

## The Ocean of Story

### Book I: Kāthapītha

#### Chapter 2

[MI] Then Pushpadanta, wandering on the earth in the form of a man, was known by the name of Vararuchi and Katyayana. Having attained perfection in the sciences, and having served Nanda as minister, being wearied out he went once on a time to visit the shrine of Durgā.<sup>[1]</sup> And that goddess, being pleased with his austerities, ordered him in a dream to repair to the wilds of the Vindhya to behold Kāṇabhūti. And as he wandered about there in a waterless and savage wood,<sup>[2]</sup> full of tigers and apes, he beheld a lofty *Nyagrodha* tree.<sup>[3]</sup> And near it he saw, surrounded by hundreds of Piśāchas, that Piśācha Kāṇabhūti, in stature like a *Śāla* tree. When Kāṇabhūti had seen him and respectfully clasped his feet, Kātyāyana sitting down immediately spake to him: "Thou art an observer of the good custom, how hast thou come into this state?" Having heard this Kāṇabhūti said to Kātyāyana, who had shown affection towards him: "I know not of myself, but listen to what I heard from Śiva at Ujjayinī in the place where corpses are burnt; I proceed to tell it thee.

"The adorable god was asked by Durgā: 'Whence, my lord, comes thy delight in skulls and burning places?'

"He thereupon gave this answer:

"Long ago, when all things had been destroyed at the end of a Kalpa, the universe became water: I then cleft my thigh and left fall a drop of blood; that drop falling into the water turned into an egg, from that sprang the Supreme Soul,<sup>[4]</sup> the Disposer; from him proceeded Nature,<sup>[5]</sup> created by me for the purpose of further creation, and they created the other lords of created beings,<sup>[6]</sup> and, those in turn, the created beings, for which reason, my beloved, the Supreme Soul is called in the world the grandfather. Having thus created the world, animate and inanimate, that Spirit became arrogant<sup>[7]</sup>: thereupon I cut off his head: then, through regret for what I had done, I undertook a difficult vow. So thus it comes to pass that I carry skulls in my hand, and love the places where corpses are burned. Moreover, this world, resembling a skull, rests in my hand; for the two skull-shaped halves of the egg before-mentioned are called heaven and earth.'<sup>[8]</sup> When Śiva had thus spoken, I, being full of curiosity, determined to listen; and Pārvatī again said to her husband: 'After how long a time will that Pushpadanta return to us?'

*The Creation  
and Kuvera's  
Curse*

Hearing that, Maheśvara spoke to the goddess, pointing me out to her: 'That Piśācha, whom thou beholdest there, was once a Yaksha, a servant of Kuvera, the God of Wealth, and he had for a friend a Rākshasa named Sthūlaśiras; and the Lord of Wealth, perceiving that he associated with that evil one, banished him to the wilds of the Vindhya mountains. But his brother Dīrghajangha fell at the feet of the god, and humbly asked when the curse would end. Then the God of Wealth said: "After thy brother has heard the great tale from Pushpadanta, who has been born into this world in consequence of a curse, and after he has in turn told it to Mālyavān, who owing to a curse has become a human being, he together with those two Gaṇas shall be released from the effects of the curse." Such were the terms on which the God of Wealth then ordained that Mālyavān should obtain remission from his curse here below, and thou didst fix the same in the case of Pushpadanta; recall it to mind, my beloved.' When I heard that speech of Śiva, I came here, overjoyed, knowing that calamity of my curse would be terminated by the arrival of Pushpadanta."

When Kāṇabhūti ceased after telling this story, that moment Vararuchi remembered his origin, and exclaimed like one aroused from sleep: "I am that very Pushpadanta, hear that tale from me." Thereupon Kātyāyana related to him the seven great tales in seven hundred thousand verses, and then Kāṇabhūti said to him: "My lord, thou art an incarnation of Śiva, who else knows this story? Through thy favour that curse has almost left my body. Therefore tell me thy own history from thy birth, thou mighty one, sanctify me yet further, if the narrative may be revealed to such a one as I am." Then Vararuchi, to gratify Kāṇabhūti, who remained prostrate before him, told all his history from his birth at full length, in the following words:—

