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**Vikram and the Vampire; Classic
Hindu Tales of Adventure, Magic,
and Romance**

Richard Francis, Sir Burton

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VIKRAM AND THE VAMPIRE

By
Sir Richard F. Burton

Classic Hindu Tales of Adventure, Magic, and Romance

Edited
by
his Wife Isabel Burton

"Les fables, loin de grandir les hommes, la Nature et Dieu, rapetissent tout." Lamartine (Milton) "One who had eyes saw it; the blind will not understand it. A poet, who is a boy, he has perceived it; he who understands it will be his sire's sire." — Rig-Veda (I.164.16).

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PREFACE

The Baital-Pachisi, or Twenty-five Tales of a Baital is the history of a huge Bat, Vampire, or Evil Spirit which inhabited and animated dead bodies. It is an old, and thoroughly Hindu, Legend composed in Sanskrit, and is the germ which culminated in the Arabian Nights, and which inspired the "Golden Ass" of Apuleius, Boccaccio's "Decamerone," the "Pentamerone," and all that class of facetious fictitious literature.

The story turns chiefly on a great king named Vikram, the King Arthur of the East, who in pursuance of his promise to a Jogi or Magician, brings to him the Baital (Vampire), who is hanging on a tree. The difficulties King Vikram and his son have in bringing the Vampire into the presence of the Jogi are truly laughable; and on this thread is strung a series of Hindu fairy stories, which contain much interesting information on Indian customs and manners. It also alludes to that state, which induces Hindu devotees to allow themselves to be buried alive, and to appear dead for weeks or months, and then to return to life again; a curious state of mesmeric catalepsy, into which they work themselves by concentrating the mind and abstaining from food—a specimen of which I have given a practical illustration in the Life of Sir Richard Burton.

The following translation is rendered peculiarly; valuable and interesting by Sir Richard Burton's intimate knowledge of the language. To all who understand the ways of the East, it is as witty, and as full of what is popularly called "chaff" as it is possible to be. There is not a dull page in it, and it will especially please those who delight in the weird and supernatural, the grotesque, and the wild life.

My husband only gives eleven of the best tales, as it was thought the translation would prove more interesting in its abbreviated form.

ISABEL BURTON.

August 18th, 1893.

PREFACE TO THE FIRST (1870) EDITION.

"THE genius of Eastern nations," says an established and respectable authority, "was, from the earliest times, much turned towards invention and the love of fiction. The Indians, the Persians, and the Arabians, were all famous for their fables. Amongst the ancient Greeks we hear of the Ionian and Milesian tales, but they have now perished, and, from every account we hear of them, appear to have been loose and indelicate." Similarly, the classical dictionaries define "Milesiae fabulae" to be "licentious themes," "stories of an amatory or mirthful nature," or "ludicrous and indecent plays." M. Deriege seems indeed to confound them with the "Moeurs du Temps" illustrated with artistic gouaches, when he says, "une de ces fables milesiennes, rehaussees de peintures, que la corruption romaine recherchait alors avec une folle ardeur."

My friend, Mr. Richard Charnock, F.A.S.L., more correctly defines Milesian fables to have been originally "certain tales or novels, composed by Aristides of Miletus "; gay in matter and graceful in manner. "They were translated into Latin by the historian Sisenna, the friend of Atticus, and they had a great success at Rome. Plutarch, in his life of Crassus, tells us that after the defeat of Carhes (Carrhae?) some Milesiacs were found in the baggage of the Roman prisoners. The Greek text; and the Latin translation have long been lost. The only surviving fable is the tale of Cupid and Psyche,[1] which Apuleius calls 'Milesius sermo,' and it makes us deeply regret the disappearance of the others." Besides this there are the remains of Apollodorus and Conon, and a few traces to be found in Pausanias, Atheneaus, and the scholiasts.

I do not, therefore, agree with Blair, with the dictionaries, or with M. Deriege. Miletus, the great maritime city of Asiatic Ionia, was of old the meeting-place of the East and the West. Here the Phoenician trader from the Baltic would meet the Hindu wandering to Intra, from Extra, Ganges; and the Hyperborean would step on shore side by side with the Nubian and the Aethiop. Here was produced and published for the use of the then civilized world, the genuine Oriental apologue, myth and tale combined, which, by amusing narrative and romantic adventure, insinuates a lesson in morals or

in humanity, of which we often in our days must fail to perceive the drift. The book of Apuleius, before quoted, is subject to as many discoveries of recondite meaning as is Rabelais. As regards the licentiousness of the Milesian fables, this sign of semi-civilization is still inherent in most Eastern books of the description which we call "light literature," and the ancestral tale-teller never collects a larger purse of coppers than when he relates the worst of his "aurei." But this looseness, resulting from the separation of the sexes, is accidental, not necessary. The following collection will show that it can be dispensed with, and that there is such a thing as comparative purity in Hindu literature. The author, indeed, almost always takes the trouble to marry his hero and his heroine, and if he cannot find a priest, he generally adopts an exceedingly left-hand and Caledonian but legal rite called "gandharbavivaha.[2]"

The work of Apuleius, as ample internal evidence shows, is borrowed from the East. The groundwork of the tale is the metamorphosis of Lucius of Corinth into an ass, and the strange accidents which precede his recovering the human form.

