essay to hoodwink grisly eld,  
Disease and death, and live for e'er on earth.  
So while the princes dwelt in joyful ease,  
Lulled thereunto by fatuous hopes that they  
Had locked up with their sister's maidenhood  
All fears, and cheated Fate therewith for aye,  
The high gods at their folly laughed aloud,  
And sent Prince Gamani the fatal web  
To weave. The queen's own nephew, young and brave,  
He was, and handsome as a god withal.  
This prince dwelt with his father, Dighayu,  
In a fair province of the island ; there  
The fame of Chitra's wondrous beauty reached  
His ears and cast its spell about his heart ;  
And as a traveller's witching tale of hills

Of gold and valleys strewn knee-deep with gems,  
In lands far-off, some venturous spirit drives  
Upon the quest, the bruit of Chitra's charms  
Filled all the prince's nights and days with dreams  
Of love, and spurred him seek the cause of this  
Unrest ; and springing on a steed, he drew  
Not rein until he gained Upatissa,  
The Royal Capital ; nor rested there  
Till he betimes had audience of the King,  
And making known his father's name and rank,  
Sought service at the court. The monarch, pleased  
To have a young man of so gallant port  
At hand, appointed him a chamberlain,  
And captain of his household guard beside.  
Now in the very lists installed, where lay  
The fount of all his dreams, his pulses danced  
With joy of expectation vehement,  
And urged him headlong rush and feast his eyes  
On her ; but fear of wrecking all his hopes,  
So near fulfilment, by one reckless step  
Suspicious, held him back ; betimes, pretext  
Of duty aided him, and with a panting heart  
He stood beneath her window in the park,  
The Royal Guards reviewing, one would say ;  
But all his thoughts were on the window fixed,  
And glances stole he upward now and then.  
There soon appeared to him the fairest face  
That ever eyes beheld—why waste more words ?  
Their glances mingled and two shafts unseen,  
Tipped with the mango-flower, pierced each a heart,

Whilst Kama Deva laughed ! Then, sighing deep,  
The princess asked the woman-slave, " What man  
Is that, if he be not some god disguised ? "  
And she, adept in gossip of the court, replied :

" No godhead he, but certes by the gods  
Here sent in answer to thy prayer and mine,  
Thy life to lift from gloom to sunshine ; yea,  
None other he than thy own mother's kin,  
Prince Gamani, drawn here to court, they say,  
In quest of royal favours, honour, fame ;  
But trust me, thy fair self his only quest,  
Thy beauty's blazoned fame his lodestar sole.  
Now even I rejoice to see thine eyes  
Reflect the idol in thy heart ; so grieve  
No more, for Radha hath her Krishna now ! "(2)

" Ah, Radha hath and hath not," sighed the maid,  
" So near her joy and yet so far ! thy words,  
My friend, are nectar to a bird at large,  
But, oh, their very sweetness makes them taste  
Gall-bitter to a caged-up bird like me :  
My grief more galling now, since I have seen  
And cannot have, than when I merely dreamed  
Of pleasures vague, now definite made and dear.  
Thy talk of sunshine springtide maketh not  
In this dark bosom, where a transient gleam  
Hath made the clouds but murkier than before.  
Ay me ! ay me ! this tombl-like cell, my tomb  
Must be indeed, if he come not to me—

That god whose merest sight hath made my heart  
To flutter in my bosom like a bird  
Within the nest, that sees its mother come  
Bearing a juicy morsel in her beak.  
Ah, fain would I abide herein for aye,  
Far happier even than in paradise,  
If he but come to me like that same bird,  
And feed my famished heart with his sweet self !”

To whom the bondsmaid : “ Ever is it thus !  
Love brooks nor time nor circumstance, but needs  
Must soon as kindled, blindly rush to seek  
Its object, fretting if its path be stopped  
Awhile ; so like an infant forced to bide  
Appointed hours of play. But lady, school  
Thyself to patience, till love, mightier far  
Than Fate, and full as sure, fruition find :  
Rest thou assured, no efforts I shall spare  
To play the fervent midwife in this case,  
To help and lead it on to glorious issue.”

