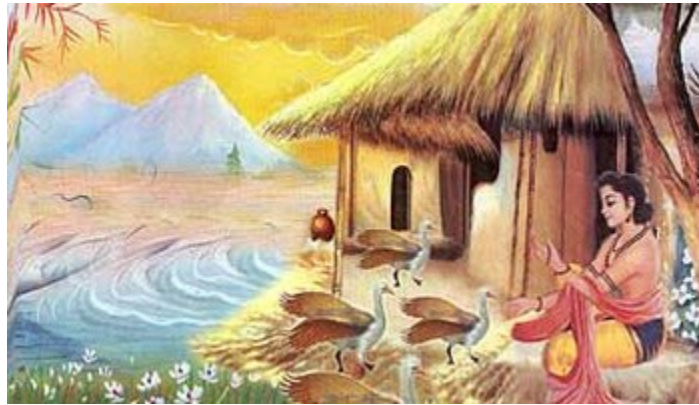


Markandeya Purana



Markandeya Purana, one of the 18 Vedic puranas, is comprised of a dialogue between the sage Jaimini and the sage Markandeya. This purana has no sectarian content, being essentially neutral to Vishnu, Shiva, and other aspects and expansions of the Lord.

Markandeya Purana begins with four questions put forth by Jaimini to Markandeya. The text consists 134 chapters. Chapters 50-97 contain the accounts of the 14 Manvantaras (the periods of the Manus) of which 13 chapters (78-90) are together known as Devi Mahatmya (Glorification of the Great Goddess. Chapters 108-133 deal with the genealogies of the Puranic dynasties.

Overall, the Markandeya Purana is divided into five distinct parts:

1. Chapters 1-9, in which Jaimini is referred by Markandeya to the wise Birds, and they directly explain to him the four questions that perplexed him, along with some related matters.
2. Chapters 10-41, in which Jaimini puts further questions to the Birds and they nominally expound upon them. The real speakers are Sumati, nicknamed Jada, and his father.
3. Chapters 42-78, wherein Jaimini and the Birds are the nominal speakers, while the real speakers are Markandeya and his disciple Kraustuki.
4. Chapters 79-90, the Devi-mahatmya, (popularly known as Durgasaptasati) a pure interpolation in which the real speaker is a rsi named Medhas, whose instructions are repeated by Markandeya.

5. Chapters 91-134, in which Markandeya and Kraustuki carry on their discourse. In the end, the Birds bring their narration to a close, there is a long discourse delivered by Markandeya, and Jaimini thanks them and departs.

In the book Markandeya Purana: Sanskrit Text with English Translation, Notes and Index of Verses translated by F. Eden Pargiter (2004), the chapter contents of Markandeya are enumerated as follows:

Jaimini applied to Markandeya for instruction on four questions. Markandeya referred him to four learned Birds, sons of Drona and the Apsaras Vapu who was cursed by the rsi Durvasas to be a bird; and narrated the story of their birth, and of their education by Samika; and explained that they were four [brahmanas](#), who were so born, because cursed by their father Sukrsa for not offering their bodies as food to a famished bird.

[The Bird's discourse on Jaimini's four questions](#)

Jaimini visited the Birds at the Vindhya Mts. and they answered his four questions thus: - Visnu assumed bodily forms in order to accomplish good; Draupadi became the joint wife of the five Pandavas because they were all emanations of Indra; Baladeva committed brahmanicide during intoxication and expiated it by pilgrimage; and five Visva Devas, who, on seeing Visvamitra's brutality to king Hariscandra, censured Visvamitra, incurred his curse thereby and were born as the five sons of Draupadi to die young and unmarried.

This story led the Birds at Jaimini's request to narrate the whole story of king Hariscandra's sufferings and ultimate beatitude; and the terrible fight which resulted therefrom between Vasistha and Visvamitra as gigantic birds.

The Birds' discourse on Jaimini's further questions Discourse on life, death and action

Jaimini propounded further questions regarding conception, foetal life, birth, growth, death and the consequences of action; and the Birds answered them by reproducing the instruction that a Brahman, Sumati, nick-named Jada, once gave to his father (chapters 10-30).

Thus, the Birds gave in Jada's words a description of death, after-existence's and certain hells; of human conception and birth, and the evils of all existence; of certain other hells and the various terrible torments inflicted there; and they narrated the story of king Vipascit's descent into hell, with a discourse regarding actions and the specific punishments for a long list of various sins, and of his deliverance from hell together with other persons confined there.

Stories Illustrating religious devotion (yoga)

The Birds, continuing Jada's discourse, broached the subject of yoga or religious devotion, but prefaced it with a long narrative (chapters 16 to 39). A brahman Mandavya was saved from a curse by his devoted wife, who stopped the rising of the sun and gained a boon from Atri's wife Anasuya; the gods in consequence blessed Anasuya, and Brahma, Visnu and Siva were born as her three sons Soma, Dattatreya and Durvasas; Dattatreya indulged in sensual pleasures; Arjuna Kartavirya, however, being advised by his minister Garga to propitiate Dattatreya, because Dattatreya (being an incarnation of Visnu) had once 'saved the gods from the demons, did so and by Dattatreya's blessing reigned gloriously. 106 This led on to the story of Alarka, which is used to convey political, religious and social instruction (chapters 17-41).

Alarka's birth and education

King Satrujit's son Rtadhvaja lived in intimate friendship with two Naga princes; they told their father Asvatara - how Rtadhvaja had succoured the Brahman Galava with the help of a wondrous horse named Kuvalaya, and descending to Patala, had killed the demon Patala-ketu there, and had rescued and married the Gandharva princess Madalasa, and was famed as Kuvalayasva; and also how a demon had caused Madalasa to die on a false report of Kuvalayasva's death. King Asvatara, by propitiating Sarasvati then, gained perfect skill in poetry and music (which are described), and by propitiating Siva received Madalasa restored to life; he invited Kuvalayasva to Patala and gave Madalasa back to him. Kuvalayasva had a son by her, and she prattled to the infant; they had three other sons and she named the youngest Alarka.

Political, religious and social instruction

Then followed an exposition of political, religious and social doctrine in the guise of instruction given by Madalasa to Alarka. She

instructed him in the duties and conduct of a king; in the duties of the four castes and of a brahmana's life; in the general duties of a grhastha and various religious matters; in the duties of a grhastha in detail; in the sraddha ceremonies; in the performance of the Parvana Sraddha and the persons to be excluded; in the Voluntary sraddhas and their benefits and proper occasions; in the rules of Virtuous Custom, generally and with much detail; about diet, purification, conduct, holy days and various religious ceremonies.

Exposition of religious devotion (yoga)

Rtadhvaja then resigned his kingdom to Alarka and departed to the forest. Alarka lived in pleasure, but, being reduced to great straits by his brother and the king of Kasi, sought relief from Dattatreya. Dattatreya spoke about the soul and, on Alarka's asking about religious devotion (yoga), expounded the method, conditions and signs of its proper performance; the attendant ailments and the stages which lead to final emancipation from existence; the way in which a yogi should live, beg, eat and reach his end; the composition, meaning and efficacy of the word "Om"; ill omens and their signification; and the seasons for, and the importance of, yoga. Alarka then relinquished the kingdom, but his brother, glad at 'Alarka's conversion, declined it and departed. Alarka gave it to his son and departed to the forest. This ends Jada's exposition.

