

The Ocean of Story

Book I: Kāthapīṭha

Chapter 5

[MI] Having said this, Vararuchi continued his tale as follows:-

1. *Story of Vararuchi ...*

In course of time Yogananda became enslaved by his passions, and like a mad elephant he disregarded every restraint. Whom will not a sudden access of prosperity intoxicate? Then I reflected with myself: “The king has burst all bonds, and my own religious duties are neglected, being interfered with by my care for his affairs, therefore it is better for me to draw out that Śakatāla from his dungeon and make him my colleague in the ministry; even if he tries to oppose me, what harm can he do as long as I am in office?” Having resolved on this, I asked permission of the king, and drew Śakatāla out of the deep dungeon. Brāhmans are always soft-hearted. Now the discreet Śakatāla made up his mind that it would be difficult to overthrow Yogananda as long as I was in office, and that he had accordingly better imitate the cane which bends with the current, and watch a favourable moment for vengeance, so at my request he resumed the office of minister and managed the king’s affairs.

Once on a time Yogananda went outside the city, and beheld in the middle of the Ganges a hand, the five fingers of which were closely pressed together. That moment he summoned me and said: “What does this mean?” But I displayed two of my fingers in the direction of the hand. Thereupon that hand disappeared, and the king, exceedingly astonished, again asked me what this meant, and I answered him: “That hand meant to say, by showing its five fingers: ‘What cannot five men united effect in this world?’ Then I, king, showed it these two fingers, wishing to indicate that nothing is impossible when even two men are of one mind.” When I uttered this solution of the riddle the king was delighted, and Śakatāla was despondent, seeing that my intellect would be difficult to circumvent.[\[1\]](#)

One day Yogananda saw his queen leaning out of the window and asking questions of a Brāhman guest that was looking up. That trivial circumstance threw the king into a passion, and he gave orders that the Brāhman should be put

*The Fish that
Laughed*

to death; for jealousy interferes with discernment. Then as that Brāhman was being led off to the place of execution in order that he might be put to death, a fish in the market laughed aloud, though it was dead.^[2] The king hearing it immediately prohibited for the present the execution of that Brāhman, and asked me the reason why the fish laughed. I replied that I would tell him after I had thought over the matter; and after I had gone out Sarasvatī came to me secretly on my thinking of her and gave me this advice: “Take up a position on the top of this palm-tree at night so as not to be observed, and thou shalt without doubt hear the reason why the fish laughed.” Hearing this I went at night to that very place, and ensconced myself on the top of the palm-tree, and saw a terrible female Rākshasa^[3] coming past with her children; when they asked her for food, she said: “Wait, and I will give you tomorrow morning the flesh of a Brāhman; he was not killed to-day.”^[4] They said to their mother: “Why was he not killed to-day?” Then she replied: “He was not executed because a fish in the town, though dead, laughed when it saw him.” The sons said: “Why did the fish laugh?” She continued: “The fish, of course, said to himself: ‘All the king’s wives are dissolute, for in every part of this harem there are men dressed up as women, and nevertheless while these escape an innocent Brāhman is to be put to death,’ and this tickled the fish so that he laughed. For demons assume these disguises, insinuating themselves into everything, and laughing at the exceeding want of discernment of kings.” After I had heard that speech of the female Rākshasa I went away from thence, and in the morning I informed the king why the fish laughed. The king, after detecting in the harem those men clothed as women, looked upon me with great respect, and released that Brāhman from the sentence of death.

