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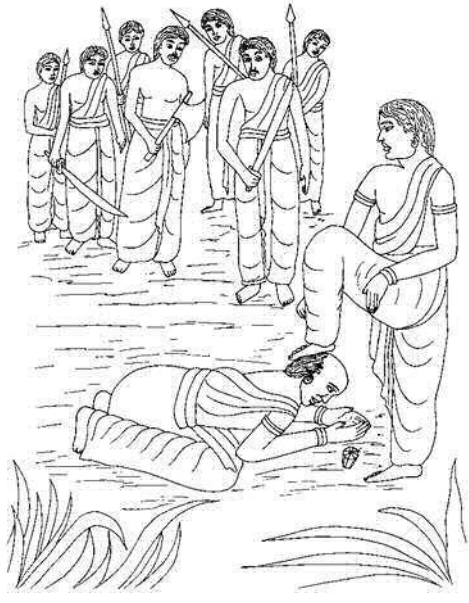
Mahosadha's Incomparable Ingenuity
Mahā-Ummagga Jātaka



It was while staying at Jetavana that the Buddha told this story about the Perfection of Wisdom.

One day, in the Hall of Truth, bhikkhus were talking about the Buddha's great wisdom. "Bhikkhus, the Buddha's wisdom is vast, ready, swift, and sharp. He has crushed heretical doctrines and converted the brahmin Kutadanta, the ascetic Sabhiya, the murderer Angulimāla, the yakkha Ālavaka, Sakka, Baka-Brahmā, and many others. He has ordained a vast multitude in his Sangha and has established them on the paths.

When the Buddha heard what they were discussing, he said, "Not now only am I wise. Long ago, even before my knowledge was completely mature, I was full of wisdom." Then he told this story of the past.

Long, long ago, when Vedeha was reigning in Mithilā, he had four advisors, named Senaka, Pukkusa, Kavinda, and Devinda.

One morning, just before sunrise, the king had a vivid dream. He saw four columns of fire, one in each corner of the royal courtyard. While these columns were blazing, each as high as the palace wall, a

tiny flame arose in the middle of the court. At first, it was only about the size of a firefly, but it soon grew much taller than the other four columns. It continued growing until it reached the realm of the devas and illuminated the entire earth so that even a tiny mustard seed lying on the ground could be clearly seen. A huge crowd of both humans and devas passed through the fire as they worshiped with garlands and incense, but not a single hair on any head was singed.

The king awoke in terror and sat mulling over the meaning of his dream, waiting for the dawn.

When the four advisors came into the royal chamber, they asked the king whether he had spent a comfortable night.

"How could I sleep well when I had a dreadful dream?"

After the king had described what he had seen, Senaka replied, "Don't worry, Your Majesty. It is an auspicious dream. It means that you will prosper! Your Majesty, a fifth sage will be born who will surpass the four of us. We are like the four columns of fire, but, in the midst of us, there will arise one who will be unparalleled and will fill a post unequaled in the realms of both devas and men."

At each of the four gates of Mithilā there was a market town. At the moment the king was having his dream, the Bodhisatta descended from Tāvatimsa and was conceived in the womb of Sumanadevī, the wife of a wealthy merchant named Sirivaddhaka, who lived in the eastern town. At the same time, one thousand other devas left Tāvatimsa and were conceived by wives of wealthy merchants in that same town.

Just before the Bodhisatta's birth, in order to make this important event known to the world, Sakka placed a medicinal herb in the baby's hand. As the baby emerged from her womb, Sumanadevī did not feel the slightest pain. His birth was as easy as pouring water from a ceremonial water pot. The new-born baby was the color of gold. As soon Sumanadevī saw him, she asked, "Dear baby, what do you have in your hand?"

"It is a medicinal herb, Mother," he replied as he placed it in her hand. "Please give it to anyone who is afflicted with a sickness."

Sumanadevī immediately told her husband about this. They were both overjoyed at the auspiciousness of the child being born holding the herb and being able to speak. It so happened that, for seven years, Sirivaddhaka had been suffering from a terrible headache. "Medicine given by a being of such incredible merit must possess great efficacy!" he thought. He ground the herb in a mortar and mixed it with water to

make a paste. No sooner had he smeared a little of the paste on his forehead than his headache, which has been throbbing incessantly for seven years, disappeared like water running off a lotus leaf. "It's a miracle!" he exclaimed, overjoyed to be, at last, free of pain. The news that Sirivaddhaka's baby had been born with the miraculous herb quickly spread, and many sick people crowded around, begging for some of the medicine.

Sirivaddhaka gave a little of the herb paste to everyone who came. The medicine cured every disease and every affliction as quickly, as easily, and as thoroughly as it had cured Sirivaddhaka's headache. Happy patients went away proclaiming the marvelous virtues of the medicine.

Rather than naming the child after any of his relatives or ancestors, Sirivaddhaka chose to give him the name Osadha, which means "medicine."

Sirivaddhaka also surmised that a son of such great merit would not have been born alone. He made inquiries throughout the town and learned about the one thousand other boys who had been born at the same time. To each boy he sent clothes and a nurse, resolving that these boys would be Osadha's companions. As they grew up, they all played together. Even as a young boy, Osadha was as handsome as a golden statue.

While the children were playing, elephants and other animals sometimes passed by and disturbed their games. At other times, rain or severe heat spoiled their fun.

One day, when the boys were seven years old, there was a sudden downpour, and the boys all ran to a nearby house for shelter. In their rush, they tripped over one another and bruised their knees and elbows. "We need a proper place for play," Osadha said to his companions. "Let's build a hall here, where animals won't bother us and where we can enjoy ourselves even when it's windy, hot, or rainy. Each one of us should bring one coin."

Osadha collected the one thousand coins and hired a carpenter. The young boy told the carpenter that he wanted a hall built on that spot. The carpenter leveled the ground and cut the posts. Then he admitted that he did not really understand what Osadha was describing. "If you don't know more than this," Osadha chided him, "how can you build a hall for us?" Osadha drew the plans for the hall, and showed the carpenter how to measure the area for the foundation. "Can you do the rest of the work on your own?" he asked the carpenter.

"I'm afraid not, sir," the carpenter replied.

"Will you be able to follow my instructions?" Osadha asked.

"I will indeed, sir."

Osadha continued supervising the work until it was finished. He had to show the carpenter everything that needed to be done, but the carpenter was able to follow the boy's directions perfectly, and the hall, when it was finished, was a marvel.

There were separate apartments for travelers, the homeless and destitute, ascetics, and foreign merchants. Each apartment had an entrance from the outside. The hall also included a gymnasium for sports activities, a court of justice, and a hall for religious gatherings. When the construction work was completed, Osadha summoned painters and ordered them to decorate all the walls as though it were a heavenly palace.

On one side of this magnificent hall, he laid out a garden as beautiful as Nandana in Tāvatimsa. The tank in the center was surrounded by flowering trees. There were steps for bathers, and the water was covered with lotuses. Nearby was an alms-hall, where food was distributed to mendicants.

News of this great hall built by such a young boy spread throughout the kingdom, and everyone wanted to see the remarkable structure. Every day crowds of people thronged the hall. Sometimes, Osadha himself, whom people now called Mahosadha, "Great Osadha," sat in the Hall of Justice to listen to petitions which citizens brought, seeking his judgment.

About this time, King Vedeha recalled the prediction that a sage would be born who would surpass his four advisors in wisdom. Figuring that the boy would have to be about seven years old, the king wondered where he was. He sent out four servants, one by each of the city gates, to search for the boy.

The servants returned from the north, the south, and the west with no information at all. The servant who went out by the eastern gate, however, saw the great hall and was sure that only a wise man could have built it. When he asked the townspeople who the architect was, they told him that it had been designed and built by the young Mahosadha, son of the merchant Sirivaddhaka.

When the servant heard that Mahosadha was only seven years old, he thought, "This fulfils the king's dream!" He immediately sent a messenger to inform the king of what he had found and to ask whether

he should escort Mahosadha to the palace.

The king was delighted at this news. He immediately summoned Senaka, gave him the servant's account, and asked whether he should send for the young sage.

Being jealous of his position, Senaka brushed off the suggestion. "Your Majesty," he replied, "a person is not to be called a sage merely because he has built one hall! Anyone can do that! It's a trifling accomplishment!"

The king wondered why Senaka objected so strongly to sending for the boy, but he remained silent. He sent a message to the servant, however, instructing him to stay in the town, to observe the youth, and to keep the palace informed.

It was not long before the servant witnessed an example of Mahosadha's wisdom.

One day, as Mahosadha and his companions were entering the great hall to play, they saw a hawk swoop down and snatch a piece of meat from a butcher's block. Some of the boys ran after the bird and began throwing stones, trying to make it drop the meat. To elude the stones, the hawk zigzagged in different directions, and the boys tried to follow it, but they ended up getting dizzy and tripping over each other. Soon, they were exhausted and gave up.

"I can make him drop it!" Mahosadha announced. The other boys begged him to do it.

Mahosadha looked up and gauged where the hawk was and which way it was flying. Then, with the swiftness of the wind, he ran until he stood in its shadow. He clapped his hands and shouted as loud as he could. His cry was so piercing that the hawk felt as though it had been struck with an arrow. Terrified, it dropped the piece of meat. Mahosadha saw the shadow of the meat and caught it before it touched the ground. Not only the boys, but a great crowd of townspeople who had stopped to watch, cheered and clapped their hands.

The servant reported this incident to the king, who, again, asked Senaka whether he should summon Mahosadha to the palace.

"As soon as this young sage appears," Senaka thought, "I will lose my glory. The king will forget my very existence! I must not let him come here!" Aloud he said, "Making a hawk drop a piece of meat is really a minor matter, Your Majesty. Just for that, he is not a sage!"

Again, the king wondered why Senaka objected so strongly, but he still remained silent. He told the servant to continue watching and to keep the palace informed.

One day, a man, who lived in a small village near the eastern town, bought some cattle from another village and took them home. The next day, he took the cattle to a field to graze. He was so tired that he soon fell asleep under a tree. While he was dozing, a thief began leading the cattle away. The man suddenly woke up, and noticed that his cattle were gone. He hurried down the path and saw the thief. "Stop!" he shouted. "Where are you taking my cattle?"

"These are my cattle," the thief retorted, "and I am taking them where I want."

The argument soon attracted a large crowd, who followed the two men.

When Mahosadha heard the shouting, he sent for the two men. As soon as he saw them, he could tell from their behavior which was the thief and which was the real owner. He knew, however, that he had to prove the case, so he asked them what they were quarreling about.

The owner said, "I bought these cattle yesterday from a farmer in the next village and took them home. Today, I brought them to graze in a field near here. This thief noticed that I was not watching and drove them off. I ran after him and finally caught up with him, but he would not give me back my cattle. The villagers all know that I bought these cattle."

The thief said, "None of that is true. These cattle were born on my farm, and I have reared them there."

Mahosadha told them that he could decide the case fairly and asked whether they would accept his decision. The two men both agreed.

First, he asked the thief what he gave the cattle to eat and drink.

"I gave them sesame flour and kidney beans to eat," he replied, "and rice gruel to drink."

Then he asked the real owner the same question.

"My Lord," the owner replied, "where would a poor man like me get rice gruel, sesame flour, and kidney beans for my cattle? They ate nothing but grass, and they drank from the stream."

Mahosadha ordered someone to bring panic seeds, which were ground in a mortar, mixed with water, and given to the cattle. When the cattle vomited, it was only grass they threw up. Mahosadha let everyone see this and asked the thief how he could explain it. The thief confessed his crime and apologized to the owner.

Mahosadha told him never to do such a thing again and established him in the five precepts.

The servant reported this incident to the king and asked whether he should escort Mahosadha to the palace.

The king again summoned Senaka and asked for his advice.

"That was a simple case of cattle ownership, Your Majesty," Senaka replied. "Anybody could have decided it. Let us wait a little longer."

The king still remained silent and told the servant to continue watching. The servant observed several more remarkable instances of Mahosadha's wise judgment. After each one, he reported to the king, but each time Senaka objected, and the king told the servant to continue watching.

One day, a poor woman went to the tank beside the great hall to take a bath. She was wearing a necklace she had made herself. This was simply several strands of different-colored thread twisted together, but she liked it very much and wore it often. Before stepping into the water, she carefully removed the necklace and laid it on her clothes. While she was bathing, a young woman picked up the necklace and said, "Mother, this is a beautiful necklace. How much did it cost to make? I would like to make one like it for myself. May I try it on to check the size?"

"Of course, my dear," replied the poor woman from the water.

The young woman tied the necklace around her neck and ran off. The poor woman hurried out of the water, threw on her clothes, and ran after her. Grabbing the young woman by her sari, she cried, "Give me back my necklace!"

"What are you talking about?" protested the other. "I haven't taken anything of yours. This is my necklace!"

"No, it isn't!" cried the poor woman. "I made that necklace myself!" The two women continued arguing as a large crowd gathered around them.

Mahosadha was playing with his friends nearby and asked what the noise was. Some passers-by told him, and he sent for the two women. As soon as he saw them, he could tell which was the rightful owner, but again, he needed proof. He asked the women whether they would abide by his judgment. They agreed, and he asked the young woman, "What scent do you use for this necklace?"

"I always use sabbasamharaka."[1]

He asked the older woman the same question, and she replied, "How could a poor woman like me get sabbasamharaka? I always scent it

1 An expensive mixture of many kinds of incense.

with cheap perfume made of piyangu flowers."

Mahosadha asked for a bowl of water and put the necklace in it. Then he sent for a perfume-seller and asked him to determine the scent of the water. The perfume-seller smelled the water and immediately identified it as piyangu.

Mahosadha confronted the young woman, she confessed her crime, and the crowd shouted their approval. Mahosadha's wisdom became even more widely known.

A little later, a woman who watched cotton fields was returning home with some fine cotton thread which she herself had spun and wound into a perfectly round ball. As she was passing the great hall, she decided to bathe in the tank. She placed the cotton ball on her clothes and stepped into the water. Another woman picked up the ball and exclaimed, "What a lovely ball of thread! Did you make it yourself?" Before the first woman could answer, the second woman walked away with the ball. The first woman scrambled out of the water, threw on her clothes, and rushed after the thief. An argument ensued, and the two women were taken before Mahosadha.

Mahosadha asked the thief, "When you made the ball, what did you put inside?"

"A cotton seed," she replied.

To the same question, the other woman replied, "A timbaru seed."

When the ball of cotton was unwound, the timbaru seed was revealed, and Mahosadha made the thief admit her guilt. Again, the crowd shouted their approval.

Another day, a woman took her infant son to the tank to bathe. After she had washed him, she laid him on her clothes and went back to take her own bath. Just then, a yakkhinī, disguised as a woman, noticed the child and looked at him hungrily. She picked him up and said, "Friend, this is a fine child. May I play with him?" The mother agreed, and the yakkhinī began playing with the baby. After a few minutes, she stood up and ran off with him.

The mother scrambled out of the tank, dressed hurriedly, and raced after them. The mother grabbed the other woman and shouted, "Where are you taking my baby?"

"What do you mean, your baby?" the yakkhinī replied. "This is my child, and I am taking him home!" As they continued fighting, they passed by the door of the hall, and Mahosadha asked what the problem was.

They told him that they both claimed the baby, and they agreed to abide by his decision. Although Mahosadha immediately recognized that one of the women was a yakkhinī, he wanted her to reveal herself. He drew a line between the two women and placed the child on it. He directed the women to take hold of the baby—one by the hands and the other by the feet.

"Now pull!" he said. "The baby surely belongs to the one who can pull it over the line."

The two began pulling, and the frightened baby screamed in pain.

Immediately, the mother released her child and began weeping herself.

"Whose heart is tender towards a child," Mahosadha asked the crowd, "a mother's or a stranger's?"

"Of course, a mother's," everyone replied.

"Who showed greater compassion, the one who kept pulling the baby or the one who let go?" he asked.

"The one who let go!" the crowd shouted.

"Who is the mother?" he asked.

"The one who let go!" the crowd shouted again.

"Do you know who the one who stole the baby really is?" he asked.

"We have no idea," everyone replied.

"She is a yakkhinī disguised as a woman."

"How do you know?" the crowd asked.

"I recognized her at once because of her unblinking eyes and lack of shadow, and she just proved herself by her heartlessness. She wouldn't care even if the baby died, for her intention was to eat him!" The crowd gasped. Mahosadha turned to the yakkhinī and said, "You are a blind fool! In the past you committed evil deeds and were reborn as a yakkhinī as a result. Now you are continuing your wickedness!" Overcome with shame, the yakkhinī admitted her guilt and asked for forgiveness. Mahosadha showed her great compassion and established her in the five precepts.

The grateful mother blessed Mahosadha, wished him long life, and went away hugging and caressing her baby.

Near the eastern town, there was a man nicknamed Golakāla, or "dark ball," because his skin was very dark and he was very short. Golakāla had worked for a family and had received no wages, but, after seven years, they had given him a wife named Dīghatālā.

After they had been married some time, Golakāla said, "Wife, prepare some snacks and some curries. We're going to visit your parents."

"What use are parents to me now?" she protested.

Golakāla insisted, however, and she finally agreed. Taking provisions, some freshly baked cakes, and a present, they set out on the journey to her hometown.

On the way, they came to a swift-flowing stream. They were both afraid of the water and dared not try to cross it. They stood on the bank and wondered how to get to the other side.

At that moment, a tall man named Dīghapitthi approached along the same path they had just traveled. "Excuse me, sir," Golakāla said. "Do you know whether this steam is deep or shallow?"

Seeing that the couple were already afraid, Dīghapitthi answered maliciously, "Oh, my goodness! This stream is very deep and full of crocodiles!"

"How will you get across?" Golakāla and Dīghatālā asked.

"I have struck up a friendship with the crocodiles in the stream," he replied. "They do not hurt me."

"Will you please take us with you?" they begged, offering him some of their food. Dīghapitthi agreed to carry them across and accepted the offer of a meal. After he had finished eating, he asked which he should carry first.

"Take your sister first and then come back for me," suggested Golakāla.

Dīghapitthi hoisted Dīghatālā onto his shoulders, picked up all their bags and stepped into the water. As he waded across, he gradually crouched lower and lower to make it look as though the water were very deep.

"Oh, dear!" Golakāla thought, as he watched Dīghapitthi. "Look at how deep this stream is! I'm glad I didn't try to wade across! I never would have made it!"

When Dīghapitthi reached the middle of the stream, he said to Dīghatālā, "Lady, marry me, and I will give you fine clothes, servants, and every comfort. What can that poor black dwarf do for you? Leave him, and come with me!"

Dīghatālā was excited at the possibility of having such a tall, handsome, and strong man for a husband and, infatuated with the stranger, replied, "Sir, if you promise not to abandon me, I will gladly go with you."

Dīghapitthi continued walking in his bent posture to the other side of the stream. He carefully put Dīghatālā down and sat on the bank beside her. In full sight of Golakāla, the scheming man ate all the food.

Then he and Dīghatālā walked away, leaving Golakāla stranded on the other side.

Realizing that his wife was leaving him for the stranger, Golakāla ran back and forth in agitation. Several times he stepped into the water, but, each time, he anxiously drew back. At last, his anger overcame his fear, and he made a desperate leap into the river, not caring if he drowned. He quickly discovered how shallow the water was and hurried across.

"Wicked thief!" Golakāla shouted as he ran after the couple. "Where are you taking my wife?"

"Your wife?" Dīghapitthi shouted back. "This is my wife!" He grabbed Golakāla by the neck and threw him down.

Golakāla jumped up and caught hold of Dīghatālā's hand. "Stop!" he pleaded. "Where are you going? You are my wife! I worked seven years to get you! Why are you leaving me?"

They were still arguing when they arrived in the eastern town, and their shouting attracted a crowd of people. They were taken before Mahosadha, and he asked whether they would abide by his decision. All three of them agreed.

Mahosadha announced that he would interview each of them separately. He sent Golakāla and Dīghatālā into separate rooms. Then, in front of the assembly, he told Dīghapitthi to state his name and his wife's name. The scoundrel had failed to ask her, so he blurted out the first name that came into his head. Mahosadha next asked him about his parents, and he answered promptly. When Mahosadha asked about his wife's family, he, again, made up names.

Next, Mahosadha called Golakāla and sent Dīghapitthi back to the room where Golakāla had been waiting. In the same way, Mahosadha told Golakāla to state his own name, his wife's name, and the names of her parents. Golakāla confidently did so.

Finally, Mahosadha called Dīghatālā and sent Golakāla to the room where she had been waiting. He told Dīghatālā to state her name and the names of her parents, and she did so. When he asked what her husband's name was, she hesitated for a moment and gave a common name, hoping it was right. Then Mahosadha asked for her husband's parents' names, and she hesitated again before making up some names for them, too.

Mahosadha called the two men, and, with the three standing in front of the crowd, he asked, "Do Dīghatālā's answers agree with Dīghapitthi's or with Golakāla's?"

"With Golakāla's!" Everyone shouted in unison.

"Obviously, Golakāla is her rightful husband, and Dīghapitthi is an imposter! Is that true?" Mahosadha questioned Dīghapitthi and Dīghatālā. They admitted that it was true, and the crowd cheered the wise judgment.

In order to make even more people aware of Mahosadha's greatness, Sakka himself instigated another case. One day, as a man was driving his chariot past the tank, Sakka disguised himself as a laborer, grabbed the back of the chariot and followed behind.

The driver looked back and shouted, "What do you want?"

"I want to work for you," Sakka answered.

"All right, hold the reins," the driver agreed, as he climbed down to answer the call of nature.

Sakka quickly jumped into the chariot, whipped the horse, and drove away.

"Stop! Stop! Where are you taking my chariot?" shouted the driver as he raced after the thief.

"Your chariot?" Sakka shouted back at him. "This is my chariot!"

As they continued shouting and arguing, they arrived in front of the hall. As soon as Mahosadha saw them, he recognized Sakka, and he knew that the chariot belonged to the other man.

To prove the case, he asked another skillful driver to drive the chariot at full speed while the two disputants held on behind. "I'm sure that the real owner will hold on to the chariot longer," he told the two men.

After the horse took off, the owner ran a little way, but the speed was too great for him, and he was forced to let go. Even though the horse increased its speed, Sakka held on and kept on running with the chariot until it circled back to the place where it had started.

"Look!" Mahosadha said to the crowd. "This man ran a little way, but was forced to let go. The other kept on running, but he isn't even perspiring or panting. He is not at all exhausted. This is not human! In fact, this is not a man at all. This is Sakka! Is that true?" he asked the one dressed as a laborer.

"Yes, it is," the king of the gods admitted. "I am Sakka!"

"Why did you come here?" Mahosadha asked him.

"I have come to display your wisdom to the world!" Sakka replied. "Mahosadha, I wanted everyone to witness another wise judgment from such a wise boy!"

The king's servant went himself to the palace and reported that

Mahosadha could detect even Sakka in disguise. "Sire, why don't you recognize this boy's superiority?" the servant asked.

"What say you now, Senaka?" the king asked. "Shall we bring the sage here?"

"Your Majesty," Senaka replied, "it takes more than that sort of trick to make one a sage. Let me test him myself." Not wishing to go against his chief advisor, the king agreed.