1. *Story of Vararuchi, his teacher Varsha, and his fellow-pupils Vyāḍi and Indradatta*

In the city of Kauśāmbī there lived a Brāhman called Somadatta, who had also the title of Agniśikha, and his wife was called Vasudattā. She was the daughter of hermit, and was born into the world in this position in consequence of a curse; and I was borne by her to this excellent Brāhman, also in consequence of a curse. Now while I was still quite a child my father died, but my mother continued to support me, as I grew up, by severe drudgery; then one day two Brāhmins came to our house to stop a night, exceedingly dusty with a long journey; and while they were staying in our house there arose the noise of a *tabor*; thereupon my mother said to me, sobbing as she called to mind her husband: "There, my son, is your father's friend Bhavananda, giving a dramatic entertainment." I answered: "I will go and see it, and will exhibit the whole of it to you, with a recitation of all the speeches." On hearing that speech of mine, those Brāhmins were

astonished, but my mother said to them: "Come, my children, there is no doubt about the truth of what he says; this boy will remember by heart everything that he has heard once."[\[9\]](#) Then they, in order to test me, recited to me a Prātiśākhya[\[10\]](#); immediately I repeated the whole in their presence, then I went with the two Brāhman and saw that play, and when I came home I went through the whole of it in front of my mother: then one of the Brāhman, named Vyāḍi, having ascertained that I was able to recollect a thing on hearing it once, told with submissive reverence this tale to my mother.

#### 1a. *The Two Brāhman Brothers*

Mother, in the city of Vetasa there were two Brāhman brothers, Deva-Svāmin and Karambaka, who loved one another very dearly; this Indradatta here is the son of one of them, and I am the son of the other, and my name is Vyāḍi. It came to pass that my father died. Owing to grief for his loss, the father of Indradatta went on the long journey,[\[11\]](#) and then the hearts of our two mothers broke with grief; thereupon, being orphans, though we had wealth,[\[12\]](#) and desiring to acquire learning, we went to the southern region to supplicate the lord Kārttikeya. And while we were engaged in austerities there, the god gave us the following revelation in a dream. "There is a city called Pāṭaliputra, the capital of King Nanda, and in it there is a Brāhman, named Varsha, from him ye shall learn all knowledge, therefore go there." Then we went to that city, and when we made inquiries there, people said to us: "There is a blockhead of a Brāhman in this town, of the name of Varsha." Immediately we went on with minds in a state of suspense, and we saw the house of Varsha in a miserable condition, made a very ant-hill by mice, dilapidated by the cracking of the walls, untidy,[\[13\]](#) deprived of eaves, looking like the very birthplace of misery.

Then, seeing Varsha plunged in meditation within the house, we approached his wife, who showed us all proper hospitality; her body was emaciated and begrimed, her dress tattered and dirty; she looked like the incarnation of Poverty, attracted thither by admiration for the Brāhman's virtues. Bending humbly before her, we told her our circumstances, and the report of her husband's imbecility, which we had heard in the city. She exclaimed: "My children, I am not ashamed to tell you the truth: listen! I will relate the whole story," and then she, chaste lady, proceeded to tell us the tale which follows:—

#### 1aa. *Varsha and Upavarsha*

There lived in this city an excellent Brāhman, named Śankara Svāmin, and he had two sons, my husband Varsha, and Upavarsha; my husband was

stupid and poor, and his younger brother was just the opposite: and Upavarsha appointed his own wife to manage his elder brother's house.[14] Then in the course of time the rainy season came on, and at this time the women are in the habit of making a cake of flour mixed with molasses, of an unbecoming and disgusting shape,[15] and giving it to any Brahman who is thought to be a blockhead, and if they act thus, this cake is said to remove their discomfort caused by bathing in the cold season, and their exhaustion caused by bathing in the hot weather[16]; but when it is given, Brāhmans refuse to receive it, on the ground that the custom is a disgusting one. This cake was presented by my sister-in-law to my husband, together with a sacrificial fee; he received it, and brought it home with him, and got a severe scolding from me; then he began to be inwardly consumed with grief at his own stupidity, and went to worship the sole of the foot of the god Kārttikeya: the god, pleased with his austerities, bestowed on him the knowledge of all the sciences; and gave him this order: "When thou findest a Brāhman who can recollect what he has heard only once, then thou mayest reveal these"—thereupon my husband returned home delighted, and when he had reached home, told the whole story to me. From that time forth he has remained continually muttering prayers and meditating: so find you some one who can remember anything after hearing it once, and bring him here: if you do that, you will both of you undoubtedly obtain all that you desire.