Thereat did Chitra’s wistful eyes, like two  
Dark lotus pools kissed by the morning’s beams,  
Light up with radiant hope : her lissome arms  
She quickly flung about the slave, and tears  
And kisses spoke her joy too deep for words.  
And even that same night Prince Gamani  
The treasure of his quest held in his arms :  
For to her window by a ladder made  
Of cords he climbed, the slave let down, and wrenched

The bars, like waxen tapers, wide apart,  
 And so got in. Night after night he spent  
 With his beloved, quaffing deep the wine  
 Of Youth's rich vintage. None beside his fair  
 One and her bondmaid and the silent stars  
 Beheld him come and go ; for deeply swilled  
 With potent arrack, their good captain's gift,  
 The guards snored nightly at their posts, unchecked.  
 But as each tree and shrub must needs confess  
 Betimes its dalliance with the lusty Spring,  
 In fragrant tales of blossoms, even so,  
 Love's secrets must be self-revealed at last !  
 Wherefore it fell out that the blossoming  
 Of these young folks' romance became the theme  
 Supreme of courtly gossip, till the king  
 His sons to counsel called and gravely said :  
 " Behold the dam ye reared against the sea  
 Of Fate, and fondly deemed secure, now leagued  
 With Kama Deva's conquering tempest, threats  
 To burst and gulf the honour of our house—  
 To Kshatriyas dearer than a thousand lives—  
 In blackest infamy unthinkable ;  
 So in the name of all we sacred hold,  
 It now behoves us rally to the breach,  
 And baulk the imminent ruin ; let forthwith  
 Prince Gamani, full worthy of her hand,  
 Be with your sister joined in wedlock bonds,  
 And foul-mouthed scandal ever silenced be."

He ceased ; the eldest prince alone, his heart

To mildness e'er inclined, his father's rede  
Approved without demur ; the rest replied :  
“ Let them be wed, but we have firmly vowed  
To crush the ominous fruit, if it turn out a son.”  
And so the lovers round the sacred fire  
Circled, and watched with joy Arúndati,  
The double-star, hung by the gods on high  
As perfect pattern of connubial love ;  
And even as with rays commingled shone  
That star, so did their hearts with love's sweet flames.

Now when fair Chitra's motherhood drew nigh,  
Her brothers, frenzied with unrest, cut down  
Kapil and Kala, loyal henchmen twain,  
Of Gamani, who scorned to be suborned  
To slay their master's child, if born a boy ;  
And these, reborn as Yakkha wizards, watched  
The coming child. Meanwhile the princess laid  
Her plans to foil her brothers' fell design :  
She, through the medium of the bondmaid, found  
A woman, like herself, upon the eve  
Of motherhood, who, for a thousand coins  
Of gold, consented to exchange her babe  
For Chitra's. And, it chanced, the woman bore  
A girl-child, but the Princess brought to light  
A boy possessed of all the corporal marks  
Of greatness ; and, the changeling ruse performed,  
She had it blazed : “ The Princess hath a girl.”  
The king's sons, scanning close the babe, rejoiced  
To see the baleful prophecy belied—

So Fate deludes the mortals it hath doomed !

And Chitra and her friends no less rejoiced  
To see the prosperous launching of their plans,  
And strove the harder to advance them on  
To utmost triumph. At the Princess' hest  
The bondmaid laid Prince Pandu (so they named  
The new-born infant) in a basket, such  
As rustic women use to carry food  
To toilers in the fields, and with it poised  
Upon her head, she set out for the village  
Of Dwaramund. It was the merry month  
Of Phalgun,<sup>(3)</sup> which, as ancient use enjoined,  
All Kshatriyas usher in with hunting down  
The savage boar, a sacrifice most dear  
To Gouri, goddess of good harvests famed.  
And so it happed the king's sons at the time,  
All gaily clad in vernal garments green,  
Were bent on hunting in the Tumbra woods,  
And chanced to meet their sister's serving-maid,  
Then hastening with her precious burden ; their  
Suspensions roused, they asked her, " Whither bound,  
And what hast thou within thy basket, woman ? "  
She promptly answered : " I am going home  
Unto my village, and these cakes I bear  
Are for my daughter." " Take them out at once,"  
They ordered—Lo, a mighty tuskéd boar,  
The biggest they had ever seen, just then  
Broke cover at their horses' feet ; and off  
The princes thundered down in hot pursuit,

All else forgetting in that moment, save  
Their quarry rare ; their Kshatriya blood afire  
With glamour of the chase irresistible.