Senaka cut a piece, about a span in length, from an acacia pole, and had both ends nicely smoothed so that they looked identical. He sent this piece to the eastern town with this message: "We understand that the people of the eastern town are very clever. Let them find out which end of this stick is the top and which is the root. If they fail, there will be a fine of one thousand coins."

The townspeople had no idea how to determine which end was which. They appealed to the headman, and he suggested that Mahosadha might know how to figure it out. They called him from the playground, showed him the stick, and explained the problem.

"Surely, the king does not expect the townspeople to solve this puzzle," he thought. "Undoubtedly, this has been sent as a test for me."

As soon as he had grasped the stick, he knew which was the top and which the root, but, to demonstrate the matter, he sent for a pot of water. He tied a string around the stick at the exact center between the two ends. He balanced the stick over the pot of water and lowered it to the surface. When it touched the water, one end of the stick sank a little more than the other.

"Which part of a tree is heavier," he asked the townspeople, "the root or the top?"

"The root," they replied.

"Do you see how this part sinks more?" he asked. "This is the root."

The headman sent the pole back to the king clearly indicating which end was the root.

The king was pleased and asked who had solved the puzzle.

"The wise Mahosadha, son of Sirivaddhaka," the messenger answered

"Well, Senaka, shall we send for him now?" the king asked.

"Let's give him another test," the insecure advisor replied.

Senaka sent two skulls to the eastern town, demanding that they be returned with identification as to which was a man's and which a woman's. In case of failure, the town would be fined one thousand coins. Again, the townspeople appealed to Mahosadha.

"This is very simple," he told them. "The sutures in a man's skull are straight, and in a woman's, crooked." He showed them that the sutures in the two skulls were different, thereby distinguishing one from the other. When the king received the skulls with this answer, he was again pleased and wanted to call for Mahosadha, but Senaka insisted on another test.

This time, he sent two snakes, a male and a female, demanding that the townspeople determine the sex of each. There was the usual penalty for failure. Mahosadha explained that this was very easy to do because the male snake's tail was thicker, while the female's head was longer. The king was pleased, but Senaka insisted on another test.

He demanded that the eastern town send the king a pure white bull with horns on its legs and a hump on its head and which sang with three notes, one short, one middling, and one long. There was the same penalty for failure. The puzzled townspeople again appealed to Mahosadha. The sage chuckled and said, "The king is asking for a rooster. The horns on its legs are the spurs; the hump on its head is his comb; and its early morning crow has three notes—long, middling, and short. Send the king a white cock, and he will be happy!" The king was pleased, but Senaka insisted on another test.

King Vedeha had inherited the exquisite Verocanamani which Sakka had given to King Kusa. This was an octagonal gem with a tiny hole for a string. Unfortunately, the old string had been broken off inside, and no one could remove it or put in a new one. Senaka sent this gem to the eastern town with an order for it to be restrung. There was the usual penalty for failure. The townspeople again appealed to Mahosadha. The sage asked for some honey, which he smeared around both sides of the hole in the gem. He twisted a wool thread, smeared one end with honey, and pushed that end a little way into the hole. Then he put the gem in a place where there were plenty of ants. As soon as the ants smelled the honey, they came out of their hole and swarmed all over the gem. After eating away the old thread, they took hold of the end of the new wool thread and pulled it all the way through the gem and out at the other end. The king was delighted to see the gem strung on its new thread and to hear how the task had been accomplished, but Senaka insisted on another test.

For the next test, the royal bull was given a rich diet for several months so that its belly swelled. Then it was rubbed with oil and covered with turmeric. Senaka sent the bull to the eastern town with the message

that the bull was pregnant and that the townspeople were to deliver the calf and return both animals to the palace. There was the same penalty for failure. The perplexed townspeople again appealed to Mahosadha. The sage told them to find a bold man who could go to the palace and confront the king. They found a man confident enough to do this, and Mahosadha told him what to do.

"Loosen your hair and go to the palace," the sage instructed him. "Stand in front of the palace gate, weeping and wailing, and tell the guards that you will speak to no one but the king. When you meet the king, he will ask you why you are crying. You must reply, 'Your Majesty, for the past seven days, my son has been in labor, but he cannot give birth. Help me! Tell me how I can deliver his baby!' The king will tell you that that is impossible because men do not bear children. Then you must say, 'If that is true, how can the people of the eastern town deliver a calf of your royal bull?'"

The man did exactly as he was told, and the king asked who had thought of the counter-question. When told that it was Mahosadha, he was very pleased, but Senaka insisted on another test.

Senaka demanded that the people of the eastern town deliver boiled rice to the palace. He stipulated that this rice must meet eight conditions. It was to be cooked (1) without rice, (2) without water, (3) without a pot, (4) without an oven, (5) without fire, and (6) without firewood; (7) it was to be delivered to the palace by neither a man nor a woman; and (8) it was not to be carried along a road. There was the usual penalty for failure. The townspeople again appealed to Mahosadha.

"This is again very simple," Mahosadha told them. "Use broken rice, which is not accepted as rice. Use snow, which is not water. Use an earthen bowl, which is not a pot. Make an enclosure of wood blocks, which is not an oven. Create a flame by rubbing two sticks together, rather than bringing fire. Use leaves and brush, instead of firewood. Have the rice delivered by a eunuch, who is neither man nor woman. Have the eunuch travel to the palace by a footpath, instead of the main road. This will meet all eight of the king's conditions."

The king was pleased, but Senaka insisted on another test.

Senaka ordered that the people of the eastern town replace the broken rope of the king's swing with a new rope of sand. There was the same penalty for failure. The townspeople again appealed to Mahosadha.

Mahosadha immediately realized that a counter-question was required. He summoned several clever speakers and told them what to

do. "Go to the palace," he instructed them, "and say to the king, 'Your Majesty, the people of the eastern town do not know whether the sand-rope is to be thick or thin. Please send them a bit of the old rope, no more than four finger lengths. With this sample, they will twist a rope of the same size.' The king will tell you that there is no sand-rope in the palace and that there never has been such a thing. Then you must reply, 'If Your Majesty has never seen a sand-rope, how can you expect the villagers to make one?'"

The men did exactly as they were instructed, and the king was very pleased, but Senaka insisted on another test.

Senaka informed the people of the eastern town that the king wanted to amuse himself in the water and ordered that they deliver a new tank complete with water lilies and lotuses to the palace. There was the usual penalty for failure.

Mahosadha realized that, again, a counter-question was required. Again, he summoned several men and told them what to do. "Go to a pond, and splash around until you are completely soaked and covered with mud. Then, with your hair and clothes still wet, go the palace, carrying ropes, sticks, and clods of earth. Tell the guards that you must speak with the king. When you see him, you must say, 'Your Majesty, we were bringing the tank to you, but, because she was so used to her life in the forest, she ran away when we got near the city. It seems that she was frightened by the crowds, tall buildings, and all the commotion. We tried to restrain her, but she broke the ropes and escaped. Please give us your old tank to use as a decoy to lure the new tank back to the capital.'"

The men did exactly as they were instructed, and the king broke up with laughter. Senaka insisted on another test.

Senaka ordered that the people of the eastern town deliver a new park to the king to replace his old one. Mahosadha suggested that they solve this problem in the same way they had done with the tank, and his strategy was again successful.

"Well, Senaka," the king asked his advisor, "shall we send for the sage now?"

"Your Majesty," Senaka replied, "there is more to being a sage than we have seen. The youth has not yet proved himself. We must wait."

The king was not pleased. "The sage Mahosadha has shown great wisdom since he was seven years old," he thought. "He has given ingenious solutions to all the puzzles, trials, and dilemmas he has faced.

I am very interested in him, but Senaka keeps stalling and won't let me summon him. What do I care about Senaka's opinion? I will bring him here myself!"

Accompanied by his attendants, the king set out from the palace on his royal horse and headed toward the eastern town. On the way, however, his horse stepped in a hole and broke its leg, and the king was forced to turn back.

Senaka asked him, "Sire, were you going to fetch Mahosadha from the eastern town yourself?"

"Yes, I was," replied the king.

"Your Majesty," Senaka chided him, "you act as if my advice has no importance. I begged you to wait, but you went off in a hurry, and your royal horse broke its leg. You should listen to me!"

The king had no answer to this.

Some time later, he again asked his advisor, "Shall we send for the sage now, Senaka?"

"All right, Your Majesty," Senaka replied. "If you insist, we'll summon him, but you must not go yourself. Send a messenger to the eastern town to say, 'Sage, as I was on my way to fetch you, my horse broke his leg. Send us an excellent horse followed by a better one.' Let us see how he solves this problem."

When Mahosadha received the message, he went to see his father and, after greeting him, said, "Father, the king wishes to see both you and me. You should go first with one thousand attendants. You must not go empty handed. Take a sandalwood casket, filled with fresh ghee as a gift for the king. When the king offers you a seat, sit in an appropriate place. I will come later, and the king will offer me a seat. When I look at you, that is your cue to stand up and offer me your seat. This will allow me to solve the king's riddle."

Sirivaddhaka prepared the gift, gathered his attendants, and went to the palace, where the king greeted him cordially. After he had presented the ghee, the king asked about his son, the wise Mahosadha.

"He's coming after me, Your Majesty," Sirivaddhaka replied.

The king, pleased to hear that, offered Sirivaddhaka a seat, and he sat in a suitable place.

Mahosadha, dressed in his finest robes and attended by his one thousand companions, had left the eastern town in a magnificent chariot just behind his father. On the way, he saw an ass in a ditch. He ordered some of his strong companions to muzzle the animal so that it would

make no noise, to put it in a huge bag, and to carry it to the palace on their shoulders.

As he passed through the city with his entourage, the citizens thronged the streets and cried out his praises: "This is the wise Mahosadha, son of the merchant Sirivaddhaka!" "He was born holding a miraculous herb!" "He can solve every puzzle he is given!"

As scheduled, he arrived shortly after his father, and the king summoned him immediately.

Mahosadha saluted the king and stood to one side. The king greeted him cordially and asked him to take a seat. Mahosadha looked at his father, and Sirivaddhaka immediately stood up and offered his seat to his son.

Many in the court, led by the king's four advisors, Senaka, Pukkusa, Kavinda, and Devinda, mockingly clapped their hands and laughed loudly. "This is the arrogant fool they call wise!" they sneered. "He made his father get up, and he is ready to sit there himself! He has no respect. How can he be called a sage at all?"

The king was crestfallen.

"Sire, why do you look so sad?" Mahosadha asked.

"My son," the king replied, "I am sad because, after having heard so much about you, I am now not happy to see you."

"Why is that?"

"I feel that my advisors are right. You show a definite lack of respect in making your father rise from his seat so that you could sit there yourself."

"Your Majesty," Mahosadha countered, "I believe that you told me to send an excellent horse followed by a better one. Is that correct?"

"Yes, it is," replied the king.

"Your Majesty, do you believe that the sire is always more worthy than the son?" Mahosadha asked.

"Of course!" the king replied quickly.

Mahosadha asked his companions to bring in the ass and to place it before the king. "Sire," he said, "how much is this ass worth?"

"If it is a serviceable beast," the king replied, "it is worth eight coins."

"Well, Your Majesty, if we breed this ass with a thoroughbred Sindh mare, how much will its mule offspring be worth?"

"Such a colt would be priceless!" the king replied.

"How can you say that, Your Majesty? Didn't you just say that the sire is always more worthy than the son? Now you say that the

mule is worth more than the ass. Is not the ass the sire of the mule? Your Majesty, if you believe that the sire is better than the son, take my father into your service. I believe that my father is an excellent man, and I fully respect him, but, if you can agree that I am wiser than he is, take me."

The king was delighted with this presentation, and everyone in the court, except, of course, the four jealous advisors, applauded Mahosadha's wisdom, waved their scarves, and shouted their praise. The four royal advisors simply looked abashed.

To show his approval, the king filled a golden vase with scented water, and, as he poured the water over Sirivaddhaka's hand, he declared, "Enjoy the eastern town as a royal gift!" The king also sent many precious necklaces, bracelets, rings, and earrings to Sumanadevī, Mahosadha's mother.

The king was awed by Mahosadha's wisdom, not only in this case, but in all the cases he had judged and the puzzles and riddles he had solved. He told Sirivaddhaka that he wanted to adopt the boy as his own son.

"Sire, my son is still very young," Sirivaddhaka protested. "As soon as he is old enough to leave home, I shall send him to you."

The king insisted so adamantly, however, that finally Sirivaddhaka relented. Mahosadha comforted his father and told him not to worry about him. Sirivaddhaka embraced his son and gave him some parting advice. Then he paid obeisance to the king and returned to the eastern town.

The king asked Mahosadha whether he would prefer to take his meals in the palace or outside. The boy replied that, since his entourage was large, it would be better for him to take his meals outside the palace. The king accepted that decision and gave him a suitable house and everything else he might need. The king also provided for the maintenance of Mahosadha's one thousand companions. From that time on, Mahosadha served the king as advisor.

One day, the king summoned Senaka and said, "Men have told me that there is a jewel in the lake near the southern gate. How can we get it out?"

"Surely, Sire," Senaka replied, "the best way would be to drain the water from the lake."

"Do what must be done!" the king instructed him. Senaka went with the men to investigate. They showed him the jewel, and he ordered

them to drain the lake. After the water had been drained, they searched the mud, but no jewel could be found. As soon as they refilled the lake, the jewel was again visible. Senaka ordered them to drain the lake once more, but still they could not find the jewel.

The king sent for Mahosadha and said, "There is a jewel in the lake near the southern gate. Senaka had the lake drained twice and searched the mud, but he could not find it. As soon as the lake was refilled, the jewel reappeared. Can you get it for me?"

"Of course, Your Majesty," Mahosadha replied. "That is not a hard task. I will certainly get it for you."

Pleased at this promise, the king led his great retinue to the lake to observe Mahosadha's wisdom in action.

Mahosadha stood on the shore and asked the men to show him the jewel. As soon as he saw it, he realized that they were seeing only a reflection. "There is no jewel in the lake!" he announced to the king.

"What do you mean?" asked the king. "We can all see it! It must be there!"

Mahosadha asked for a pail which he filled with water from the lake. He tilted the pail toward the king and said, "Look, Sire! Now the jewel appears to be in the pail. It is only the reflection visible both in the lake and in the pail." Pointing at a tall talipot palm tree standing beside the lake, he explained, "The jewel itself is wedged in the bottom of a crow's nest in that tree. Send a man up to the nest and have the jewel brought down."

A servant quickly climbed the tree and retrieved the jewel for the king. The crowd applauded and shouted their approval. "Senaka's men dug in the mud," they cried, mocking the advisor, "to find a gem in a tree! An advisor should be wise like Mahosadha!"

The king was so pleased that he gave Mahosadha the priceless string of pearls from his own neck. He also gave a string of pearls to each of Mahosadha's companions. The king also granted all of them the privilege of visiting the palace at any time.

Another day, as the king was going with Mahosadha to the park, a chameleon that lived in the arched gateway, seeing the king approach, hurried down and lay flat on the ground.

The king was puzzled and asked, "What is that chameleon doing, wise sir?"

"Paying its respects to you, Sire."

"If that is so, its service should not be unrewarded. Give it a gratuity."

"Sire, a tip is of no use to the chameleon, but it would appreciate something to eat."

"What do chameleons eat?"

"Meat, Sire."

"How much should we give?"

"A small coin worth a half a grain of gold would be ample, Sire."

"A half a grain of gold is hardly a royal gift!" exclaimed the king, and he ordered a servant to give the chameleon a piece of meat worth two and a half grains of gold everyday.

The servant began giving meat to the chameleon every day, and, every day, the chameleon descended from the archway and paid its respects to the king. This continued for some time, but, on the full-moon day, when no animals were butchered, the servant couldn't find any meat for the chameleon. Instead, he drilled a hole through a piece of gold weighing two and a half grains, strung it on a thread, and tied it around the chameleon's neck.

That afternoon, as the king was going to the park, the chameleon saw him approach, but, instead of descending to pay its respects to the king, it remained motionless on the archway.

"Wise sir," the king asked Mahosadha, "why doesn't the chameleon come down today as usual?"

Mahosadha saw the piece of gold on the chameleon's neck and realized immediately what had happened. "Today is a full-moon day, Sire. The servant, not finding any meat in the market, gave the chameleon a piece of gold worth two and a half grains. Now the chameleon has become proud and thinks itself your equal."

The king checked with the servant and learned that Mahosadha's speculations were correct. This made the king even happier with the sage, since it seemed that he understood even the thoughts of animals! As a reward, he gave Mahosadha the revenue from the four gates. Piqued by the chameleon's ingratitude, however, the king wanted to discontinue the ration of meat, but Mahosadha dissuaded him, saying that it was unworthy of the king to renege on his promise for such a slight offense.

At about the same time, a young man from Mithilā named Pinguttara finished his studies under a famous teacher in Takkasilā. As he was preparing to return to Mithilā, his teacher announced that his beautiful daughter had just come of age, and, according to family tradition, she was to be given in marriage to his senior student, who happened to be Pinguttara.

All his life, Pinguttara had been extremely unlucky, and he expected that he would always be so. On the other hand, the teacher's daughter had always been extremely lucky, and she expected that she would always be so. When Pinguttara saw his future wife, he was not in the least attracted to her, but, not wanting to offend his teacher, he hid his feelings and agreed to the marriage, which was performed with great ceremony.

On the wedding night, Pinguttara lay down on the lavishly decorated bed, but, as soon as his new wife lay down beside him, he began groaning, got up, and stretched out on the floor. When she got out of bed and lay down beside him, he immediately climbed back into bed. She got up and lay beside him again, but he retreated again to the floor. Of course, the reason for this was that good luck and bad luck make a poor match. Eventually, the woman tired of this game and stayed on the bed, leaving Pinguttara on the floor. They slept this way for the seven days of their honeymoon. After all the formalities had been concluded, Pinguttara bade farewell to his teacher and left with his wife for Mithilā.

The journey was miserable for both of them, and they exchanged not a word. Not far from Mithilā's city gate, Pinguttara noticed a fig-tree laden with fruit. Feeling hungry, he climbed the tree, sat in the branches, and began eating figs. His wife was also hungry, so she stepped to the foot of the tree and called out, "Throw down some fruit for me, too."

"What?" retorted Pinguttara, "don't you have hands and feet? If you want some of this luscious fruit, climb up and get it yourself!"

As soon as she was in the tree, Pinguttara climbed down and piled thorns and brambles all around the tree. "At last, I have gotten rid of that miserable creature!" he exclaimed and fled. Unable to get down safely, she remained sitting in the tree.

That evening, as the king was returning to the city on his royal elephant, after enjoying himself in his pleasure garden, he caught sight of the woman and immediately fell in love with her. He sent a courtier to ask if she had a husband.

"Yes," she answered, "my parents gave me to a man, but he has abandoned me."

When the king heard this, he exclaimed, "Treasure lost and found belongs to the king!"

The young woman was helped out of the tree, seated on an elephant, and conveyed to the palace, where she was consecrated as the king's

queen consort. Because she was found in a fig tree (*udumbara*), she was called Queen Udumbarā.

Some time later, the king ordered some of the men who lived near the city gate to repair the road to the pleasure garden. One of the men who was pressed into service was Pinguttara. One day, while the work was going on, King Vedeha and Queen Udumbarā passed by in the royal chariot. The men, covered with dirt and sweat and with their dhotis tucked up, were toiling in the hot sun. The queen recognized Pinguttara and smiled.

When the king saw her smile, he became intensely jealous and demanded to know why she was smiling.

"My Lord," she said, "that laborer over there, half-naked, covered with grime, and working like a slave, is my former husband. He is the one who made me climb the fig-tree, piled thorns around it, and abandoned me. When I recognized him, I could not help but smile at my great fortune and his wretched luck."

"I don't believe you!" the king shouted, drawing his sword. "You were smiling at someone else. I will kill you for being unfaithful to me!"

"Sire!" the queen cried in fear for her life. "It's the truth! Ask your advisors!"

Barely lowering his sword, the king asked Senaka whether he believed her.

"No, My Lord," Senaka replied. "I do not believe her story at all. Who would leave such a beautiful woman if he had had the good fortune of marrying her?"

The queen became even more frightened. "Please, My Lord!" she begged.

"What does Senaka know?" the king wondered, as he lowered his sword a little more. "I had better ask Mahosadha." Aloud he said, "Mahosadha, if a woman is both virtuous and fair, is it possible for a man to cast her aside? What do you think, sage? Can you believe the queen's story?"

"Your Majesty," Mahosadha replied, "it is possible, and I believe her story. Look at that man. He is certainly an unlucky wretch, whereas the queen is the most fortunate of women. I am sure that things happened exactly as she has said, for good luck and bad luck make a poor match."

His words completely quenched the king's anger, and his heart became calm. "Mahosadha, you are very wise!" the king exclaimed. "If you had not been here, I would have listened to that fool Senaka, and I would

have lost this precious woman. You have saved my queen!" He rewarded the sage with a gift of one thousand coins.

Filled with gratitude for Mahosadha's wisdom, the queen respectfully said to the king, "Sire, this sage has saved my life. Please allow me to treat him as my younger brother."

"Certainly, my queen! I gladly grant you this boon."

"Sire," the queen continued, "I would like to be able to share all delicacies with my brother. Please grant that I be free to send him sweets and fruit, unhindered, at any time."

"This boon also I gladly grant, my dear," the king replied. Thus, did the young Mahosadha become foster brother to the queen.

In the palace compound, there was a billy goat that had discovered the abundance of lush grass in the elephant stables. Whenever the elephant-keepers saw the mischievous goat eating the elephants' grass, they drove it off. One day, a fierce mahout caught the goat eating and chased it away, but not satisfied with that, he grabbed a big stick and hit the goat's back as hard as he could. The poor goat, suffering great pain, lay down on a bench by the palace wall.

That same day, the royal cook had finished preparing the food early, had dished it up, and was standing outside, wiping the sweat off his brow. A dog, overcome by the temptation of the savory meat dishes, sneaked into the kitchen, knocked the cover off a large pot, and began to devour the roasted meat. When the cook heard the noise, he ran into the kitchen, saw the dog, and gave it a fierce blow with a stick. The dog dropped the piece of meat and ran, yelping, to the courtyard. Arching its back with pain, it limped to the place where the goat was lying.

"Friend, why are arching your back like that?" the goat asked.

"I've just been beaten for trying to eat a little of the extra meat in the kitchen," the dog replied. "What about you, friend? It looks like your back is also in pain."

"It is," replied the goat. "A mahout just beat me for helping the elephants dispose of the grass that their keepers are always throwing at them."

As they related their stories to each other and commiserated that neither could, for fear of his life, ever return to the scene of his punishment, the goat brightened up. He had an idea.

"Tell me what you are thinking!" the dog pleaded.

"Well," the goat began, "I can't go to the stables any more, but you can. You can't go to the kitchen any more, but the cook does not know

me. If you go into the stables every day and bring back several mouthfuls of grass for me, I will saunter into the kitchen and grab some meat for you. No one will ever suspect either of us."

"That's a great plan!" exclaimed the dog. "It's a deal!"

