

Ra×avîrasi×g

Tales Of The Sun Or Folklore Of Southern India

Indian

Intermediate
39 min read

Once upon a time in the town of Vañjaimânagar (an ancient Indian town), there ruled a king, named ×ivâchâr. He was a most just king, and ruled so well that no stone thrown up fell down, no crow pecked at the new drawn milk, the lion and the bull drank water from the same pond, and peace and prosperity reigned throughout the kingdom. Notwithstanding all these blessings, care always sat on his face. The fruit which makes life in this world sweet, the redeemer to him from the horrible Naraka of Put(Hell), a Putra, he had not. His days and nights he spent in praying that God might bless him with a son. Wherever he saw pîpal trees (A×vattharâjas – Ficus religiosa), he ordered Brâhma×s to surround them. Whatever medicines the doctors recommended he was ever ready to swallow, however bitter they might be. “Eat even dung to get a son,” says the proverb, and accordingly he did every thing to secure that happiness, but all in vain.

×ivâchâr had a minister, named Kharavadana, a most wicked tyrant as ever lived in the world. The thought that the king was without an heir, and had no hopes of one, awakened in his mind the ambition of securing for his family the throne of Vañjaimânagar. ×ivâchâr knew this well. But what could he do. His only care was to send up additional prayers to frustrate the thoughts of Kharavadana, and to secure for himself a good position after death, without undergoing the severe torments of the Put-hell.

At last fortune favoured ×ivâchâr; for what religious man fails to secure his desire? The king in his sixtieth year

had a son. His joy can better be imagined than described. Lacs (Lâkhs) of Brâhmaṣ were fed in honour of the son-birth festival, Putrôtsavam, as it is technically called. The state prisons were opened, and all the prisoners let loose. Thousands of kine and innumerable acres of land were offered to Brâhmaṣ, and every kind of charity was duly practised. The ten days of the Sûtikâgḥavâsa (confinement) were over. On the eleventh day the father saw his much longed-for son's face, and read on the lines of it great prosperity, learning, valour, goodness and every excellent quality.

The cradle-swinging, naming, and other ceremonies were duly performed, and the prince grew up under the great care generally shown to a king's son. His name the elders fixed as Sundara(the fair). The minister whose only wish was to get the throne for his family, was much disappointed at the birth of a son to his master. The whole kingdom rejoiced at the event, and the minister was the only man who was sorry. When one is disappointed in his high hopes and expectations, he devises plans to take away the barrier that lies in his way. Even so, Kharavadana said to himself, "Let me see how affairs progress. The old king is near his grave. When he dies, leaving a son in his minority I myself must be his regent for a time. Shall I not then have opportunity enough of securing for ever for myself and my family the throne of Vañjaimânagar?" So thought he within himself, and was quiet for a time.

ḥivâchâr, who was a very shrewd man, on several occasions, read the minister's mind, and knew very well how his intentions stood. "This cruel devil may murder my only son. I care not if he usurps the throne. What I fear is, that he may murder him. Na daivam ḥaḥkarât param. No other god but ḥaḥkara. And he must have his own way. If it is so written on the prince's head I cannot avoid it." Thus sighed ḥivâchâr, and this sorrow (ḥôka), made him leaner day by day. Just ten years after the birth of Sundara, the king fell ill and lay on his deathbed.

ḥivâchâr had a servant, named Raḥavîrasiḥg, whom he had all along observed to be very honest and faithful. That servant the king called to his side, and asking all others except Sundara, who was weeping by his father's pillow, to leave the room, addressed him thus:—"My dear Raḥavîrasiḥg! I have only a few ghaḥikâs before me. Listen to my words, and act accordingly. There is one God above us all, who will punish or reward us according to our bad or good acts. If by avarice or greed of money you ever play false to the trust that I am going to repose in you that God will surely punish you. It is not unknown to you what great difficulties I had in getting this only son, Sundara; how many temples I built, how many Brâhmaṣ I fed, how many religious austerities I underwent, &c., &c.. God after all gave me a son." Here his sorrow prevented him from proceeding further,