The beast, a phantom conjured up by those  
Two Yakkha guardians of the infant, lured  
His eager hunters ever on and on  
Into the forest depths ; up hill and down,  
Through matted thorns and *nullahs* deep, he tore,  
Oft letting them gain ground, and full as oft  
Outpacing them when they their lances poised  
To hurl. The day declined, and still the whoop  
And halloo of the chase rang through the woods,  
As still the phantom lured the huntsmen on.  
At last their coursers, spent and flecked with foam,  
Stood trembling, mindless of the spur and whip ;  
And they, perforce, gave up the fruitless chase,  
To find themselves benighted 'midst the wilds  
With thirst and hunger vexed, and failure blank,  
And leagues away from farm or hut withal.

Meantime the bondmaid, speeding on her way  
With fear-lent pinions, safely reached her goal,  
And seeking out the herdsman, Ayut, said :  
“ Lo, my good mistress, Princess Chitra sends  
Thee this, her child, whose life his uncles seek,  
To be reared as thine own, and held in trust,  
Until thou hear from her again ; withal,  
These thousand gold Mohurs she bade me hand  
Thee for thy trouble.” Ayut, of the friends

Of Chitra trusted most, and ever loyal, took  
The infant ; and as on that very day  
His wife bore him a son, noised it abroad :  
“ My wife hath borne twin sons ! ” And so the boy  
Was nursed with Ayut’s child, and nothing lacked  
Of loving-kindness, ever watchful care.  
And so once more the Princess and her friends  
A triumph scored, and greatly they rejoiced.

Now, when the princes from the airy chase  
Came home, unwitting how they were befooled,  
The serving-woman like a spectre rose  
Before their minds ; and plagued by haunting doubts,  
They sowed the land with spies, to be forewarned  
If danger raised its head. And so it happened,  
When Chitra’s son, now grown a lusty lad  
Of seven, frolicked with the herdsmen’s boys,  
Whilst tending cattle in the pasture lands,  
His uncles knew the truth, and sent their men  
To seek and slay the boy. The favourite sport  
Of Pandu and his friends was in a pond  
To swim and dive ; but none could longer keep  
Submerged than Pandu ; much admired,  
The feat was nathless but a simple trick !  
Its secret he revealed to none, and none  
Had guessed : for in the pond there grew a tree  
Whose trunk was hollow with an ample slot  
Below the water, and another higher up,  
But smaller : Pandu dived and promptly slipped  
Into the hollow hole and when he wished,

Returned the selfsame way ! One afternoon  
The boys were at their wonted sport when down  
Upon them swooped the slayers, and to make  
More certain of their prey, they slew the lot ;  
But Pandu, as the gods would have it, dived  
A moment ere they swooped, and so escaped.  
And when the princes learnt the tale, their minds  
Were eased ; but none the less they kept a watch ;  
For slumbering in their bosoms lay their dread,  
Unquenchable. Five years it slumbered, till  
The news that Pandu midst the herdsmen dwelt  
Full merrily, bestirred it, and it rose,  
As a fierce python from its stupor roused,  
Unfolds its massy coils and rears its head  
With sinister, blazing eyes and darting tongue,  
Prepared to seize and crush its destined prey.

Again the killers, charged to spare no folk  
Found on the pastures, came ; and yet again  
They missed their mark ; for on the day they came  
It chanced the cowherds shot an elk and sent  
Young Pandu to the village for some fire  
To roast their prey. The youth went home, but asked  
His foster father's son to go instead,  
Saying : " Lo, I am footsore, take thou fire  
Unto the herdsmen ; then thou too wilt share  
The savoury feast." Delighted went the boy.  
The moment he arrived the slayers drew  
A cordon round the hapless folk and dyed  
The meadow with their life-blood, sparing none.