I was disgusted by seeing this and other lawless proceedings on the part of the king, and while I was in this frame of mind there came to the Court a new painter. He painted on a sheet of canvas the principal queen and Yogananda, and that picture of his looked as if it were alive; it only lacked speech and motion. And the king, being delighted, loaded that painter with wealth, and had the painting set up on a wall in his private apartments. Now one day when I entered into the king’s private apartments it occurred to me that the painting of the queen did not represent all her auspicious marks; from the arrangement of the other marks I conjectured by means of my acuteness that there ought to be a spot where the girdle comes, and I painted one there. Then I departed after thus giving the queen all her lucky marks. Then Yogananda entered and saw that spot, and asked his chamberlains who had painted it. And they indicated me as the person who had painted it. Yogananda thus reflected while burning with anger: “No one except myself knows of that spot, which is in a part of the queen’s body usually concealed, then how

*The Mole on the
Queen’s Body*

can this Vararuchi have come thus to know it?[5] No doubt he has secretly corrupted my harem, and this is how he came to see there those men disguised as women.” Foolish men often find such coincidences.[6] Then of his own motion he summoned Śakatāla, and gave him the following order:–“You must put Vararuchi to death for seducing the queen.” Śakatāla said: “Your Majesty’s orders shall be executed,” and went out of the palace, reflecting: “I should not have power to put Vararuchi to death, for he possesses god-like force of intellect; and he delivered me from calamity; moreover he is a Brāhman; therefore I had better hide him and win him over to my side.” Having formed this resolution, he came and told me of the king’s causeless wrath which had ended in his ordering my execution, and thus concluded: “I will have someone else put to death in order that the news may get abroad, and do you remain hidden in my house to protect me from this passionate king.” In accordance with this proposal of his, I remained concealed in his house, and he had someone else put to death at night, in order that the report of my death might be spread.[7] When he had in this way displayed his statecraft, I said to him out of affection: “You have shown yourself an unrivalled minister in that you did not attempt to put me to death; for I cannot be slain, since I have a Rākshasa to friend, and he will come, on being only thought of, and at my request will devour the whole world. As for this king, he is a friend of mine, being a Brāhman named Indradatta, and he ought not to be slain.” Hearing this, that minister said: “Show me the Rākshasa.” Then I showed him that Rākshasa who came with a thought; and on beholding him Śakatāla was astonished and terrified. And when the Rākshasa had disappeared Śakatāla again asked me: “How did the Rākshasa become your friend?” Then I said: “Long ago the heads of the police, as they went through the city night after night on inspecting duty, perished one by one. On hearing that, Yogananda made me head of the police, and as I was on my rounds at night I saw a Rākshasa roaming about, and he said to me: ‘Tell me, who is considered the best-looking woman in this city?’ When I heard that I burst out laughing, and said: ‘You fool, any woman is good-looking to the man who admires her.’ Hearing my answer, he said: ‘You are the only man that has beaten me.’ And now that I had escaped death by solving his riddle,[8] he again said to me: ‘I am pleased with you; henceforth you are my friend, and I will appear to you when you call me to mind.’ Thus he spoke and disappeared, and I returned by the way that I came. Thus the Rākshasa has become my friend, and my ally in trouble.” When I had said this, Śakatāla made a second request to me, and I showed him the goddess of the Ganges in human form who came when I thought of her. And that goddess disappeared when she had been gratified by me with hymns of praise. But Śakatāla became from henceforth my obedient ally.

Now once on a time that minister said to me when my state of concealment weighed upon my spirits: “Why do you, although you know all things, abandon yourself to despondency? Do you not know that the minds of kings are most undiscerning, and in a short time you will be cleared from all imputations?[9] In proof of which listen to the following tale:–

1c. *Śivavarman*

There reigned here long ago a king named Ādityavarman, and he had a very wise minister, named Śivavarman. Now it came to pass that one of that king’s queens became pregnant, and when he found it out, the king said to the guards of the harem: “It is now two years since I entered this place, then how has this queen become pregnant? Tell me.” Then they said: “No man except your minister Śivavarman is allowed to enter here, but he enters without any restriction.” When he heard that, the king thought: “Surely he is guilty of treason against me, and yet if I put him to death publicly I shall incur reproach.” Thus reflecting, that king sent that Śivavarman on some pretext to Bhogavarman, a neighbouring chief,[10] who was an ally of his, and immediately afterwards the king secretly sent off a messenger to the same chief, bearing a letter by which he was ordered to put the minister to death.[11] When a week had elapsed after the minister’s departure, that queen tried to escape out of fear, and was taken by the guards with a man in woman’s attire. Then Ādityavarman when he heard of it was filled with remorse, and asked himself why he had causelessly brought about the death of so excellent a minister. In the meanwhile Śivavarman reached the Court of Bhogavarman, and that messenger came bringing the letter; and fate would have it so that after Bhogavarman had read the letter he told to Śivavarman in secret the order he had received to put him to death.