#### 1a. *The Two Brahman Brothers*

Having heard this from the wife of Varsha, and having immediately given her a hundred gold pieces to relieve her poverty, we went out of that city; then we wandered through the earth, and could not find anywhere a person who could remember what he had heard only once; at last we arrived tired out at your house to-day, and have found here this boy, your son, who can recollect anything after once hearing it: therefore give him us and let us go forth to acquire the commodity knowledge.

#### 1. *Story Of Vararuchi ...*

Having heard this speech of Vyāḍi, my mother said with respect: "All this tallies completely: I repose confidence in your tale: for long ago at the birth of this my only son, a distinct spiritual[17] voice was heard from heaven. 'A boy has been born who shall be able to remember what he has heard once; he shall acquire knowledge from Varsha, and shall make the science of grammar famous in the world, and he shall be called Vararuchi by name, because whatever is excellent[18] shall please him.' Having uttered this, the voice ceased. Consequently, ever since this boy has grown big, I have been thinking, day and night, where that teacher Varsha can be, and to-day I

have been exceedingly gratified at hearing it from your mouth. Therefore take him with you: what harm can there be in it, he is your brother?" When they heard this speech of my mother's, those two, Vyādi and Indradatta, overflowing with joy, thought that night but a moment in length. Then Vyādi quickly gave his own wealth to my mother to provide a feast, and desiring that I should be qualified to read the Vedas, invested me with the Brāhmanical thread.[19] Then Vyādi and Indradatta took me, who managed by my own fortitude to control the excessive grief I felt at parting, while my mother in taking leave of me could with difficulty suppress her tears, and considering that the favour of Kārttikeya towards them had now put forth blossom, set out rapidly from that city; then in course of time we arrived at the house of the teacher Varsha: he too considered that I was the favour of Kārttikeya arrived in bodily form. The next day he placed us in front of him, and sitting down in a consecrated spot he began to recite the syllable Om[20] with heavenly voice. Immediately the Vedas with the six supplementary sciences rushed into his mind, and then he began to teach them to us; then I retained what the teacher told us after hearing it once, Vyādi after hearing it twice, and Indradatta after hearing it three times: then the Brāhmans of the city, hearing of a sudden that divine sound, came at once from all quarters with wonder stirring in their breasts to see what this new thing might be, and with their reverend mouths loud in his praises, honoured Varsha with low bows. Then beholding that wonderful miracle, not only Upavarsha, but all the citizens of Pātaliputra[21] kept high festival. Moreover, the King Nanda, of exalted fortune, seeing the power of the boon of the son of Śiva, was delighted, and immediately filled the house of Varsha with wealth, showing him every mark of respect.[22]