Another old Hindu story-book relates, in the popular fairy-book style, the wondrous adventures of the hero and demigod, the great Gandharba-Sena. That son of Indra, who was also the father of Vikramajit, the subject of this and another collection, offended the ruler of the firmament by his fondness for a certain nymph, and was doomed to wander over earth under the form of a donkey. Through the interposition of the gods, however, he was permitted to become a man during the hours of darkness, thus comparing with the English legend—

Amundeville is lord by day, But the monk is lord by night.

Whilst labouring under this curse, Gandharba-Sena persuaded the King of Dhara to give him a daughter in marriage, but it unfortunately so happened that at the wedding hour he was unable to show himself in any but asinine shape. After bathing, however, he proceeded to the assembly, and, hearing songs and music, he resolved to give them a specimen of his voice.

The guests were filled with sorrow that so beautiful a virgin should be married to a donkey. They were afraid to express their feelings to the king, but they could not refrain from smiling, covering their mouths with their garments. At length some one interrupted the general silence and said:

"O king, is this the son of Indra? You have found a fine bridegroom; you are indeed happy; don't delay the marriage; delay is improper in doing good; we never saw so glorious a wedding! It is true that we once heard of a camel being married to a jenny-ass; when the ass, looking up to the camel, said, 'Bless me, what a bridegroom!' and the camel, hearing the voice of the ass, exclaimed, 'Bless me, what a musical voice!' In that wedding, however, the bride and the bridegroom were equal; but in this marriage, that such a bride should have such a bridegroom is truly wonderful."

Other Brahmans then present said:

"O king, at the marriage hour, in sign of joy the sacred shell is blown, but thou hast no need of that" (alluding to the donkey's braying).

The women all cried out:

"O my mother![3] what is this? at the time of marriage to have an ass! What a miserable thing! What! will he give that angelic girl in wedlock to a donkey?"

At length Gandharba-Sena, addressing the king in Sanskrit, urged him to perform his promise. He reminded his future father-in-law that there is no act more meritorious than speaking truth; that the mortal frame is a mere dress, and that wise men never estimate the value of a person by his clothes. He added that he was in that shape from the curse of his sire, and that during the night he had the body of a man. Of his being the son of Indra there could be no doubt.

Hearing the donkey thus speak Sanskrit, for it was never known that an ass could discourse in that classical tongue, the minds of the people were changed, and they confessed that, although he had an asinine form he was unquestionably the son of Indra. The king, therefore, gave him his daughter in marriage.[4] The metamorphosis brings with it many misfortunes and strange occurrences, and it

lasts till Fate in the author's hand restores the hero to his former shape and honours.

Gandharba-Sena is a quasi-historical personage, who lived in the century preceding the Christian era. The story had, therefore, ample time to reach the ears of the learned African Apuleius, who was born A.D. 130.

The Baital-Pachisi, or Twenty-five (tales of a) Baital[5]—a Vampire or evil spirit which animates dead bodies—is an old and thoroughly Hindu repertory. It is the rude beginning of that fictitious history which ripened to the Arabian Nights' Entertainments, and which, fostered by the genius of Boccaccio, produced the romance of the chivalrous days, and its last development, the novel—that prose-epic of modern Europe.

Composed in Sanskrit, "the language of the gods," alias the Latin of India, it has been translated into all the Prakrit or vernacular and modern dialects of the great peninsula. The reason why it has not found favour with the Moslems is doubtless the highly polytheistic spirit which pervades it; moreover, the Faithful had already a specimen of that style of composition. This was the Hitopadesa, or Advice of a Friend, which, as a line in its introduction informs us, was borrowed from an older book, the Panchatantra, or Five Chapters. It is a collection of apologues recited by a learned Brahman, Vishnu Sharma by name, for the edification of his pupils, the sons of an Indian Raja. They have been adapted to or translated into a number of languages, notably into Pehlvi and Persian, Syriac and Turkish, Greek and Latin, Hebrew and Arabic. And as the Fables of Pilpay,[6] are generally known, by name at least, to European literateurs.. Voltaire remarks,[7] "Quand on fait reflexion que presque toute la terre a ete infatuee de pareils comes, et qu'ils ont fait l'education du genre humain, on trouve les fables de Pilpay, Lokman, d'Esopo bien raisonnables." These tales, detached, but strung together by artificial means—pearls with a thread drawn through them—are manifest precursors of the Decamerone, or Ten Days. A modern Italian critic describes the now classical fiction as a collection of one hundred of those novels which Boccaccio is believed to have read out at the court of Queen Joanna of Naples, and which later in life were by him assorted together by a most simple and

ingenious contrivance. But the great Florentine invented neither his stories nor his "plot," if we may so call it. He wrote in the middle of the fourteenth century (1344-8) when the West had borrowed many things from the East, rhymes[8] and romance, lutes and drums, alchemy and knight-errantry. Many of the "Novelle" are, as Orientalists well know, to this day sung and recited almost textually by the wandering tale-tellers, bards, and rhapsodists of Persia and Central Asia.