And thus the princes' plans went twice awry,  
Despite the hopeful tales their bloodhounds brought.  
And yet a third time did they wot their doom  
Still hung above their heads, when Pandu stood,  
A stalwart stripling of sixteen, with arms  
That reached below his knees, a certain sign  
Of kingship ; and his valour matched his strength  
So well, that his compeers would often say :  
“ Pandu and Peril were together whelped,  
And he the stronger of the twain indeed :  
How else is he a stranger unto fear ? ”

But ere the princes acted, once again  
Did Chitra sage forestall them : sending gold  
Enow for all his needs, she wished her son  
Be moved in secret to a distant place  
Beyond his uncles' reach. So when the time  
Was ripe the herdsman called his ward and said :  
“ My son ! dost thou recall the hint I dropped,  
When I the tale recounted of thy birth  
And destiny, about a time when we  
Must part ? Lo, even now that hour hath struck,  
And thou must needs lay down the herdsman's staff,  
And hence departing, in another school  
Learn how to wield the jewelled staff that sways  
Far other than dumb herds, but herds withal,  
And far more turbulent, more prone to stray  
Than those thou hast till now controlled ; hard task  
And dangerous, but well within thy scope  
Of mind and puissance—thou who art endowed

With two and thirty godly attributes—  
Why use long words—to Pandula, the sage,  
Thou now must wend ; he dwelleth in the South,  
The opulent lord of acres, deeply versed  
In *Dharma, Artha, Kama* :<sup>(4)</sup> threefold lore,  
That makes a perfect man. Thy mother's friend  
He is, and sworn to speed thy fortunes on,  
Till triumph, falcon-wise, perch on thy arm  
With kingship in his talons ! Bear in mind,  
Thy uncles are thy deadly foes ; yet fear  
Them not, for they must meet the awful weird  
That Brahma with His iron nail hath scored  
Upon their heads the moment of their birth.  
But now to horse ; needs must thou unperceived  
Leave here. Here's gold, thy mother's gift to thee ;  
And here's the chosen bondman who will guide  
Thee on thy way, and serve thy daily needs.  
Farewell, dear son ! my blessings go with thee,  
And thy fond foster dame's ; disconsolate  
She'll sit and moan when she awakes and finds  
Thee gone—may all the gods protect thee, son ! ”

He ended ; and they hung awhile in fond  
Embrace with brimming eyes and heavy hearts ;  
Then parted : and Pandu and his trusty guide  
Into the silent shadows rode away,  
And till they passed the village fields close hugged  
The umbral woods that clothed Mihantala,  
The sacred mount, from soaring peak to foot :  
Mihántala ! what thrilling memories

Awoke in Pandu's breast, as riding round  
Its base he viewed the mount whose pinnacle  
Of riven granite, towering a thousand feet  
Above a sea of verdure, seemed to kiss  
The very stars. How oft he and his mates  
Had scaled the breezy summit and admired  
The view sublime, that stretched across the isle  
From coast to coast ; and how they thrilled to glimpse  
The distant ocean glimmering in the sun ; to hear  
The booming of the breakers on the beach,  
Or fancy they could hear ; how oft they vied  
In scrambling up the beetling crags to rob  
The crested eagle's nest ! All these and more  
Of boyish pranks his fancy fed, and filled  
His bosom with a soft regret for things  
That were no more, as on he southward rode.  
Three nights they journeyed, resting in the groves  
By day from summer heat, and when the third  
Night's stars began to pale, they reached the town  
Named Pandulagama after its lord,  
The Brahman sage. The moment that the sage  
Knew him for Chitra's son, with open hands  
He welcomed Pandu as an honoured guest,  
And said : " Thou wilt be king and rule this isle  
Full seventy years : learn thou the art, my son ! '  
And so he taught him all the Vedic lore  
Of war and peace, and everything a king  
Should know ; and also taught his own  
Son Kanda. Brahmacharya-wise, down at  
The Guru's feet both pupils sat and sucked

His doctrines (<sup>5</sup>). As the sun-baked earth,  
Touched by the rain, as by a fairy's wand,  
Bursts into verdure, even so apace  
The scholars showed their mastery of the arts.