The Bird's discourse on Jaimini's further questions Discourse on Creation

Jaimini put further questions, and the Birds answered them by repeating what Markandeya had taught Kraustuki. This discourse runs on to the end of the Purana.

Markandeya, after extolling this Purana, described the course of creation from Brahma through [pradhana](#), and the mundane egg; he discoursed about Brahma, and explained divine and human time and the four ages. He described the creation of the earth and all it contains; the gods, demons, pitrs, manking, and the positions assigned them; the origin of the primeval human race and its social and moral evolution; the birth of the nine Sages, Rudra, Manu Svayambhuva and his descendants, Daksa and his offspring; Adharma and his progeny, especially the goblin Duhsaha and his powers, whose brood of goblins and hags are named with their particular functions; the creation of the Kudras; and the wives and offspring of the rsis and pitrs.

Account of the Manus

Markandeya next discoursed of the Manus and manvantaras. He told of the first Manu, Svayambhuva, and his descendants who peopled the seven Continents. Jambudvipa was occupied by Agnidhra, and his descendant Bharata gave his name to India. This introduced the subject of geography.

Geography

Markandeya described the earth and its continents, especially Jambu-dvipa; and also Mount Meru, first briefly, and then with full mention of neighboring forests, lakes and mountains; and the course of the Ganges in the sky and on the earth. He mentioned the nine divisions of Bharata, and then dealt with India in detail; naming its seven mountain ranges and its scattered hills; and its rivers, distinguishing them according to their sources, in the Himalaya, the Paripatra, the Vindhya, the Rksa, the Sahya, the Malaya, the Mahendra and the Suktimat ranges. He named the various peoples inhabiting India and its confines, according as they dwelt in the Middle Land (Madhya-desa), in the north-west, outside northwards, in the north, in the east, in the south, in the west, around the Vindhya mountains and beneath the Himalayas.

Next representing India as resting upon Visnu in the form of a tortoise, Markandeya named the various peoples (with the corresponding lunar constellations) as they were distributed over the middle of the tortoise's body, over its face, its right fore-foot, its right flank, its right hind-foot, its tail, its left hind-foot, its left flank and its left fore-foot; and he added some astrological, religious and political comments. He then described the countries Bhadrasva, Ketumala, the Northern Kurus, Kimpurusa, Hari-varsa, Ilavrta, Ramyaka, and Hiranmaya.

Account of the Manus (resumed)

Markandeya related the birth of the second Manu. A Brahman visited Himavat and met an Apsaras Varuthini; a Gandharva Kali by personating him gained her affection and she bore a son Svarocis. Svarocis delivered a maiden Manorama from a curse and married her, and also rescued her two girl-companions and married them; after living long in heedless pleasure with them, he had three sons whom he established in separate kingdoms by the knowledge called

Padmini; and he had by a forest goddess another son Dyutimat who became the second Manu, Svarocisa; and his period is noticed. The allusion to the knowledge Padmini introduced a discourse on its supporters, the Nidhis.

Continuing, Markandeya related how king Uttama banished his queen for bad temper, and helped a Brahman to find his ill-tempered wife who had been carried off; he was rebuked by a rsi for his own conduct; he recovered the brahman's wife, whose bad hidden; the Brahman changed her nature and the Raksasa restored her to king Uttama; she bore a son, who became the third Manu, Auttama, and his period is noticed.

Markandeya related how king Svarastra when driven from his kingdom, met his deceased queen, and had a son who became the fourth Manu, Tamasa; his period is noticed. The rsi Rtavac made the constellation Revati fall; a maiden was born therefrom; she married king Durgama and bore a son, who became the fifth Manu, Raivata; his period is noticed. Caksusa, being changed when an infant by a hag, became king Vikranta's son, but turned an ascetic and became the sixth Manu, Caksusa; his period is noticed.

Continuing the manvantaras, Markandeya said the Sun married Tvastr's daughter Sanjna and had two sons Vaivasvata and Yama; Sanjna quitted him, leaving her Shadow behind, because his splendour was excessive; Tvastr pared his splendour down while the eighth Manu, Savarni. Vaivasvata is the seventh and present Manu; his period is noticed. The future period of Savarni with its rsis, gods, etc., is prophesied.

The Devi-Mahatmya

The mention of Savarni introduced the Devi-mahatmya. Markandeya related that king Suratha, being ousted from his kingdom, met a Vaisya driven from his family, and both consulted a rsi about their longings for home; the rsi ascribed their feelings to the goddess Maha-maya (Great Illusion), and related how, when she was lauded by Brahma, Visnu slew the demons Madhu and Kaitabha.

The rsi then recited her exploits. Here begins the Devi-mahatmya properly. The demons under Mahisa vanquished the gods, and the goddess was formed as Candika, (Ambika) out of their special energies combined; she began a great battle and destroyed the demons, all the demon chiefs and finally Mahisa himself. The gods

praised her in a hymn, and she promised to befriend them always. Again the gods were vanquished by the demons Sumbha and Nisumbha, and invoked her; she appeared, and Sumbha wanted to marry her but she declined; he sent an army and she destroyed it; he sent another with Canda and Munda; the goddess Kali destroyed them and Candika gave her the combined name Camunda; Sumbha sent all his armies; Candika killed the chief Raktavija, then Nisumbha in spite of Sumbha's aid, and many demons, and finally Sumbha himself; whereat the universe was filled with joy. The gods praised her in a hymn and she promised to deliver them always. She descanted on the merits of this poem. The gods regained their supremacy; and she is extolled. Here ends the Devi-mahatmya properly. After hearing this poem King Suratha worshipped Candika, and she promised he should be the eighth Manu, Savarni.

Account of the Manus (resumed)

Markandeya, continuing, mentioned the other future Manus, the ninth, tenth, eleventh and twelfth named Savarna, and the thirteenth named Raucya, and their periods. He narrated the story of Raucya. A Prajapati Ruci was urged by the Pitrs to marry; he propitiated Brahma and pleased the Pitrs in a hymn; they appeared and promised him a wife and extolled his hymn; he married an Apsaras and had a son who will be the thirteenth Manu Raucya. Santi, the disciple of the irascible rsi Bhuti, finding the sacred fire extinguished, offered a hymn to Agni. Agni restored the fire and promised to Bhuti a son who should be the fourteenth Manu, Bhautya. Bhautya's period is noticed. This account of the manvantaras is extolled.

Commencement of the Genealogies

At Kraustuki's request Markandeya began the genealogies. Brahma creates Daksa, from whom came Martanda, the Sun. Then mentioning that Brahma was born from the mundane egg, and produced the lokas (worlds), and next the four Vedas with their merits - Markandeya diverged into a laudation of the Sun.

The majesty of the Sun

The gods and the Vedas are declared to be manifestations of the Sun. The sun's glory was at first too great, and Brahma with a hymn induced him to contract it and then finished the creation. Marici's

son Kasyapa begot the gods, demons, mankind, etc. The demons overcame the gods and Aditi sought help of the Sun in a hymn. He became her son as Martnda and destroyed the demons. The story of the Sun and his wife Sanjna (as told in chapters 74 and 75) is re-told here with more detail regarding the Shadow-Sanjna, the curse on Yama, the paring down of the Sun's splendour, the hymns offered to the Sun, and the Sun's offspring and the stations allotted them.