and he began to cry aloud, and shed tears. “Do not weep on my account, father. We cannot wipe off what was written on our heads. We must undergo happiness or misery as is thereon written by Brahmâ, cried the prince. Ra×avîrasi×g was melted at the sight. He took the boy on his lap, and with his own upper garment wiped his eyes. The old man continued, “Thus you, my faithful Ra×avîrasi×g, know everything. I now wish that I had not performed all that I did to get this son. For when I die at this moment, who is there to take care of him for the next? Kharavadana may devise plan after plan to remove my boy from this world, and secure the kingdom for himself. My only hope is in you. I give him into your hands.” Here the aged father, notwithstanding his illness, rose up a little from his bed, took hold of his son’s hand, and after kissing it for the last time, placed it in Ra×avîrasi×g’s. “Care not if he does not get the kingdom. If you only preserve him from the wicked hands of the minister whom I have all along seen to be covetous of the throne, you will do a great work for your old master. I make you from this moment the lord of my palace. From this minute you are father, mother, brother, servant, and everything to my son. Take care that you do not betray your trust.” Thus ended the king, and sent at once for the minister. When he came he spoke to him thus, “Kharavadana! See what I am now. Yesterday I was on the throne. To-day, in a few minutes, I must breathe my last. Such is the uncertainty of life. Man’s good acts alone follow him to the other world. Take my signet-ring. [Here the king took the ring from off his finger, and gave it to the minister.] Yours is the throne for the present, as long as the prince is in his minority. Govern well the kingdom. When the prince attains his sixteenth year kindly give him back the throne. Exercise a paternal care over him. Find a good and intelligent princess for his wife.” Suddenly, before his speech was quite finished, the king felt the last pangs of death. The sage-looking minister promised him everything.

×ivâchâr breathed his last. After the usual weeping and wailing of a Hindû funeral, his corpse was burnt to ashes in a sandalwood pyre. All his queens—and there were several scores—committed satî with the corpse. The ceremonies were all regularly conducted, the minister himself superintended everything.

Kharavadana then succeeded to the throne of Vañjaimânagar. Ra×avîrasi×g became the lord of the palace, and true to his promise exercised all care over his trust. He was always at the side of Sundara. That he might not lose the sweetness of boyhood in study and play, Ra×avîrasi×g brought to the palace twenty gentlemen’s sons of good conduct and learning and made them the prince’s fellow-students. A professor for every branch of learning was employed to teach the prince and his companions. Sundara thus received a sound and liberal education, only he was never allowed to go out of the palace. Ra×avîrasi×g guarded him very strictly, and he had

every reason to do so. For Kharavadana, as soon as he became king, had issued a notice that the assassin of Sundara should have a reward of a karôr mohurs(ten gold coins); and already every avaricious hand was in search of his head. Before the issue of this notice, Kharavadana found out a good girl and married her to the prince. She lived with her husband in the palace, and Ra×avîrasi×g strictly watched her, as she had been chosen by the minister. He would not allow Sundara to speak to her. These strict prohibitions displeased the prince, even with his faithful servant. But the latter could not help it till he had full confidence in her. He used to advise Sundara not even to take a betel-leaf from her hands. But love is blind. So the prince within himself accused his old guardian; but he could not help following his orders. Thus passed on a few years.

Sundara reached his sixteenth year. Nothing happened about the transference of the kingdom; the prince, almost in imprisonment in the palace, had forgotten everything about the kingdom. Ra×avîrasi×g wished to wait till, as he thought, the prince had acquired better governing faculties. Thus some time passed.

Full eight years had elapsed from the death of ×ivâchâr. Sundara was already eighteen, and still he had not received his kingdom. Nothing was neglected in his education. Though Ra×avîrasi×g exercised all paternal care over him, still it was not to his liking; for he found in him a great barrier to the pleasures of youth. The only pleasure for the prince, therefore, was the company of his friends.