Thereafter, the two animals became the greatest of friends. Every day each brought food for the other, and they ate together in the courtyard.

One morning, as the king was pacing up and down in a corridor after breakfast, he glanced into the courtyard and saw the two animals lying side by side and eating. "How remarkable!" he thought. "Here are two natural enemies living peacefully together. It looks like they are even sharing their food! How can such a thing be? I'll use this to test my advisors. Any unable to figure it out should be banished! Well, it is too late today. I'll ask them about it when they come tomorrow morning."

The next day, when the advisors went to wait upon the king, he announced, "Two natural enemies, who never could stand to be within seven paces of each other, have become friends and are now inseparable. What is the reason? You must solve this question for me before noon. If you don't, you will be banished! I have no need of ignorant men."

Mahosadha, who was sitting furthest from the king, thought, "The king is not clever enough to have thought this up by himself. He must have seen something. I could solve the riddle if I had a day to work on it." The other four advisors were completely in the dark. Senaka, who was sitting closest to the king, looked at Mahosadha for help and could see by the way the younger sage was looking at him that even he did not know the answer. Senaka understood, however, that Mahosadha wanted him to ask the king for a day's grace and wondered how to obtain this from the king.

Senaka laughed loudly to reassure the king and said, "Sire, are you saying that you will banish us all if we cannot answer your question?"

"Yes, I am!" responded the king promptly.

"Sire, this is a knotty question," Senaka countered. "It cannot be solved in a hurry because it needs serious reflection. With so many people around, our minds are distracted. We must think it over in silence. Give us one day, and we will solve this problem for you. If you will allow it, we will bring the answer to you tomorrow."

"All right, I'll grant you one day," the king replied, obviously not happy with this excuse, "but I warn you, if any one of you fails to figure this out, I will banish him!"

The four senior advisors left the palace, and Senaka said to the others, "Friends, this is an extremely difficult question, and I'm afraid that we are in serious trouble. Ponder on it for a while, and, if you come up with anything, be sure to share it with the rest. Together we must try to work it out!" Each of them went to his own home to consider the problem.

Mahosadha, however, went to visit Queen Udumbarā. "Your Highness," he asked her, "where did the king spend a good deal of time yesterday and today?"

"Brother," answered the queen, "he walked back and forth in the corridor, looking out of the windows at the courtyard."

"Thank you, Your Highness," Mahosadha replied happily. "That's it! He must have seen something there." He went straight to the corridor and gazed out the windows. After a few minutes, he saw the dog coming from the elephant stables, carrying a mouthful of grass. Then he saw the goat coming from the kitchen, carrying a piece of meat. The two animals lay down side by side and began eating the food which the other had brought. "This must be what the king saw," Mahosadha thought as he continued watching. "Of course!" he exclaimed triumphantly, having understood the friendship between the two and figured out exactly how it had happened. "The king's question is solved!" Completely satisfied and confident, he went home.

Later that day, Pukkusa, Kavinda, and Devinda visited Senaka. "Have you found the answer to the problem?" he asked them.

"No, Master," they replied.

"What are you going to do if the king banishes you?" he challenged them.

"What about you?" they asked. "Have you figured it out?"

"Well," he replied awkwardly, "I've thought a lot about it."

"If you can't find the answer, how can you expect that we would?" they cried. "When you said, 'Give us one day, and we will solve this problem,' we were confident that you would find the answer. We depended on you! Now what are we going to do? The king will be furious!"

"Obviously, this question is beyond us," Senaka admitted. "No doubt, Mahosadha has already solved it in one hundred ways."

"What are we waiting for?" the other three cried. "Let's go and see him!"

The four advisors hurried to Mahosadha's house. After greeting him politely, they asked, "Well, sir, have you figured out the question?"

"If I haven't, who will? Of course I have."

"Then tell us, too," they pleaded.

Mahosadha thought, "If I don't help them, the king will banish them and honor me. I do not want to be responsible for the downfall of these fools." Aloud he said, "All right, I will help you." He sat them down on low seats, and, rather than telling them what the king had seen and what had happened, he taught each of them one piece of the answer. "When the king asks you for the solution, if each of you recites your verse correctly, the king will be satisfied," he said and sent them away.

The next morning, when all the advisors went to wait on the king, he asked, "Senaka, have you solved my problem?"

"Sire, if I don't know the answer, who does?" Senaka replied.

"All right, then tell me," ordered the king.

"Young beggars and young princes enjoy goat meat, but neither eats dog meat," Senaka recited, not understanding a word of what he was saying, "still there may be friendship between a goat and a dog."

The king assumed that Senaka had figured out the secret, and he was pleased. "Pukkusa," he said, addressing his second advisor, "have you solved my problem?"

"Am I not a wise man?" Pukkusa asked in response.

"We shall see," the king replied.

"Men use a goatskin to cover a horse's back, but no one would use a dogskin that way," Pukkusa recited, also not understanding a word of what he was saying. "Nevertheless, there may be friendship between a goat and a dog."

The king assumed that Pukkusa had also figured out the secret, and he was pleased. "Kavinda," he said, addressing his third advisor, "have you solved my problem?

"A goat has twisted horns, but a dog has none. One eats grass, and the other meat," Kavinda recited, also not understanding a word of what he was saying. "Nevertheless, there may be friendship between a goat and a dog."

The king assumed that Kavinda had also figured out the secret, and he was pleased. "Devinda," he said, addressing his fourth advisor, "have you solved my problem?"

"A goat eats grass and leaves; a dog eats neither, but feasts on rabbit and cat," Devinda recited, also not understanding a word of what he was saying. "Nevertheless, there may be friendship between a goat and a dog."

The king assumed that Pukkusa had also figured out the secret, and he was pleased. "My son," he said, addressing Mahosadha, "have you solved my problem?

"Sire, who, between the lowest hell and the highest heaven, could understand this question better than I?"

"No one, I am sure," replied the king. "Please tell me the answer."

"From the kitchen, a goat carries meat; from the stable, a dog carries grass. Banished from their natural places, these enemies have made a pact of friendship and serve each other well. From the corridor these two can be seen exchanging their bounty in the courtyard below."

The king, unaware that Mahosadha had coached the others, was delighted that all five had discovered the solution to his riddle. "How fortunate I am to have such wise men in my palace!" he exclaimed. "All of you have successfully solved this difficult riddle. I am very pleased, indeed! To each of you I give a chariot, a mule, and a village!"

Queen Udumbarā realized that Mahosadha had told the others what to say, and she was not at all satisfied that the king had rewarded all equally. As soon as she was alone with the king, she asked him, "Sire, who discovered the solution to your riddle?"

"Why, my dear," the king replied in surprise, "my five advisors did. You heard each of them give his very clear answer."

"How do you think they solved it?" she asked.

"I have no idea."

"Sire, your four senior advisors are fools!" she told him. "Mahosadha alone solved the problem. He didn't want the others to be banished, so he taught each of them one little piece. They had no idea what they were saying. It is most unfair that you gave all of them the same reward. You should acknowledge Mahosadha's much greater wisdom."

The king was pleased that Mahosadha had neither ridiculed the others nor divulged his role in helping them. Instead of revising the rewards he had given, however, the king decided to pose another problem and to bestow greater honor on Mahosadha when he solved it.

Not long afterwards, the opportunity arose. One morning, when the five advisors had come to wait upon him, the king said, "Senaka, I will ask a question."

"Please do so, Sire," Senaka replied.

"Wise and poor or rich and foolish! My question is this: is it better for a man to be endowed with wisdom and bereft of wealth, or endowed

with wealth and bereft of wisdom? Which of these conditions, Senaka, should be considered the higher?"

The answer to this question had been handed down in Senaka's family for generations, so, without hesitation, he replied, "Your Majesty, wise men and fools, the educated and the illiterate, all provide service to one who is wealthy. They may be well-bred, and he may be illegitimate, but it doesn't matter. If he is rich, they serve him. Having seen that this is the way the world is, I declare that wisdom is lowly and that wealth is higher."

Without paying any attention to the other three, the king turned to Mahosadha and asked, "Mahosadha, how would you answer the same question?"

"Your Majesty," Mahosadha replied, "A fool, filled with false pride, commits many evil deeds; he sees this world but not the next, and he suffers for it in both. Beholding this, I declare that the poor wise man is superior to the wealthy fool."

"What do you say to that, Senaka?" asked the king.

"Your Majesty," Senaka replied, "Mahosadha is still a child. What does he know? Neither learning nor good looks can guarantee a comfortable life, but even an idiot, if he is wealthy and lucky with his money, is catered to by everyone. Having seen that this is the way the world is, I declare that wisdom is lowly and that wealth is higher."

"What do you say to that, my son?" the king asked Mahosadha.

"Your Majesty," Mahosadha replied, "what does Senaka know? He is like a crow pecking at scattered rice or a frog trying to lap up milk. He sees himself but not the stick which is about to fall on his head. The man of small wit, when he gets money, becomes intoxicated. When he is struck by misfortune, however, he is stupefied and writhes like a fish out of water. Beholding this, I declare that the poor wise man is superior to the wealthy fool."

"Your Majesty," Senaka retorted, "what does he know? In the forest, it is the sturdy tree full of fruit which the birds seek out. In the same way, the rich man attracts many friends among the powerful and influential. Having seen that this is the way the world is, I declare that wisdom is lowly and that wealth is higher."

"Your Majesty," Mahosadha countered, "what does this potbelly know? The rich fool may use his wealth to seek glory by violence, and he may roar loudly, but he is sorely mistaken. He will be dragged off to

hell. Beholding this, I declare that the poor wise man is superior to the wealthy fool."

"Your Majesty," Senaka retorted, "look at all the rivers and streams that pour into the Gangā. All lose their identity in that great river. When the Gangā flows into the sea, it, too, can no longer be distinguished. In the same way, the wealthy absorb all those around them. Indeed, the world is devoted to wealth. Having seen that this is the way the world is, I declare that wisdom is lowly and that wealth is higher."

"Your Majesty," Mahosadha replied, "This mighty ocean, which Senaka has foolishly mentioned, beats incessantly on the shore. However mighty it may be, it cannot pass beyond that boundary for very long. So it is with the chattering of the fool. Even his prosperity cannot overcome the wise. Beholding this, I declare that the poor wise man is superior to the wealthy fool."

"Your Majesty," Senaka replied, "a wealthy man can easily gain a high position of influence and power so that, even if he lacks self-control, whatever he says has weight among his friends and in a court of law. In this case, money speaks, and wisdom alone is weak. Having seen that this is the way the world is, I declare that wisdom is lowly and that wealth is higher."

"Your Majesty," Mahosadha replied, "what does stupid Senaka know? For another's sake or for his own, when the fool speaks falsely, in this world, he is put to shame in front of others, and, in the next, he suffers even greater misery. Beholding this, I declare that the poor wise man is superior to the wealthy fool."

"Your Majesty," Senaka replied, "elephants, cattle, horses, and jewelry are found only in rich families. Because of these things, the rich man can enjoy life to the full. Having seen that this is the way the world is, I declare that wisdom is lowly and that wealth is higher."

"Your Majesty," Mahosadha replied, "The fool who performs thoughtless acts and speaks foolish words is cast off by fortune as the worn-out skin is cast off by a snake. Beholding this, I declare that the poor wise man is superior to the wealthy fool."

"Your Majesty," Senaka replied, "what can this little boy know? The five of us are wise, but, nonetheless, we all wait upon you with respect. Like Sakka, you are our lord and master. Having seen that this is the way the world is, I declare that wisdom is lowly and that wealth is higher."

"Your Majesty," Mahosadha replied, "this fool is looking only at

himself and does not see the excellence of wisdom. When questions of this kind arise, it is the sage who finds the answers. Without the wise, the wealthy fall into confusion. Beholding this, I declare that the poor wise man is superior to the wealthy fool."

"What do you say to that, Senaka?" asked the king.

Senaka was disturbed. Like one who had used up all the corn in his granary, he sat there speechless and unable to answer. Seeing that his opponent was defeated, Mahosadha concluded, "Verily, Your Majesty, wisdom is esteemed by the virtuous, whereas wealth is respected only by those who are devoted to base sensual pleasures. Wealth can never surpass wisdom."

"I hereby declare Mahosadha the victor!" proclaimed the king. "He has refuted every opposing argument and answered every question. Whatever problem I have posed, he has wisely solved. To show my pleasure, I grant this sage one thousand cows, a bull, an elephant, ten chariots, each drawn by thoroughbreds, and sixteen prosperous villages."

From that day on, there was no question as to the wisdom of Mahosadha. The sage's glory continued to increase, and he was looked after by Queen Udumbarā. When he became sixteen, she thought, "My younger brother has grown up. Now we must find a wife for him." She mentioned this to the king, and he agreed.

When the queen broached the subject to Mahosadha, he told her that he wanted to get married, but he was sure that he would not be satisfied with a wife that she and the king chose, so he asked her not to do anything for a few days while he himself searched for a suitable bride. The queen had no objection to this and agreed to inform the king that he would be absent for a few days.

Mahosadha disguised himself as a tailor and went to the northern town. As he was approaching the town, he saw a lovely young woman carrying a pot of rice gruel. "I can see that that young woman is wise and that she has all the auspicious signs," he thought. "If she is not married, she must become my wife."

When she saw Mahosadha, she thought, "If I could live in the house of such a man, I would be able to restore my family's fortune."

Stopping a short distance in front of her, Mahosadha clenched his fist. The young woman understood that he was asking whether or not she had a husband, and she held out her open palm.

Mahosadha was pleased. He went up to her and asked her name.

"My name is that which for any being does not exist, never has

been, and never will be," she replied.

"Sister," Mahosadha replied, "all beings are subject to death, so your name must refer to the deathless. Is it Amara?"

"You have spoken correctly, Master," she replied.

"For whom do you carry that gruel?" he asked.

"It is for the deva of former times," she replied.

"The devas of former times are one's parents," he said. "No doubt, you mean your father."

"You have spoken correctly, Master," she replied.

"What is your father doing?"

"He is making two out of one."

"He must be plowing."

"You have spoken correctly, Master," she replied.

"Where is your father plowing?"

"Near the place where one goes, never to return."

"He must be plowing near a charnel ground."

"You have spoken correctly, Master," she replied.

"Will you come back today?"

"If it comes, I will not come. If it does not come, I will come."

"Your father must be plowing on the other side of a river. If the river floods, you will not return. If it doesn't flood, you will."

"You have spoken correctly, Master," she replied, and she offered him some gruel.

Thinking it would be discourteous to refuse, he accepted.

As she put the pot of gruel on the ground, he thought, "If she offers it to me without first washing the jar and giving me water to wash my hands, I will leave her."

Amara poured a little water in a jar, swished it around and offered it to him to wash his hands. Then she placed the empty jar on the ground, and, after stirring the gruel, she put some of it into the jar, saving enough for her father. She handed the jar to him, and he noticed that the gruel was very weak.

"There is not enough rice in this gruel," he said.

"There was no water, Master." she replied.

"During the growing season, you must not have had enough water for irrigation," he said.

"You have spoken correctly, Master," she replied.

When he had finished drinking the gruel, he rinsed his mouth and said, "Sister, I would like to go to your house. Please tell me the way."

"Past the cakes and the gruel, beyond the double-leaf tree in bloom, along the way of the hand with which one eats. Avoid the way of the hand with which one does not eat. My parents' house lies there."

Mahosadha thanked her and took his leave. He entered the town and walked past a cake shop. A little further, he passed a gruel shop and an orchid tree in full bloom. He turned right and easily found her parents' house. He could see that they were poor but that they had once been wealthy merchants. Amara's mother welcomed him and offered him a seat.

"Will you have some gruel, Master?" she asked.

"Thank you, Mother," he replied, "but I received some from Sister Amara." The woman understood at once that he had come on her daughter's account.

"Mother, I am a tailor," Mahosadha announced. "Do you have anything to mend?"

"Yes, Master, but we cannot pay," she replied.

"There is no need to pay, Mother. Just bring whatever you have."

She gave him some old clothes, and the sage quickly mended them all.

Then he said to her, "Please announce my presence to the people in the street."

She went from house to house in the neighborhood and announced that a tailor had come to her house. By the end of the day, Mahosadha had earned one thousand coins.

At noon, Amara's mother served him lunch, and, in the evening, she asked how much food she should prepare.

"Cook enough, Mother, for all those who are staying in this house," he replied.

The woman understood that he would be staying. Late in the afternoon, Amara returned from the forest, bearing a bundle of wood on her head and a basket of leaves on her hip. She left the wood near the front door, put the basket of leaves in its proper place, and entered by the back door. Her father returned at sunset.

Mahosadha enjoyed a delicious meal of rice and curry. Amara served her parents before she herself sat down to eat. After they had finished, Amara washed her parents' feet. Then she washed Mahosadha's feet. Mahosadha stayed with the family for several days, observing Amara's behavior.

One day, to test her, he said, "My dear Amara, take half a measure of

rice and prepare some gruel, a cake, and some boiled rice for me."

Without the slightest hesitation, she agreed and measured out the exact amount of rice he had stipulated. After husking the rice, she separated it into three small portions. With the big grains, she made gruel; the middling grains she boiled, and, with the small pieces, she made a cake.

She served Mahosadha the gruel, and its exquisite taste sent a thrill through his body. Nevertheless, to test her, he spat it out and said, "Sister, if you don't know how to cook, why did you spoil my rice?"

Without the least bit of anger, she gave him the cake and said, "Master, since the gruel is not good, please eat the cake."

He did the same with the cake, and, again, the same with the boiled rice. Then, pretending to be angry, he mixed the remains of all three together and smeared it all over her face and body. "Go and sit by the door!" he ordered her.

"Very good, Master," she replied and went to sit by the door.

Thus, Mahosadha saw that there was no pride in her, and he called, "Sister, come here."

Amara returned and knelt before him, and he removed from his bag a beautiful silk sari which he had brought from the palace. He placed it in her hands and said, "Sister, please bathe and come back wearing this." After she had come back, magnificently adorned, Mahosadha gave her parents the money he had earned tailoring and an additional one thousand coins which he had brought with him. Then he returned with her to the city.

To test her further, he left her in a room of the gatekeeper's house. After secretly informing the gatekeeper's wife of his scheme, he went to his own house.

He summoned several of his companions and said to them, "There is a beautiful woman in the gatekeeper's house at the northern gate. Here are one thousand coins. Please go and enjoy yourselves with her."

The young men cheerfully took the money and offered it to Amara, but she scorned them. "That is not worth the dust on my master's feet," she cried, sending them away.

Satisfied that she had passed that test, Mahosadha sent several others of his companions to seize Amara and to carry her to his house without telling her anything. Meanwhile, he dressed himself in his finest robes. The men carried her in and placed her before Mahosadha, who was sitting in the shadows, so, of course, she did not recognize him. She

looked at the sage and smiled. Then she began weeping.

Disguising his voice so that she still would not recognize him, he asked her why she had smiled and why she was weeping. "Sir, when I beheld your magnificent robes, I could see that your glory is certainly due to some good deed you did in a previous life. I smiled in appreciation of your good fortune. Then I realized that you are about to commit a great sin against one who is pledged to another and that, for that, you will go to hell. I wept in pity for the misery you will suffer."

Firmly convinced of her purity, he sent her back to the gatekeeper's house. Later, he returned there himself in his guise as a tailor and spent the night.

The next morning, he went to the palace and told Queen Udumbarā everything that had happened, and the queen joyfully informed the king. The queen sent a magnificent sari and exquisite jewelry for Amara to wear. Then, standing the bride in a royal chariot so that all could see her, the queen ordered a procession around the city to carry her to Mahosadha's house, where the wedding ceremony was performed with great pomp. The king and the queen each gave the young couple a gift worth one thousand coins, and every citizen of Mithilā sent a wedding present, as well. Amara accepted half of each gift, but graciously returned the other half. In this way, she gained the respect of everyone in the kingdom.

Not long afterwards, Senaka remarked to the other three senior royal advisors, "Friends, we cannot compete with this commoner's son, Mahosadha, and now he has a wife as clever as he is. We must find a way to drive a wedge between him and the king."

"What can we do?" they asked Senaka. "We'll follow your suggestion, teacher!"

"All right, here is my plan. I will steal the jewel from the royal crown. Pukkusa, you take the king's golden necklace. Kavinda, you take his woolen cape. Devinda, you take his golden slippers. Then all we have to do is to smuggle them into Mahosadha's house." During the next few days, they managed to steal these things from the palace.

Senaka put the royal jewel in a pot of dates. He gave the pot to a servant girl and told her to pretend to be selling them but not to give them to anyone except someone from Mahosadha's house.

The girl walked back and forth in front of the sage's house, crying, "I have dates! Who needs dates?"

Amara noticed that the girl was not going anywhere else and

suspected something. After ordering her own servants to stay inside, she herself stepped out and called, "Come here, young woman. I would like some dates." Amara called for her servants, but, of course, none responded, so she sent the girl to fetch them.

While she was gone, Amara put her hand into the pot, felt around, and found the jewel.

The girl returned, saying that she could not find any servants.

"It doesn't matter," Amara said. "Please tell me whose servant you are, dear?"

"I have come from the house of the sage Senaka, madam," the girl replied.

After also asking her name and her mother's name, Amara said, "Very well, give me some dates."

"Please, madam, take the pot and all," the girl insisted. "I need no payment."

"Thank you," Amara said, taking the pot of dates. "You may go."

After the girl had left, Amara wrote on a leaf that Senaka, on that date, had sent the royal jewel in a pot of dates, carried by that girl and indicated her mother's name, as well.

In the same way, Pukkusa sent the golden necklace hidden in a casket of jasmine flowers, Kavinda sent the woolen cape hidden in a basket of vegetables, and Devinda sent the golden slippers hidden in a bundle of straw.

Amara accepted each gift in the same way, carefully recording the details each time. She put the leaves in a safe place and told everything to her husband.

One day, the four senior advisors mentioned that it had been a time since they had seen the king with his royal regalia.

"So it has!" replied the king, and he ordered servants to fetch his crown, his golden necklace, his woolen cape, and his golden slippers. The servants went to the treasure house to retrieve these things but quickly returned to announce that the jewel from the crown was gone and that they could not find the other three items at all.

"Your Majesty," the advisors said, "we think that we have seen these things in Mahosadha's house. It seems that he is using them himself in secret. Undoubtedly, the honor you have bestowed on that young son of a commoner has made him so proud that now he is your enemy." The king believed them and was furious.

Some of Mahosadha's companions, who happened to overhear this,

went to warn Mahosadha, who replied, "I will go to the king myself and find out."

As soon as it was proper, he went to the palace, but the king shouted, "I don't know Mahosadha! What is he doing here?"

Mahosadha left the palace, but the king ordered officers to arrest him. Again, his friends sent him a warning. He told his wife that the time had come and immediately left the city in disguise. In the southern town, he took up residence with a master potter and served as his apprentice. Soon, the city was filled with rumors that the great sage had fled in disgrace.

Senaka, Pukkusa, Kavinda, and Devinda each secretly sent a message to Amara: "Do not worry that Mahosadha has gone. After all, I am also a wise man!"