Then choosing an auspicious day and hour,  
The Brahman gave the Prince enough of gold  
To raise an army ; when five hundred men,  
All stalwart warriors skilled the weapons five  
To wield, and valiant as himself and true,  
The Prince enrolled, the Guru spake and said :

“ Now lift thy banner up aloft, and lead  
Thy warriors forth ; lo, Kanda, thy colleague,  
Shall go with thee, thy second in command,  
And trusted counsellor ; but bear in mind  
These words of mine : the maiden at whose touch  
Leaves turn to gold, take even her to wife ;  
And when the throne is thine, make her thy queen,  
And make my son thy chaplain. Now march on,  
And rest not till thou sittest on the throne,  
Hewing thy way to it through all that dare  
Oppose thee ; as a thirsty elephant,  
The leader of a mighty herd, rests not,  
But cuts his way through thickest jungle growth  
Until the water pools are reached ; so seek  
The water that shall consecrate thee “ Lord  
Of Elephants.” Now while thy natal stars  
Are in the house of Royal-fortune met,  
And thy doomed uncles' occupy the fell

Abodes of Rahu and his brother Ketu,  
Strike home and hard, and thou wilt certes win !  
But ere thou goest treasure up these words,  
And closely weave thy life upon their warp :  
Do that by day which may enable thee  
To pass the night in peaceful slumbers sweet ;  
Do that through eight months of the circling year  
Which may the rainy season happy make ;  
Throughout thy youthful prime do that which may  
Fill up thy life's sear days with happy hours ;  
Aye, more, do that throughout thy mortal life,  
Which may, enfreeing thee from future births,  
Crown thee with bliss eternal. Fare thee well ! ”

Thus cheerfully dismissed, the valiant Prince  
Stepped round his wise preceptor thrice with hands <sup>(6)</sup>  
Conjoined in meet farewell. He then unfurled  
His banner bright, and sallied blithely forth  
With his small force, that quickly gathered strength  
As further north it moved ; and when a halt  
Was called at Kanda-mountain, it had swelled  
To thrice its bulk.

Now in the wealthy fief  
Of Siva, one of Pandu's hostile uncles, they  
Encamped ; and Siva even at that time,  
O'erseeing the toiling reapers, in his fields  
Sojourned. His only daughter, Pali, ranked  
Foremost amongst the island's fairest maids ;  
And she, now riding a resplendent wain

With her fair damsels, as the full-orbed Moon  
Rides midst the planets in autumnal skies,  
And by a gorgeous retinue accompanied,  
Of men-at-arms, came bringing noontide fare  
Unto her father's reapers. As her way  
Lay by his camp, Prince Pandu saw her pass—  
Their glances met ; and as a bird new-caged,  
Leaps at the bars, deep yearning to rejoin  
His mate outside, his heart within his breast  
Leapt madly ; and he jumped into his car,  
And driving up abreast the Princess' wain,  
Despite her armed guards who, startled by  
The strange light in his eyes gave way, he asked  
The maid in gentlest accents whither she was bound  
And when she smiling sweetly fluted out  
Her answer, he, emboldened, craved a share  
Of food she bore. Most graciously she stopped  
Her wain, stepped down and 'neath a banyan's shade  
She bade the Prince and all his warriors sit ;  
Then in a golden bowl she served the Prince  
With cates ; the rest she served in banyan leaves,  
When lo, the leaves all turned turned to solid gold  
Beneath her touch ! Thereat the Prince's soul  
Leapt up with joy, as he the Brahman's words  
Recalled, and thought, " Here is the very maid,  
Or, goddess rather, as her every look  
And act proclaim her, chosen by the gods  
My queen to be : in sooth, she reigns the queen  
Already of my bosom, crowned by love—  
Yea, the goddess of my worship, shrined

Within my soul her beauteous image stands ! ”

So mused he, happy in his new-found love,  
While moved the stately Princess with her maids,  
Like Rhumba 'midst her Apsarases, (7) her guests  
Attending ; her soft eyes, by love illumed,  
Vied in their lustre with the brilliant pearl  
That dangled from her dainty nose and kissed  
Her luscious lips, like a bright-coated bee  
That lingers o'er a partly-opened rose  
Of crimson hue ; the zone of golden bells  
That girt her slender waist, and ankle rings,  
Seductive music made with every step  
She took ! Then lo, another miracle :  
The viands grew not less, and it but seemed  
That one man's portion had been drawn away  
When all had had their fill ! Wherefore, thenceforth  
The Princess they Suvannapali named,  
Since she so rich in virtues proved herself,  
The merit springing from her guilelessness.