The great kshatriya,(soldier) king Vikramaditya,[9] or Vikramarka, meaning the "Sun of Heroism," plays in India the part of King Arthur, and of Harun al-Rashid further West. He is a semi-historical personage. The son of Gandharba-Sena the donkey and the daughter of the King of Dhara, he was promised by his father the strength of a thousand male elephants. When his sire died, his grandfather, the deity Indra, resolved that the babe should not be born, upon which his mother stabbed herself. But the tragic event duly happening during the ninth month, Vikram came into the world by himself, and was carried to Indra, who pitied and adopted him, and gave him a good education.

The circumstances of his accession to the throne, as will presently appear, are differently told. Once, however, made King of Malwa, the modern Malwa, a province of Western Upper India, he so distinguished himself that the Hindu fabulists, with their usual brave kind of speaking, have made him "bring the whole earth under the shadow of one umbrella."

The last ruler of the race of Mayura, which reigned 318 years, was Raja-pal. He reigned 25 years, but giving himself up to effeminacy, his country was invaded by Shakaditya, a king from the highlands of Kumaon. Vikramaditya, in the fourteenth year of his reign, pretended to espouse the cause of Raja-pal, attacked and destroyed Shakaditya, and ascended the throne of Delhi. His capital was Avanti, or Ujjayani, the modern Ujjain. It was 13 kos (26 miles) long by 18 miles wide, an area of 468 square miles, but a trifle in Indian History. He obtained the title of Shakari, "foe of the Shakas," the Sacae or Scythians, by his victories over that redoubtable race. In the Kali Yug, or Iron Age, he stands highest amongst the Hindu kings as the patron of learning. Nine persons under his patronage, popu-

larly known as the "Nine Gems of Science," hold in India the honourable position of the Seven Wise Men of Greece.

These learned persons wrote works in the eighteen original dialects from which, say the Hindus, all the languages of the earth have been derived.[10] Dhanwantari enlightened the world upon the subjects of medicine and of incantations. Kshapanaka treated the primary elements. Amara-Singha compiled a Sanskrit dictionary and a philosophical treatise. Shankubetalabhata composed comments, and Ghatakarpata a poetical work of no great merit. The books of Mihira are not mentioned. Varaha produced two works on astrology and one on arithmetic. And Bararuchi introduced certain improvements in grammar, commented upon the incantations, and wrote a poem in praise of King Madhava.

But the most celebrated of all the patronized ones was Kalidasa. His two dramas, Sakuntala,[11] and Vikram and Urvashi,[12] have descended to our day; besides which he produced a poem on the seasons, a work on astronomy, a poetical history of the gods, and many other books.[13]

Vikramaditya established the Sambat era, dating from A.C. 56. After a long, happy, and glorious reign, he lost his life in a war with Shalivahana, King of Pratisthana. That monarch also left behind him an era called the "Shaka," beginning with A.D. 78. It is employed, even now, by the Hindus in recording their births, marriages, and similar occasions.

King Vikramaditya was succeeded by his infant son Vikrama-Sena, and father and son reigned over a period of 93 years. At last the latter was supplanted by a devotee named Samudra-pala, who entered into his body by miraculous means. The usurper reigned 24 years and 2 months, and the throne of Delhi continued in the hands of his sixteen successors, who reigned 641 years and 3 months. Vikrama-pala, the last, was slain in battle by Tilaka-chandra, King of Vaharannah[14].

It is not pretended that the words of these Hindu tales are preserved to the letter. The question about the metamorphosis of cats into tigers, for instance, proceeded from a Gem of Learning in a university much nearer home than Gaur. Similarly the learned and still living Mgr. Gaume (*Traite du Saint-Esprit*, p. 81) joins Cam-

erarius in the belief that serpents bite women rather than men. And he quotes (p. 192) Cornelius a Lapide, who informs us that the leopard is the produce of a lioness with a hyena or a bard..

The merit of the old stories lies in their suggestiveness and in their general applicability. I have ventured to remedy the conciseness of their language, and to clothe the skeleton with flesh and blood.

To My Uncle, ROBERT BAGSHAW, OF DOVERCOURT,
These Tales, That Will Remind Him Of A Land Which He
Knows So Well, Are Affectionately Inscribed.