Amara graciously accepted the messages and invited the advisors to visit her. As soon as each one arrived, Amara had her servants seize him, shave his hair and beard, beat him, roll him in a straw mat, and put him in the outhouse. When she had taken care of all four, she announced to the king that she would like to see him.

She had her servants place the four advisors, still rolled up inside the mats, in a cart and proceeded to the palace with the royal regalia. After servants had dumped the mats in the courtyard, Amara announced to the king, "Your Majesty, my husband, the wise Mahosadha is not a thief! Senaka stole the jewel, Pukkusa stole the golden necklace, Kavinda stole the woolen cape, and Devinda stole the golden slippers. Here are the records indicating when each item was sent to our house and who carried it. Here, also, are the thieves," she said, pointing to the four mats, "who have shamed themselves by seeking my favors. Take back what is yours, and throw these scoundrels out!"

The king was extremely confused by this turn of events, and, without Mahosadha to advise him, he did not know what to do. He simply told the four advisors to bathe and to go home.

The deva that lived in the royal umbrella missed hearing Mahosadha's sweet voice advising the king and wondered where he was. When she learned that the king had chased him away, she resolved to bring him back. That night, she appeared to the king and posed four riddles, demanding a solution. Of course, the king could not answer, but he told the deva that he would ask his advisors and give her the answers the next day.

The next morning, he summoned the four advisors, but they sent

messages in reply that they were ashamed to show themselves in the street, shaven as they were. The king sent them skullcaps and ordered them to appear in court.

When they finally arrived, the king told them, "Last night, the deva of the royal umbrella appeared to me and demanded that I solve four riddles. You must give me the answers."

"Of course, Your Majesty," they replied. "You have but to recite these riddles, and we will solve them for you."

"The first riddle," the king began, "is this: 'He strikes with hands and feet and beats upon the face; yet he is dear and grows dearer than a husband.'"

"Uh, strikes how? Strikes whom?" Senaka stammered, without understanding a word. The other three just stared dumbly at the king. In shame, they left the king without answering or even asking about the other three riddles.

That night, the deva returned and asked the king for the answers. The distressed king replied, "I asked my four advisors, the wisest men in my court, but even they could not answer."

"Those fools?" the deva cried. "Your Majesty, when you want fire, don't blow on a firefly! When you want milk, don't squeeze a horn. No one but the wise Mahosadha can solve these riddles. I will give you one more day! If you do not find the solution to these riddles, I will split your head with my fiery sword! Do what you know you must do!" The king cowered in fear when he heard the deva's dreadful threat.

Early the next morning, he sent out four courtiers, one in each direction, to find Mahosadha, to show him all honor, and to bring him back as quickly as possible. The courtier who went to the western town found nothing at all. The one who went to the northern town talked with Amara's family, but they had not seen or heard anything from the sage. The courtier who went to the eastern town searched throughout the great hall but found no trace of him. The courtier who went to the southern town happened to see Mahosadha sitting on a bundle of straw at the potter's shop, eating his lunch of rice balls and soup. He was completely covered with dirt since he had been digging clay and turning pots on his master's wheel all morning.

When Mahosadha saw the courtier, he knew that the king had sent for him, that he would be reinstated, and that he would soon be enjoying choice food prepared by Lady Amara. He put down the ball of rice he was eating, stood up, and rinsed his mouth.

The courtier, who happened to be a follower of Senaka, said sarcastically, "Wise teacher, what a surprise to see you here, covered with clay and eating poor rice and thin soup! Is this how your wisdom serves you? It seems that Senaka was right! Wisdom is lowly, and wealth is higher."

"Blind fool!" retorted the sage. "By the power of my wisdom, I will restore my prosperity when I choose. I am here of my own free will. When the time is ripe, I will make an effort, and you will see that the poor wise man is superior to the wealthy fool. Why have you come?"

"Wise sir," the courtier replied, "the deva in the royal umbrella has posed four riddles to the king, but none of the four wise men could solve them. The king has sent me to fetch you. Please dress and come with me." The courtier presented Mahosadha with clean clothes and one thousand coins, all of which had been sent by the king.

During this exchange, the master potter had been listening attentively. He was shocked to learn that his apprentice was actually the great sage. When Mahosadha turned toward him, he immediately fell to the ground and prostrated himself. "Do not be alarmed, Master," Mahosadha said. "You have no need to worry. You have been of great help to me. Please accept this gift." Mahosadha gave him all the money he had just received from the king. Then, taking the time neither to bathe nor to change clothes, he stepped into the chariot and said to the courtier, "Come! Let us go to see the king!"

When they arrived at the palace, the courtier asked Mahosadha to wait and hurried in to announce his success to the king.

"Where did you find the sage, my son?" asked the king.

"Your Majesty," the courtier replied, "he was working as an apprentice to a potter in the southern town. As soon as I told him that you wanted to see him, he gave the money you sent to his master and mounted the chariot. Although he was covered with clay, he neither bathed nor put on the exquisite clothes you sent. He hurried to the palace and is waiting outside."

"If he were my enemy," the king thought, "he would have come with an army. He is certainly not after my throne."

"Tell the sage to go to his home, to bathe, and to dress," the king commanded the courtier. "When he is properly attired, he is to return to the palace with due ceremony."

When Mahosadha returned to the palace, the king greeted him warmly. Then, as the sage stood to one side, the king said, "Sir, some wealthy men commit no evil deeds in order to protect their wealth.

Some avoid evil for fear of blame. Some, because they are ignorant. Some, because they are completely incapable. You are wise and extremely competent. You could, if you wished, seize control of all of Jambudīpa. Pray, tell me, why do you do me no harm? Why have you not tried to kill me and to seize my throne?"

"Your Majesty," Mahosadha replied, "Wise men never commit evil deeds for the sake of the pleasure that wealth provides. The virtuous never deviate from the right, not because of misfortune, nor because of friendship, nor because of hatred."

"It is often said," interjected the king, "that, if a man raises himself from poverty to a position of wealth and respect, he will always walk the path of righteousness."

"Sire," Mahosadha replied, "if a man has rested beneath a tree and benefited from its shade, it would be treachery to cut a branch from that tree. How much worse would it be for a person to harm or to kill his benefactor? Your Majesty gave my father great wealth. You have shown me favor and bestowed great honor upon me. How could I entertain any thoughts of betrayal or injury to you?"

Having assuaged and pleased the king with this avowal of loyalty, Mahosadha took it upon himself to teach the king and to reprove him for the ill-treatment he had received. "Sire," he continued, "when a man has been shown the right or has had his doubts cleared by another, he becomes the protector and the refuge of that other. A wise man will not forsake that trust. A virtuous layman is restrained by the moral precepts. A virtuous ascetic is restrained by his practice. A virtuous king must be restrained by justice. Only a bad king would decide a case without examining the evidence from both sides. Anger is never justified. The king who makes well-pondered judgments will always enjoy fame, respect, and honor."

When he heard this, the king stood up and invited Mahosadha to sit on the throne under the royal umbrella. He himself sat down on a lower seat and said, "Wise sir, the deva of the royal umbrella gave me four riddles. I consulted my four other advisors, but they could find no answers. Please solve these riddles for me, my son."

"Sire, let me hear the riddles, and I will give you the answers you desire."

"The first riddle," the king began, "is this: 'He strikes with hands and feet and beats upon the face; yet he is dear and grows dearer than a husband.'"

"Your Majesty," Mahosadha replied, "This is as clear as the moon in the night sky. When a child is on his mother's lap, he playfully kicks her, beats her face, and pulls her hair. With a broad smile, she asks, 'Little rogue, why do you beat me so?' and she presses him close to her breast. Unable to restrain her affection, she kisses him, and, at such a time, he is dearer to her than his father."

"The riddle is well solved!" cried the deva with her sweet voice as she emerged from the royal umbrella showing half her body. She presented the sage with a precious casket full of heavenly perfume and flowers and disappeared. The king was pleased and also rewarded him.

"The second riddle is this," said the king. "She abuses him roundly, yet wishes him to be near, and he is dearer than a husband.'"

"Sire," Mahosadha replied, "when a boy is seven years old, he is able to do his mother's bidding. Supposing she tells him to go to the bazaar, he may retort, 'If you will give me that snack, I will go.' After she gives it to him, he may eat it and say, 'Why should I go out in the sun to do your work while you just sit there in the cool shade?' If he says this, makes a face, and mocks her, she may get angry, pick up a stick, and cry, 'How dare you eat what I give you without doing anything for me!' When he runs off, she may shout, 'Run, you rascal! I hope thieves chop you up into little bits!' She sounds so angry that he may stay away playing the whole day, and, in the evening, afraid to go home, he may go to an uncle's house. Meanwhile, his mother has forgotten her anger and is watching the road for him. When he doesn't return, she realizes that he was frightened, and her heart is full of pain. With tears streaming down her face, she searches the houses of her relatives. When she finally finds her son, she hugs and kisses him, and cries, 'My darling son! Did you take my words seriously?' In the hour of anger, a mother loves her son even more, and, at such a time, he is dearer to her than his father."

Both the deva and the king again rewarded him.

"The third riddle is this," said the king. "She reviles and reproaches him with neither cause nor reason; yet he is dearer than a husband.'"

"Sire," Mahosadha replied, "when a pair of lovers are secretly enjoying their love's delights, the woman may say to the man, 'You don't care for me! Your heart is elsewhere, I know!' As she coquettishly accuses him and as they quarrel thus, they, in fact, grow dearer to each other."

Both the deva and the king again rewarded him.

"The fourth riddle is this," said the king. "They take food and drink, clothes and lodging; in fact, they carry them off; still, they are dearer than a husband.'"

"Sire," Mahosadha replied, "this refers to religious mendicants. Pious devotees, believing that giving alms offers a reward in the next world, delight in giving. When they see these ascetics accepting their offerings and carrying them away, they are overjoyed, and this increases their affection and respect for the ascetics."

When the last question had been answered, the deva presented Mahosadha with a golden casket filled with the seven precious things, and the king appointed him commander-in-chief. Mahosadha's glory became even greater than before.

Once again, the four senior advisors found themselves eclipsed. "What can we do?" they grumbled to each other as they watched Mahosadha's star rising higher and higher in the court.

"I have a plan," Senaka told them. "Mahosadha, unlike us, was not born among nobility. He is a country bumpkin and does not know the ins and outs of court life. If we can make it look like he is secretly scheming something, we can discredit him with the king, and that will be the end of him. Let's go and talk to him!"

The four went to Mahosadha's house and greeted him. "Wise sir," Senaka said, "we would like to ask you a few questions."

"Ask away," he consented.

"Wise sir," Senaka said, "in what should a man be firmly established?"

"In the truth," Mahosadha promptly answered.

"Having established himself in the truth, what should he do next?" Senaka asked.

"He should make his fortune," Mahosadha replied.

"Having made his fortune, what should he do next?" Senaka asked.

"He must learn from wise advisors," Mahosadha replied.

"Having learned from the wise, what should he do next?" Senaka asked.

"He must be careful not to divulge his secrets to anyone," Mahosadha replied.

"Thank you very much, sir," the four of them said together, as they stood up and took their leave. Once outside, they gloated to each other, "Now we have him! We must report this to the king!" They went to their own homes, satisfied that they were about to see the last of the sage.

The next day, as soon as they arrived at the palace, they announced to the king, "Sire, Mahosadha is a traitor!"

"I do not believe you!" the king replied. "My son would never betray me."

"Sire, you must believe us! The sage is scheming something. He is guarding some mysterious secret. He trusts no one. If you do not believe us, ask him yourself. Sometime, you might ask him to whom a secret might be told. If he says, 'To no one,' you can be sure that he is scheming something against your royal person and that he is afraid to let anyone know about it."

A few days later, the king had the opportunity and said, "An interesting question has occurred to me, and now that you five wise men are together, I would like to hear your opinions. If one has an important secret, whether good or bad, to whom should he confidently reveal this secret? What do you think?"

Senaka was delighted that the king was bringing this up, but, to make sure that the king was with them, he said, "Sire, each of us has his own thought on this matter, but it would help us to see the matter clearly, if you would express your opinion first."

The king, not being the brightest of men, answered, "If a man has a wife who is virtuous, faithful, affectionate, and supportive, that man can confidently tell his wife his secret, whether good or bad."

"The king is on my side!" thought Senaka joyfully.

"What say you, Senaka?" asked the king.

"If a man has a friend, Sire," Senaka said, "who cares for him when he is sick and who is his refuge in distress, that man can confidently tell his friend his secret, whether good or bad."

"What say you, Pukkusa?" asked the king.

"If a man has a brother, Sire," Pukkusa said, "who is virtuous and loyal, that man can confidently tell his brother his secret, whether good or bad."

"What say you, Kavinda?" asked the king.

"If a man has a son, Sire," Kavinda said, "who is obedient and wise, that man can confidently tell his son his secret, whether good or bad."

"What say you, Devinda?" asked the king.

"If a man has a mother, Sire," Devinda said, "who fondly cherishes him, that man can confidently tell his mother his secret, whether good or bad."

Finally, the king turned to the sage and asked, "What say you, Mahosadha?"

Mahosadha answered, "Sire, the value of a secret is its secrecy. Once

it is revealed to anyone, that value is compromised. As long as the secrecy of a situation, an idea, or a scheme is important, a wise man would hesitate to divulge that secret to anyone. Once the situation changes, once the idea becomes a reality, or once the scheme is accomplished, he may speak freely."

Mahosadha immediately sensed that the king was displeased with his answer and noticed that the king and Senaka exchanged glances. He guessed that the four had once again slandered him to the king and that it must have been a trick question. "How unpredictable this king is!" he thought. "No one can guess where this might lead. I had better leave at once!" He stood up, paid his respects to the king, and left the hall.

He continued thinking about what the others had said. "Each of the four said that a secret could be revealed. One said to a friend, another said to a brother, another said to a son, and the last said to a mother. There must be something behind all that. I wonder how I can find out what it is."

The sun had set, and the lamps had been lit, so Mahosadha realized that the other advisors would also soon be leaving. He knew that, when the four left the court, they usually sat for a few minutes on an overturned stone trough and discussed their plans before going home. He had his servants lift the trough and spread a carpet on the ground. He lay down on the carpet, had his servants replace the trough, and instructed them to let him out once the four advisors had gone away.

As soon as Mahosadha had left, Senaka said to the king, "Sire, what do you think? Do you believe us now?"

"How could I not believe you, wise Senaka? He said exactly what you said he would say! Now what must we do?"

"Sire, there is no time to wait," Senaka replied. "He must be killed."

"No one looks after my interests as well as you do, Senaka," said the king, feeling very reassured. As he handed Senaka his royal sword, he continued, "When Mahosadha comes to the palace tomorrow morning, you and your friends must be waiting at the gate. Strike the traitor with this sword, and save me!"

"Very good, Your Majesty," Senaka replied, accepting the sword. "Have no fear. We will do your bidding."

As the four left the court, they whispered to each other, "Well done! At last, we will be rid of him!" Feeling triumphant, they sat down on the trough to gloat over their success. "Who will strike the fellow?" Senaka asked.

"It is your plan, master," the others said. "You should do it."

"All right," Senaka agreed. "Now, tell me, friends. I'm curious about what you said to the king. Why did you say that you can confidently reveal a secret to a brother, a mother, or a son?"

"What about you?" they asked. "First tell us why you said that a secret can be confidently revealed to a friend."

"What does that matter to you?" Senaka asked.

"Why won't you tell us?" they asked in reply. "Aren't we your friends?"

"Well, I have a secret," Senaka relented, "but if the king ever heard about it, he would have me killed."

"Don't worry, master," they assured him. "You can trust us, and there is no one else here."

"What if," he asked, tapping the trough, "that bumpkin were under here?"

"What a joke!" they cried, laughing. "He is so proud of himself that he would never crawl into such a dirty place! He is intoxicated with his own glory! Come on! Tell us!"

"All right," Senaka began. "Do you remember the famous courtesan who used to live near here?"

"Of course, we do!" they replied.

"Have you seen her recently?" Senaka asked.

"No. Come to think of it, we haven't."

"Well, some time ago, I had my pleasure with her in the sal grove of the royal park. When she fell asleep, I killed her and tied her jewelry in a bundle, which is now hanging from an elephant's tusk in an upper room of my house. Of course, I dare not do anything with it until it's safe. The only other person I've told this to is my best friend. I'm sure that he has not told anyone else. That's why I said that a secret may be confidently revealed to a friend."

"Well, I have a secret, too," Pukkusa admitted. "On my thigh, there is a spot of leprosy. No one knows about this except my younger brother. Every morning, he washes it and puts salve and a bandage on it. Sometimes, when the king wishes to rest, he calls me and lays his head on my thigh. If he ever found out about my leprosy, he would kill me. I am sure that my brother will never tell a soul. That's why I said that a secret may be confidently revealed to a brother."

"Well, I have a secret, too," Kavinda admitted. "Every month, on the night of the new moon, a deva named Naradeva takes possession of me,

and I bark like a mad dog. I told my son, and, whenever he sees the condition coming on, he locks me in a back room. In order to hide the noise of my barking, he throws a party with lots of music. He has vowed never to tell anyone about this. That's why I said that a secret may be confidently revealed to a son."

"Well, I have a secret, too," Devinda admitted. "As you know, I am the inspector of the king's jewels. One day, I stole the magnificent Verocanamani, the gem which Sakka gave to King Kusa, and I gave it to my mother. Every morning, as I leave home to go to court, my mother hands me the gem, and I hold it for a few seconds. Just from touching that jewel, I am blessed with good fortune all day in the palace. The king always greets me first, and he gives me money every day. If he ever finds out that I have that gem, he will have me killed, but I know that my secret is safe with my mother. That's why I said that a secret may be confidently revealed to a mother."

The four advisors stood up and bade each other farewell. "Be sure to come early tomorrow," Senaka reminded them. "First thing in the morning, we will kill the churl!" With the greatest of confidence, each went to his own home.

As soon as the four had left, Mahosadha's men lifted the trough and released their master. After he had washed and eaten supper, he told a servant that he was expecting an urgent message from Queen Udumbarā and lay down on his bed.

That evening, the king was extremely upset. He lay in bed tossing and turning with pangs of guilt. "Mahosadha has served me since he was seven years old," he thought, "and he has never done me any wrong. The deva would have split my head if he hadn't solved the riddles for me. I never should have believed Senaka and the others. They just want revenge. Why did I give them my sword? Now I will never see the peerless sage again! What a fool I was!"

Queen Udumbarā noticed his restlessness and asked, "What is troubling you, Sire? Have I done anything to displease you?"

"No, my dear, you have done nothing wrong, but I have made a great mistake. Senaka and the other advisors told me that Mahosadha was scheming against me, and I believed them. I even gave them my sword so that they could kill him tomorrow morning. I can't bear to think about losing the wise sage, and I sorely regret that I have condemned him to death."

The queen was devastated to hear this, and she immediately began

thinking of ways to save the sage. "First," she thought, "I must console the king. As soon as he is asleep, I will send a message to my brother." Aloud she said, "Sire, don't be upset. You really had no choice. Your first consideration has to be your own safety. After all, the sage is just a commoner's son. You raised him to a position of power and made him commander-in-chief. You shouldn't be surprised that all that honor has gone to his head and that he has indeed become your enemy. Just put it out of your mind, and go to sleep."

The king was greatly relieved to hear her say this, and he soon fell fast asleep.

The queen then went to her own chamber and wrote a letter informing Mahosadha of the danger. She explained that the king had given the four advisors his sword and that they would be waiting early in the morning. "Do not come to the palace tomorrow unless you have the entire city behind you," she concluded.

She put the letter in the center of a cake, tied it with a string to conceal it, and put the cake into a jar. She sealed the jar and gave it to a servant, instructing her to hand it directly to Mahosadha. The servant walked straight to the sage's house. No one hindered her because they knew she was carrying delicacies from the queen, and all the guards had been informed that the queen had been given the privilege of sending food to Mahosadha at all hours of the day or night.

As soon as the servant arrived at the sage's house, a man woke Mahosadha and told him that a present had arrived from the queen. Mahosadha accepted the jar and dismissed the girl, who informed Her Highness that she had accomplished her mission. The sage opened the jar, read the message, and perfectly grasped the situation. After a few minutes of deliberation, he returned to bed.

Early the next morning, the four advisors concealed themselves just inside the palace gate and waited. Senaka held the sword above his head, ready to strike Mahosadha down as soon as he stepped through the gate, but the sage never arrived. Finally, they gave up. Humiliated that they had failed at their task, they went to see the king.

Mahosadha, however, had not been idle. By sunrise, he had positioned guards at strategic points and had gained control of the entire city. Gathering many of his companions around him, he mounted a chariot and proceeded with great pomp to the palace. Since he was very familiar with the king's schedule, he timed his arrival so that the king would be in his chamber and looking out the window. Mahosadha stepped out of

the chariot and saluted the king. "If he were my enemy," the king thought, "he would not salute me!" The king descended to the throne room with the queen and summoned the sage. Mahosadha entered and sat in his usual seat. The other four advisors were also sitting in their seats.

Pretending that he had done nothing wrong, the king said, "My son, yesterday you left us abruptly. This morning you have come quite late. Why are you treating me so negligently?"

"Sire," Mahosadha replied, "I did not come to the palace early this morning because I knew that you had ordered your four advisors to kill me as I entered the gate. Perhaps you recall mentioning this secret to your wife last night."

The king glared angrily at his queen.

"Your Majesty," Mahosadha continued, "why would you be angry with the queen? I know many secrets. Perhaps I learned your secret from your wife, but do you think that I have talked with Senaka's friend, Pukkusa's brother, Kavinda's son, and Devinda's mother to learn their secrets? I know all their secrets! I know everything, past, present, and future." As the four advisors gasped, Mahosadha said, "Sire, let me tell you a few secrets.

"In the sal grove, Senaka killed the famous courtesan of Mithilā and stole her jewelry, which he has hidden in his house. I ask you, Sire, which of us is your enemy?"

"Is this true, Senaka?" the king asked.

"Yes, Your Majesty," Senaka replied meekly, and the king ordered guards to arrest him.

"Your Majesty often rests his head on Pukkusa's thigh. What you find so soft is actually the bandages which cover a leprous spot which he conceals there."

"Is this true, Pukkusa?" the king asked.

"Yes, Your Majesty," Pukkusa replied reluctantly, and the king ordered the guards to arrest him, too.

"Every month, Your Majesty, on the night of the full moon, Kavinda is possessed by a deva. He crawls on all fours and barks like a dog."

"Is this true, Kavinda?" the king asked.

"Yes, Your Majesty," Kavinda replied, barely audibly, and the king ordered the guards to arrest him, too.

"Perhaps Your Majesty has not yet noticed that the precious octagonal gem which Sakka presented to King Kusa, your illustrious ancestor, is

missing. Some time ago, your trusted Devinda stole it and gave it to his mother."

"Is this true, Devinda?" the king asked.

"Yes, Your Majesty," Devinda replied timidly, and the king ordered the guards to arrest him, too.

"Thus, you can see, Your Majesty, that it is never wise to divulge a secret, not to a wife nor to anyone else. These four, who declared that a secret can be confidently revealed to a friend, a brother, a mother, and a son, have come to utter ruin. The value of a secret is its secrecy. When one discloses a secret to another, he becomes the slave of that person. As many as there are who know a man's secret, so many are that man's anxieties."