The wayside banquet done, the Princess sent  
Her damsels onward with the sumpter-wain,  
Her escort with them ; and then, nothing loath,  
She let the Prince to fold her in his arms,  
To drink the nectar from her lotus mouth,  
To raise her up, as though she were a child,  
Into his battle-car, and drive away :  
What though he was a stranger unto her,  
What though she was but an untutored maid,

What though her parents were her highest gods,  
What though her lover was her father's foe,  
What though death were the sequel to her step—  
She nothing recked in heaven or on earth,  
Save him whose arms enringed her ! So they drove  
Unto the camp, and that same evening, hand  
In hand enclasped, paced round the nuptial fire,  
While Kanda sang the blessings o'er the pair,  
And mountains echoed back the festal shout.

The next day broke blood-red with clash of arms :  
For stung unto the soul, Prince Siva threw  
His principedom's martial might against the bold  
Abductor of his daughter, as he deemed  
Prince Pandu. Fierce the battle joined, but soon  
Concluded with the rout of Siva's forces,  
Of whom but few survived the dreadful shock  
And fled. Lo, Kalhanágar, Battle-town,  
Marks now that stricken field. Another wave  
Of battle, raised by Pali's brothers five,  
Against Prince Pandu rolled the selfsame day.  
But like the first, it broke and fell in ruddy foam  
Upon a rocky front by Kanda reared,  
And Field of Blood the spot today is named.

Pandu, now leader of a mighty host,  
Swept onward, like the god of war himself,  
From triumph unto triumph ; the king's sons,  
All save the eldest, who succeeding his  
Dead father, ruled until he was deposed

For favouring still his conquering nephew's cause—  
All these opposed him, and defeated fled  
With all their cohorts, like Asura hosts  
Before the legions under Indra's lead.  
From stronghold unto stronghold routed, fled  
They headlong, pausing not until they reached  
The royal capital. Then Pandu camped  
In Dhummarakka's captured mountain fort.

And in those mountain wilds a Yakkhni dwelt,  
Named Cetiya ; 'twas her wont at times to leave  
Her lonely lotus pond and roam abroad,  
The form assuming of a mare, milk-white  
Her well-turned limbs and body gleamed ;  
With flowing mane and tail and pink-rimmed eyes,  
And feet and nostrils of a ruddy hue,  
She worthier seemed a god to bear than man.  
This wondrous steed, a warrior chanced to spy,  
And told the Prince ; armed with a twisted noose,  
The hero stole towards her, but she fled  
And he pursued her swiftly ; seven times  
She circled round the pond with him in close  
Pursuit ; then making for the neighbouring bank  
Of Ganga, plunged into the swirling flood ;  
Emerging thence she seven times around  
The Dhummarakka mountain flew, the hero still  
Close on her heels ; and yet thrice more the pond  
She circled ere she plunged yet once again  
Into the Ganga's foam ; but there he closed

On her, and seized her by her copious mane ;  
Then grasped a palm-leaf floating down the stream,  
And lo, it turned into a glittering sword,  
By gods so willed ; the blade he brandished high  
With threatening looks ; whereat, " O spare me, Lord,"  
She whined, " and I will help thee win this realm ;  
I am a Yakkhni who can serve thy need ;  
And well thy prowess hath subdued my will."  
So saying she allowed him lead her thence  
Nose-roped, and ever after him she bore,  
Submissive to his will, with winged speed,  
And helped him with her counsel sage withal.

His army rested and recouped, the Prince  
Resumed his northward march, and halted not  
Till he Aritta's mountain stronghold gained ;  
And there encamped within an easy march  
Of Upatissa, the Imperial Capital.  
Thereat his uncles all uneasy grew,  
And raised a monster force, such as the isle  
Had never trod since Rama in the hoary past<sup>(8)</sup>  
Encountered Rávana for fair Sita's sake ;  
And leaving Pali's sire behind, to watch  
Their eldest brother, whom they trusted not,  
The princes led their arméd myriads forth,  
Resolved to conquer Fate—a trifling task  
With such an army—so they fondly deemed !