The excellent minister Śivavarman in his turn said to that chief: “Put me to death; if you do not, I will slay myself with my own hand.” When he heard that, Bhogavarman was filled with wonder, and said to him: “What does all this mean? Tell me, Brāhman; if you do not, you will lie under my curse.” Then the minister said to him: “King, in whatever land I am slain, on that land God will not send rain for twelve years.” When he heard that, Bhogavarman debated with his minister: “That wicked king desires the destruction of our land, for could he not have employed secret assassins to kill his minister? So we must not put this minister to death. Moreover, we must prevent him from laying violent hands on himself.” Having thus deliberated and appointed him guards, Bhogavarman sent Śivavarman out of his country that moment; so that minister by means of his wisdom returned alive, and his innocence was established from another quarter,

for righteousness cannot be undone. In the same way your innocence will be made clear, Kātyāyana[12]; remain for a while in my house; this king too will repent of what he has done.

1. *Story of Vararuchi ...*

When Śakatāla said this to me, I spent those days concealed in his house. Then it came to pass that one day, O Kāṇabhūti, a son of that Yogananda named Hiranyagupta went out hunting, and when he had somehow or other been carried to a great distance by the speed of his horse, while he was alone in the wood, the day came to an end; and then he ascended a tree to pass the night. Immediately afterwards a bear, which had been terrified by a lion, ascended the same tree; he seeing the prince frightened, said to him with a human voice: “Fear not, thou art my friend,” and thus promised him immunity from harm. Then the prince, confiding in the bear’s promise, when to sleep, while the bear remained awake. Then the lion below said to the bear: “Bear, throw me down this man and I will go away.” Then the bear said: “Villain, I will not cause the death of a friend.” When in course of time the bear went to sleep while the prince was awake, the lion said again: “Man, throw me down the bear.” When he heard that, the prince, who through fear for his own safety wished to propitiate the lion, tried to throw down the bear, but, wonderful to say, it did not fall, since fate caused it to awake. And then that bear said to the prince: “Become insane, thou betrayer of thy friend,”[13] laying upon him a curse destined not to end until a third person guessed the whole transaction. Accordingly the prince, when he reached his palace in the morning, went out of his mind, and Yogananda seeing it was immediately plunged in despondency, and said: “If Vararuchi were alive at this moment all this matter would be known; curse on my readiness to have him put to death!” Śakatāla, when he heard this exclamation of the king’s, thought to himself: “Ha! here is an opportunity obtained for bringing Kātyāyana out of concealment, and he, being a proud man, will not remain here, and the king will repose confidence in me.” After reflecting thus, he implored pardon, and said to the king: “O King, cease from despondency; Vararuchi remains alive.” Then Yogananda said: “Let him be brought quickly.” Then I was suddenly brought by Śakatāla into the presence of Yogananda and beheld the prince in that state; and by the favour of Sarasvatī I was enabled to reveal the whole occurrence; and I said: “King, he has proved a traitor to his friend.” Then I was praised by that prince who was delivered from his curse; and the king asked me how I had managed to find out what had taken place. Then I said: “King, the minds of the wise see everything by inference from

signs, and by acuteness of intellect. So I found out all this in the same way as I found out that mole.” When I had said this, that king was afflicted with shame. Then, without accepting his munificence, considering myself to have gained all I desired by the clearing of my reputation, I went home; for to the wise character is wealth. And the moment I arrived the servants of my house wept before me, and when I was distressed at it Upavarsha came to me and said: “Upakośā, when she heard that the king had put you to death, committed her body to the flames,[14] and then your mother’s heart broke with grief.” Hearing that, senseless with the distraction produced by recently aroused grief, I suddenly fell on the ground like a tree broken by the wind; and in a moment I tasted the relief of loud lamentations. Whom will not the fire of grief, produced by the loss of dear relations, scorch? Varsha came and gave me sound advice in such words as these: “The only thing that is stable in this ever-changeful world is instability; then why are you distracted though you know this delusion of the Creator?” By the help of these and similar exhortations I at length, though with difficulty, regained my equanimity; then, with heart disgusted with the world, I flung aside all earthly lords and, choosing self-restraint for my only companion, I went to a grove where asceticism was practised.