The king was furious. "These four advisors," he shouted, "defamed the wise Mahosadha and tried to turn me against him, but they are themselves wretched traitors! Take them to the southern gate and cut off their heads!"

Guards bound the hands of the four hapless advisors behind their backs and marched them through the streets, beating them at every crossroads.

"Your Majesty," Mahosadha interceded, "these men have been your advisors for many years. It is not right that you should now order their execution. Please reconsider and grant them your clemency."

The king consented, and turned them over to Mahosadha to be his slaves. The sage immediately gave them their freedom. "In that case," cried the king, "they cannot live in the kingdom. I banish them from my realm!"

Mahosadha again appealed to the king, asking him to pardon their blind folly and to restore them to their former positions. The king was so impressed and pleased with the sage's compassion that he agreed. "If my son has this much gentle mercy for his enemies, what must he feel toward others!" thought the king.

From then on, however, the four advisors were like snakes defanged. The king began to regard the wise Mahosadha as his chief and most trusted advisor. Mahosadha, for his part, reflected, "I have, indeed, become the king's white umbrella. Because I manage the kingdom, I must be vigilant."

Mahosadha set about preparing the city for possible dangers and fortifying it against enemies. He ordered a great rampart to be built around the city. This great wall had elaborate gates and hundreds of watchtowers. The wall was surrounded by three moats, a water moat resplendent with the five kinds of lotuses and infested with man-eating

fish and crocodiles, a mud moat, and a dry moat. Inside the city, he ordered that all dilapidated, abandoned buildings be torn down and that, in their place, tanks be dug and filled with water. All storehouses were stocked with grain. Ascetics were asked to bring white mud and water lily seeds from the Himavat when they returned to the city. Canals and waterways were dredged and repaired. The towns around the city were also cleaned, and old buildings were restored.

Traveling merchants who visited the city were given warm hospitality and were gently questioned as to conditions in their own countries and the tastes of their kings. Having gathered this information, Mahosadha sent soldiers to each of the one hundred one other kingdoms in Jambudīpa with gold and jeweled accessories as gifts. Each gift was designed to the taste of that particular king, and each was engraved with the name "Mahosadha," but the engraving was skillfully done in such a way that it would not become visible until the time was right. These soldiers, who were, in fact, spies, were instructed to take up residence and to enter the service of their respective kings. They were to observe conditions and to send back any useful information they gathered. Mahosadha promised them that their families would be well cared for during their absence.

From the kingdom of Ekabala, the spy sent a message that King Sankhapāla was mysteriously assembling a great army. As soon as Mahosadha had received this message, he brought out the clever parrot Māthara, fed him honey and grain, and gave him sweet water to drink. He anointed the joints of the bird's wings with oil which had been refined one thousand times and said, "My friend, find out what King Sankhapāla is doing in Ekabala. Then fly all over Jambudīpa and bring me the news." He released the bird from the eastern window and watched him fly toward Ekabala. Māthara did not find anything worrisome in that kingdom, but, when he reached Uttarapañcāla, the capital of Kampilla, he discovered something very important.

The king of Kampilla was Cūlani-Brahmadatta, and his advisor was a shrewd brahmin named Kevatta. One morning, when Kevatta awoke at dawn, he looked around his magnificent chamber and thought, "All this splendor belongs to King Cūlani-Brahmadatta. A king possessing such riches ought to be the emperor of all of Jambudīpa, and I should be his chief advisor."

Early that morning, he went to the king and, after the usual greetings, said, "Your Majesty, there is something I wish to say."

"Speak, then, Teacher," replied the king.

"Sire, a secret cannot be told in the town. We should go to the royal park."

"Very well," replied the king. "Let's go to the park."

Māthara was perched in a tree in the courtyard and heard this, so he followed them to the royal park and hid among the leaves of a sal tree above the king's stone seat.

At the entrance to the park, the king ordered his retinue to wait outside while he and Kevatta went alone inside. The king sat down and asked, "Now what do you wish to say to me, Teacher?"

"Sire, bend your ear this way," Kevatta said softly. "I don't want anyone else to hear this. I have a plan to make you emperor of all of Jambudīpa."

The greedy king listened eagerly and replied, "Just tell me what to do, and I will do it."

"Sire, let us raise an army and attack the capital of one of the small kingdoms on your border. With the city surrounded, I will enter the city and tell the king that there is no use in resisting. If he joins us, we will let him stay on as a figurehead. If he resists, we will utterly destroy him. In either case, with the combined armies we will attack another kingdom, and then another and another, until we have gained dominion over all of Jambudīpa. Then we will invite the one hundred one other kings to Uttarapañcāla to drink the cup of victory. We will serve them poisoned liquor and throw their bodies into the Gangā. With all of them out of the way, you will declare yourself the unrivaled emperor of Jambudīpa."

"An excellent plan, Kevatta!" cried the king. "How shall we begin?"

Kevatta was about to answer when Māthara let fall a messy dropping on the brahmin's head.

"What's that?" he asked, looking up with his mouth wide open. Māthara dropped another right into the advisor's mouth and flew away, crying, "Kevatta, you think your plan is for four ears only, but now it is for six! Soon it will be for eight, and then for hundreds of ears!"

"Catch that parrot!" the king and Kevatta shouted, but, as swift as the wind, Māthara flew away, straight back to Mithilā and through an open window in Mahosadha's house.

Māthara was well-trained. Whenever he returned, if the news he had was for the sage's ears only, he would perch on Mahosadha's shoulder. If Lady Amara was also to be privy to it, he would perch on

Mahosadha's lap. If the news was intended for everyone, he would land on the floor. When all those present saw the bird land on the sage's shoulder, they immediately withdrew.

With the bird still on his shoulder, Mahosadha climbed to the top story and asked him, "Well, my dear Māthara, what have you seen? What have you heard?"

"My Lord," the bird replied, "I found no danger in any other kingdom in all of Jambudīpa, but in the city of Uttarapañcāla there is a gathering threat. Kevatta, chief advisor to King Cūlani-Brahmadatta, took the king to the royal park and told him of his plan to conquer all of Jambudīpa. He warned the king that what he had to say was for four ears only and that no one else should hear, but I perched on a branch overhead and heard everything. As I was leaving, I dropped a piece of dung into the brahmin's mouth, so he knows that I heard, but he does not know that I was there on your orders." Then he told the sage the details of Kevatta's scheme.

"Did the king agree to the plan?" Mahosadha asked.

"Yes, he did, and they plan to get started right away," Māthara replied.

Mahosadha made sure that Māthara was well fed and returned him to his golden cage. "Kevatta does not know that I am the wise Mahosadha," he thought. "I will prevent him from carrying out this evil plan!"

Over the next few days, Mahosadha summoned all the rich and powerful families of the kingdom and settled them in the capital. As an extra precaution, he gathered even more grain and stored it in the city.

Following Kevatta's plan, King Cūlani-Brahmadatta began attacking the neighboring kingdoms, and, just as the brahmin had predicted, every king surrendered. It took Cūlani-Brahmadatta exactly seven years, seven months, and seven days to conquer every kingdom in Jambudīpa, except that of King Vedeha. As each kingdom was attacked and fell, the spy in that capital informed Mahosadha of what was happening. To each message, the sage replied, "I am on my guard! Continue to be alert yourself!"

"Teacher," King Cūlani-Brahmadatta said to his advisor, "the time has come for us to seize the kingdom of Vedeha. Let's attack Mithilā!"

"Sire," Kevatta replied, "Mithilā is home to the wise Mahosadha. He is so cunning and clever that I am afraid we will never be able to gain possession of that city as long as he is there, but, after all, Vedeha is a very small kingdom. Certainly, we don't need to bother with it. The rest of Jambudīpa should be enough for us."

This satisfied King Cūlani-Brahmadatta, but the one hundred other kings protested, "We will drink no cup of victory unless Vedeha is brought into the union. All of Jambudīpa must be included!" Disgruntled, they prepared to return to their own capitals.

"Come back!" Kevatta urged them. "Why should we bother about Vedeha? Mahosadha may be clever, but the king can easily be persuaded to join with us later. We'll just need a little patience. Let's all go to Kampilla and celebrate with a victory banquet!" The kings accepted this argument and set out for Uttarapañcāla with King Cūlani-Brahmadatta.

As this was taking place, Mahosadha's spies were sending messages to Mithilā. The first message was that an attack was imminent. The next message was that all the kings were returning home. Finally, the spies reported that the victory celebration would, indeed, take place in Uttarapañcāla. When Mahosadha received this message, he thought, "With a wise man like me alive, it is not reasonable that so many kings should be killed. I will save them!" He told his spies to let him know as soon as the date for the festivities had been set.

When King Cūlani-Brahmadatta and Kevatta arrived in Uttarapañcāla, they began making preparations for the victory banquet. Choosing an auspicious day, they ordered servants to decorate the royal park, to prepare an array of delicious meat and fish dishes, and to set out one thousand jars of wine. All this was reported to Mahosadha.

The sage sent for his one thousand companions and told them that he wanted them to go to Uttarapañcāla. "King Cūlani-Brahmadatta is going to hold a victory celebration," he said. "You must go to the royal park and, as soon as the one hundred other kings have arrived, you must claim the seat of honor next to Cūlani-Brahmadatta. Before any of them have had a chance to eat or drink anything, you must shout, 'This is for King Vedeha!' There will be a great outcry, and they will shout, 'For seven years, seven months, and seven days, we were conquering kingdoms, and, not once, did we see your king! What kind of king is this Vedeha? Go find him a seat at the end of the table!' Then you must shout, 'Except for Cūlani-Brahmadatta, no king is above our king! If you will not allow our king to sit here, we will not allow you to eat or drink!' Then you must rush around and break every pot of wine. Scatter the food so that it is unfit to eat. Shout in your loudest voices, 'We have been

sent by the wise Mahosadha of Mithilā! Catch us if you can!' When everything has been spoiled, escape from the park, and come back here."

The men did exactly as the sage had instructed them, and King Cūlani-Brahmadatta was furious that his cunning plan had failed. The kings, for their part, were disappointed and angry that they had been deprived of the delicious food and drink.

King Cūlani-Brahmadatta summoned the kings and urged them, "Let us go with our combined armies to Mithilā and teach King Vedeha a lesson. We will cut off his head and trample on it. Then we can come back and enjoy our great victory banquet. Prepare your armies! Let's leave immediately!"

Kevatta had no illusions about their chances of conquering Mithilā. He foresaw only failure, disappointment, and disgrace. "Sire," he pleaded, "King Vedeha is weak, but the city and the kingdom are managed by the sage Mahosadha, and he is very powerful. We can neither conquer nor outwit Mahosadha, nor can we take Mithilā as long as he is in control. Don't even think of fighting him! We shall only be disgraced!"

King Cūlani-Brahmadatta would not listen to his advisor. Thrilled by the prospect of becoming emperor of all Jambudīpa, he refused to be deterred. The combined armies of the one hundred one kings rode out of Uttarapañcāla and headed for Mithilā. Kevatta had no choice but to go along.

Mahosadha's warriors made it back to Mithilā in a single night and reported everything to the sage. His undercover agents, based all over Jambudīpa, sent word that Cūlani-Brahmadatta was marching on Mithilā with the one hundred kings and their combined forces to take King Vedeha.

The next morning, Mahosadha received updated reports from his spies informing him of the armies' progress. By the time they arrived, the sage was fully prepared. Guards were posted throughout the city to make sure that no invader could get inside.

King Cūlani-Brahmadatta threw a cordon of elephants, another of chariots, and a third of horses around the city. At regular intervals he placed infantry battalions.

There were so many torches that, as night fell, it seemed that Mithilā was encircled by a ring of fire. The elephants, horses, and soldiers created a deafening din. The four royal advisors had no idea what was happening and rushed to the king. King Vedeha had heard rumors that Cūlani-

Brahmadatta was on his way and told the advisors that he had probably arrived.

When King Vedeha looked out the window, however, he was shocked at the size of the regular army encamped outside the city wall. "This is dreadful!" he cried. "Tomorrow morning, Cūlani-Brahmadatta will undoubtedly slay us all!"

At that moment, Mahosadha entered. The king had never been so glad to see him. "No one but Mahosadha can save me from this calamity!" he thought, as the sage greeted him and stood respectfully at one side. "Cūlani-Brahmadatta has come with an infinite army of foot-soldiers, archers, chariots, horses, and elephants!" the king cried. "Our royal city of Mithilā is surrounded by the armed forces of all the kings of Jambudīpa who have come under his sway! Think, Mahosadha! What can we do? How can we defeat this monarch who is advised by ten wise men, skilled in strategy, and by his mother[2] who is the wisest of all?"

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2. Her reputation came from the following incident:

One day, a man started to cross a river, but, in midstream, he was caught in the current and could go no further. Afraid of drowning, he called to several men on the bank, "Help! I have here a bundle of husked rice, a portion of boiled rice wrapped in a leaf, and one thousand coins. I will give whichever of these I like to the man who will take me across!"

One of the men, who was very strong, quickly tied up his dhoti, dived into the water, and pulled the other man safely to the far side of the river.

"There you are!" said the strong man. "Now, pay me!"

"Certainly!" replied the other man. "Here is the husked rice."

"What? I risked my own life to save you! I don't want rice! Give me the money."

"My good man, I told you that I would give you whichever I liked. I choose to give you the husked rice. Take it, and be satisfied."

The strong man complained to a bystander, but he opined that the man he'd saved was giving what he liked and that the rescuer should just take it. Dissatisfied, the strong man complained before the court, but the judges all decided against him. As a last resort, he complained to the king, but even the king agreed with the man he'd saved.

When the king's mother, Queen Talatā, heard about the case, she asked the king whether he had carefully considered the evidence.

"Mother," the king replied, "I did the best I could. If you think you can judge the case any better, go ahead!"

"All right, I will," she declared.

She summoned the man who had been saved and said, "Friend, place here, for me to see, the three things you were carrying when you were in the water."

"The hungry man seeks refuge in food," Mahosadha thought; "the thirsty man, in water. The sick man's refuge is the physician, but I alone am the refuge of this king who trembles in fear for his life. I had better soothe his mind." Aloud he said, "Have no fear, Sire. Your royal power is secure. Everything is ready for this pretender's attack. I will scatter that mighty host as a farmer scares crows with a stone."

Mahosadha issued a proclamation which was read throughout the city accompanied by a drum: "Citizens! Have no fear! I, the wise Mahosadha, declare seven days of celebration! Let everyone enjoy food, drink, and all sorts of entertainment. Let there be music and dancing in every neighborhood. Dress up in your holiday best. Decorate the city with garlands and perfume. Everything is being offered as a gift from me. I will bear all expenses."

When King Cūlani-Brahmadatta heard the music and laughter, he summoned his advisors and asked, "What is the meaning of this? We have surrounded this city with our armies, but the population shows no fear or anxiety. They are enjoying themselves as if we were not even here! How can this be?" Mahosadha's spies told the king, "Sire, we had to go inside the city on business, and we asked the citizens this same

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(continued) The man placed the bundle of husked rice, the leaf of boiled rice, and the one thousand coins on the floor in front of the queen.

"Very good," said the queen. "Now tell me, when you were in the water, afraid of drowning, exactly what you said."

I shouted, 'Help! I have here a bundle of husked rice, a portion of boiled rice wrapped in a leaf, and one thousand coins. I will give whichever of these I like to the man who will take me across!'"

"All right," the queen said. "You may go. Take away whichever of these you like."

The man picked up the money and started to walk away.

"One moment!" called the queen.

The man stopped and turned around.

"Do you like the money?" the queen asked him.

"Yes, Your Highness."

"Did you or did you not say that you would give your rescuer whichever of these you liked?"

"That is what I said."

"Then you must give this man the money!" declared the queen.

Reluctantly, he surrendered the cash. While he wept and grieved at his loss, the assembly applauded the wisdom of the queen mother.

question. They told us that, when their king was a boy, he had a wish to hold a festival when all the kings of Jambudīpa were besieging the city. Now that the one hundred one kings are indeed attacking, to fulfill that wish, he has proclaimed a public festival, and he himself is celebrating inside the palace."

This news infuriated King Cūlani-Brahmadatta. He ordered a division of his army to attack, to destroy the gate towers, to break down the walls, to enter the city, to slaughter the inhabitants, and to bring King Vedeha's head to him as a trophy.

A battalion of warriors, in full battle gear, marched to the gate and the wall, but guards posted atop the wall assailed them with arrows, javelins, spears, clubs and rocks. As the soldiers tried to break through, the guards held up skewers of meat and fish. "If you can't conquer us, at least have a bite to eat!" they shouted as they gobbled the food themselves and shot more arrows at the invaders. At last, the soldiers were forced to retreat. "Sire," they reported to the king, "no one but a magician could get into that city!"

King Cūlani-Brahmadatta waited five days, but still he could not see any way to conquer Mithilā. He summoned Kevatta. "Teacher," he cried, "we cannot take the city! None of our soldiers can even get near it! What's to be done?"

"Don't worry, Your Majesty," Kevatta replied. "The city gets its water from outside. All we have to do is cut the water supply. If we set up a blockade, they will soon be so thirsty that they will have to open their gates."

"Brilliant!" cried the king, and he ordered soldiers to make sure no water got into the city.

As had been arranged, the sage's spies wrote messages on leaves, fastened them to arrows, and shot them into the city. In this way Mahosadha was continuously informed of all that was happening outside the walls.

"Cūlani-Brahmadatta and his advisors have no idea what I can do!" Mahosadha thought. He ordered men to fetch long pieces of bamboo. The men split the bamboo, removed the joints, and filled each piece with the mud and water lily seeds that the ascetics had brought from the Himavat. Then they rejoined the pieces and sealed them with mud. The lilies quickly sprouted, the stalks emerged from the ends of the bamboo, and the flowers bloomed.

The sage had the lilies pulled out of the bamboo. Men tossed the

magnificent flowers with their gigantic leaves and elongated stalks over the wall. "Hey, you servants of Brahmadatta," they shouted, "are you hungry? Here you are! Eat these stalks, and use the flowers to adorn your helmets!"

One of the sage's spies picked up one of the lilies and took it to King Cūlani-Brahmadatta. "Look at this, Your Majesty," he said. "Have you ever seen such a long stalk before?"

"Measure it!" ordered the king. The spy pretended to measure it and told the king that it was twice as long as it really was.

"Where did that grow?" asked the king.

"Inside the city, Sire," the spy replied. "Some of the guards threw these flowers over the wall this morning. Last week, being thirsty for a little toddy, I sneaked into the city and saw people in boats gathering flowers like this in great tanks."

The king was astonished. He summoned Kevatta and said, "Teacher, it is useless to try to cut off their water. Give up that tactic! What else can we do?"

"Well," said the brahmin, "let's starve them out. They have to get food from outside. We'll cut off their food supply."

"An excellent plan!" replied the king.

As soon as Mahosadha learned of this stratagem, he had mud laid along the top of the city wall and rice seedlings transplanted there. The rice quickly grew tall and was visible above the ramparts.

"What is that green above the wall?" King Cūlani-Brahmadatta asked.

One of the spies replied, "Sire, Mahosadha, the son of a farmer, foreseeing danger, collected grain from all the farmers in the kingdom. After filling all the granaries, men threw the surplus rice over the wall. Undoubtedly, this rice fell atop the wall and, soaked in the rain and warmed by the sun, grew up there on its own. Recently, when I was in the city on some business, I picked up a handful of this rice, and people laughed at me. 'If you're hungry,' they said, 'take as much as you want. We have more than we'll ever need.'"

Again, the king was astonished. He summoned Kevatta and said, "Teacher, it is useless to try to starve them out. Give up that tactic! What else can we do?"

"Well," said the brahmin, "let's cut off their supply of fuel. They will have to get fuel from outside to cook their rice."

"Good idea!" replied the king.

Mahosadha ordered that firewood be piled on the top of the wall so

that it towered over the rice. Guards threw logs down on the invading soldiers. "Use these to cook your rice!" they jeered.

"Is that firewood showing above the rampart?" the king asked.

"Yes, it is, Your Majesty," replied one of the spies. "The farmer's son, foreseeing danger, collected firewood and stored it in the sheds behind the houses. What was left over was stacked just inside the wall."

Again, the king was astonished. He summoned Kevatta and said, "Teacher, it is useless to try to cut off their fuel. Give up that tactic! What else can we do?"

"Well, Sire, I have another plan," replied Kevatta.

"What plan, Teacher?" asked the king. "I see no end to your plans. Vedeha cannot be taken; let's go back to our city."

"Sire," Kevatta pleaded, "if word gets out that Cūlani-Brahmadatta with one hundred other kings could not take Vedeha, we'll be disgraced. Mahosadha is not the only wise man; I am another. Let me think a moment. I have it! Let's propose a Battle of the Law!"

"What do you mean by that?" the king asked.

"A Battle of the Law, Sire, is a contest between the two sages of the kings. Whichever one bows to the other, loses. It's as simple as that. No armies need fight at all. Of course, Mahosadha will not understand what this is, and, being much younger than I, when we meet, he will bow to me in respect. You will declare me the winner, and Vedeha will be ours! We can return home with honor and hold the victory celebration."

King Cūlani-Brahmadatta was overjoyed. He immediately sent a message to King Vedeha; "Tomorrow there will be a Battle of the Law between our two sages. If you refuse to send your sage, you will be declared vanquished!"

Of course, Mahosadha had learned all the details of this stratagem even before the king received the challenge.

King Vedeha immediately sent for the sage. "My son," he announced, "Cūlani-Brahmadatta has challenged us to a Battle of the Law between our two sages. What is that, and what does it mean?"

"Sire," Mahosadha replied with a chuckle, "this is just a simple-minded game thought up by that foolish brahmin, Kevatta. It is nothing to worry about. Let us prepare for this Battle of the Law near the western gate. We will gather there tomorrow morning."

"Excellent!" replied the king, very much relieved.

"Oh, one more thing, Your Majesty," said Mahosadha. "I will need to borrow your eight-sided Verocanamani gem."

"Of course, my son," replied the king. "By all means, take it."

Early the next morning, Kevatta positioned himself in front of the western gate to wait for Mahosadha. Not knowing what was going to happen, the one hundred kings surrounded Kevatta to protect him. Mahosadha bathed in sweet-smelling water, put on a magnificent robe of the finest silk from Kāsi, took the gem, and mounted his chariot. Accompanied by his one thousand companions, he proceeded slowly to the western gate. When he arrived, he ordered that the gate be opened.

By this time, the sun had risen high in the sky, and Kevatta was sweating. As soon as he saw the crack in the doors, he began craning his neck to catch sight of his rival. Cool and unruffled, Mahosadha rode through the gate behind his great white horses. After crossing the moats, he stopped the chariot and stepped down, as majestic as a lion. As he deliberately strode forward, the one hundred kings were so impressed by his stately bearing that they called out, "Here comes the sage Mahosadha! Here is Sirivaddhaka's son, who has no equal for wisdom!"

Kevatta, also, was unable to restrain himself. He advanced and said in a loud voice, "Sage Mahosadha, we are both wise men. Although I have been living quite near to you for some time, you have never sent me even a token. Why is this?"