Forewarned, Prince Pandu braced his men to meet  
The coming storm, undaunted by the odds ;

But when at eye-shot reach the enemy loomed,  
That sight the bravest heart might have appalled :  
For with its brightly armoured elephants,  
So like a moving range of blazing hills,  
Its flaming weapons, clattering chariots, tramp  
Of steeds, all overhung with rolling clouds  
Of ruddy dust, it seemed a forest fire,  
Consuming all to ashes in its path ;  
Or an approaching cyclone seemed, with clouds  
Emitting lightning and the thunder's roar.  
Advancing thus in brave array, they built  
A battlemented camp beyond the reach  
Of hostile missiles ; then besieged the Mount,  
Encircling it completely. Pandu sought  
The wily Yakkhni's counsel, and she said :  
" Wealth, argument and stratagem and force—  
These four predicaments rule all events  
Of life ; occasion now demands, O Prince,  
The use of policy and warrants it.  
So send thou to the hostile camp a band  
Of chosen warriors with their weapons well  
Concealed beneath their raiment ; let them bear  
Rich presents for thine uncles, and withal  
A message saying, thou art following  
The embassy to sue for peace thyself.  
Thus lulled by humble words thy foes will think :  
' Let be, we'll take him prisoner when he comes ;'  
But let thy warriors when they hear me neigh,  
Cut down thine uncles with their hidden swords."  
The Prince did even as the Yakkhni said,

And when his envoys had admittance gained,  
He riding her, as she did furthermore  
Advise, led forth a numerous force well armed ;  
And when the entrance of the camp they reached,  
Full loudly did the Yakkhni neigh. Straightway  
The Prince's men within and those without  
Responded with a mighty shout, and fell  
Upon their panic-stricken foes and reaped  
A dreadful harvest, rearing with the skulls  
A grisly mound ; which when the Prince beheld,  
And saw his uncles' skulls there uppermost,  
He straight exclaimed, " 'Tis like a heap of gourds " ;  
Wherefore they called the place " The Town of  
Gourds,"  
Which to this day retains its ancient name.

Thus did the doom the high gods foreordained,  
Though shunned with anxious care and toil so long,  
O'ertake its princely victims in the end.  
But the victorious Pandu going hence,  
A wonder-city founded on a site  
Appointed by the gods ; with scented groves  
And crystal lakes and founts the city spread  
O'er many a league of ground ; and dwellings fair  
With tree-embowered streets and verdant parks,  
Resounded with the hum of bright-faced folk  
Of all communities and gilds and creeds,  
All happy in their several zones assigned ;  
And every sect had its own fretted shrines  
And fanes all by the cunning hands designed

Of master craftsmen ; public halls and homes  
For every human need abounded there ;  
And the whole city with its suburbs vast,  
Was ever clean and sweet, maintained by folk  
Appointed for the task, Chandālas named.  
And when this earthly paradise the Prince  
Accomplished, in the midst thereof he reared  
A stately palace for himself, and named  
It Anuradhapur. And then he bade  
Them bring the royal sunshade, spotless white,  
And rich with many a sparkling stone and pearl ;  
This purified with water from a natural pool,  
As Vedic rites ordained, the Brahmans raised  
Above him and his spouse, amid the roar  
Of joyful throngs and burst of minstrelsy.  
And next from out the selfsame lotus-pool—  
Thereafter named the Pool of Victory—  
He and his consort fair received the shower  
Of regal consecration. And the King,  
True to his promise unto Kanda brave,  
Made him his Chaplain ; and conferred on all  
His friends, both men and Yakkhas, offices  
According to their merits ; compassed thus  
With trusty counsellors and loyal friends,  
King Pandu in Anuradhapur,  
That soon became the wonder of the world  
For wealth and splendour, reigned as sovereign lord  
Supreme o'er all the Kingdom of the Lions,  
The peoples' King, full seventy blissful years.



## NOTES

### EPISODE I—*The Coming of Wijaya.*

1. “*Gobbs.*”—Backwaters on the Ceylon coast. For a full description of *Gobbs*, see Sir Emerson Tennent’s “Ceylon.”
2. “*Yakkhas.*”—Yakshas in Sanscrit. They are attendants on Kubera, the God of Wealth. Like the Widhyadaras, another order of mythical beings, the Yakshas possess magical faculties.
3. “*The beast’s love for his son.*”—Buddhists believe that when love towards all creatures is actually present in one’s heart, nothing can injure one.
4. “*My evil Karma.*”—The Hindu doctrine of *Karma* is bound up with their belief in re-birth.
5. *Sakkra.*—Another name for Indra, the Hindu Jupiter. Curiously enough he is represented as being subservient to Buddha.
6. “*Lotus seeds delicious plucked.*”—“At some of the tanks where the lotus grows in profusion in Ceylon, I tasted the seeds enclosed in the torus of the flowers and found them white and delicately flavoured, not unlike the pine cone of the Apennines.” Sir Emerson Tennent in “Ceylon.”
7. “*Faulchion, battleaxe*”, etc.—They are the five weapons of a completely equipped Hindu warrior.
8. “*The marriage garland.*”—The garland used in a *Swayamwara*, or a maiden’s choosing of her husband.