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## Endnotes

1. More literally, the goddess that dwells in the Vindhya hills. Her shrine is near Mirzāpur. [<back>](#)
2. Dr Brockhaus makes *parusha* a proper name. [<back>](#)
3. *Ficus Indica*. [<back>](#)
4. *Pumān*=*purusha*, the spirit. [<back>](#)
5. *Prakṛiti*, the original source, or rather passive power, of creating the material world. [<back>](#)
6. *Prajāpati*. [<back>](#)
7. The spirit was, of course, Brahmā, whose head Śiva cut off. [<back>](#)
8. The conception of the world-egg is found throughout Indian cosmology. Similar legends of the origin of the world appear both in the period of the *Brahmayas* and *Upanishads* and in that of the Epics and *Purānas*. For full details see the article "Cosmogony and Cosmology (Indian)," by H. Jacobi, in Hastings' *Encyclopædia of Religion and Ethics*, vol. iv, p. 155 *et seq.*—N.M.P. [<back>](#)
9. It appears from an article in *Mélusine*, by A. Bart, entitled "An Ancient Manual of Sorcery," and consisting mainly of passages translated from Burnell's *Sāmavidhāna Brāhmaṇa*, that this power can be acquired in the following way:— "After a fast of three nights, take a plant of *soma* (*Asclepias acida*); recite a certain formula and eat of the plant a thousand times, you will be able to repeat anything after hearing it once. Or bruise the flowers in water, and drink the mixture for a year. Or drink *soma*, that is to say the fermented juice of the plant, for a month. Or do it always" (*Mélusine*, 1878, p. 107; II, 7, 4-7)  
In the *Milinda Pañho* (*Pali Miscellany*, by V. Trenekner, Part I, p. 14), the child Nagasena learns the whole of the three Vedas by hearing them repeated once. [<back>](#)
10. A grammatical treatise on the rules regulating the euphonic combination of letters and their pronunciation peculiar to one of the different Sākhās or branches of the Vedas. See Monier Williams, *Indian Wisdom*, pp. 160, 161. [<back>](#)
11. I.e. died. [<back>](#)
12. Here we have a pun which it is impossible to render in English. *Anatha* means without natural protectors and also poor. [<back>](#)

13. Taking *chhāyā* in the sense of *śohhā*. It might mean "affording no shelter to the inmates."<[back](#)>

14. Dr Brockhaus translates the line: *Von diesem wurde ich meinem Manne vermählt, um seinem Hauswesen vorzustehen.*<[back](#)>

15. Like the Roman *fascinum*; *guhya=linga=phallus*. Professor E. B. Cowell has referred me to an article by Dr Liebrecht in the *Zeitschrift der Morgenländischen Gesellschaft*. It was reprinted in his *Zur Volkskunde*, Heilbronn, 1879, p. 436 *et seq.*, under the title of "Der Aufgegessene Gott." He connects the custom with that of the Jewish women mentioned in Jeremiah vii. 18: "The women knead their dough to make cakes to the Queen of Heaven," and he quotes a curious custom practised on Palm Sunday in the town of Saintes.—Dulaure went deeply into the subject in his *Des Divinités Génératrices*, Paris, 1805, (1st edition); 2 vols., 1825 (2nd edition); vol. 2 was enlarged and reprinted in 1885—the last edition was issued in Paris, 1905. He says that in his time the festival was called there "La fête des Pinnes"; the women and children carried in the procession a *phallus* made of bread, which they called a *pinne*, at the end of their palm branches; these *pinnes* were subsequently blessed by the priest, and carefully preserved by the women during the year. Liebrecht gives numerous examples of the making and eating of gods for various reasons. They are usually a form of sympathetic or homoeopathic magic. For instance in the time of famine the *Hanīfa* tribe of Arabia make an idol of *hais* (dates, butter and milk kneaded together), which they eat, thus hoping to obtain food supplies and a speedy termination of the famine. See Burton's *Nights*, vol. vii, p. 14 [night 642], where, in the story of [Gharib and his brother Ajib](#), Jamrkan worships a god of '*Agwah*—i.e. compressed dates, butter and honey. In other cases we see customs connected with the corn goddess which involve the eating of a cake made in some particular shape.

To give a few examples:

At Ulten, in the Trentino district of the Tyrol, the women make a god with the last of the dough which they have been kneading, and when they begin baking the god is thrown into the oven.

In Germany there are distinct festivals connected with such cake ceremonies. In Upper Germany they are called Manoggel, Nikolause, Klausmanner; in Lower Germany, Sengterklas, Klaskerchen, etc. They are all connected with St Nicolaus.

In France, in La Pallisse, it is customary to hang several bottles of wine and a "man of dough" on a fig-tree. The tree and its offerings are carried to the Mairie and kept till the end of the grape-picking season, when a harvest festival is held, at which the Mayor breaks the dough figure and distributes it among the people.

In Sweden the figure of a girl is made from the grain of the last sheaf, and is divided up among the household, each member of which eats his allotted portion.