"Wise sir," Mahosadha replied softly, holding up the incomparable gem and allowing the sun's rays to reflect from its facets, "I have been searching for a gift which would be worthy of you. At last, I have found something. There is nothing like it in the whole world."

Kevatta was awestruck by the dazzling jewel. He held out his hands and cried, "Give it to me!"

Mahosadha dropped the gem onto the tips of Kevatta's fingers. The brahmin was unprepared for the weight of the huge stone, and it slipped from his fingers and fell at Mahosadha's feet. In his greed, the surprised brahmin stooped to pick it up.

Mahosadha quickly put one hand on the brahmin's shoulder and pushed him to the ground. With his other hand on the brahmin's back, he firmly held him down. "Rise, Teacher, rise!" he shouted. "I am younger than you, young enough to be your grandson! Do not pay obeisance to me. It is not proper! It is not right!" As he said this, Mahosadha ground the brahmin's forehead into the gravel until it was bloody. In a whisper so that only the brahmin could hear, he spat out his disdain, "You blind fool, did you really think that I would pay obeisance to you?" He released

the brahmin and shoved him away. Kevatta regained his balance and ran off.

Before Kevatta had straightened up, the kings and soldiers had seen him bow, and the shout went up, "The brahmin Kevatta is paying obeisance at Mahosadha's feet!"

King Cūlani-Brahmadatta was devastated. "My sage," he cried, "has paid obeisance to Mahosadha! We are vanquished!" He turned his chariot around and fled. The one hundred kings saw this, and they, too, began running away.

As they passed Kevatta, they vilified him, "Scoundrel! Wretched brahmin! Having declared a Battle of Law, you bowed down to someone young enough to be your grandson! What a disgrace!"

"Wait!" Kevatta cried. "I didn't bow to him! He tricked me with a gem! You must believe me! Stop!" No one bothered to listen to him. He jumped on a horse and rode after the kings, wiping the blood from his forehead as he went.

To tumultuous applause from all the troops of Mithilā, Mahosadha returned to the city.

After some time, Kevatta was able to convince the kings to rally the shattered army. This army was so huge that, had each man taken a handful of dirt and thrown it into a moat, they could have filled it in, but none of the soldiers showed the least initiative. They simply returned to their former positions and waited.

"What are we to do, Teacher?" King Cūlani-Brahmadatta asked Kevatta.

"Your Majesty," the brahmin replied confidently, "let's completely seal the city. Let neither anyone nor anything enter or leave the city. Eventually, the people will get so discouraged that they will have to open the gate. Then we storm the city and destroy it."

"Very well," replied the king.

Mahosadha knew of the plan almost before the king had replied. "This army is really a nuisance," he thought. "I must find a way to get rid of these pesky kings and their soldiers!" He told his companions that he needed a clever and stout-hearted man, and they brought him a man named Anukevatta, who perfectly suited his requirements.

"What am I to do, wise sir?" Anukevatta asked.

"Listen carefully," Mahosadha began. "Stand on the rampart, and, when the guards pretend to look the other way, let down cakes, fish, meat, and other food to Brahmadatta's men. Say to them, 'Here, eat this

good food, and don't be discouraged. The people inside the city are beginning to feel like hens in a coop. If you can hold out and stay here a few more days, they will throw open the gates themselves. Then you'll be able to capture both the king and that villain of a farmer's son.' Then our guards will shout, 'Traitor!' and seize you. In plain sight of Brahmadatta's soldiers, they will bind you hand and foot and beat you with bamboo sticks. They will tie your hair in knots, daub you with brick dust, and put a foul garland of kanavera flowers around your neck. I'll ask them not to beat you too severely, but they will have to raise some welts on your back to convince the enemy. Then they will lower you down outside the wall and shout, 'Go, traitor! Good riddance, double-crosser!'

"My spies will take you before Brahmadatta, and he will ask what happened. You must say to him, 'Your Majesty, I once enjoyed a high position in King Vedeha's court, but Mahosadha denounced me as a traitor and robbed me of everything. I vowed revenge on that son of a farmer. Inside the city, the people are starving and almost ready to give up. In order to encourage your soldiers, I stole as much food as I could find in the palace and dropped it over the wall. When the sage's guards found me, they beat me as you can see. Your own soldiers saw this and can tell you that it is all true.' The king will believe you and take you into his confidence. Once you are sure he trusts you completely, say to him, 'Sire, I am sure that the people inside the city are ready to give up. They no longer support the king and that farmer's son. Now is the time for you to launch an attack. I know the strong places and the weak places of the city wall. I know where the crocodiles are and how to cross the moat. I can lead your army into the city and deliver it into your hands.'

"The king will believe you, and he will let you lead the army. When you take the men to the moat, they will refuse to go across because they are afraid of the crocodiles. Then you must return and tell the king that the soldiers refuse to follow your orders. Suggest to him that the one hundred other kings, their armies, and even the brahmin Kevatta, have all been bribed by the farmer's son and can no longer be trusted. Convince him that you alone are loyal and true! Say 'If you don't believe me, summon the kings in full dress! Examine their belts and other accessories! You will see that they were all given to them by the farmer's son!' King Cūlani-Brahmadatta will summon the one hundred kings, and he will find that all the accessories are inscribed with my name.

This will fill the king with so much fear of betrayal that he will abandon them all. Then he will you ask what is to be done. You must reply, 'Sire, you must trust me. Even Kevatta has betrayed you. He may have a scar on his forehead, but he tricked you so that he could get the Verocanamani gem. Once he had the gem, he got you to retreat for three yojanas. Then he lied and regained your confidence. You can't trust him. Now, without an army, there is no way for you to capture the city. The farmer's son is too resourceful. If you stay here any longer, he will turn your army against you and they will deliver you to him. Your only hope is for the two of us to escape tonight. In the middle watch, you and I should take horses and flee so that we do not die by our enemies' hands.' Of course, he will follow your advice.

"While the king is resting, you must rig the reins so that the more they are pulled, the faster the horse goes. You can pretend to leave with the king, but he will soon be gone, and you can come back inside. Is all of that clear?"

"Good sir," Anukevatta replied, "I understand perfectly, and I will do exactly as you have instructed."

"Well, I'm afraid you will have to suffer a few blows," Mahosadha warned.

"Wise sir, do what you will with my body," Anukevatta replied. "Only spare my life and my limbs."

Mahosadha ordered that Anukevatta's family be well taken care of in his absence and sent his trusty agent with food to the top of the rampart. Anukevatta proved himself a most worthy actor, and the scheme was carried out perfectly and went precisely as planned.

As Anukevatta was returning toward the city, he shouted, "King Cūlani-Brahmadatta has fled!" Mahosadha's spies repeated the cry in every battalion. The guards on the ramparts began shouting and clapping their hands and led the citizens inside in a chorus of cheers so that the whole city was in an uproar.

The one hundred kings were sure that Mahosadha had opened the gates and was attacking them. All of them fled as fast as they could, without bothering to take any of their valuables. As soon as the officers and common soldiers realized that their leaders were fleeing, they, too, dropped everything they had and escaped. Before the sun rose, the entire invading force had disappeared.

When King Vedeha's soldiers opened the gates, they found the field strewn with booty. They asked Mahosadha what to do with it all.

"Everything they left is ours," he replied. "That which belonged to the kings should be given to our king. That which belonged to Kevatta should be given to me. As for the rest, soldiers and citizens may take what they like." Everyone rejoiced at the unexpected windfall. In recognition of his service, Anukevatta was given great honor.

When King Cūlani-Brahmadatta held a meeting in Uttarapañcāla with the one hundred kings, he discovered how he had been completely deceived by Mahosadha's plan, and he was ashamed.

One year later, when Kevatta looked in a mirror, he saw the scar on his forehead and thought, "That is the doing of the farmer's son! He made me a laughing-stock in front of King Cūlani-Brahmadatta and the other one hundred kings! What can I do to get revenge? I must bring down both him and King Vedeha! What to do? I've got it! Princess Pañcālacandī, King Cūlani-Brahmadatta's daughter, is peerless in beauty, like a deva. If King Vedeha hears of her beauty, he will be undone by desire like a fish that has swallowed a hook. With her as bait, I will trap both king and sage, kill them, and drink the cup of victory!"

He immediately went to King Cūlani-Brahmadatta and said, "Your Majesty, I have an idea."

"Really?" the king replied with sarcasm. "An idea of yours once left me without a rag to cover myself with. Whatever you have to propose now would be better left unspoken."

"Sire," Kevatta insisted, "there has never been a plan equal to this."

"All right," relented the king, "tell me what it is."

"Sire," Kevatta whispered, "we two must be alone."

"So be it," replied the king, and he led the brahmin up the stairs to the royal bedchamber.

"Your Majesty," Kevatta began conspiratorially, "I will arouse King Vedeha's desire, lure him here, and kill him."

"That sounds good, Teacher," replied the king, "but how are you going to arouse his desire?"

"Sire, your daughter Pañcālacandī is without equal in beauty. We will have poets celebrate her charms in verse. When these poems are sung in Mithilā, the king will become so intoxicated with her beauty that he won't be able to get her out of his mind. He will be so obsessed with the thought of possessing her that he will think, 'If I cannot get this pearl of maidens, of what use is my kingdom?' At that point, I will go to Mithilā and propose the match. The king will be overjoyed, and we will fix the day. When he and the farmer's son come to Uttarapañcāla,

they will be like fish that have swallowed hooks. All we have to do is kill them."

"You've hatched a fine plan, Teacher!" replied the king. "Let's carry it out!"

The king called for skillful poets and acquainted them with his daughter. He asked them to compose poems celebrating her face, her hair, her figure, and her voice and supported them while they worked. When they had finished, they recited to the king what they had written. He was very pleased and rewarded them handsomely. Next he summoned musicians, who learned the poems from the poets and set them to enchanting music. The king sent the musicians to all parts of Jambudīpa to sing the songs in every public place. Soon, everyone was singing the praises of the princess, and every king longed for her.

King Cūlani-Brahmadatta again sent for the poets, and said, "My sons, your poems have been very effective! Now I need new poems which express in the most beautiful language that a princess like my daughter is too good for any king in all Jambudīpa, except King Vedeha of Mithilā. Your poems must extol both my daughter's beauty and His Majesty." The king was again delighted with their work and paid them well. After the poems had been set to music, troubadours went to Mithilā and sang the songs on every street corner. Wherever they sang, people applauded and threw coins. At night, the troubadours climbed into the trees and tied bells on the roosting birds sleeping there. In the morning, as the birds flew away, the little bells tinkled in the air, and the troubadours sang their songs. The effect was of a heavenly chorus of devas singing the praises of their king and the foreign princess. King Vedeha sent for the musicians and asked them to perform in the palace. He was overjoyed to learn that King Cūlani-Brahmadatta was, in effect, offering him the princess, and he paid the troubadours handsomely. They returned to Uttarapañcāla and reported everything to Kevatta and King Cūlani-Brahmadatta.

"Sire," Kevatta advised, "it is time for me to go to Mithilā to fix the date and to bring King Vedeha back to Uttarapañcāla."

"Very good, Teacher," replied king. "Take appropriate gifts and go."

When Mahosadha had first heard the songs about the princess and King Vedeha, he had become suspicious. He asked his spies in Uttarapañcāla for an explanation, but they replied, "We do not know what all this means. We know only that the king and Kevatta went secretly to the royal bedchamber to discuss something shortly before

the poems and songs starting appearing. There is a female mynah bird who lives in that chamber. She surely knows what they discussed, but we have no access to the bird." The sage sent Māthara, the clever parrot, back to Uttarapañcāla to discover what secrets he could pry from the mynah.

When Mahosadha heard that Kevatta would be visiting Mithilā, he thought, "Our enemies must not be given any advantage. Kevatta must not be allowed to see the city!" He ordered that lattice work be erected on both sides of the street between the city gate and the palace. This was covered with beautifully painted mats. The road was strewn with flowers, and jars of drinking water were placed at regular intervals. Overhead, flags and banners fluttered in the breeze.

The citizens of Mithilā, however, had no suspicions. "At last, King Cūlani-Brahmadatta and King Vedeha will settle their quarrel!" they shouted. "Brahmadatta will give his daughter to our king! Kevatta is here to make the match!"

As Kevatta passed through the city, of course, he could not see any houses, shops, storerooms, or tanks, but he assumed that the king had decorated everything in his honor. He entered the palace, offered his gifts to the king, and sat down at one side. After a proper reception, he announced, "Your Majesty, a king who wishes for your friendship has given you these precious gifts. He sent me as an ambassador to offer you an excellent and beautiful princess to unite the people of Kampilla and Vedeha. Please come back with me, Sire, to Uttarapañcāla to receive this princess of peerless beauty."

The king was flattered by this proposal, but he hesitated to accept right away. "Teacher," he replied, "there was a quarrel between you and the wise Mahosadha at the Battle of the Law. Go now, and see my son. You two wise men must resolve your differences. After you've had a talk with him, come back." Kevatta agreed and went to see the sage.

Mahosadha had already decided not to talk with the wicked Kevatta. Early that morning, he had his servants remove all the chairs and seats from his chamber, leaving only one narrow couch for himself. Then he ordered them to smear wet cow dung on the floor and to cover the pillars with oil. He drank some ghee and instructed his servants, "When Kevatta comes, tell him that I have taken a dose of ghee and that he must not speak to me. When I start to speak, stop me, and say, 'My Lord, you have taken a dose of ghee. You must not talk." Finally, he lay down on his couch and covered himself with a red robe.

Kevatta arrived at the house and asked for Mahosadha. A servant told him that their master was in his chamber. "Brahmin," he continued, "do not make much noise; if you wish to go in, go silently. Today, the sage has taken ghee, and he cannot stand any noise." As Kevatta passed through the house, he was told the same thing at each door.

The seventh door led to Mahosadha's chamber. Kevatta entered, but, as he approached the sage, the dung oozed through his toes. He furtively looked around for a place to sit, but, finding none, continued standing uncomfortably and rubbing one foot against the other leg in a vain attempt to scrape off the filth. Mahosadha made as if to speak, but his servants told him to stay silent because he had taken a dose of ghee, adding, "Why should you talk with this wretched brahmin anyway?"

Kevatta noticed that the servants were staring at him. One rubbed his eyes, another lifted his eyebrows, and a third scratched his head and yawned. This rude behavior annoyed Kevatta, and he said, "Wise sir, I am going."

"Wretched brahmin," one of the servants snarled at him, "didn't we tell you to be quiet? If you make another sound, I'll break your bones!" Startled, Kevatta looked up, and another servant hit him with a bamboo stick. A third caught him by the throat and pushed him. Yet another slapped him on the back. Barely able to stand, but aghast at the thought of falling in the muck, Kevatta hurried away as best he could, like a fawn fleeing a panther.

While the king was waiting for Kevatta to return to the palace, he imagined how pleased Mahosadha would be to hear his happy news. He was sure that the two wise men were having a wonderful conversation, and he thought, "Today, they will be reconciled, and I will be the winner!"

As soon as he saw Kevatta, he asked, "How was your meeting with Mahosadha? Were you reconciled? Was he pleased?"

"Sire," Kevatta replied, "you may think that he is a wise man, but there is no man worse than he! He is ignoble, disagreeable, and obstinate, and he has a foul disposition! I went in to meet him, but he said not a word to me!"

This displeased the king, but he remained silent. He provided Kevatta and his attendants with all that they needed and told them to go and rest. After they left, the king thought, "My son is wise and has good manners. Still, he refused to speak courteously to this brahmin. Undoubtedly, he suspects something. My son must see some mischief

in this visit. He must think that Kevatta has come here for no friendly purpose. Perhaps the brahmin is trying to lure me to Uttarapañcāla so that Cūlani-Brahmadatta can capture me there. I wonder whether Mahosadha foresees some danger in this venture." As he was turning these thoughts over in his mind, the four other advisors entered.

Turning to Senaka, the king asked, "Do you think I should go to Uttarapañcāla to marry King Cūlani-Brahmadatta's daughter?"

"Sire, what a question! When good luck comes along, who would drive it away? King Cūlani-Brahmadatta knows that all the other kings of Jambudīpa are his vassals and that you alone are his equal. Obviously, that is why he wants to give you his peerless daughter. By going to Uttarapañcāla to marry the princess, you will unite the two greatest families, and all of Jambudīpa will be one great realm. Of course, we, too, will be rewarded." The other three advisors were of the same opinion.

While they were conversing, Kevatta arrived. "Sire," he announced, "I cannot linger here any longer. I must return to my own capital. I hope you will accept our hospitality and join us soon in Uttarapañcāla." The king spoke a few friendly words and let him leave.

When Mahosadha heard of Kevatta's departure, he bathed, dressed, and went to wait on the king.

The king, addled by passion, disregarded his own misgivings and ignored his regard for Mahosadha's insight, and asked, "Well, my son, all my other advisors think I should go to Uttarapañcāla. What do you think?"

"Oh, dear," the sage thought, "this greedy king is still foolishly listening to those four idiots. I wonder whether he will believe me when I warn him of the danger." Aloud he said, "Your Majesty, King Cūlani-Brahmadatta is powerful and ruthless, and he wants to kill you. His daughter is the bait on a hook, and, like a hungry fish, you are rushing to grab it. Go to Uttarapañcāla, and you will find yourself caught in a deadly trap like that which the hunter sets for the unsuspecting deer."

"How insulting!" thought the king. "Instead of offering me congratulations, he compares me to a deer and a fish! Does he think that I am so stupid as to fall into a trap? Haven't I sought the advice of four other wise men? Why is he trying to deprive me of the most beautiful woman in the world, the daughter of the most powerful king in Jambudīpa?" Aloud he said, "It seems, sir, that I was foolish to consult a farmer like you on important matters of state! How could you be expected to understand such things when you grew up hanging on to a plow?"

Raising his voice, he cried, "This clodhopper is spoiling my good luck! He is trying to deprive me of a rare jewel! Take him by the neck and throw him out." The king was shouting in anger, but he still respected the sage enough not to demand that any of his attendants carry out his command.

Mahosadha realized the danger he was in. Not wanting to be shamed by being manhandled, he saluted the king and returned to his house.

Meanwhile, after Mahosadha had released Māthara from the eastern window for the second time, the parrot flew directly to King Cūlani-Brahmadatta's palace in Uttarapañcāla and landed in the royal bedchamber. "Hello, my dear," he said to the sweet-voiced mynah. "I hope all is well with you? Are you happy in your fine cage? Does your master give you enough parched corn with honey?"

"All is well with me, sir," the surprised mynah replied, "and I am, indeed, happy. Yes, Mister Parrot, my master gives me enough parched corn with honey every day, but please tell me who you are, why you have come, and why you speak to me in this way. I don't believe that I have ever seen you before, nor have I ever heard of you."

"If I tell her I am from Mithilā, she will never trust me," Māthara reflected. On the way, he had noticed a town called Aritthapura in Sivi, so he said, "Until very recently, I was King Sivi's own chamberlain, but that righteous king set all prisoners, including me, free."

"Sir, you have come a long way," she replied, as she gave him some of the delicious corn and honey which had been served to her in a golden dish. "What has brought you here?"

"I once had a wife," he told her, "a sweet-voiced mynah, but, one day, right in front of my eyes, a hawk killed her."

"Oh, dear!" she cried. "How did that happen?"

"One day, the king invited us to a party at the tank in the royal garden. My wife and I had a joyous time playing in the water. In the evening, after we had returned to the palace, my wife and I flew out of a window and sat on the top of a pinnacle to dry our feathers. Suddenly, a hawk swooped down at us. I was able to fly away, but my wife's feathers were still very wet and heavy. The hawk easily snatched her in his sharp talons and carried her off. I saw that wretched brute of a bird tear her body apart and eat it. It was more than I could bear. When the king learned of this, he comforted me and urged me to look for another wife.

"Why should I wed another?' I asked him. 'Better to live alone!'

"He insisted and finally said, 'Friend, I know a lovely mynah, as virtuous as your late wife. She lives in King Cūlani-Brahmadatta's royal chamber. Go and court her. If she accepts your proposal, come and tell me, and my queen or I will bring her to Sivi with great pomp.' Thus, here I am."

Although his words pleased her, she didn't show her feelings. Instead, she asked, "Is it natural for a parrot and a mynah to mate?"

The parrot was pleased that she was not rejecting his advances. He felt confident that she was just being coy, so, hoping to gain her trust, he persisted. "When two beings are in love, caste has no meaning, but all are equal. In love there is no distinction. Consider Vāsudeva, king of Dvāravatī and the eldest of ten Andhakavenhu brothers. One day, as he was going to the royal park, he saw a stunningly beautiful girl standing by the roadside and immediately fell in love with her. Even though he was a khattiya and she was a candāla, when he learned that she was unmarried, he turned back, took her home, surrounded her with precious things, and made her his chief queen. This candāla woman, Queen Jambāvatī, was the mother of King Sivi. If even a great king had no qualms about marrying a candāla woman, why should we, who are mere animals, worry? If we wish to mate, there is no more to be said."

To strengthen his case, he gave another example, citing the story of Rathavatī, a kinnarī, who married an ascetic named Vaccha.

"My dear, perhaps you have heard of Vaccha, who renounced the world and became an ascetic in the Himavat. Not far from his hut of leaves, there was a cave inhabited by a number of kinnaras. Also in that cave lived a powerful and hideous spider, which caught the kinnaras in its web. The poor kinnaras were helpless against the spider and appealed to the ascetic for help. Vaccha refused, saying that he could never take the life of a living being. The kinnaras tempted him with a beautiful kinnarī named Rathavatī, and, as soon as Vaccha saw her, he fell in love with her. He took her as his mate, killed the dreadful spider with a club, and spent the rest of his life with her. They had many children and were devoted to each other. Vaccha was a human, and Rathavatī was a kinnarī, but we are both birds, so we can certainly do the same."

"My Lord," the mynah replied, "I am not a steady creature. I'm actually very passionate, and, if we were to become intimate and you ever left me, I'm afraid my heart would break."

"Well, my dear," the parrot replied in as captivating a manner as he could manage, "if you are so afraid of love that you want me to leave, I

will just go on my way. Obviously, dear, sweet-voiced mynah, you don't really care for me."

"No!" the mynah cried. "Don't say that! Wise parrot, act in haste and repent at leisure! Please remain here a little longer. You must meet our king and enjoy the splendors of our court." The parrot stayed and lived with the mynah long enough that he was sure of her confidence. One day, after he had become certain that she would not hide the secret from him, he said, "My dear!"

"What is it, My Lord?" she asked.

"I want to ask you something. May I speak?" he asked.

"Please do, My Lord."

"Oh, never mind," he replied. "Today is a festival. It can wait for another day."

"If what you have to ask is not unsuitable for a festival, please ask it now, My Lord," she insisted.

"Actually, it is about a festival day."

"Then speak."

"Well," he began, pretending reluctance, "I keep hearing a rumor, all over the country, that the daughter of your king, who is now our king, that is to say the mighty king of Uttarapañcāla, a beautiful young girl, who is as bright as a star, is going to be given to King Vedeha of Mithilā and that a great festival will be held to proclaim their wedding."