9. "*Wedded Gandharva-wise.*"—"The voluntary union of a maiden and her lover, one must know, to be the Gandharva rite." The Laws of Manu.
10. "*Jungle cock's reveille call.*"—For an account of this bird and the golden-oriole, see Sir E. Tennent's "Ceylon."
11. "*Naming it Thambrapani from the dust.*"—"The soil of Ceylon is composed of laterite which crumbles into a red dust." Prof. Geiger.
12. "*Households of the eighteen guilds*".—The four main castes or *Varnas*, namely, the Brahmana, the Kshatriya, the Vaisya, and the Sudra, which compose Hindu society, are again divided into eighteen sub-castes or guilds, according to the various occupations, such as agriculture, trade, weaving, carpentry, etc. At the present time there are many more than this number. It is very curious that the *chandalas* (scavengers), usually considered out-castes, are included in the list.

Cf. *The Laws of Manu*, Prof. Buhler's translation, Chapter X.

13. "*In Lakshmi's name.*"—"Lakshmi, or Sree, is the Goddess of wealth and good fortune. She was one of the *ratnas* or gems that came to the surface when the ocean was churned by Gods and Demons for the celebrated *Amrita* or nectar of immortality. Lakshmi is usually represented with a lotus in her hand. Hindus often say, "Lakshmi has

come", when fortune smiles, and "Lakshmi has flown", when in misfortune.

EPISODE II—*The Builder of Anuradhapura.*

1. "*The Mansions of the Sun.*"—"The sun-god is the deity, they (the Kshatriyas) are most anxious to propitiate; and in his honour they fearlessly expend their blood in battle from the hope of being received into his mansion. Their highest heaven is accordingly the *Bhanthan* or *Bhanuloca*, 'the region of the sun'." Todd's Rajasthan.
2. "*Radha hath her Krishna.*"—Krishna is the Apollo of the Hindu pantheon. The love romance of Radha and Krishna is fully dealt with by Jayadeva in his "*Gita Govinda.*"
3. "*The merry month of Phalgun.*"—"Phalgun or Spring is ushered in with the *Ahairea*, or Spring Hunt. The preceding day the Rana distributes to all his chiefs and servants either a dress of green or some portion thereof, in which all appear habited on the morrow to slay the boar to Gouri, the Ceres of the Rajputs."
4. "*Dharma, Artha, Kama.*"—This may be rendered Religion, Profit, Pleasure, a knowledge of which, according to the Vedas, forms the complete education of a man of the world.
5. "*Sucked his doctrines*", etc.—"So instantaneous is the response of nature to the influence of returning moisture, that in a single day the green hue of reviving vegetation begins to tint the saturated ground." Sir Emerson Tennent's "*Ceylon.*"

6. "*Stepped round his wise preceptor.*"—The Hindu custom of taking leave of a revered person. It is not now generally followed, but circumambulating a temple or shrine is still in vogue.
7. "*Like Rhumba 'midst her Apsarases.*"—Rhumba is the queen of the mythical beings known as Apsarases, who are the Houris of Indra's paradise.
8. "*Rama in the hoary past*".—The story of Rama, the hero of the great Indian epic, the *Ramayana*, has often been communicated to European readers in verse and prose translations. The reference in the text is to the war waged by Rama against Ravana in Lanka, or Ceylon. Ravana, the demon king of Lanka, who had abducted Sita, the consort of Rama, to avenge an insult, was attacked by Rama and his army of forest folk, who are called, perhaps totemistically, "monkeys and bears," in his stronghold of Lanka. The war ended with the slaying of Ravana by Rama in single combat, and the recovery of Sita. See Romesh Dutt's condensed metrical rendering in the *Everyman Library* series.



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