Then, as days went by, once on a time a Brāhman from Ayodhyā came to that ascetic grove while I was there, I asked him for tidings about Yogananda’s government, and he recognising me told me in sorrowful accents the following story:—

“Hear what happened to Nanda after you had left him. Śakatāla, after waiting for it a long time, found that he had now obtained an opportunity of injuring him. While thinking how he might by some device get Yogananda killed, he happened to see a Brāhman named Chāṇakya digging up the earth in his path. He said to him: ‘Why are you digging up the earth?’ The Brāhman whom he had asked said: ‘I am rooting up a plant of *darbha* grass here because it has pricked my foot.[15] When he heard that, the minister thought that Brāhman who formed such stern resolve out of anger would be the best instrument to destroy Nanda with. After asking his name he said to him: ‘Brāhman, I assign to you the duty of presiding at a *śrāddha*[16] on the thirteenth day of the lunar fortnight, in the house of King Nanda; you shall have one hundred thousand gold pieces by way of fee, and you shall sit at the board above all others; in the meanwhile come to my house.’ Saying this, Śakatāla took that Brāhman to his house, and on the day of the *śrāddha* he showed the Brāhman to the king, and he approved of him. Then Chāṇakya went and sat at the head of the table during the *śrāddha*, but a Brāhman named Subandhu desired that post of honour for himself. Then Śakatāla went and referred the matter to King Nanda, who answered: ‘Let

*Śakatāla has
his Revenge on
King Nanda
(Yogananda)*

Subandhu sit at the head of the table; no one else deserves the place.’ Then Śakatāla went and, humbly bowing through fear, communicated that order of the king’s to Chāṇakya, adding: ‘It is not my fault.’ Then that Chāṇakya, being, as it were, inflamed all over with wrath, undoing the lock of hair on the crown of his head, made this solemn vow: ‘Surely this Nanda must be destroyed by me within seven days, and then my anger being appeased I will bind up my lock.’[17] When he had said this, Yogananda was enraged; so Chāṇakya escaped unobserved and Śakatāla gave him refuge in his house. Then, being supplied by Śakatāla with the necessary instruments, that Brāhman Chāṇakya went somewhere and performed a magic rite; in consequence of this rite Yogananda caught a burning fever, and died when the seventh day arrived; and Śakatāla, having slain Nanda’s son Hiranyagupta, bestowed the royal dignity upon Chandragupta, a son of the previous Nanda. And after he had requested Chāṇakya, equal in ability to Brīhaspati,[18] to be Chandragupta’s prime minister and established him in the office, that minister, considering that all his objects had been accomplished, as he had wreaked his vengeance on Yogananda, despondent through sorrow for the death of his sons, retired to the forest.”[19]

After I had heard this, O Kāṇabhūti, from the mouth of that Brāhman, I became exceedingly afflicted, seeing that all things are unstable; and on account of my affliction I came to visit this shrine of Durgā, and through her favour having beheld you, O my friend, I have remembered my former birth.

And having obtained divine discernment I have told you the great tale. Now as my curse has spent its strength, I will strive to leave the body; and do you remain here for the present, until there comes to you a Brāhman named Guṇādhyā, who has forsaken the use of three languages,[20] surrounded with his pupils, for he like myself was cursed by the goddess in anger, being an excellent Gaṇa, Mālyavān by name, who for taking my part has become a mortal. To him you must tell this tale originally told by Śiva, then you shall be delivered from your curse, and so shall he.