In England, at Nottingham, it was, according to Liebrecht (*op. cit.*), the custom for the bakers to send at Christmas to all their customers buns in the shape of a lozenge, upon which was stamped the Cross, or more often, the Virgin and Child. The distant connection with the "Queen of Heaven," mentioned at the beginning of this note, will be recognised.

In the above examples of "cake customs" the phallic element is to a large extent either hidden or forgotten, or else plays but a minor part in the ceremonies described. In many cases, however, the opposite is the case. In his *Remains of the Worship of Priapus*, R. P. Payne Knight states that in Saintonge, in the neighbourhood of La Rochelle, small cakes baked in the shape of a *phallus* form part of the Easter offering; they are subsequently distributed at all the houses. A similar custom existed at St Jean d'Angély. According to Dulaure (*op. cit.*), in 1825 such cakes were still commonly made at certain times, the male being symbolised at Brives and other localities of Lower Limousin, while the female emblem was adopted at Clermont, in Auvergne, as well as other places.

Turning to the ancient world we find that cakes of phallic form were among the sacred objects carried about in Greece during the Thesmophoria, and in the λίκνον, or baskets of first-fruits, at the orphic rite of the Liknophoria, and also at marriages. They were included in the mystic food eaten by the women at the Hōla, and in all probability formed part of the *sacra* presented to the μύσταις in the Eleusinian Mysteries (J. E. Harrison *Prolegomena to the Study of Greek Religion*, Cambridge, 1908, pp. 122, 518, 522, 530 *et seq.*; *cf.* Clem. Alex., *Protrept.*, ii). At Syracuse, on the day of the Thesmophoria, cakes of sesame and honey, representing the female sex, and known by the name of μύλλοι, were carried about and offered to the goddesses—probably Demeter and Kore (Athenaeus, xiv, 516; Farnell, *Cults of the Greek States*, iii, 99, and the authorities there cited). The Romans, according to Martial, made cakes in the form of either sex.

For further details on customs connected with the making of cakes as part of magical or religious ceremony reference should be made to Hastings' *Encycl. Rel. and Eth.*, vol. iii, p. 57 *et seq.* (Art. "Cakes and Loaves," by J. A. Macculloch); vol. ix, p. 818 *et seq.* (Art. "Phallism," by E. S. Hartland, from which the Greek references in the above note have been taken).—N.M.P. <[back](#)>

16. I read *tat* for *tāh* according to a conjecture of Professor E. B. Cowell. He informs me, on the authority of Dr Rost, that the only variants are *sā* for *tāh* and *yoshitā* for *yoshitah*. Dr Rost would take *evamkrite* as the dative of *evamkrit*. If *tāh* be retained, it may be taken as a repetition—"having thus prepared it, I say, the women give it," Professor Cowell would translate (if *tāh* be retained): "the women then do not need to receive anything to relieve the fatigue during the cold and hot weather." <[back](#)>

17. Literally bodiless—she heard the voice, but saw no man.— It is the same as the Hebrew *Bath kol*, and the Arabic *Hâtif*.—N.M.P. <[back](#)>

18. *Vara*=excellent; *ruch*=to please. <[back](#)>

19. Explanatory notes will occur in a future volume.—N.M.P. <[back](#)>

20. Explanatory notes will occur in a future volume.—N.M.P. <[back](#)>

21. I.e. Palibothra of the Greek historians. See note in Vol. II, Chapter XVII.—N.M.P. <[back](#)>



22. Wilson remarks (*Essays on Sanskrit Literature*, vol. i, p. 165): "The contemporary existence of Nanda with Vararuchi and Vyāḍi is a circumstance of considerable interest in the literary history of the Hindus, as the two latter are writers of note on philological topics. Vararuchi is also called in this work Kātyāyana, who is one of the earliest commentators on Pāṇini. Nanda is the predecessor, or one of the predecessors, of Chandragupta or Sandrakottos; and consequently the chief institutes of Sanskrit grammar are thus dated from the fourth century before the Christian era. We need not suppose that Somadeva took the pains to be exact here; but it is satisfactory to be made acquainted with the general impressions of a writer who has not been biased in any of his views by Paurānik legends and preposterous chronology."<[back](#)>

END