One fine evening on the fourteenth day of the dark half of the month of Vai×âkha of the Vasanta(Spring) season, the prince was sitting with his companions in the seventh story of his mansion viewing the town. The dusk of evening was just throwing her mantle over the city. People in their several vocations were at that time ceasing work, and returning home. In the eastern division of the town the prince saw a big mansion, and just to break the silence asked his friends what that was. "That is the Râjasthânik Kachêri(the king's court), a place you ought to have been sitting in for the last two years. The wretched minister, Kharavadana, has already usurped your seat; for, if he had intended to give you back the kingdom he would have done it two years ago when you reached your sixteenth year. Let us now console ourselves that God has spared your life till now, notwithstanding all the awards promised to the taker of your head. Even the proclamation is dying out of the memory of the people now." So said one of his friends and ceased.

These words fell like arrows in the ear of Sundara and troubled him. Shame that he had been thus treated brought a change of colour over his face which all his friends perceived, and they felt sorry for having touched

upon the subject. The prince, perceiving that he had played a woman's part among his friends, resumed or pretended to resume his former cheerful countenance, and changed the conversation to some pleasanter topics. They separated very late that night. Before doing so, Sundara asked them all to present themselves in the durbâr hall(Council chamber) early next morning. At the same time he also ordered Ra×avîrasi×g to keep horses ready for himself and his friends for a morning ride through the town the next day. "I was only waiting to hear such an order from your own mouth, Mai Bâb Chakravarti(My darling prince)! I was thinking from your retired disposition that you were not an energetic man. I will have the horses ready." Ra×avîrasi×g at once issued orders to his servants to keep ready saddled and decked twenty-one horses for the prince and his companions. He also appointed a certain number of his men to ride in front of the party.

The morning came. The friends assembled, as promised the previous evening. The prince and they, after a light breakfast, mounted their horses. The horsemen rode in front and behind. The prince with his friends marched in the middle. Ra×avîrasi×g with drawn sword rode by his side. The party went through the four main streets of the town. Every one rose up and paid due respect to their old king's son. When passing through the street where the minister's mansion was, Ra×avîrasi×g perceived that Kharavadana paid no respect to the royal march. This seemed a most unbearable insult to Ra×avîrasi×g. He bit his lips, gnashed his teeth, and wrung his hands. The prince observed all the mental pains of his faithful guardian, and laughed to himself at his simplicity. About mid-day the party returned to the palace. The friends dispersed, and Sundara after the ceremonies of the new-moon day had a slight dinner, and retired to rest.

The morning ride was deep in the mind of the prince. Though he laughed to himself at the simplicity of Ra×avîrasi×g when the latter gnashed his teeth in the morning, the insult had left a stronger and deeper impression in his heart. The day was almost spent. Sundara took a very light supper, and shut himself up in his bed-room before the first watch was quite over. Ra×avîrasi×g, as usual, watched outside. The prince found his wife sound asleep in her bed, and without disturbing her he went up and down the room. A thread-like substance attracted his attention in a corner of the bed-chamber. On examination he found it to be a thread ladder. He had not even time to think how it came into the bed-chamber. Just then Ra×avîrasi×g had retired for a few minutes to take his supper. "The old fool is off now to eat; and Paramê×vara has thrown this ladder in my way. Let me now escape." Thus thinking, Sundara came out unobserved by his old guardian, and ascended to the top of the seventh mansion. From that place he cast his ladder towards a big tree in the East Main street.

On pulling it he found that it was firmly fixed. “Let me get down, and Paramêvara will assist me.” So praying, before the first watch was over, the prince got down from his palace, and was in a few minutes in the East street. The severe watch kept over him by Ravîrasi made it very difficult for him to go out when he liked, and now by the grace of God, as he thought, he had escaped that dark new-moon night.