[MI] Having said all this to Kāṇabhūti, that Vararuchi set forth for the holy hermitage of Badarika in order to put off his body. As he was going along he beheld on the banks of the Ganges a vegetable-eating[21] hermit, and while he was looking on, that hermit’s hand was pricked with *kuśa* grass. Then Vararuchi turned his blood, as it flowed out, into sap[22] through his magic power, out of curiosity, in order to test his egotism; on beholding that, the hermit exclaimed: “Ha! I have attained perfection”; and so he became puffed up with pride. Then Vararuchi laughed a little and said to him: “I turned your blood into sap in order to test you, because even now, O hermit, you have not abandoned egotism. Egotism is in truth an obstacle in the road to knowledge hard to overcome, and

without knowledge liberation cannot be attained even by a hundred vows. But the perishable joys of Svarga cannot attract the hearts of those who long for liberation; therefore, O hermit, endeavour to acquire knowledge by forsaking egotism.” Having thus read that hermit a lesson, and having been praised by him prostrate in adoration, Vararuchi went to the tranquil site of the hermitage of Badarī.[23] There he, desirous of putting off his mortal condition, resorted for protection with intense devotion to that goddess who only can protect, and she, manifesting her real form to him, told him the secret of that meditation which arises from fire, to help him to put off the body. Then Vararuchi, having consumed his body by that form of meditation, reached his own heavenly home; and henceforth that Kāṇabhūti remained in the Vindhya forest, eager for his desired meeting with Guṇādhya.

[Previous](#) 



[Ocean Home](#)

 [Next](#)



[Home](#)

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Endnotes

[1] This language of signs occurs two or three times in the present work (see Chapters [VII](#), [LXXV](#)). It is found in the *Nights* and other Eastern collections. I shall have more to say on the subject in a future note.—N.M.P. <[back](#)>

[2] Dr Liebrecht in *Orient und Occident*, vol. i, p. 341, compares with this story one in the old French romance of Merlin. There Merlin laughs because the wife of the Emperor Julius Caesar had twelve young men disguised as ladies-in-waiting. Benfey, in a note on Dr Liebrecht's article, compares with the story of Merlin one by the Countess D'Aulnoy, No. 36 of the *Pentamerone* of Basile, *Straparola*, iv, 1, and a story in the *Śuka Saptati*.—

In the tale from *Straparola* (see translation by W. G. Waters, London, 1894, [vol. i, p. 177](#)) it is a wild satyr, named Chiappino, who laughs—twice. First because the hero is called Constanzo, when really she is a woman disguised and should be called Constanza. The second laugh was for exactly the same reason as in our story. The reference to the *Pentamerone* story of “[The Three Crowns](#)” (Burton, vol. ii, p. 404 *et seq.*) by Benfey is quite appropriate, as it merely deals with a case of a woman's love scorned by a man who, when accused of attempted seduction, proves to be a woman. The version in *Śuka Saptati* is very like our text, and the laugh is even more mysterious and ironical than that in the *Ocean of Story*, because it shows the double hypocrisy of the queen, and the fish is not only dead, but cooked: “King Vikramaditya of Ujjayini dines with his beloved wife Kamalila. He offers her roast fish, and she declines: ‘My lord, I am unable to look at these men, much less to take hold of them.’ When the fish heard that they, fried as they were, broke into peals of laughter, so that the people of the city heard it.” In this case the final exposure of the queen is brought about in a very intricate way by the wise maiden Bālapaṇḍitā. The same story appears, even more elaborately, in Knowles' *Folk-Tales of Kashmir*, 1888, [p. 484 et seq.](#) It appears in Jacobi's *Indian Fairy Tales*, 1892, [p. 186 et seq.](#); and also in Bompas' *Folk-Lore of the Santal Parganas*, 1909, [p. 70 et seq.](#) In the former the “guessing riddles” *motif* is introduced into the story, while in the latter there are two laughing fish. Professor Bloomfield (*Journ. Amer. Orient. Soc.*, 1916, vol. xxxvi, pp. 54-89), in his paper, “Psychic *Motifs* in Hindu Fiction, and the Laugh and Cry *Motif*,” has classified the various kinds of laughs occurring in Hindu fiction. There is the cry and laugh together, and each separately. Of laughter by itself, as in our text, there is the laugh of joy, of irony, malice, trickery and triumph. Then there is the sardonic laugh, the enigmatic, fateful laugh (sometimes with ironic humour in it), and finally there is the laugh of mystery, as in the case of the fish that laughed. Examples from Hindu fiction of all these varieties will be found in Bloomfield's article. In England we have the expression “enough to make a cat laugh,” but imagine anything being so funny or curious as to raise a laugh from the coldest-blooded of animals—a fish, and that a dead one!