Further Markandeya related that king Rajya-varadhana when old resolved to resign the kingdom, but his people in grief propitiated the Sun, and the Sun granted him great length of life; the king similarly obtained the same boon for them. This story is extolled.

The Genealogies resumed

Markandeya mentioned Manu Vaivasvata's seven sons and Ila-Sudyumna, Pururavas, etc. Manu's son Pusadhra killed a brahman's cow and being cursed became a sudra. Karusa's descendants were mentioned. Dista's son Nabhaga married a vaisya maiden willfully and became a vaisya; their son Bhanandana conquered the earth, but Nabhaga declined to reign. Then Nabhaga's wife explained that she was not really a promise of recovery, and that she was a princess and had become a vaisya under Agastya's curse.

Bhanandana became king. His son Vatsapri rescued a princess Sunanda from Patala after killing a demon king who had a magic club and married her. His son was Pramsu and Pransu's son Prajati. Prajati's son Khanitra was beneficent; his brother's ministers practiced magic to dethrone him but destroyed themselves; Khanitra resigned the kingdom in grief and went to the forest. His son Ksupa performed sacrifices for the harvests. His son was Vira and grandson Yivimsa. Vivimsa's son Khaninetra while hunting met two deer eager to be sacrificed and by Indra's favour obtained a son Balasva. Balasva was called Karandhama because of a fanciful victory.

His son Aviksit married man princesses and carried off princess Vaisaini at her svayamvara; the suitor kings conquered and captured him, but she refused them all; Karandhama rescued Aviksit, but Aviksit refused to marry the princess after his discomfiture; she turned to austerities and obtained an assurance from the gods: Aviksit's mother by a ruse obtained a promise from him to beget a son: while hunting he rescued the princess from a demon and pleased the gods: she proved to be a Gandharvamaiden and Aviksit

married her in the Gandharva world; She bore a son Marutta there Aviksit returned but refused the kingdom because of his discomfiture. Marutta became king, and was 653 a universal monarch, a great sacrificer, and liberal benefactor to brahmans. The Nagas gave great trouble, and he attacked them, but Aviksit interposed in favour of the Nagas; a battle was averted by the rsis, and the Nagas made reparation. Marutta's wives are named.

His son Narisyanta enriched the brahmans permanently at a great sacrifice. His son Dama was chosen by the Dasarna princess, and defeated the suitor kings, who, in violation of marriage laws, opposed him. Dama became king. Narisyanta was murdered in the forest by Vapusmat one of those kings. Dama bewailed, and vowed vengeance against the murderer; he slew Vapusmat and celebrated his father's obsequies with Vapusmat's flesh and blood.

Conclusion

The Birds closed their long repetition of Markandeya's instruction to Kraustuki, with an encomium on the Puranas and this Purana in particular. Jaimini thanked them.

Once upon earth there lived a saintly king
Named Hariščandra; pure in heart and mind,
In virtue eminent, he ruled the world,
Guarding mankind from evil. While he reigned
No famine raged, nor pain; untimely death
Ne'er cut men off; nor were the citizens
Of his fair city lawless. All their wealth,
And power, and works of righteousness, ne'er filled
Their hearts with pride; in everlasting youth
And loveliness the women passed their days.
It so fell out, that while this mighty king
Was hunting in the forest, that he heard
The sound of female voices raised in cry
Of supplication. Then he turned and said,
Leaving the deer to fly unheeded: "Stop!
Who art thou, full of tyranny and hate,
That darest thus oppress the earth; while I,
The tamer of all evil, live and rule?"
Then, too, the fierce Ganeša,--he who blinds
The eyes, and foils the wills of men,--he heard
The cry, and thus within himself he thought:

"This surely is the great ascetic's work,
 The mighty Viśvâmitra; he whose acts
 Display the fruits of penance hard and sore.
 Upon the sciences he shows his power,
 While they, in patience, discipline of mind,
 And silence perfected, cry out with fear,
 'What shall we do? The illustrious Kaušika
 Is powerful; and we, compared with him,
 Are feeble.' Thus they cry. What shall I do?
 My mind is filled with doubt. Yet stay; a thought
 Has come across me: Lo! this king who cries
 Unceasingly, 'Fear not!' meeting with him,
 And entering his heart, I will fulfil
 All my desire." Then filled with Rudra's son--
 Inspired with rage by Vigna Raj--the king
 Spoke up and said: "What evil doer is here,
 Binding the fire on his garment's hem,
 While I, his king, in power and arms renowned,
 Resplendent in my glory, pass for nought?
 Surely the never-ending sleep of death
 Shall overtake him, and his limbs shall fail,
 Smitten with darts from my far-reaching bow,
 Whose fame this lower world may scarce contain."
 Hearing the prince's words, the saint was filled
 With wrath o'erpow'ring, and the sciences
 Fell blasted in a moment at his glance.
 But when the king beheld the pious sage
 All-powerful, he quaked exceedingly,
 And trembled like the sacred fig-tree's leaves.
 Then Viśvâmitra cried: "Stop, miscreant!"
 And Hariščandra, humbly falling down
 Before the saint, in accents low and meek:
 "O Lord! most holy! most adorable!
 Oh, blame me not! This is no fault of mine!
 My duty calls," he said, "I must obey."
 "Is it not written in the Holy Law,
 'Alms must be given by a virtuous king;
 His people must be fought for, and be kept
 From every ill'?" Then Viśvâmitra spoke
 And said: "To whom, O king, should'st thou give alms?
 For whom in battle should'st thou fight? and whom
 Should'st thou protect? Oh, tell me, nor delay,
 But quickly answer, if thou fearest sin."
 "Alms should be given to Brâhmans," said the king:

"Those who are weak should be protected: foes
 In battle should be met and overcome."
 Then Višvâmitra spoke and said: "O king!
 If thus indeed thou rightly dost perceive
 Thy royal duty, give thine alms to me;
 I am a holy Brâhman, and I seek
 A dwelling-place; moreover I would gain
 A wife: therefore bestow on me thine alms."
 The king, his heart filled with exceeding joy,
 Felt, as it were, his youth return, and said:
 "Fear not! but tell me, son of Kaušika,
 Thy heart's desire; and be it hard to gain,
 Or be it easy, it shall still be thine.
 Say, shall I give thee gold, or wealth, or life?
 Or shall I give thee wife, or child, or land? Or my prosperity itself?"
 "O king!"
 The sage replied, "thy present I accept;
 But let thine alms, I pray, be granted first,--
 The offering for the kingly sacrifice."
 "O Brâhman!" said the king, "the alms are thine;
 Further than this, whatever be the gift
 Thou mayest desire, freely I give it thee.
 Ask what thou wilt." Then Višvâmitra spake:
 "Give me the earth, its mountains, seas, and towns,
 With all its kingdoms, chariots, horses, men;
 Its elephants, its treasure-houses too;
 Its treasures vast, and all whate'er beside
 Is recognized as thine: oh! give me all, I pray, except thyself, thy
 wife, thy son,
 And this thy righteousness, that follows close
 Beside thee. Sinless one! oh thou who art
 Perfect in righteousness! oh give me all--
 All beside these. What need of further words."
 The king, with heart rejoicing, and unchanged
 In countenance, hearing the sage's words,
 Said, humbly bowing down before the saint,
 "So be thy wish fulfilled." "O saintly king,"
 Said Višvâmitra, "if the world is mine,
 And power, and wealth, I pray you who shall reign,
 Since in this kingdom as a devotee
 I dwell?" Then Harišchandra said: "'Ere this,
 Before the world was thine by my free gift,
 Thou wast the lord of all; how much more now?
 Thy right is doubly sure." Then said the sage:

"If this indeed be so,--if the whole world
 Be truly mine, and all its sovereignty,
 Then should'st thou not remain, nor leave thyself
 Aught of that kingdom which thou hast renounced,
 But, casting off thy royal ornaments,
 Thou should'st depart, clothed in a dress of bark."
 The king, obedient to the sage's word,
 Stripped off his royal dress, and, with his wife
 And son, made haste to go. Then said the saint:
 "Stop, Hariščandra! Hast thou then forgot
 The offering for the kingly sacrifice
 That thou hast promised us?" Replied the king:
 "O mighty saint! the kingdom now is thine;
 All have I given to thee: and as for me,
 What have I left?--nought! save myself,
 My wife, my son!" "Thou sayest the truth, indeed,"
 Answered the sage; "but yet there still remains
 The offering for the kingly sacrifice.
 And this know well: A vow to Brâhmans made,
 If unfulfilled, works special woe to him
 Who made the vow. For in this sacrifice
 Must offerings of worth be freely made
 To Brâhmans;--offerings until they cry
 Hold! that suffices for us! Therefore pay
 Thy promised vow, nor longer hesitate.
 'Alms are for Brâhmans,' thou thyself hast said,
 'Those who are weak must be protected: foes
 In battle must be met and overcome.'"

"O saintly priest!" answered the king, "my wealth
 Is all departed: nothing now remains
 For me to give: yet grant me time I pray,
 And I will pay the offering!" "Noble king,"
 Said Višvâmitra, "speak I pray thee! Say
 What time dost thou appoint that I should wait?
 Speak! no delay! or else my curse of fire
 Shall burn thee up." Then Hariščandra said:
 "Most holy Brâhman! when a month has past
 The money for the offering shall be thine.
 Now I have nothing. Oh! be pleased to grant
 Remission for the present." Said the sage,
 "Go! go! most noble prince! maintain thy faith!
 And may'st thou prosper! may no enemies
 Harass thy road." Commanded thus, the king
 Departed as an outcast;--he, the king

Of all the earth, an exile with his wife
 Unused to go afoot, and with his son
 Went forth: while cries and lamentations rose
 On every side: "Our hearts are filled with pain,
 Why dost thou leave us thus? O virtuous king!
 Show mercy to thy subjects. Righteousness
 Indeed shines forth in thee; if thou art full
 Of mercy, may it overflow on us.
 Stay! Mighty Prince! one moment, while we gaze
 With lover's eyes upon thy beauteous form.
 Alas! our Prince! Shall we ne'er see thee more?
 How changed thy princely state! Thou, who did'st once
 Go forth, surrounded by attendant kings,
 Who marched on foot; while stately elephants
 Bore e'en thy ministers. Now, Lord of Kings!
 Thyself art driven forth on foot. Yet, stay!
 Think, Hariščandra! how wilt thou endure
 The dust, the heat, the toil? Stay, mighty prince,
 Nor cast thy duty off. Oh, show to us
 Some mercy, for herein thy duty lies. Behold, we cast off all for thee!
 Our wives,
 Our wealth, our children, our possessions, all
 Have we relinquished; like thy shadow,
 We would follow thee. Oh leave us not!
 For wheresoe'er thou art is happiness,
 And heaven itself would be no heaven to us
 Without our prince." Then, overwhelmed with grief
 At these laments, the king stayed on his course,
 In pity for his loving citizens.
 Then Višvāmītra, filled with rage, his eyes
 Rolling with wrath, exclaimed: "Shame on thee! shame!
 O full of falsehood, and of wickedness.
 How! would'st thou, then, speaker of lies!
 Resume the gifts that thou hast freely made,
 And reinstate thee in thy kingdom?" "Sir!
 I go!" replied the king to these rude words,
 And trembling crept away in haste, his wife
 Holding him by the hand. And, as she went,
 Her fragile form o'ercome with weariness,
 The Brâhman smote her fiercely with his stick.
 Then Hariščandra, pained with inmost grief,
 Seeing the stroke, said meekly, "Sir! I go!"
 Nor further spoke. Filled with compassion then,
 The Višvadevas said: "What sin is this?

What torments shall indeed suffice for him
 By whom this pious king--the offerer
 Of prayer, and sacrifice, has been cast forth.
 Who now will sanctify the Soma-juice
 With prayers and hymns, at the great sacrifice,
 That we may drink it with rejoicing hearts?"
 Then, having heard these words, the Brâhman turned
 Upon the Višvedevâs; and, in wrath
 Exceeding hot, he spake a fearful curse:
 "You shall be cast down from the height of heaven,
 And live as men." The curse had hardly passed
 His lips, when filled with pity for their fate,
 The sage yet further added: "you shall live
 Indeed as men, but yet, there shall be born
 To you no son, nor shall you know the state
 Of marriage. Envy, love, and wrath shall ne'er
 Hold sway o'er you: and when the appointed time
 Has past, you shall re-enter once again
 The courts of heaven, and wear again the form
 Which you had lost." The Višvedevâs then
 Came down from heaven, and, clothed in human form,
 Were born as men, the sons of Pritha, wife
 Of Pa.n.du. Therefore those five Pâ.n.davas--
 Mighty in war--by Višvâmitra cursed,
 Knew not the state of marriage. Thou hast heard
 The tale of Pa.n.du's sons; thy question, too,
 Of fourfold import has been answered.
 I pray thee, say, what further would'st thou hear?
 BOOK VIII.

Said Jaimîni: An answer ye have found
 To all my questions; and indeed have filled
 Me full of deepest interest. Oh! I long
 To hear yet more! Alas! that saintly king!
 What grief he suffered! Did he e'er attain
 To any comfort answering to his woe?
 Noblest of Birds! Oh tell me this, I pray.
 The Holy Birds continued: Then the king,
 O'ercome with grief and pain, hearing the words
 Of Višvâmitra, with his wife and son
 Journeyed along, dragging his weary steps.
 At length the holy place appeared in view--
 The shrine of Śiva; thus within himself,
 He said: "Benares, sacred to the god,
 Lies now before me; there shall I find rest,