“Life is dear to every one. What can I do if any of the minister’s men find me out now and murder me? Na daivam akarât param. No god but akara, and he will now help me.” Thus thinking he walked to the nearest pual, and lingered there till the bustle of the town subsided. Nor was it in vain that he stopped there. He overheard while there the following conversation take place between the master and mistress of the house at which he lingered:—“Console yourself, my wife. What shall we do? Fate has so willed it on our heads. May Brahmâ(the creator of the Hindu mythology) become without a temple for the evil that he has sent us. When the old king was living he appreciated my merits, and at every Sakrânti(a Hindû feast) gave me due dakshinâ(a fee) for my knowledge of the Vêdas(The sacred books of the Hindûs). Now there reigns a tyrant over our kingdom. I have been lingering here with the hope that the son of ivâchâr would one day come to the throne and relieve our sufferings. Now that such hope is altogether gone, I have made up my mind to leave this nasty city, and go to some good place where there reigns a king who can appreciate our yogyatâ (merit).” Of these words Sundara overheard every syllable, and these supplied the fuel to the fire of shame and anger that was already burning in his mind. “Let me try to win back my kingdom. If I succeed, I shall save other lives. If I die, I alone die. May Paramêvara help me.” So saying he walked out of the town, and passed the east gate. The night was as dark as could be, for it was a new moon night. Clouds were gathering in the sky, and there were some symptoms of rain.

There was a Gaêa temple on the way. As it was already drizzling, the prince went inside till the rain should cease. No sooner had he entered it than he saw two men, who by their conversation appeared to be shepherds, coming towards that same temple. They seemed to have been watching their flocks near an adjacent field, and had come to shelter themselves from the rain in the temple. Sundara when he saw them, trembled for his life, and crept in. The shepherds sat down on the verandah, and taking out their bags began to chew betel-nuts. An idle lizard began to chirp in a corner. To break the silence, one said to the other, “Well, Râmakôn, I have heard that you are a great soothsayer and interpreter of bird sounds and lizard speeches. Let me know what these chirps of the lizard that we heard just now mean. Tell me.” Râmakôn replied, “This is news which I would never

have revealed at any other time. But as no fourth person is likely to be here at this time on a rainy night, let me tell you that the prince of the town is now lingering here in this temple. So the lizard says. Hence I said, 'no fourth person.' I am glad that no evil hand has yet been tempted, though such a high price has been set upon his head. The very fact that he has lived up to this time unhurt in a tiger's domain augurs well for his future prosperity." Râmakôn had scarcely finished his speech when the idle lizard again made its chit, chit, and Râmakôn now asked his friend, Lakshmaakôn, for that was the other's name, to interpret those sounds. "This has rather a sad meaning for the prince. The Mantrî(Minister) and Pradhânî(Vice minister) are coming here in a few minutes (nimishas), to consult on a secret topic. So says the lizard," said Lakshmaakôn to Râmakôn, and at that very moment a light was seen at a distance. "It is the minister's carriage. Let us be off. God only must save the prince." So saying, they both ran away.

The feelings of the prince inside were like that of a man who was being led to the gallows. The bitterest enemy of his life, the minister himself, was coming to that very place where he was hiding. "I foolishly accused my old guardian, Raavîrasi, and now I see his good intentions. How I am to be spared from this calamityakara only knows." Thus thinking, he hurriedly fled to the inmost part of the temple behind the very image, and sat down there, still like a stump, without even breathing freely, lest his breath might reveal him. He had ample time there to admire the sound knowledge of the shepherds in interpreting the lizard chirps, their simplicity, their honesty and truthfulness; for, had they been otherwise, they might at once have caught hold of the prince and made him over to the tiger minister. True to the interpretation of the second shepherd, a carriage stopped in front of the Gaêa temple, and there came out of it the Mantrî and the Pradhânî. Excepting themselves and, of course, the carriage driver and, as we know, the prince behind the Gaêa, there were no others there.