In one case, however, in *Prabandhacintāmaṇi* (see Tawney's fine translation, *Bib. Indica*, 1899, p. 15) the fish is not dead, but has just been thrown up by the waves. When the king demands an explanation it is given as follows:—“In a former life, as a poor wood-carrier,

you used to come to eat your humble meat at the bank of this very river. One time you saw walking in front of you a Jaina hermit who had come to break a month's fast. So you called him and gave him the ball of meat that you had made. From the surpassing merit of that act you have become King Çālivāhana. The hermit has become a god. That god entered into this fish and laughed for joy at beholding the soul of the wood-carrier, which is none other than yourself, born in the rank of a king." (See Tawney's note on p. 208 of his translation, where he refers to a similar tale in the *Prabandhakośa*.)

Smuggling men into the harem is a favourite *motif* of Eastern tales. One of the best-known cases occurs at the beginning of the *Nights* (Burton, vol. i, pp. 6 and 9) in "[The Story of King Shahryar and his Brother](#)," where the brother sees the queen enter a garden with twenty slave-girls: "... they advanced a little way into the garden till they came to a jetting fountain amiddlemost a great basin of water; then they stripped off their clothes and behold, ten of them were women, concubines of the king, and the other ten were white slaves." (See also "[The Reeve's Tale](#)" on p. 282 of the same volume.)

In ancient India the smuggling of men into harems seems to have been brought to a fine art, if we may judge from the sixth chapter of Part V of Vatsyayana's *Kāma Sūtra*. Instructions are given as to the best way for entrance and exit, and by what means the Palace guards can be bribed or avoided. It is suggested that besides getting into the harem in women's clothes the lover can sometimes gain entrance disguised as a watchman, or may be taken in or out rolled in a bed or curtain cloth. After showing the utter depravity of both the women, their lovers and guards, Vātsyāyana ends the chapter by saying the information given is merely for the good of men to enable them to protect their own wives against any such deceits!—N.M.P. <[back](#)>

[3] For details of these demons see [Appendix I](#) at the end of this volume.—N.M.P. <[back](#)>

[4] Cf. the following passage in a Danish story called "Svend's Exploits," in Thorpe's *Yuletide Stories*, p. 341. Just as he was going to sleep, twelve crows came flying and perched in the elder-trees over Svend's head. They began to converse together, and the one told the other what had happened to him that day. When they were about to fly away, one crow said: "I am so hungry; where shall I get something to eat?" "We shall have food enough to-morrow when father has killed Svend," answered the crow's brother. "Dost thou think then that such a miserable fellow dares fight with our father?" said another. "Yes, it is probably enough that he will, but it will not profit him much, as our father cannot be overcome but with the Man of the Mount's sword, and that hangs in the mound, within seven locked doors, before each of which are two fierce dogs that never sleep." Svend thus learns that he should only be sacrificing his strength and life in attempting a combat with the dragon before he had made himself master of the Man of the Mount's sword.