"My Lord," the mynah squawked, shivering her wings and ruffling her feathers, "on a festival day, you have said something most inauspicious!"

"What do you mean?" asked the parrot. "I thought that this marriage was most auspicious for everyone. How can something this joyous be unlucky?"

"My Lord," the mynah replied, suddenly clamming up, "I dare not say."

"Madam," the parrot responded, moving slightly away, "if you refuse to tell me what you mean, our happy union will come to an end! If you don't trust me, how can I marry you?"

"Don't say that, darling!" she cried. Then, lowering her voice, she said, "All right, I will tell you. You would not wish such a wedding on even your worst enemy! There will never be an unluckier match than this one between the kings of Kampilla and Vedeha."

"Why do you say such a thing, my dear?" he whispered, taking a cue from her.

"Listen, and I will tell you." she answered softly, revealing the entire plot to the parrot.

"This Kevatta is certainly clever and resourceful!" the parrot replied. "That's a perfect plan to kill the king and that haughty sage as well. I am very impressed! Nevertheless, such things mean nothing to us! We need not concern ourselves with anything so unlucky as that! Silence is best."

That night, he was particularly affectionate toward her to make sure that she did not suspect anything. The next morning, he announced, "My dear, I must return to Sivi and tell the king that I have found a loving wife. Please allow me to be gone for just one week. As soon as I have finished my business, I will return to you."

The mynah didn't want him to leave, but she could not refuse. "I give you permission to be away for seven nights, my darling, but, if you do not return to me in a week, I will die."

"My dear, how could I live for more than seven days without seeing you?" he asked, but what he really meant was, "What do I care whether you live or die?"

He flew through the window, and she watched him fly toward Sivi, never suspecting that he had no interest in that kingdom. Without once stopping to rest, he flew all the way to Mithilā and through the window of Mahosadha's house. He landed on the sage's shoulder, and everyone else in the room immediately got up and left. When the two of them were alone, the parrot revealed everything he had learned from the mynah.

Mahosadha thanked Māthara, fed him, and returned him to his golden cage.

"It's just as I suspected," Mahosadha thought. "The king is in great danger. He is an utter fool and has no notion of his own welfare. Blinded by his desire for the princess, he has no idea of the disaster awaiting him. He is determined to go to Uttarapañcāla and refuses to listen to my advice. Nevertheless, he is my great benefactor, and I should neither bear a grudge nor let his words bother me. If he goes unprotected, he will be destroyed. If I fail to protect him, I will be disgraced. As long as he has me to guard him, he is safe. I will go ahead of him, see the place, and arrange everything. Once more, I will outwit Kevatta and Cūlani-Brahmadatta. I will snare the princess for our king, even while being besieged by all the kings of Jambudīpa and their armies. I will perform a great feat, which only I can do. I will save our king, as the moon is

released from the jaws of Rāhu. I will bring him home safe and sound. His safe return is in my hands alone." As he made this resolve, joy pervaded his body, and he declared, "A man should always work for the interests of his patron."

After bathing and putting on his formal robes, he went to the palace. "Sire, have you decided to go to Uttarapañcāla?" he asked the king.

"Yes, I have," the king replied. "If I cannot win Pañcālacandī, what is my kingdom to me? My son, don't desert me! Come with me. By going there, I will gain two benefits. I will marry the most precious of women, and I will make friends with the king."

"Your Majesty," Mahosadha replied. "Allow me to go ahead. I will prepare a suitable place for you to stay and fix the date for the wedding. As soon as all the arrangements are completed, I will send word, and you can arrive in great ceremony."

"An excellent idea!" exclaimed the king, delighted that Mahosadha was not abandoning him, after all. "What do you need to take with you?"

"An army, Sire."

"Take as many men as you wish, my son."

"Thank you, Sire, I will begin recruiting the men I need, but I would also like to take all the men who are in your prison."

"Of course, my son," the king consented. "Do as you will. I give you a free hand!"

Mahosadha went to the prison and offered all the prisoners their freedom if they would follow him to Uttarapañcāla and obey his orders. They all agreed. He next asked the skilled shipwright, Ānandakumāra, to join him. Then he recruited eighteen different crews, composed of masons, blacksmiths, carpenters, painters, and men skilled in many other arts and crafts. They carried with them all the tools they would need. Accompanied by all these workers, the released prisoners, and his one thousand companions, the sage left Mithilā for Uttarapañcāla.

All along the route, Mahosadha had the men build villages at intervals of one yojana. In each village, he left a courtier with orders to prepare elephants, horses, and chariots to defend the king and to facilitate his return to Mithilā with his new bride, Princess Pañcālacandī.

When Mahosadha reached the Gangā, he summoned Ānandakumāra and told him to take three hundred carpenters upriver, where they were to procure choice timber and to build three hundred ships. They were to fill these ships with lumber and return as soon as possible.

With the rest of his army, Mahosadha crossed the river. From the

landing, he began choosing sites and pacing distances. "The great tunnel will be dug here. This is where we will build the city walls," he mused, "and the palace will be here," he continued as he walked toward Uttarapañcāla. "The small tunnel will extend this way into the city." Having decided the layout for his construction, he mounted his chariot and entered the capital.

King Cūlani-Brahmadatta was extremely pleased to hear that Mahosadha was, at last, arriving. "My cherished dream will soon be realized!" he gloated. "King Vedeha will follow him shortly. Then, after I have killed the two of them, I will control Vedeha, and I will be emperor of all Jambudīpa!"

As soon as the sage appeared, people flocked into the streets to see him. "Here is the wise Mahosadha!" they cried. "He put to flight the one hundred one kings like crows scared by a clod of earth!" The citizens of Uttarapañcāla could not help but admire Mahosadha's handsome features as he proceeded to the palace.

The king greeted him and asked, "My son, when will King Vedeha come?"

"When I send for him, Your Majesty," Mahosadha replied.

"Why have you come alone?"

"I must build a place for our king to stay, Sire."

"Good, my son." He settled Mahosadha in a beautiful mansion and provided everything necessary for his entourage. "Please make yourself at home while you are here," he said. "I'm sure you will be quite busy, but, if you find anything in our palace or capital which needs to be done, we would be delighted to have your assistance."

As soon as Mahosadha had entered the palace, he noticed the staircase leading to the royal chambers and thought, "This is where we should construct the entrance to the small tunnel, but we must be careful that the stairway doesn't collapse while we are digging." Aloud he said, "Your Majesty, as I passed by the great staircase, I noticed that there is a fault in its construction and that it is in danger of collapse. If I may be allowed, I could easily reinforce it to make it safer for you and your family."

"By all means, my son," replied the king. "We would be very grateful. Please do it!"

After placing curtains all around the staircase so that no one could see what was happening, Mahosadha dismantled the entire structure, excavated the ground beneath it, and built a sturdy wooden platform to

support the staircase and to serve as the entrance to the small tunnel. Then he quickly installed a secret door and replaced the stairs. When he was finished, it looked exactly the same as it had before. The king was delighted that Mahosadha was so filled with goodwill and concerned for the welfare of his hosts.

Having completed that project, Mahosadha approached the king and said, "Sire, if I could know where our king is to stay, I could arrange everything for him."

"Very good, wise sir," replied the king. "You may choose for your king any place in the city, except my palace."

"Sire," Mahosadha continued, "we are strangers here. If we were to take over the house of one of your favorites, there would be an uproar, which would be very unpleasant for you and for us."

"Wise sir," the king insisted, "pay no attention to any objections. I give you leave to choose whatever place pleases you the most."

"Thank you, Sire." Mahosadha replied. "We will bother you no more. May I post guards to prevent people from disturbing you about this?"

"Of course, my son!" agreed the king. "That would be very kind of you."

Mahosadha placed his own guards at the bottom of the stairs, at every door, and at every gate of the palace, with orders that no one be admitted to see the king.

The sage first sent his men to the palace of Talatā, the queen mother, to act as if they were going to pull the entire building down.

As soon as they began chipping at the walls and foundation, the queen mother appeared and shouted, "Who are you, and what do you mean by tearing down my house?"

"Mahosadha, the great sage, wants to build a new palace for his king on these grounds," the men replied as they continued working.

"But this is a perfectly good palace," insisted the queen mother. "If you must have it, your king may live here as long as he likes."

"Our king's retinue is very large, Madam. This house is much too small. We must tear it down and build a much larger palace."

"Obviously, you do not know who I am!" she shouted indignantly. "I am the queen mother! I will go to my son and see about this!"

"Your Highness," they replied calmly, "we are acting on the king's orders. Go ahead and ask him if you want."

The queen mother stormed off angrily, but Mahosadha's guards would not let her enter the palace.

"What do you mean by this?" she cried. "I am the king's mother!"

"We know who you are, Your Highness," the guards replied, "but the king has ordered us not to let anyone enter. He does not want to be bothered. Please go away!"

She sullenly returned and watched the men beginning to destroy her elegant palace.

"What are you doing back here?" shouted one of the workers as he grabbed her and threw her to the ground. "Go away, and let us get on with our work!"

"This really must be the king's orders," she thought, as she stood up and dusted herself off. "Otherwise, they would never dare do this. I must go and see the sage himself."

She hurried to Mahosadha's residence, but he insisted that he was too busy to talk with her and suggested that she file a complaint with his foreman.

"My son," she pleaded with the foreman, "why are your men tearing down my palace?"

"Didn't they tell you, Madam?" the foreman asked her. "We must build a new palace for King Vedeha."

"In this great city," she said, "there must be many other good places where you can build a suitable palace. "Here!" she cried, placing several bags of money in front of him. "Accept this gift of one hundred thousand coins and leave my palace alone. Build a glorious palace for your king on some other spot."

"Madam!" the foreman replied with a look of surprise. "We will accept this generous gift and leave your palace only if you promise that you will not reveal to anyone that you have given this money to us. If others learn of this, they might also try to bribe us in order to spare their own houses."

"My son," she whispered, "if word ever got out that the queen mother bribed you, the shame would be mine! You can be sure that I will tell no one."

The foreman returned with her to her palace and told his workers to stop. She thanked him and went inside.

Mahosadha next sent his men to Kevatta's house. Of course, the advisor was also upset and hurried to the palace. The guards barred his entry and beat him with bamboo sticks until his back bled. He also offered one hundred thousand coins to the foreman.

In this way, Mahosadha's men crisscrossed the entire city and

collected nine crores of coins. He went himself to the palace, thanked his guards, and sent them away. Then he went in to see the king.

"Did you find a suitable place?" the king asked him.

"Sire," the sage replied, "we looked at many houses, and all the owners were willing to cooperate, but, as soon as we started working, they were stricken with regret and asked us to stop. We do not wish to be the cause of any unpleasantness or hard feelings. However, outside the city, not far from the gate, between the city and the Gangā, there is a suitable place where we could build a palace for our king without disturbing anyone."

The king was extremely pleased with this suggestion. "Fighting an enemy's army inside the city would be difficult" he thought. "It would be hard to distinguish friend from foe. Outside the city, we could easily defeat Vedeha." Aloud he said, "Excellent, my son! Build your palace in the place you have seen."

"Thank you, Sire." Mahosadha replied. "We would like to request that none of your subjects come onto the construction site, looking for firewood, herbs, or such things. If they do, there might be quarrels, and that would be unpleasant for everyone."

"Of, course, my son. I will tell everyone to stay away from your construction site."

"One more thing, Your Majesty. Our elephants like to frolic in the river. We hope that none of your subjects complain that the water has gotten too muddy. Please tell them to let the water settle a little longer before using it, and it will be clean enough for bathing and drinking."

"Let your elephants play," the king replied.

The king had it proclaimed throughout the land: "No one is to enter the site where the sage Mahosadha is constructing a palace for King Vedeha. Violators will be fined one thousand coins. No one is to complain that the water is too muddy. This is a temporary inconvenience."

Mahosadha led his army of workers to the bank of the Gangā and showed them where to erect the wall of the new city to be called Upakāri. He also indicated the location of the palace for the king, the houses for all the courtiers who would be coming, and the layout of the streets. While they were leveling the site, the three hundred ships which he had commissioned arrived, carrying not only the lumber that was needed but also all the furnishing for the palace and the houses. As soon as the ships were unloaded, Mahosadha had the sailors conceal them in a secure place from which they could be summoned at short notice.

On the other side of the Gangā, he ordered men to build a village where he would station the elephants, horses, chariots, cattle, and oxen.

Then he called sixty thousand men to begin digging the great tunnel, which extended from the palace in Upakāri to the bank of the Gangā. As they excavated, the dirt was carried to the river in leather sacks and dumped into the water. Elephants trampled it as they sported in the water, and the Gangā became muddy. As Mahosadha had predicted, citizens were upset that the water was unfit for use, but they dared not complain.

Seven hundred men began digging the small tunnel which extended from the great tunnel, under the new palace to King Cūlani-Brahmadatta's palace. The dirt from that excavation was also brought out in leather sacks, but it was mixed with straw and water, and used for constructing walls.

The main door of the great tunnel was eighteen hatthas high. In all, there were eighty great doors and sixty-four smaller ones. All of the doors were cleverly fitted with mechanisms so that they could be opened and closed simultaneously with the turn of a single handle.

The sides of the great tunnel were brick, covered with stucco and polished with lime. The ceiling was wooden planks, polished white with powder from conch shells. Built into the walls were hundreds of cells for lamps. The doors of these cells were also mechanically fitted so that one switch opened or closed them simultaneously. Along both sides of the great tunnel, doors led to one hundred one chambers. Each chamber contained a bed with a multi-colored cover, a throne over which was raised a white umbrella, and a statue of a beautiful woman, so realistic that, without touching it, no one could tell that it was not warm and breathing. The doors of these rooms were also controlled by a central device.

On the walls of the great tunnel, skillful artists had painted all manner of scenes—the splendor of Sakka, majestic Mount Sineru, the seas and the ocean, the four continents, the Himavat, Lake Anotatta, Manosila, the sun and the moon, the heaven of the Four Great Kings, and more. The ceiling was painted with lotuses, and pure white sand covered the floor. Bouquets of flowers were hung here and there. The tunnel, indeed, resembled the divine hall of Sudhamma.

Four months from the beginning of construction, Upakāri was finished. The small tunnel, the great tunnel, the palace and all the other houses were completed. The wall around the city had been erected, and

three moats had been dug. It was truly a wonder to behold. Mahosadha sent a messenger to summon King Vedeha, who eagerly set out with a great retinue.

Mahosadha met him on the bank of the Gangā, and escorted him to the palace in Upakāri. After eating a delicious meal and resting, the king sent a message to King Cūlani-Brahmadatta: "Sire, I have come to pay my respects and to receive your beautiful daughter, full of grace and charms, to be my wife."

Naturally, King Cūlani-Brahmadatta was delighted. "There is no way my enemies can escape me now!" he thought. "I will split open both of their skulls and drink the joyous cup of victory!" He treated the messenger with respect and sent this reply, "Welcome, Vedeha! Please ascertain from your astrologers the most auspicious time, and I will give you my dear daughter, attended by her handmaidens, in marriage."

King Vedeha immediately sent a return message: "What day and time could be more auspicious than now?"

As soon as King Cūlani-Brahmadatta had received this message, he summoned the most trusted palace guards and ordered them to take his mother, Queen Talatā; his consort, Queen Nandā; his son, Prince Pañcālacanda; and his daughter, Princess Pañcālacandī; as well as their retainers to a secure apartment inside the palace and to protect them there. To King Vedeha, however, he sent the message: "I give you my daughter, the most beautiful and graceful of women, to marry now, at this very auspicious hour." He sent a completely different message to the one hundred kings: "Prepare for battle! The time has come for us to besiege the new city of Upakāri and to slay our two worst enemies, King Vedeha and the sage Mahosadha. Then we can drink the cup of victory together." With that, King Cūlani-Brahmadatta led his army and the forces of all the other kings in an attack on the new city of Upakāri.

As soon as Mahosadha was sure that King Cūlani-Brahmadatta had left his palace, he summoned three hundred of his companions and told them: "Go swiftly through the small tunnel to the palace in Uttarapañcāla. Go up the staircase to the apartment where the queen mother, the king's consort, his son, and his daughter are staying. Bring them to the main tunnel and make them comfortable until I arrive with the king. When you hear us in the tunnel, escort them to the great hall at the other mouth of the great tunnel, on the bank of the Gangā."

The men hurried through the great tunnel and the small tunnel and

quietly opened the secret door at the foot of the staircase. They quickly seized the guards who had been stationed there and bound and gagged them without anyone else in the palace suspecting what was happening. After enjoying some of the king's food, they mounted the staircase and found the royal chamber.

The queen mother was surprised to see these strange guards and asked what was happening. "Your Highness," Mahosadha's men replied excitedly, "your son has been victorious! King Vedeha and Mahosadha have been slain! Our king is now the ruler of all of Jambudīpa. He asked us to escort you to the field where he is preparing to drink the cup of victory with the one hundred other kings. Please come, all of you!"

Without any misgivings, the royal family followed the guards to the foot of the staircase. As they were entering the small tunnel, they asked one another, "Have you ever been here before? Do you remember this street?"

"This is a special route," the guards answered. "Because today is such a special day, the king told us to fetch you this way."

As soon as they were in the tunnel, others of Mahosadha's companions roamed through King Cūlani-Brahmadatta's palace, overcoming the guards and pillaging the valuables. They even broke into the treasury and took away as much as they could carry.

When the royal family reached the large tunnel, they could not believe their eyes. "When did my son build this?" asked the queen mother as she admired the paintings.

"This is the most beautiful hallway I have ever seen!" exclaimed the queen.

"These beds are magnificent!" exclaimed the princess.

"Look at these statues!" cried the prince. "They are so lifelike!"

They were completely at ease as they settled down in a well-furnished chamber to await the summons of the king. One of the sage's companions went to inform Mahosadha that they had arrived.

Meanwhile, King Vedeha was in his palace, impatiently awaiting his bride. Becoming restless, he wandered to the window and gazed out. "What is this?" he cried when he saw the torches blazing all around the city. "Why are all those soldiers and cavalry out there? What does this mean?"

"Sire," Senaka reassured him, "don't worry. I am sure that Cūlani-Brahmadatta is bringing his daughter to you. It is dark, so, of course, the escorts have lit the way with torches."

"No doubt he has sent a special honor guard to welcome you," Pukkusa added.

Not satisfied with these foolish opinions, the king remained at the window. Listening carefully, he could hear voices. "Put a detachment here!" someone shouted. "Set a guard there!" shouted another. "Be vigilant!" shouted a third. He was sure that he could see thousands of fully armed soldiers. Quaking with fear, he turned to Mahosadha. "What is the meaning of that great army?" he asked the sage. "Please assure me that we are not in grave danger!"

"Let me shock some sense into this blind fool of a king!" Mahosadha thought. Aloud he said, "Sire, as you can see, we are surrounded by the mighty army of King Cūlani-Brahmadatta and the other kings. Tomorrow morning, Brahmadatta will kill you. He never intended to give you his daughter."

The advisors began quaking so much that they could barely stand. The king's mouth became dry, and his hair stood on end. "My temples are throbbing!" he cried. "My mouth is parched, and my heart has turned to ice!"

"Your Majesty," Mahosadha continued, "in Mithilā, you ignored my advice. Now let your clever advisors save you if they can. I clearly warned you that coming here would bring disaster. A king who ignores his most faithful servant deserves what he gets. You insisted on satisfying your desires. Like a greedy fish, you were so eager for the bait that you didn't notice the hook hidden in the lure. Now that you are caught, you recognize that hook which promises death. Blinded by lust, you mocked my good advice and failed to recognize the king's daughter as your own downfall. Accusing me of trying to deprive you of a beautiful maiden, you called me a farmer and ordered your men to take me by the neck and throw me out. Well, Sire, since I am a mere clodhopper, how could I possibly know what to do in a case like this? Ask Senaka and your other advisors. Counseling kings is not my trade. Let these sages rescue you from the deadly army that surrounds you."

The king recognized his faults, but he was confident that Mahosadha had arranged for his safety. "My son," he replied softly, "do not throw the past in my face. What you are doing is like spurring a horse still hitched to a post! If you see an escape, save me! Please stop scolding me!"

"It is too late for me to do anything, Sire. If you have a flying elephant

or a magical horse, ride it, and escape. I can do nothing for you. You must manage on your own."

"Mahosadha," Senaka begged, "when a man lost in the mighty ocean finds a foothold, he is filled with joy. You, wise sir, are firm ground to stand on. Best of counselors, please rescue us from this disaster!"

"I have told you that it is too late." Mahosadha replied. "There is nothing I can do. Senaka, save your king and yourself!"

The king was ashamed to plead with Mahosadha. He turned to Senaka and said, "You see the great peril we are in, Senaka. What should we do?"

"Your Majesty, let us set fire to the door!" Senaka suggested, unable to come up with anything positive. "Let us take swords and slay one another! That would be better than letting Brahmadatta kill us by slow torture."

"You fool!" the king shouted angrily. "You seem to be ready for your own funeral, but I am not! What do you suggest, Pukkusa?"

"Sire," Pukkusa replied, terribly shaken, "we had better all take poison and die peacefully. Cūlani-Brahmadatta certainly is planning to kill us most painfully!"

"Idiot!" cried the king. "Poison may be good enough for you and your wife, but I am not ready to lie down and die! What do you suggest, Kavinda?"

"Sire," Kavinda replied, "the situation is very grave. Let us hang ourselves from the rafter and die quietly. Who knows what this king has in store for us?"

"Dolt!" cried the king. "You and your relatives may hang themselves as high as you please, but I am not interested in that! What do you suggest, Devinda?"

"Sire," Devinda replied, "I agree with Senaka. We could set fire to the palace and throw ourselves on our swords. However, there is one other possibility, which is really our only hope. Your Majesty, we are no more than fireflies compared to the bright flame of Mahosadha! Only he can save us. Rather than wasting your time and your breath asking us what to do, Your Majesty should be pleading with Mahosadha to rescue you from this peril! His wisdom is great!"

The king, however, recalling how badly he had treated the sage, could no longer even look him in the face. "We are like the man who sought heartwood in a banana plant!" he moaned. "We have found no solution to our misery! Here I am in mortal danger but surrounded by worthless

men who know nothing! My heart is pounding, and I see nothing but darkness!"

"Your Majesty, let your heart cease its pounding," Mahosadha consoled him. "Do not despair! As long as I am here, you have nothing to fear. I will set you free, as one frees the moon when it has been seized by Rahu. As one frees an elephant sunk in the mud, a snake shut in a basket, or a fish caught in a net, I will release you from this trap! You, your advisors, your courtiers, and your army—all will be safe. I will chase away your enemies as one scares the crows with a clod. Of what use is your sage's wisdom if it cannot extract you from such difficulties as these?"

"My son!" cried the king, much relieved. "I feel alive again! With you to help us, I know that we are safe!"

"Wise sir, I am sure that you truly can save us," Senaka declared, "but how will you manage to spirit us away from this danger?"

"You will escape through an elaborate tunnel. Prepare yourselves!"

He ordered one of his men to turn the handle, and the door of the great tunnel swung open. Everyone gasped when they saw the blazing lights before them.

"Come, Your Majesty," Mahosadha beckoned. "It is time to go."