For there man has no power." The king approached
 The gates on foot: lo! at the entry stood
 The Brâhman Višvâmitra. Mighty Saint!
 The king, his hands in supplication joined,
 With humble reverence, said: "Here is my life,
 My wife, my son, I offer all to thee;
 Accept, I pray, the offering! or choose
 Whatever else thou wouldest!" But the sage
 Replied: "The month is past! most saintly king!
 Give me the present for the sacrifice--
 The offering thou hast promised." "One half-day
 As yet remains before the month be past,
 Oh Brâhman of surpassing piety,
 And penances unfading. Wait, I pray,
 A few short hours." Then Višvâmitra said:
 "So be it, king! once more I will return,
 But if the offering be not duly paid,
 Before the sinking of this evening's sun,
 My curse shall smite thee." And the priest
 Departed, while the king, in anxious thought,
 Debated thus: "How shall I make the gift?
 The promised gift? where are my friends? my wealth?
 I may not beg for alms; how can I then
 Fulfil my vow? Nor even in the world
 Beyond shall I find rest. Destruction waits,
 If with my promise unfulfilled, I pass
 From hence. A robber of the holy saints;
 I shall become the lowest of the low.
 Nay, I will sell myself! and, as a slave,
 Redeem my promise." Then the queen, in tears
 Bewildered, and afflicted, lost in thought,
 With face cast down, "Maintain thy truth," she said,
 "Most mighty prince! Oh! let not doubt prevail!
 The man devoid of truth is to be shunned
 Like contact with the dead. The highest law
 Declares, that inward truth and faithfulness
 Must be maintained. Burnt sacrifices, alms,
 The study of the scriptures, penances,
 Are counted not for righteousness to him
 Whose word is faithless. Listen! noble prince!
 Is it not written in the sacred law:
 'The wise attain Salvation through the truth,
 While lies and falsehood are destruction's way
 To men of low and evil minds.' There lived,

'Tis said, a king upon the earth, by whom
 The kingly sacrifice--burnt offerings too,
 Were offered in abundance. That same king
 Fell once from truthfulness, and by that fall,
 He lost his righteousness, and forfeited
 His place in heaven. Prince! I have borne a son" --
 Her utterance failed her, issuing forth in nought
 But sighs and lamentations. Then the king,
 With eyes o'erflowing, said, "Behold thy son!
 He stands beside thee! cast away thy grief!
 Tell me what presses on thee." Said the queen,
 "Prince, I have borne a son; and sons are born
 To none but worthy women. This my son
 Shall take me--he shall offer me for sale--
 Then with the money gained, pay thou the priest
 The promised offering." Hearing these words,
 He fell down fainting. When his sense returned,
 Filled with exceeding pain, the king burst forth,
 Lamenting: "This, alas! most loving one!
 Is hardly to be framed in words, much less
 Be carried out in deed. Alas! alas!" --
 His spirit fled again, and to the earth
 He fell unconscious. Overcome with grief,
 The queen exclaimed, filled with compassion: "King!
 How art thou fallen from thy high estate!
 The ground is now thy resting-place, whom once
 A gorgeous couch received. Lo! this my lord,
 By whom wealth, honour, power, are freely given
 An offering to the Brâhman--see, he lies
 Insensate on the ground. Ye gods of heaven!
 Tell me, I pray you, has this noble king,
 Equal to gods in rank, committed sin
 Against you, that he lies thus overcome
 With woe?" Then fell the queen, bereft of sense
 Upon the earth, o'erwhelmed with grief and pain,
 Seeing her husband's misery. When the boy
 Beheld his parents lying on the ground,
 He cried in terror: "Father! give me food!
 Mother! my tongue is parched with thirst!" Meanwhile
 Upon the scene the mighty Brâhman came;
 And when he saw the king lie senseless, "King!" --
 Sprinkling cold water on his face--he said,
 "Rise up! rise up! Pay me the promised vow;
 For this thy misery from day to day

Increases, and will yet increase, until
 The debt be paid." The water's cooling touch
 Refreshed the king; his consciousness returned;
 But when he saw the Brâhman, faintness seized
 His limbs again. Then overpowering rage
 Seized Višvâmitra; but before he left,
 The best of Brâhmans said: "If what is just,
 Or right, or true, enters thy mind, O king!
 Give me the present. Lo! by truth divine
 The sun sends forth his vivifying rays
 Upon the earth. By truth this mighty world
 Stands firm and steadfast. Truth all law excels.
 By truth the very heaven itself exists.
 Wert thou to weigh the truth, and in the scale
 Opposing, wert to place burnt-offerings,
 And sacrifices countless, still the truth
 Would far outweigh them all. Why need I waste
 My words of loving-kindness upon thee--
 An ill-intentioned, false, ignoble man.
 Thou art a king,--so should the truth prevail
 With thee. Yet hear me;--if the offering
 Be still unpaid when th' evening's sun has sunk
 Behind the western mountain to his rest,
 My curse shall smite thee." Speaking words like these
 The Brâhman left him; and the king, o'ercome
 With fear--a fugitive--robbed of his wealth--
 Degraded to unfathomable depths--
 The victim of his evil creditor--
 Heard once again the counsel of his wife:
 "O king! sell me! nor let the fiery curse
 Dissolve thy being!" Urged repeatedly,
 The king at length replied: "Most loving one!
 What the most wicked man could hardly do,
 That same will I:--and I will sell my wife.
 Alas! that I should utter such a word!"
 And going with his wife into the town--
 Eyes dimmed with tears, voice choked with grief--he cried:
 "Come hither, townsmen! hearken unto me!
 A wretch! inhuman! savage as a fiend!
 I offer here my wife for sale, and yet
 I live! Here is a female slave! Who buys?
 Make haste and speak." "The female slave is mine!"
 (So spake an ancient Brâhman to the king.)
 "Money I have in heaps, and I will pay

You well for her. My wife is delicate;
 Her household duties are beyond her strength;
 I want a slave, and therefore I will give
 A price proportioned to the woman's skill
 And temper; nor will I o'erlook her youth
 And beauty. What you think is fair and right,
 That will I pay." Struck dumb with grief, the king
 Stood mute, nor answered aught. And then the priest,
 Tying the price in the king's garment-hem--
 His bark-cloth garment--roughly grasped the queen,
 And dragged her off. But when the loving child
 Beheld his mother led away, he seized
 Her by her garment. And the queen exclaimed:
 "If only for a moment, noble sir!
 Oh! let me go! that I may gaze once more
 Upon my child, whom I shall never see,
 And never touch again! My child, behold
 Thy mother, now a slave! And thou--a prince!
 Oh, touch me not! My lot of servitude
 Forbids that thou should'st touch me." But the child,
 His eyes bedewed with tears, ran after her,
 Calling her "Mother!" As the boy came near,
 The Brâhman spurned him with his foot; but he
 Still following close would not be torn from her,
 Calling her "Mother!" "Oh, my lord! I pray,
 Be gracious to me!" said the queen. "Oh, buy
 My son with me; divide us not! For I
 Without him shall be nought of use to you.
 Be gracious, O my lord!" Then said the priest:
 "Here! take the money! give the boy to me!
 The saints, who know the scriptures, have ordained
 The right and lawful sum. Take it!" He tied
 The money in the king's bark dress, and led
 Them both away--the mother and the child--
 Together bound. But when the king beheld
 Himself bereft of both his wife and son,
 He burst forth: "Ah! my wife! whom neither sun,
 Nor moon, nor air have ever seen I who hast
 Been kept from vulgar gaze! Alas I a slaveHast thou become! Alas!
 thou, too, my son!--
 A scion of the noble dynasty,
 Sprung from the sun! disgrace has seized on thee,
 And--shame upon me!--thou too art a slave!
 Ye have become a sacrifice; ye, through my fault,