So Sigfrid hears two birds talking above his head in Hagen's *Helden-Sagen*, vol. i, p. 345.—See also the story of Lalitanga, in which the cunning of Vararuchi is referred to, in Tawney, *Kathākoca*, p. 164, and Bloomfield, *Life and Stories of Pārçvanātha*, pp. [26](#), [31](#), [186](#)

and [187](#). I shall have more to say on this motif of “overhearing” in a note in Vol. III, [Chapter XXIX](#).—N.M.P. <[back](#)>

[5] Compare the “mole cinque-spotted” in [Cymbeline](#).—

The attraction of the mole has always been fully recognised in the East. Indian, Persian and Arabic fiction abound in beautiful and often exaggerated similes. The mole is likened to a crumb of ambergris, a spot of nut-brown musk, or to an ant creeping on the cheek towards the honey of the mouth. It is well known that Hafiz offered (had they been his) to give away both Samarkand and Bokhara for a single mole on his beloved’s face.

So great is the admiration for moles that professional tattooists do a large trade in artificially producing them. In India it is usually done by low-caste wandering gypsies or members of the Nāi, or barber caste. They insert the point of a needle under the epidermis and introduce the juice of a plant which soon dries into an indelible dark spot. The usual places chosen are between the eyebrows, below the under lip, and on the cheek, breast and forearms. In Bengal the process is called *Ulki* or *Godāni*.—N.M.P. <[back](#)>

[6] See Sir G. Grierson’s article, “Vararuchi as a Guesser of Acrostics,” in the *Indian Antiquary*, 1881, vol. x, pp. 366-370. He gives a much more elaborate version of this part of the story, which he heard from a Tirhutia Brāhman. It was known as “The Story of Sasemirā.”—N.M.P. <[back](#)>

[7] Compare [Measure for Measure](#). <[back](#)>

[8] Cf. the story of *Ædipus* and the *Mahābhārata* (*Vanaparva*, chap. cccxii), where Yudhishtira is questioned by a Yaksha. Benfey compares *Mahābhārata* xiii (iv, 206) 5883-5918, where a Brāhman seized by a Rākshasa escaped in the same way. The reader will find similar questioning demons described in Veckenstedt’s *Wendische Sagen*, pp. 54-56, and 109. <[back](#)>

[9] Reading *chuddhis* for the *chudis* of Dr Brockhaus’ text. <[back](#)>

[10] Sāmanta seems to mean a feudatory or dependent prince. <[back](#)>

[11] Much could be written on the “letter of death” *motif* in fiction. I shall have more to say in [Chapter XLII](#), where such a letter occurs again. Widely distributed throughout the East, the “letter of death” appeared in Europe about the twelfth century. —N.M.P. <[back](#)>

[12] Readers should not forget that when Pushpadanta descended to earth by Parvatī’s curse his name was changed to Vararuchi and Kātyāyana.—N.M.P. <[back](#)>

[13] Benfey considers that this story was originally Buddhistic. A very similar story is quoted by him from the *Karmaśataka* (*Pañchatantra*, i. p. 209); cf. also [Chapter LXV](#) of this work. [<back>](#)

[14] This is the well known *suttee* (an English corruption from the Sanskrit *satī*=”good woman”). It dates from about the fourth century B.C. By the sixth century A.D. it grew to have a full religious sanction, although it was not universal throughout India. In about the tenth to fifteenth centuries it was chiefly a Brāhminic rite. The manner of sacrifice differs in various districts. Under British rule *suttee* became illegal in 1829. I shall have more to say on the subject in a later volume.—N.M.P. [<back>](#)

[15] Probably his foot bled, and so he contracted defilement. *Darbha* grass is the most sacred of the various kinds of grasses (*kuśa*, *dūrva*, etc.) held in special veneration. The origin of *darbha* grass is explained in numerous legends. It is said to have been formed from the hairs of Viṣṇu which came off while, in his tortoise incarnation, he was acting as a pivot for Mount Mandara at the Churning of the Ocean. Another story relates that while the gods were drinking the Amṛita after the Churning a few drops fell on the grass and thus made it sacred. It enters into nearly all important ceremonies among the Hindus. It is used in the famous “sacred thread” (*upanayana*) ceremony, at weddings, in offering up prayers or invoking deities, at funerals, at a *śrāddha* (see next note), at sacrifices, and at numerous other ceremonies connected with initiation, magic, pregnancy, menses, and different forms of ordeals.