Kharavadana and his subordinate chose that solitary place at the dead of night to hold secret consultations. The Mantrî spoke first, and one could easily perceive from his words that he was in a fit of anger. "Why should the prince be thus allowed to ride free through my streets? Of the innumerable servants who eat our salt was there not one to cut down that impertinent head?" roared the minister. The Pradhânî replied, "My king, my lord, excuse me first for the humble words that I am going to speak before your honour. We have taken up a kingdom to which we have no right. If the prince had demanded the throne two years ago, we ought rightfully to have returned it to him. He never asked, and we did not restore it. He never troubles us with demands, but lives like a poor subject of the crown in his own quarters. Such being the case, why should we kill him? Why should we murder the only son of our old and much-respected kingivâchâr? What I beg to suggest to your

honour is, that we should no more trouble ourselves about his poor head.” The Pradhânî, as he discovered that these words were not to the taste of Kharavadana, stopped at once without proceeding further, though he had much to say upon that subject. “Vile wretch! Dare you preach morals to your superiors. You shall see the result of this, before the morning dawns,” bawled out the Minister. The Pradhânî saw that all his excellent advice was like blowing a horn in a deaf man’s ears. He feared for his own life, and so at once begged a thousand pardons, and promised to bring the head of the prince within a week. And as Kharavadana wanted only that, he spared the Pradhânî. They then talked on different subjects, and prepared to start.

The prince inside, behind the Ga~~x~~ê~~x~~avighraha(The image of the belly-god), was now almost stifled to death. The short breaths that he inhaled and exhaled were themselves enough to kill him. Add to that the horrible words that fell on his ears. For all that he continued to hide himself. Kharavadana and the Pradhânî finished their conversation and got into the carriage. Sundara called courage to his assistance, “~~x~~â~~x~~kara has saved me till now; he may so save me throughout.” So thinking to himself, he boldly came out of the temple without making the least noise and sat behind the carriage, and, as it rolled on, thought again within himself: “I will follow these, come what may, and find out what more plans they devise against my life.”

The carriage drove on to the opposite end of the town. It passed the west gate and entered a big park outside the town. The undaunted prince followed. In the middle of the park a fine tank was discovered. The banks looked like day, being lighted up profusely. In the midst of the tank a small island with a gaudy mansion was seen. Pillars of gold, sofas of silver and doors of diamonds made it the very Indralôka(The world of Indra, the regent of the sky) itself. A broad road with avenues of sweet smelling flowering trees connected the island with the bank. It was at that road that the carriage stopped. The prince, before that was reached, had got down and hid himself under the shade of a tree, to see unobserved all that passed in the mansion which he had every reason to believe was the destination of the minister. Kharavadana descended from the carriage and sent the Pradhânî home. What most astonished the prince was the absence of male servants in that garden. At the entrance of the road twenty young females of the most exquisite beauty waited and conducted Kharavadana through the sweet bower to the mansion. When it was reached, the minister sat down on a most richly furnished gold couch, and ordered the females there to bring the queen. Ten females arranged themselves on each side of an ivory palanquin, and started, apparently, to bring the queen in it. “These females themselves resemble Rambhâ, Urva~~x~~î, &c.(Names of divine damsels) A woman who has beauty superior to the heads of