Have fallen. Would that I were dead!" Thus spoke
 The king. Meanwhile the Brâhman hastily
 Entered the grove wherein his dwelling stood,
 And vanished with his slaves. Then met the king
 The Brâhman Višvâmitra. "Prince!" he said,
 Pay me the offering!" Harišchandra gave
 The money gainèd by the shameful sale
 Of wife and child. And when the priest beheld
 The money, overcome with wrath, he said:
 "How canst thou mock me with this paltry sum!
 Base Kshatriya! And thinkest thou that this
 Suffices for a sacrificial gift
 Such as I would accept? But if thy mind
 Thus far misleads thee, thou shalt feel my power--
 Power transcendant, gained by penances,
 And scripture meditation. Yes! the power
 Of my pure Brâhmanhood shall show itself
 On thee." "More will I give thee," said the king,
 "But wait, most noble saint! Nought have I left!
 Even my wife and child are sold." Replied
 The Brâhman: "Hold! be silent! Further time
 Than the remaining fourth part of to-day
 grant thee not." Enraged, he turned away,
 Departing with the money. And the king,
 Immersed in grief and fear, with face cast down,
 Cried out: "If there be any one of you
 Who wants a slave, let him make haste and speak
 While day remains." Then Dharma, putting on
 The form of a Cha.n.dâla, hastily
 Came forward, taking pity on the king.
 His countenance was fearful,--black, with tusks
 Projecting; savage in his words; his smell
 Was foul and horrible; a crowd of dogs
 Came after him. "Tell me thy price," he said;
 "Be quick; and whether it be large or small
 I care not, so I have thee as my slave:"
 The king, beholding such a loathsome form,
 Of mien revolting--"What art thou?" he said.
 "Men call me a Cha.n.dâla," he replied.
 I dwell in this same city--in a part
 Of evil fame. As of a murderer
 Condemned to death, such is my infamy.
 My calling is a robber of the dead."
 "I will not be a slave," exclaimed the king,

"To thee, a base Cha.n.dâla. Better far
 That I should perish by the fiery curse."
 The words were scarcely uttered, when the saint
 Returned, his countenance with rage
 Distorted; and he thus addressed the king:
 "The sum is fair; why dost thou not accept
 The offer? Then indeed thou mightest pay
 The gift thou owest for the sacrifice."
 "O son of Kušika!" replied the king,
 "Consider this, I pray!--my noble race!
 Truly am I descended from the sun!
 How can I then become, though sore in want,
 Lowest of creatures--a Cha.n.dâla's slave?"
 "Delay no more," the Brâhman said, "but pay
 The gift at once, and sell thyself a slave
 To the Cha.n.dâla--or assuredly
 I curse thee." "Saintly priest, be merciful!"
 The king entreated; and, immersed in care,
 He seized the Brâhman's feet, exclaiming thus:
 "What am I but a slave, o'erwhelmed with grief!
 Fear holds me! Saintly priest, be merciful!
 Protect me, mighty saint! Save me, I pray,
 From this most horrible Cha.n.dâla. Sir!
 Most noble saint! hereafter shall thy will
 Be all the object of my life! To serve
 Thy lightest wish shall be my highest joy!
 Thus will I make the offering--I will be
 Thy slave!" Replied the Brahman: "If thou art
 My slave, then will I sell thee as a slave
 To the Cha.n.dâla." Then, filled with delight,
 Paying the money, the Švapâka bound
 His lately-purchased slave, and striking him,
 Led him away. Parted from all his friends;
 In utmost grief; in the Cha.n.dâla's house
 Abiding--morning, noon, and eventide,
 And night, the king thus made lament:
 "Alas! my tender wife, overwhelmed with pain,
 Looking upon her son in misery,
 Bewails her lot. But yet she says: 'The king
 Will surely ransom us, for he has gained
 By now more money than the Brâhman paid
 For us;' and all the time she little knows
 My fate--worse than her own. For I have passed
 From woe to woe--kingdom and friends--my wife,

My son, have passed from me, and now the state
 Of a Cha.n.dâla holds me." While he dwelt
 A slave in the Cha.n.dâla's house, the forms
 Of those he loved were still before his eyes--
 Were ever in his mind. Meanwhile the king,
 Obedient to his master's will, became
 A robber of the dead; and night and day
 He watched for plunder. "One part of the spoil
 Is for the king, three for thy master, two
 For thee. Go to the city's southern part,
 Where is the dwelling of the dead, there wait."
 Obeying the Cha.n.dâla, to the place
 Of burial he went;--an awful place,
 Filled full of fearful sounds and loathsome sights--
 Of evil smells, and smoke, and locks of hair
 Fallen from the dead; while troops of fiends and ghouls,
 Vampires and demons, wandered to and fro.
 Vultures and jackals prowled, and spirit forms'
 Of evil hovered o'er. The ground was strewn
 With heaps of bones; and wailing, sharp and shrill,
 Re-echoed from the mourners of the dead.
 The bodies on the funeral piles, half burnt,
 Crackled and hissed; showing their shining teeth,
 They grinned, as if in sport; while all the time
 The howl of demons and the wail of fiends
 Were mingled with the roar of flames--a sound
 Of fearful import, such as ushers in
 The day of doom. The sights, and sounds, and smells--
 The heaps of ashes, and the piles of bones,
 Blackened with filth--the smoke, the shouts,
 The yells--struck fear on fear into the heart.
 The burial-place resembled nought but hell.
 Such was the place appointed for the king.
 "Priests! Brâhmans! Counsellors! how have I fallen
 From all my royal state! Alas! my queen!
 Alas! my son! Oh! miserable fate!
 We have been torn asunder by the power
 Of Višvâmitra." Thoughts like these possessed
 His inmost mind; while foul, unshorn, unwashed,
 He served his master. Running here and there,
 Armed with a jagged club, he sought the dead,
 From whom he gained his wages. So he lived,
 Degraded from his caste. Old knotted rags
 Served as his dress; his face and arms and feet

With dust and ashes from the funeral piles
Begrimed; his hands defiled with putrid flesh
From contact with the bodies of the dead.
So neither day nor night he ceased from toil.
And twelve months passed--twelve weary months, which seemed
To his grief-stricken mind a hundred years;
And then at last, worn out, the best of kings
Lay down to rest; and as upon his couch
All motionless in sleep he lay, he saw
A wondrous vision. By the power divine
He seemed to wear another form,--a form
Both new and strange,--and in that form to pay
The vow. Twelve years of expiation passed
With difficulty. Then within himself
King Harišchandra thought: "So too will I,
When I am freed from hence, perform my vows
With generous freedom." Forthwith he was born
As a Pukkasa; while a place was found
For him among the dead, and funeral rites
Were ordered as his task. Thus seven years
Were passed; then to the burying-place was brought
A Brâhman seeking sepulture: in life
He had been poor, but honest; and the king,
Though he knew this--the dead man's poverty
And his uprightness--pressed his friends to pay
The funeral dues. "Enforce thy right," they said,
"And do this evil deed; yet know thou this:
Once upon earth there was a mighty king
Named Harišchandra; though he but disturbed
A Brâhman's sleep, through that offence he lost
His merit, and by Višvâmitra's curse
Became a base Pukkasa." "Yet the king
Spared not the dead man's friends, but still required
His fee. Therefore they cursed him in their rage--
"Go!--go!--thou most degraded of mankind--
Go to the lowest hell!" Then in his dream
The king beheld the messengers of death.
Fearful to look at, armed with heavy chains,
They seized him, and they bound him hand and foot,
And bore him off. And then, in fear and pain,
Headlong he fell into the bath of oil
In Nâraka. There, torn with instruments
Sharp-edged as razors, fed on putrid blood,
He saw himself. For seven years in hell--