With regard to its literary history, it is mentioned in the *Ṛig-Veda* ([i. 191, 3](#)) with *sara* and *kusara* grasses; in the *Atharva Veda* (in numerous places), where it is a charm against anger, baldness, etc. (See Macdonell and Keith, *Vedic Index*, [vol. i, p. 340.](#))

In appearance *darbha* grass is straight and pointed, about two feet in height, very rough to handle, and instantly draws blood if rubbed the wrong way by the hand or foot (as in our text).—N.M.P. [<back>](#)

[16] *Śrāddha* (Sanskrit, *śraddhā*=faith, trust, belief) is the most important ceremony connected with Hindu ancestor-worship. It is a development of the ancient custom of eating at funerals and providing food for the dead. Manu ([Institutes](#), iii, 267-271) gives a detailed list of the offerings of food and drink which are to be made, with regulations for the correct ritual to be observed. The modern *śrāddha* is most intricate and elaborate. It has been described by nearly every Indian scholar since the days of Dubois and Colebrooke. The most recent and comprehensive account is in Mrs Sinclair Stevenson’s *The Rites of the Twice-born*, 1920, pp. [158-192](#). See also the article, “Ancestor-Worship (Indian),” by W. Crooke, in *Hastings’ Ency. Rel. Eth.*, [vol. i, p. 453](#) and Sir Charles Eliot’s [Hinduism and Buddhism](#), 3 vols., 1921, vol. i, pp. 338, 339.

Space will not permit any detailed account here of the various rites performed on the different days. I shall merely describe shortly the rite of feeding the spirit which extends for ten days, from the second onwards, as described by Crooke (*op. cit.*). Grains of rice (for Brāhmins)

or barley-flour (for Kshatriyas and illegitimate sons of Brāhmans) are boiled in a copper jar, mixed with honey, milk and sesamum. The mixture is made into a ball (*pinḍa*), which is offered to the spirit with the invocation that it may obtain liberation, and reach the abodes of the blessed after crossing the hell called Raurava (Manu, [Institutes](#), iv, 88). By this rite the creation of a new body for the disembodied soul begins. On the first day one ball is offered, on the second two, and so on until, during the observances of the ten days, fifty-five balls have been offered. Various invocations are made, for which see Muir, *Original Sanskrit Texts*, v, 297. By these ten days' rites the spirit has been enabled to escape from the same number of different hells, and gradually a new body with all its members has been created. The order in which the new members of this new body are formed is sometimes thus defined. On the first day the dead man gains his head; on the second his ears, eyes and nose; on the third his hands, breast and neck; on the fourth his middle parts; on the fifth his legs and feet; on the sixth his vital organs; on the seventh his bonds, marrow, veins and arteries; on the eighth his nails, hair and teeth; on the ninth all remaining limbs and organs and his manly strength. –N.M.P. [<back>](#)

[17] The innumerable methods recorded of swearing an oath would take a volume to describe in detail. The most comprehensive account I know is that in Hastings' *Ency. Rel. and Eth.*, vol. ix, p. 430 *et seq.*, under "[Oath](#)." The article is by Crawley, Beet and Canney. –N.M.P. [<back>](#)

[18] The preceptor of the gods. [<back>](#)

[19] See the *Mudrā Rākshasa* for another version of this story (Wilson, *Hindu Theatre*, vol. ii). Wilson remarks that the story is also told differently in the *Purānas*. [<back>](#)

[20] Sanskrit, Pakrit and his own native dialect. [<back>](#)

[21] I change Dr Brockhaus' *Śākāsana* into *Sākaśana*. – Durgāprasād's edition of the text now proves Tawney's reading correct. –N.M.P. [<back>](#)

[22] As, according to my reading, he ate vegetables, his blood was turned into the juice of vegetables. Dr Brockhaus translates: "*machte, dass das herausströmende Blut zu Krystallen sich bildete.*" [<back>](#)

[23] A celebrated place of pilgrimage near the source of the Ganges, the Bhadrinath of modern travellers. –*Monier Williams*, s.v, [<back>](#)

End.