these females must, of course, be of the greatest beauty imaginable in this world. Let me see her.” Thus thinking, the prince Sundara anxiously awaited the return of the palanquin. In a few minutes it came. A female of the most charming beauty jumped briskly out of it. The minister came running to give his helping hand to her. Horror of horrors, what sees the prince! It was his own wife, the very girl that the minister had married to him a few years before, that got down from the palanquin. “Are my eyes deceived? Do they perform their functions aright? Let me look once more.” So again and again wiping his eyes to clear them a little, the prince saw distinctly. It was his very wife herself. “Oh, I most foolishly accused that grey-headed guardian for a wicked fool, because he would not allow me to be friends with my wife. I now see what he saw a long time ago. Perhaps if I had seen more of her I should have thus been brought in here by some secret way that these devils seem now to have to the inmost parts of the palace. If I had taken anything from her hands I should have died that very day. My poor old man, my Ra~~x~~avîrasi~~x~~g it is, who has saved me from all these calamities.” These thoughts and a thousand more were passing through Sundara’s mind when he saw his wife sitting down on the same couch with the minister. She accused him of the delay in murdering her husband, of his letting all opportunities escape during the morning ride. “Horrible! Did you, Kharavadana, marry me to such a faithful wife! Thank God and Ra~~x~~avîrasi~~x~~g that I have not fallen into her snares,” thought Sundara to himself. The minister offered a thousand excuses, related to her all that had taken place between himself and the Pradhânî, and of what the latter had promised. Then they both retired to bed. At that moment the treacherous owl began to hoot, and one of the maid-servants, who happened to be a clever interpreter of owl-hootings revealed, to secure the favour of the minister, that the prince was lurking behind a tree in that very garden. Knowing the price set on Sundara’s head even female hands flew to cut it off. All ran with torches to search the garden.

These words, of course, fell upon the ears of the prince like thunder. Before the people there began their search he began his race, jumped over a high wall, and flew like a kite. Before the lady-racers and the minister had left their sweet road to the tank-bank, Sundara found himself in the north street of the town. The news that the prince was out that night spread like a flame from the pleasure-park outside throughout the whole town, and before long avaricious persons were searching in the streets for his valuable head. Sundara thought it dangerous to pass through the streets, and wished to hide himself in a safe place. Fortune conducted him to one. It was a ruined old choultry, where food, during the days of his father, was distributed in charity to the beggars of the town, and which was now only resorted to by them to sleep, and not to receive rice. The prince entered it, and laid himself down in the midst of them, fortunately unobserved. He could hear from where he

was the noise of the persons searching outside. In the garden the minister searched in vain, and accusing the female for her wrong interpretation as he thought, retired to bed.

Outside the north gate, at a distance of three ghaṅikâs' walk, lived a robber. He used to start out on a plundering expedition once in seven years. In the houses and mansions he used to rob he took only jewels of various kinds, Gômêda, (Cinnamon-stone) pushparûga, (topaz) vajra, (Diamond) vaiṅṛya, &c.; gold and silver he rejected as being too mean for his dignity. As he was (a precious stone) a high-caste robber, he used to take a coolie with him on his way to carry his booty. Of course, that coolie never returned from the cave. He was put to death after his services were over, lest he should disclose the secret of the robber.

Unfortunately, that new-moon night happened to be the night of that cruel robber's plundering expedition. He came out, and when he saw people in search of the prince, thinking that he was not in his palace, he wanted to plunder it. Wishing for a coolie, he entered the ruined choultry, to pick out one among the beggars there. Passing over the others he came to the prince. He found him stout and strong. "This beggar will do me good service to-day. I shall break my custom, and amply reward this man for his services." So thinking to himself, the gentleman robber tapped Sundara with his cane on the back. The prince had just closed his eyes. In the short sleep that ensued he dreamt that the minister's servants were pursuing him, and that one had caught him. At that very moment the gentleman-robber's stroke fell upon his back, giving a sort of reality to his dream. He awoke with horror. "Tell me who you are," asked the unknown person, "A beggar," was the reply. "How does the night appear to you?" asked the robber. "As dark as dark can be," replied the prince. The robber applied a sort of kajjala (a of paint for the eye) to the prince's eyes, and asked, "How does the night appear now?" "As luminous as if a karôṅ of suns were in the sky," answered Sundara. The robber applied a tilaka (A mark on the forehead) to the intended coolie's forehead and addressed him thus: "I am a robber, now going to plunder the palace, from which the prince is absent. Follow me. I shall reward you richly. The kajjala has made the night a day to you. The tilaka takes you unobserved wherever you wish to go." So saying, and dragging the coolie or supposed coolie by the hand, the robber went off to the palace. Wherever he found a door locked, he applied a leaf that he carried in his hand to the fastening, and behold, the lock flew back, and the door opened of its own accord. The prince was astonished. In a few minutes the robber opened one and all of the gates and boxes, and extracted all the precious stones. He tied them up in a bundle, and set it on the prince's head, and asked him to follow. Sundara followed. He assisted in the plunder of his own palace, and carried the booty behind the