Now burnt from day to day, now tossed and torn,
Now cut by knives, and now by icy winds
Frozen and numbed--a dead Pukkasa's fate
He underwent. Each day in Nâraka,
A hundred years of mortal reckoning--
So count the demons who inhabit hell.
Then he beheld himself cast up to earth,
His spirit entering a filthy dog;
Feeding on things all foul and horrible--
Consumed by cold. A month thus passed away.
His spirit changed its dwelling, and he saw
Himself an ass; and after that an ox,
A cow, a goat, a sheep, a bird, a worm.
So day by day he saw his spirit change
Its outward shape. A multitude of forms--
Some moving, others rooted to the ground--
Received his soul. And when the hundred years
Were passed and gone, he saw himself again
Re-occupy his pristine human form--
Once more a king. And then he seemed to lose
His kingdom, casting it away in games
Of chance. Turned from his home a wanderer
Into the forest with his wife and child:
Devoured by a ravening beast, but raised
To life again on earth, he sore bewailed
His wife: "Alas! why hast thou left me thus?
Alas! O Saivya! where hast thou gone?"
Then in his dream he seemed to see his wife
And son lamenting: "What hast thou to do
With gambling? Oh protect us, mighty king!"
The vision faded, and he saw no more
The cherished forms. And then the dream returned
By power divine. And Hariščandra stood
In heaven, and he beheld his wife on earth,
With flowing hair, dragged forcibly along--
Stripped of her clothes: the cry came to his ear,
"Protect us, king of men!" Then, snatched away,
The demons hurried him before the judge;
And Hariščandra seemed to hear the words:
"Go forth! return once more to earth! Thy grief
Is well nigh past and ended; joy ere long
Shall come to thee. The sorrows that remain
Endure." The king, then driven from the sky
By Yama's messengers, falling through space--

Senseless in fear and terror, filled with pain
 Yet more exceeding--thought within himself,
 "How shall I suffer all these torments sore!--
 The changes manifold of form--the pain
 In Nâraka." Then Hariŝchandra sought
 Aid from the gods: "O mighty lords," he said,
 "Protect me! O protect my wife and child!
 O mighty Dharma, thee I worship! Thee,
 O Krish.na, the Creator! Faultless ones,
 Both far and near, before you now I come,
 A suppliant. On thee, O lord of prayer,
 I call! on thee, O Indra too! to thee
 O ancient one! I pray--immutable!"
 The vision fled, the king arose from sleep.
 His tangled hair, his body black and grimed,
 Recalled to him his state--the plunderer
 Of dead men's clothes. His recollection gone,
 He thought not of his sorrowing wife and child,
 For reason failed. The loss of kingdom, wealth,
 And friends, his dwelling-place among the tombs,
 Had overthrown his senses, and destroyed
 His mind. Then to the burying-place the queen
 Came, bearing the dead body of her son--
 Pale and distracted. "My beloved son!
 My child!" she kept exclaiming, while she threw
 Dust on her head. "Alas! alas! O king!
 O that thou could'st behold thy child," she said--
 "Thy child now lying dead upon the earth,
 Killed by a serpent's bite. Alas! my son!
 So lovely! so delightful!" Then the king,
 Rearing the sounds of mourning, went in haste
 To rob the dead: nor did he recognize
 His wife, in that sad mourner, changed by grief
 As if into another. And the queen
 Knew not the form that stood before her, clothed
 In rags, with matted hair, withered and foul.
 Then recollection dawned upon the king,
 Seeing the dead child's princely form, the thought
 Of his own son came o'er him. "Ah! my child!
 What evil chance," he said, "has brought thee here!
 A child of princely race thou seemest. He, my son,
 Would have been even such as thou in age."
 Then raised the queen her voice, and thus she spoke:
 "Alas! has some unexpiated crime

Brought upon us, my child! this endless woe.
 My absent lord! since thou did'st not console
 My grief in times gone by, how can the pain
 I suffer now assuage? Did'st thou not lose
 Thy kingdom? did'st thou not desert thy friends?
 Did'st thou not sell thy wife and child?" The king
 Heard her lament, and as he heard, the wail
 Fell from his eyes,--he recognized again
 His wife and son--and saying but the words,
 "Ah! Saivya! Ah! my beloved child!"
 He fainting fell to earth. Then, too, the queen,
 Hearing her husband's voice, o'ercome with grief,
 Insensate fell. Returning consciousness
 Brought to them both affliction's heaviest weight
 And mutual lamentations. "Ah! my son!"
 Thus mourned the king, "my inmost heart is torn,
 When I behold thy form so delicate:
 My child! embracing thee in tend'rest love,
 Words of affection I will speak, that rise
 Unbidden to my lips. Alas! thy limbs
 Will be defiled by my embrace; the dust
 That clings about my garments will pollute
 Thy lovely form! Alas! my child, thou had'st
 An evil father! He who should have kept
 All dangers from thee, he it was who sold
 Thee as a slave! and yet in heart and mind
 First of all things I love thee. Ah! my child!
 Thy father's realm--my heaped-up wealth--all this
 By lawful right was thine inheritance,
 And now thou liest slain! Ah me! the tears
 Rise to my eyes in blinding force: thy form,
 In grace and beauty like the lotus flower,
 Fades from my sight." He spoke, and faltering
 With grief embraced his son. The queen exclaimed:
 "This is indeed my lord--I know his voice!
 I know his form! this is the mighty king.
 The wisest of all beings. But how changed!
 What fate is this? Ah what a dreadful place
 For him, the lord of men. This grief yet more
 Is added to the mourning for my son--
 My husband's fate--for as a slave he serves
 A base Cha.n.dâla. Curséd be that god,
 Or demon foul, through whom a godlike king
 Has fallen to this degraded state; the lot