robber, who, praised be his stupidity, never for one moment suspected he was a prince, but admired his coolie for the beauty of his person, thought of saving his life, and also of making him his son-in-law. For the robber had a beautiful daughter, for whom he had long been searching for a suitable husband. So with this thought he reached the cave, stopped before it, and taking the bundle from the prince's head ordered him to go into a large cell, the mouth of which he covered with a big stone, which he lifted up by pronouncing an incantation over it. The robber went with the bundle to his wife, and described to her the beauty of the coolie, and what a fair match he would be for their daughter. The wife did not like it, and asked her husband to do with the coolie as they usually did, i.e., murder him; and the robber, who never in anything acted against the will of his wife, went in to fetch his weapon.

Meanwhile the robber's daughter, an excellent girl, of the most charming beauty, overhearing all that took place between her parents, came running to the cave where the coolie was confined. She pronounced a single word over the stone lid of the cave, and it opened, and the prince, who had lost all hopes of recovery, now beheld a beautiful girl coming towards him. "Whoever you may be, my dear coolie, fly for your life for the present. You are my husband. My father has so named you, but as my mother does not like it, he has gone to fetch his weapon to murder you. Excepting we three, none, not even Brahmâ, can open the once-shut gates. After hearing you once called my husband, I must ever regard you so. Now fly, and escape my father's sharp sword. If you are a man, marry me in kind remembrance of the assistance rendered. If you fail to do so you are a beast, and I shall die a virgin." So saying she conducted out in haste the supposed coolie, who had only time to take a hasty embrace, whispering in her ear that he was the prince, and that he would marry her without fail. He now ran for his life. Fearing the robber would come after him he left the way by which he reached the cave, and passing through unknown fields reached the south gate of the town. By that time the search for him had almost abated, and the prince, praising God for his delivery, reached the south street. The night was almost spent. Before returning to the palace he wished to take rest for a few minutes, till he had recovered his breath, and so he sat down on the pial of an old and almost ruined house.

That happened to be the house of a poor Brâhma, who had not even sufficient clothes to wear. As the prince sat down in a corner of the pial the door of the house opened, and the old Brâhma came out. The old woman, the Brâhma's wife, was standing at the door with a vessel containing water for her husband. She, for that was the Brâhma's name, looked up to the sky for a couple of minutes, after which he heaved a deep sigh, and said,

“Alas, the prince, the only son of our former protector, \times ivâchâr, is not to remain for more than two gha \times ikâs. A kâlasarpa (black serpent) will sting him. What shall we do? We are poor. If we could begin Sarpahôma(Serpent sacrifice) now we could tie the mouth of the snake, sacrifice it in the fire, and thus save the prince.” So saying the poor Brâhma \times cried. Sundara, who overheard everything, jumped down in confusion, and fell at the feet of the Brâhma \times , who asked him who he was. “I am a herdsman of the palace. Preserve my master’s life,” was the reply. \times ubhâ \times âstrî was extremely poor. He had no means to procure a small quantity of ghî even to begin the hôma(Sacrifice). He did not know what to do. He begged from his neighbours, who all laughed at his stupidity, and ridiculed his astrology. The prince in a hopeless state of anguish wrung his hands, and in wringing them he felt his ring. Drawing it off his finger he gave it to \times ubhâ \times âstrî, and requested him to pawn it. The latter resorted to the nearest bâzâr, and awakening the bâzâr-keeper procured from him a little ghî, by pawning the ring. Running home and bathing in cold water the Brâhma \times sat down for the hôma. The prince, fearing the serpent, wished to sit inside the house, but at a distance from the place of the ceremony. Just at the appointed hour a large black serpent broke through the sky, fell on the head of the prince, whom he was not able to bite, and gave up its life in the fire. “This is no shepherd, but the very prince himself,” said the Brâhma \times î(Brâhma \times woman).Sundara rose up, and running surrounded them thrice, spoke to them thus:—“You alone are my parents and protectors. This night has been a most adventurous one with me. There was every possibility of my escaping every other calamity, and so I did. But no other power except yours could have averted this snake-bite. So my rescue is due to you alone. I have no time to lose now. Before daylight I must fly unobserved to the palace, and you shall before long see my reward for this.” So saying, Sundara ran to his palace and entered.