Of a Śvapâka. Ah! most noble prince,
 My mind is filled with grief, when I recall
 Thy regal state, thy past magnificence.
 No kingly ensigns go before thee now,
 No captive kings, brought down to slavery,
 Humbly precede thee, casting in the way
 Their garments, lest the dust should soil thy feet.
 But now! O king! alas, thyself a slave,
 Thou livest in this fearful place, begrimed
 With filth; thy sacred cord concealed, thy hair
 Tangled and long, plunder of dead men's clothes
 Thy livelihood. Ah! king! and is thy life
 Spent in this awful wise?" So spake the queen,
 And falling on his neck, embraced her lord:
 While she, sprung from a king herself, bewailed
 Her sorrows endless. "King! I pray thee speak!
 Is this a dream? If it be real and true,
 Then justice, truth, and righteousness have fled
 And gone from earth: nor aught avails mankind,
 Of sacrifice, or reverence, to gods
 Or priests! 'Tis vain to follow innocence
 If thou, most perfect, purest of mankind,
 Art brought to such a depth of infamy."
 Then spoke the king, and told his sorrowing wife
 How he had fallen to this wretched state,--
 The state of a Cha.n.dâla. She, in turn,
 Weeping, with many sighs, poured out her tale,
 Telling him how the serpent's bite had killed
 Their child. "Beloved one! I suffer not
 These evils," said the king, "by mine own will--
 Thou seest what I endure; my evil fate
 Depends not on myself. I am a slave,
 And if I fly from the Cha.n.dâla's bonds,
 The fiery torment in the depths of hell
 Will overtake me, and I shall become
 A slave again. My doom is fixed! lo! hell
 Is my abode hereafter; and in forms,
 Creeping and loathsome, shall my soul abide.
 Yet from this miserable life on earth
 There is one only refuge. He! my son!
 My hope! my stay! is dead; drowned by the sea
 Of my misfortunes. But I am a slave!
 I am dependent on another's will!
 Can I give up my wife? Yes! even so!

For know thou this: one who is steeped in woe
 Cares not for evil chances; not the state
 Of the most loathsome beast, nor yet the wood
 Of sword-leaved plants, nor even hell's dread stream,
 Could add the smallest fraction to the pain
 I have already borne. My son is dead!
 Who then will make atonement for my sins?
 Yet listen to my words, beloved one,
 If I have offered sacrifice, and paid
 Due reverence to the saints; if I have given
 Alms to the needy--may we meet again
 Hereafter, in the world to come, and find
 The refuge for our woes denied us here.
 Let us together follow in the path
 By which our son has gone. Our hopeless fate
 Can never alter here. Whatever words
 I may have uttered, thoughtlessly, in jest,
 These, when I pray for pardon, shall receive
 Fullest forgiveness. Thou must not despise
 Thy lord: nor pride thee on thy queenly state
 Now passed and gone." The prince's wife replied:
 "I am prepared to tread that path with thee,
 O king, most saintly! and with thee that world
 To enter." While she spoke these words, the king
 Made up the funeral pile, and placed thereon
 His son, himself ascending with his wife.
 And then, in meditation wrapt, he thought
 Upon Nârâyana, the lord supreme,
 And Vâsudeva, lord of deities,
 Śiva, and Brâhma the eternal god,
 And Krish.na clothed in glory. As the king
 Was meditating, all the gods from heaven
 Came down headed by Dharma. And they said:
 "Hear us, O king! hear us, O lord! The gods--
 Even the mighty gods have come to earth,
 And at their head is Dharma. Gods, and saints,
 And heroes--yea, and Višvâmitra too,
 The sage implacable,--all summon thee--
 Ascend! to heaven: receive the due reward,
 That thou hast gained. O king! slay not thyself!
 I, perfect Righteousness, I summon thee
 To enter now the heaven that thou hast gained
 By thy transcendant virtues, self-control,
 Patience, and truth." Then Indra spoke, and said:--

"O Hariščandra! King, most eminent!
 In virtue! lo! before you Indra stands--
 For I am he. The everlasting world
 Thou hast attained: together with thy wife,
 And son, ascend to heaven;--to that third heav'n--
 So difficult to be attained by men--
 The heav'n that thou hast won." Then Indra rained
 Life-giving am.rit from the sky, and flowers
 That blossomed in the heavenly courts: while sounds
 Of music filled the air, and round him stood
 The gods, a vast assembly. Then the son
 Of Hariščandra rose, restored to life,
 And health, his mind and senses whole, his form
 More beautiful than ever: and the king
 Embraced his wife and son, with perfect joy
 Filled to o'erflowing, crowned with heavenly wreaths.
 Then Indra said: "Thou, with thy wife, and son,
 Shalt dwell in bliss supreme: bliss that thyself
 Hast purchased, by thy virtues and thy toils."
 Then spoke the king: "Hear me! most holy gods!
 Unbidden by my master, will I not
 To heaven itself ascend." Then Dharma spoke:
 "I am thy master. I assumed the form
 Of a Cha.n.dâla. All thy pain and woe
 Was brought upon thee by my magic power,
 And thou wast made a slave! I have beheld
 Thy truth, and thy uprightness. Sainly king!
 The highest place that heaven accords to men,
 Whose virtue has been tried and proved:--to that
 Ascend!" But Hariščandra answering, said:
 "Receive, most mighty lord! my words of praise
 And thanksgiving. I offer them to thee
 Full of affection. Lo! my people stand
 With grieving hearts, longing for my return.
 Can I ascend to heav'n while they on earth
 Lament for me? If they have ever slain,
 Brâhmans, or teachers of the holy law,--
 If lust or avarice have ruled their hearts,--
 Then may my labours and my toils atone,
 For these their sins. I may not leave my friends.
 For neither here, nor in the world to come,
 Can there be peace to one who casts aside
 The friend whose love is pure and true--the friend
 Who serves him from the heart. Return!

Return! to heaven! O Indra! If thou grant
 My friends to rise with me, to heav'n will I
 Ascend; if not, with them will I descend
 To Nâraka." "O king! thy prayer is heard!
 Thy people's sins are pardoned: even for them,
 Hard though it be, thy toils and pains have gained
 A place in heaven." Thus mighty Indra spoke.
 Replied the king: "Indra! I will not leave
 My kinsmen. By his kinsmen's help a king
 His kingdom rules; by them he offers up
 The kingly sacrifice, and for himself
 Lays up a store of meritorious deeds.
 So have my kinsmen too enabled me
 To work whate'er I may of righteousness.
 My actions virtuous, my granted prayers,
 Truly I owe to them, for by their aid
 Have these been possible. May the reward
 Thou grantest me, I pray, be shared with them.
 My kinsmen, though I should ascend to heaven,
 I will not leave." "So be it!" Indra said;
 "So be it!" said the Brâhman; Dharma, too,
 Gave his assent; and then, in countless hosts,
 Appeared the heavenly chariots. Indra said:
 "Men of Ayodhya, ascend to heaven."
 The saintly Brâhman, having heard with joy
 The words of Indra, poured the sacred oil
 Upon the prince, and with the perfect ones,
 The sages, and the gods, anointed him
 "Son of the mighty king." Then all the throng--
 The king, his wife, his son, his followers--
 Filled with rejoicing and delight, ascend
 To heaven, surrounding, as they go, the king
 Borne in his chariot. He, too, filled with joy--
 The mighty father, who eternal bliss
 Both for his people and himself had gained,
 Once more in form and mien a king--reposed,
 Resting from all his toils, his faithful friends
 Surrounding him with a protecting wall.
 And Indra spoke and said: "Upon this earth
 Great Hariŝchandra's equal has not been
 Nor shall be. Whosoe'er may hear his life,
 His toils, his sorrows, and in sympathy
 For him lament, transcendant happiness
 Shall he attain, and all his heart's desire

Shall be accomplished. Is his prayer a wife,
Or son, or kingdom, he shall gain them all,
E'en heaven itself. And he who imitates
The truth, and steadfastness, of that great king,
Like him shall enter everlasting rest.