Ra \times avîrasi \times g was almost dead. The rumour that the prince was out reached him. He was astonished at the way in which Sundara had got out. He searched the whole palace. To his astonishment all the rooms had previously been opened and plundered. “Has the prince been stolen away by some vile tricks from the palace,” thought Ra \times avîrasi \times g, and without knowing what to do he was buried in the ocean of sorrow, from which he gave up all hopes of recovering. What was his joy, then, when he saw the prince enter the palace just at dawn. “Mai Bâb Chakravarti, where have you been the whole night, throwing away the advice of your poor slave? How many enemies you have in this world, you have yet to know,” said Ra \times avîrasi \times g. “I know them all now, only listen to what I say, and do as I bid. I have won the crown without a blow. Thank the day that gave me you as my protector, for it was only yesterday that I had ample reason to verify your statements. My adventures would make your hair stand on end. Thank God I have escaped from all of them unhurt. If you have a few men ready

now, we have won the kingdom.” So saying, the prince explained to him every detail of his adventure. “If we catch hold of the minister now, we have done all.” “I could never for one moment think that you in a single night could have seen and done so much. Now that heaven has shown you the way, I shall obey you,” said Raṅgavīrasīṅg, and Sundara accordingly issued the orders. He described the house with the pīṭh at which he had lingered for a while the previous night, and asked a servant to bring the owner of that house to the Rājasthānik office. Raṅgavīrasīṅg brought in the Pradhānī, who was extremely delighted at the good intention of the prince. He was offered the Mantrī’s place. Two were sent to the shepherds. Twenty were sent to the pleasure-park to have the minister and his sweet paramour brought to the court in chains. The female servants were also ordered to be brought. The robber and his cruel wife were not forgotten. The prince minutely described the cave, and asked his servants to catch and imprison the robber by surprising him suddenly, without giving him time to have recourse to his vile tricks—lock-breaking kajjala, &c. The palace palanquin was sent for the robber’s daughter, whom the prince had firmly made up his mind to marry. The palace elephants were decked and sent to fetch with all pomp Ṁubhāṅstrī and his wife to the court. Thus, without a single stroke, Sundara won the kingdom. Raṅgavīrasīṅg was thunder-struck by the excellent and bold way in which the prince in one night went through the series of calamities, and successfully overcame them all. The Pradhānī’s delight knew no bounds. He himself broke open the court and every one connected with the previous night’s adventure was ushered in. The prince bathed, offered up his prayers, and attended the council. When Ṁubhāṅstrī came in with his wife the prince put them on the simhāsana(throne), and himself standing before them, explained to all his previous night’s adventures, rewarded the poor Brāhmaṅ and the shepherds, punished by banishment the maid-servant who, knowing that the prince’s head was coveted, revealed his concealment, and ordered his wife, the minister, the robber, and the robber’s wife to be beheaded. He rewarded without limit his protector, Ṁubhāṅstrī, and married the robber’s daughter, being won over by her sincerity. The Pradhānī, as we have said already, he made his minister, and with his old guardian, the faithful Raṅgavīrasīṅg, the prince reigned for several years in the kingdom of Vañjaimānagar.

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