Senaka, who was standing behind the king, took off his turban and loosened his gown. "What are you doing?" Mahosadha asked him.

"Wise sir," he replied, "in a tunnel, a man must take off his headdress and wrap his clothes around himself tightly."

"Senaka," Mahosadha said, correcting him, "in this tunnel, there is no need to crawl on your knees, nor will you even need to stoop. If you wished, you could ride through on an elephant! This lofty tunnel is eighteen hatthas high, with a wide door. Wear what you like, and go in front of the king."

Senaka and the other advisors went first, the king followed them down the stairs, and Mahosadha was right behind the king. As they walked through the great tunnel, the advisors were constantly pointing and exclaiming, "Look at that!" "How beautiful!" "What a marvel!" The king, dazzled by the splendor of it all, repeatedly stopped to stare at the paintings on the walls and the ceiling. Mahosadha gently urged him on. The entire entourage relished the plentiful rice, curries, and delicacies piled on the tables against the walls, as well as the delicious beverages in innumerable pots.

When the guards learned that their king and his entourage had entered the great tunnel, they escorted King Cūlani-Brahmadatta's family out the other end and seated them in the main hall on the bank of the river. When the four royals saw King Vedeha and Mahosadha emerge from the tunnel, they shrieked in fear. "We're in the hands of our enemies!" they cried. "Those were the sage's soldiers who came for us! We've been captured! Help!"

At that moment, King Cūlani-Brahmadatta, who was about halfway between Upakāri and the Gangā, heard their cries. He clearly recognized the voice of his queen but dared not say anything for fear that his soldiers would scoff at him for imagining things.

Mahosadha seated Princess Pañcālacandī on a great heap of treasure and performed a wedding ceremony by sprinkling her with lustral water. "Here, Sire, is the prize for which you came to Uttarapañcāla!" he proclaimed. "Let her be your queen!"

The three hundred ships silently glided up to the pier beside the great hall. The king, the new queen, her mother, her grandmother, and her brother boarded one of the richly decorated vessels.

"Pañcālacandī was born a royal princess, Sire," Mahosadha advised the king from the bank of the river. "Respect her as your queen. Protect Prince Pañcālacanda as your brother. Treat Queen Nandā as your esteemed mother-in-law. As long as I am safe, let no harm come to them." Mahosadha did not feel that it was necessary to mention the queen mother because she was an elderly matron.

"Of course, my son," replied the king, "but what do you mean, 'as long as I am safe?' Why are you still standing on the riverbank? Come aboard quickly. We have escaped from great danger. It is time to go. Surely, you are coming with us!"

"No, Sire," the sage replied, "I cannot go with you. We still must confront King Cūlani-Brahmadatta, who is besieging your new city. I cannot abandon our army. The men who came with you are weary from travel. My men are fatigued from all the construction work they have been doing for the last four months. I will return with all of them, with the consent of Cūlani-Brahmadatta himself. Go, Sire, with all speed! Do not tarry at any point. I have stationed relays of elephants and chariots all along the route. Return quickly to Mithilā!"

"Yours is a small army against a great one. How can you prevail?" asked the king, greatly concerned for the safety of the sage.

"A small army with wise leadership can easily conquer a huge

force that has none," Mahosadha replied, "just as the rising sun dispels the darkness." Mahosadha saluted the king and signaled for the ships to leave.

As he sailed across the river, the king reflected on how he had been saved from the hands of his enemies and how, by winning the princess, he had gained his fondest wish. He also reflected on the sage's virtues. "True happiness comes, Senaka," he declared, "from living with the wise."

When the ships arrived on the other side of the Gangā, elephants, horses, and chariots were waiting. At the end of each day, having traveled one yojana, they arrived in a village, where fresh elephants, horses, and chariots had been prepared. At every point, food and drink for the royal party and water and fodder for the animals was amply provided. Thus, they reached Mithilā refreshed, yet without delay.

Still on the bank of the Gangā, Mahosadha turned and walked back toward the great tunnel. At the entrance, he took off his sword and buried it in the sand. Then he entered the tunnel and walked to Upakāri. After bathing in scented water, he ate supper and retired to his bed, satisfied that he had accomplished what he had set out to do.

The next morning, King Cūlani-Brahmadatta, mounted on his most powerful elephant, which was a sixty-year-old tusker, ordered his combined army to attack Upakāri. "Storm the palace, but take King Vedeha alive!" he shouted. "Even if Vedeha could fly like a bird, he would not be able to escape from me now!"

Inside the city, the army of Vedeha and Mahosadha's companions, who had not been given orders to fight and did not know that the king was gone, were unsure what to do. They rushed to protect the sage. Mahosadha had awakened unperturbed, completed his toilet, and was leisurely having his breakfast. When his companions informed him that King Cūlani-Brahmadatta was at the gates of the palace, he mindfully put on his robe of Kāsi silk worth one hundred thousand coins and his golden slippers, took up his formal staff inlaid with precious jewels, and stepped onto the terrace.

"Welcome to our city, Sire," he said to King Cūlani-Brahmadatta. "You look very happy, as if you have achieved a great success. Put down your bow and arrows and come in. Why are you goading your elephant so fiercely?"

"Don't mock me, you clodhopper!" cried the king. "You speak with a

smile on your face, but you and your king have a rendezvous with death this very day!"

The soldiers of the combined army were struck by the sage's handsome visage, and they strained to hear his words.

"You do not know what I am capable of doing. Have you forgotten that I am the wise Mahosadha? I will not allow you to kill me, nor to kill my king. The plan which you and Kevatta devised has been thwarted. Last night, King Vedeha crossed the Gangā with all his courtiers and attendants."

King Cūlani-Brahmadatta could not imagine how such a thing was possible, but he instinctively knew that Mahosadha was not lying. He was furious to think that he had again been outsmarted. He was doubly furious to have been made a fool a second time. "Seize him!" he shouted to his soldiers. "Cut off his hands and feet, slice off his ears and his nose. Because of him Vedeha has slipped away! Cut off his flesh and cook it on skewers!"

"Sire," Mahosadha called out in a loud, convincing voice, "Let your men cut off my hands, my feet, my ears, and my nose. You can be sure that King Vedeha will deal with your family in the same way. If you cut off my flesh and cook it on skewers, my friends in Mithilā will roast Princess Pañcālacandī, Queen Nandā, and Prince Pañcālacanda in the same way. This was our agreement when he left."

"What do you mean, you damned yokel? My wife, my daughter, and my son are closely guarded in my palace! Are you so afraid to die that you resort to foolish, empty threats?"

"Are you sure, Sire? Send some of your men to go and look. Let them tell you that your inner apartments are empty and that your guards are in bonds. Your wife, your daughter, your son, and your mother were spirited quite willingly out of the palace through a secret tunnel. They were given to King Vedeha, and they left with him last night."

For a moment, the king was speechless. "Could it be that what I heard truly was the voice of Queen Nandā?" he wondered. "This sage speaks with such confidence! Who knows what he is capable of?" Aloud he shouted to the soldier next to him, "Go! Hurry to my palace to see whether my family is still in the upper apartment! Tell me that the sage is lying!"

The messenger galloped off. Dismounting and rushing through the palace, he found the guards bound, gagged, and hanging on hooks. Broken vessels were scattered about, and the doors of the treasury

were open. The inner apartments were deserted. As fast as he could, the soldier rode back to report all of this to the king. When he heard the messenger confirm what Mahosadha had said, the king began trembling with grief.

Mahosadha could see that the king's grief was developing into anger directed at him. To protect himself, Mahosadha stepped back from the edge of the terrace and began praising Queen Nandā. "Last night, Sire, the most beautiful woman, adorned with sparkling jewels, stood on the bank of the Gangā. Around her slender waist she wore a golden belt. Her supple limbs swayed beneath dark silk as she gracefully walked across the courtyard. Her lips were ruby red, her eyes sparkled like a pigeon's, and her long black hair curled slightly at her waist. When she spoke, she charmed the world with music. The beauty of the queen was like a flame in winter."

As the king listened to Mahosadha's description of his wife, a great longing arose in him, not only for his wife, but for his children, as well. Then, with the realization that only the sage could return them to him, he was filled with sorrow.

"Don't be troubled, Sire. Your queen, your son, and your mother will all come back safely to you. The only condition is my safe return to Mithilā."

"Mahosadha," King Cūlani-Brahmadatta called, still sitting on his elephant, "My palace in Uttarapañcāla was closely guarded. The armies of the one hundred kings had Upakāri surrounded. Still, you were able to abduct my queen, my daughter, my son, and my mother right from under my nose and to send them off with King Vedeha. How did you do it? Are you a master of magic?"

"Sire," Mahosadha replied, "you might say that I do, indeed, know magic. A wise man must be constantly on his guard to understand what is happening so that, when danger arises, he can save both himself and others. I have many young companions who are clever at overcoming obstacles, so, when I saw the threat which was coming, I was able to summon them. I devised secret passages, and, with the help of my companions, we whisked your family and our king to the Gangā and on to Mithilā."

"Where are these secret passages?" asked the king. "Did my wife and mother crawl through tunnels all the way from the palace to the river?"

"Come with me, Sire," Mahosadha replied, "and you will see my great tunnel. There is no need to crawl. It is brightly illuminated and large

enough for an elephant. Bring your army and come into the city of Upakāri. Let me show all of you my tunnel."

The sage ordered that the city gate be thrown open, and King Cūlani-Brahmadatta entered, followed by the one hundred other kings. Mahosadha left the terrace, saluted the king, and led the entire party into the tunnel.

When the main door opened, the king felt that he was standing before the gate of Sudhamma Hall in Tāvatimsa. The light from the thousands of torches blinded him. The tunnel was larger than any palace he had ever seen. He was sure that the paintings had been done by the devas themselves. As Mahosadha led him through the tunnel and explained its many features, the other kings helped themselves to the delicious food and drink. Each king discovered that there was a chamber arranged especially for him and entered it. "How blessed is King Vedeha," thought King Cūlani-Brahmadatta, "to have so wise a sage in his service!"

Mahosadha led the king back to the entrance and turned a handle. Suddenly all the doors closed, and the one hundred kings were locked in their chambers. He turned another handle, and the lamp niches also closed, plunging the tunnel into utter darkness. The kings cried out in terror.

Before King Cūlani-Brahmadatta knew what was happening, Mahosadha recovered the sword he had hidden the night before, grabbed the king's arm, and shouted, "Sire, to whom belong all the kingdoms of Jambudīpa?"

"To you, wise sir!" cried the king. "Spare my life!"

"You have nothing to fear, Sire," Mahosadha assured him. "I did not brandish my sword to harm you. I only wished to impress upon you my wisdom! Take it, Sire!" he continued, handing the sword to the king. "If you still feel anger and hatred toward me, kill me!"

"Never, wise sir!" cried the king. "You have nothing to fear from me. I promise you your safety."

Standing there at the entrance to the tunnel, with the sword between them, the king and the sage pledged their friendship.

"Wise sir," the king asked, "with wisdom such as yours, why have you not seized the kingdom and declared yourself king?

"Sire," Mahosadha replied, "if I wished, I could certainly conquer all the kingdoms of Jambudīpa and destroy all rivals, but it is not in the nature of a wise man to gain glory by killing others."

Suddenly, the king remembered the other kings. "Wise sir," he cried, "the kings must be frightened to death trapped in the tunnel. Please open the doors and spare them!"

Mahosadha turned a handle, and the tunnel became a blaze of light once more. He turned another handle, and all the doors swung open. The one hundred kings rejoiced as they emerged from the tunnel.

"Wise sir," they cried, "you have saved our lives!"

"My Lords," Mahosadha replied, "this is not the first time I have saved your lives."

"What do you mean?" they asked in unison. "When did you save us before, wise sir?"

"After King Cūlani-Brahmadatta had conquered all the kingdoms of Jambudīpa except Vedeha, you were all gathered in Uttarapañcāla. You were planning to celebrate by drinking together the cup of victory. Do you recall that occasion?" he asked.

"Yes, of course, wise sir," they all answered.

"At that time," Mahosadha explained, "this king, along with Kevatta, had poisoned the drinks, intending to murder you all. I did not want you to die such repugnant and unjust deaths, so I sent my men to break the vessels before you drank a drop. I thwarted their plan and saved your lives."

The one hundred kings gasped in disbelief and turned to King Cūlani-Brahmadatta, asking whether this was true.

"The sage speaks the truth," the king admitted, shamefacedly.

The one hundred kings crowded around Mahosadha and praised him for saving them. Each gratefully offered him a treasured talisman.

"Sire," Mahosadha reassured King Cūlani-Brahmadatta, "your fault was in associating with a wicked man. Ask forgiveness from these kings."

"My friends," the king cried, "it is true that I was under the influence of that wicked advisor when I committed that evil deed. Nevertheless, it was my own fault. Please forgive me! I promise that I will never do such a base thing again!"

Not only did all one hundred kings express their forgiveness, but they also confessed their own faults. At last the one hundred one kings pledged enduring friendship to each other.

King Cūlani-Brahmadatta ordered a banquet, with savory dishes and delicious drinks. To honor the one hundred kings he placed a garland around the neck of each one. For seven days, they all feasted and reveled in the tunnel, honoring the sage. At the end of this festival, they ascended

to the palace in Upakāri, and the king sat on his new throne. Summoning Mahosadha, he said, "Wise sir, I offer you honor and support, a double allowance of food and wages, and many other great boons, as well. I beg you not to return to King Vedeha!"

"Your Majesty," Mahosadha replied, "to desert a patron for the sake of gain is a disgrace to all concerned. As long as King Vedeha is alive, I can neither serve another nor live in another kingdom."

"Well spoken, wise sir!" declared the king. "Promise me that, when your king is no more, you will come to serve me."

"If I am alive, Sire, I will come." Mahosadha agreed with a formal bow.

After another week of feasting and ceremonies, King Cūlani-Brahmadatta presented Mahosadha with a large quantity of gold, eighty villages in Kāsi, four hundred servants, and one hundred wives. He then granted the sage permission to return to Mithilā with his army.

"I will now take my leave!" Mahosadha agreed. "Do not worry about your family, Sire. Before my king left, I sprinkled your daughter with lustral water and solemnized their marriage. I told him to treat Queen Nandā as his own mother and Prince Pañcālacanda as his younger brother. I will send back your wife, your son, and your mother."

The king was thoroughly pleased at this and sent a proper dowry of gold, precious jewels, elephants, horses, and servants for his daughter. He also presented gifts to all of Mahosadha's men.

Accompanied by his companions, his army, and all his spies, Mahosadha set out for Mithilā. On the way, he sent men to collect the revenues from the eighty villages.

In Mithilā, Senaka had stationed a man to keep watch for Mahosadha's return. When this man saw the sage a full three yojanas away, he hurried to alert the palace.

As King Vedeha kept watch from the window, he saw the massive army approaching and was frightened. "Senaka," he cried, "Mahosadha's company was small. Surely this is King Cūlani-Brahmadatta himself, coming with a great army to attack us. Who else would be marching with elephants, horses, chariots, and foot soldiers?"

"On the contrary, Your Majesty," Senaka insisted, "this is indeed Mahosadha returning with his men. King Cūlani-Brahmadatta must have been so pleased with the sage that he gave him a large company." Convinced, the king ordered that the city be decorated to welcome the sage.

When Mahosadha entered the palace, the king rose to embrace him. "My son!" he exclaimed. "We left you like a corpse in the charnel ground. How did you escape?"

"I overcame the scheme, Sire, by a counter-scheme," Mahosadha answered. "I encompassed King Cūlani-Brahmadatta as the ocean encompasses Jambudīpa."

To the delight of the king, the sage explained all that had happened and described the many gifts he had received.

"Happiness truly comes from living with the wise," declared King Vedeha. "Like birds from a closed cage, like fish from a net, Mahosadha set us free from the hands of our enemies."

"You have spoken true, Sire," Senaka agreed. "Mahosadha is indeed our savior."

The king ordered a seven-day festival to honor the great sage. The entire population joined in the celebration. Overjoyed at the sage's return, everyone waved scarves and showered Mahosadha with gifts and great honor. At the end of the festival, Mahosadha told the king that it was time to send King Cūlani-Brahmadatta's wife, son, and mother back to Uttarapañcāla, and the king agreed.

Before sending them back, Mahosadha paid them great honor and entertained them lavishly. Not only did he assemble an army to escort them home, but he returned the four hundred servants and one hundred wives he had received from King Cūlani-Brahmadatta.

When this great company reached Uttarapañcāla, the king asked his mother whether she had been treated well in Mithilā.

"My son, how can you ask?" she exclaimed. "King Vedeha treated me as if I were a deva." She assured her son that the king had also respected Queen Nandā as a mother and Prince Pañcālacanda as a younger brother.

King Cūlani-Brahmadatta was so pleased to hear this that he sent a rich gift to King Vedeha, and, from that time on, the two monarchs lived in friendship and amity.

Queen Pañcālacandī was very dear to King Vedeha, and, two years later, she bore him a son. When the child was ten, King Vedeha died, and Mahosadha raised the white umbrella over the prince. The sage asked permission to go to Uttarapañcāla, but the young king begged him to stay. "Wise sir," the boy said, "do not leave me in my childhood. I will honor you as a father."

"Please do not go, wise sir," the queen mother Pañcālacandī also

begged. "If you leave, there will be no one to protect us!"

"My promise was given," the sage insisted. "I have no choice but to go."

The entire population of Mithilā cried in lamentation as Mahosadha and his entire household left for Uttarapañcāla. King Cūlani-Brahmadatta welcomed him with great pomp, presented him with many more gifts, and gave him a fine residence.

Queen Nandā, however, had never forgiven the sage for having separated her from her husband. She summoned five women that she could trust and told them to watch Mahosadha closely and to report to the king anything that might cause a breach between the two. The women accepted the task and kept a close eye on everything that the sage did.

Also living in Uttarapañcāla at that time was a learned female ascetic named Bherī, who took all her meals in the palace. She and Mahosadha had never met, but they had heard about each other.

One day, as Bherī was leaving the palace after her meal, she caught sight of the sage on his way to wait on the king. They saluted each other and stood still.

"They say this is a wise man." Bherī thought. "Let me see whether or not he is really wise."

She held out her open hand.

Mahosadha clenched his fist.

Bherī rubbed her head.

Mahosadha rubbed his stomach.

Mahosadha and Bherī were both pleased with this silent communication. They saluted each other again and went their separate ways.

The queen's confidantes observed this pantomime from a window of the palace and hurried to the king. "Your Majesty," they said, "Mahosadha is conspiring with Bherī to seize your kingdom."

"How do you know this?" asked the king.

"Sire, as Bherī, the ascetic, was going out after her meal, she and Mahosadha confronted each other.

"We saw her open her hand, asking, 'Can't you crush the king flat like the palm of the hand and seize the kingdom for yourself?'

"Mahosadha clenched his fist, replying, 'In a few days, I will cut off his head and take power.'

"She rubbed her head, saying, 'Cut off his head!'

"He rubbed his stomach, saying, 'I will cut him in half.'

"Be vigilant, Sire! Mahosadha is your enemy! He should be put to death before he can harm you!"

The king thanked the women for their information and sent them away. "I dare not harm my sage," the king thought. "These charges don't make sense. Let me question the ascetic."

The next day, after the ascetic had finished her meal, the king approached her and asked, "Madam, have you seen wise Mahosadha?"

"Yes, Sire," she replied, "I met him yesterday as I was going out after my meal."

"Did you talk with him?"

"I did not exactly talk with him," she replied. "I had heard of his wisdom, so I decided to test him by conversing with hand gestures.

"I asked him, by showing my open hand, whether you were treating him generously.

"He replied, by clenching his fist, that he had come in fulfillment of a promise, but that now you gave him little.

"By rubbing my head, I asked why, if he was dissatisfied, he did not become an ascetic.

"He rubbed his stomach to reply that, since he had many to support and many bellies to fill, he was not free to become an ascetic."

"In your opinion, Madam," the king asked, "is Mahosadha a wise man?"

"Yes, indeed, Sire," she replied. "In all the world there is no equal to him in wisdom."

The king paid his respects to the ascetic and returned to his chamber.

When Mahosadha came to the palace, the king asked him, "Sir, have you seen the ascetic, Bherī?"

"Yes, Sire," the sage replied, "I saw her yesterday on her way out."

"Did you talk with her?" the king asked.

"We conversed with hand gestures, Your Majesty." He related the incident exactly as Bherī had done.

The king was so pleased with the sage that he appointed him commander-in-chief, raising him to a position second only to his own.

"I wonder why the king has suddenly rewarded me," Mahosadha reflected. "Kings often do something like that when they are getting ready to destroy a presumed rival. I must find out whether or not the king has genuine goodwill toward me. Only the ascetic Bherī is wise enough to do that. I'm sure that she will find a way."

He prepared a large offering of flowers and incense and went to visit the ascetic. After paying his respects, he said to her, "Madam, after you praised me to the king, he rewarded me with great honor. I wonder, however, whether his show of respect is sincere. I would be very grateful if you could find out the king's real intentions." She willingly agreed to try to do so.

"I don't want to look like a spy," Bherī thought, "but, just by posing an intellectual question to the king, I will be able to discover how he feels about the sage."

The next day, after she had finished her meal, the king again approached her, greeted her, and sat down on one side. "If, indeed, the king bears ill-will toward the sage," she thought, "it would not do for him to express this in front of other people. I should ask him when we are alone."

"Sire," she said, "I wish to speak to you in private."

The king sent away all the attendants.

"There is an interesting question I would like to pose to Your Majesty," Bherī began.

"Ask, Madam," said the king, "and, if I can, I will reply."

"This is called the Question of Dakarakkhasa," she continued. "Imagine, Sire, that you are traveling on the ocean with your mother, Queen Talatā; your wife, Queen Nandā; your brother, Prince Tikhinamanti; your friend, Dhanusekha; your advisor, Kevatta; and the sage, Mahosadha. Suddenly, your ship is seized by a yakkha, who demands a human sacrifice. Whom would you offer to be eaten?"

The king promptly answered, "I would give my mother."

Without commenting, the ascetic asked, "If, on the next day, the yakkha asked for another victim, whom would you offer?

"My wife," replied the king.

"On the third day?" asked the ascetic.

"My brother," replied the king.

"On the fourth day?"

"My friend."

"On the fifth day?"

"My advisor."

"On the sixth day?"

"Myself. I would never give up the sage Mahosadha!" declared the king.

In this way, Bherī discovered the king's goodwill towards Mahosadha,

but she felt that, if the king were to extol the merit of Mahosadha publicly, the sage's virtue would shine like the full moon in the night sky.

The next day, when all the members of the inner palace were gathered, Bherī repeated her question, and the king answered in the same way. "Sire, you say that you would first give your mother, but a mother is of great merit, and Queen Talatā has indeed been your great protector. When King Chambhī sought to have you killed, she bravely and wisely saved you by arranging for you to be spirited out of the country.[3] Why would you so readily give your mother to the yakkha?"

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3. While Cūlani was still young, his mother committed adultery with a brahmin advisor named Chambhī. She poisoned her husband Mahā-Cūlani and made Chambhī king.

One day, she gave Cūlani some molasses. While he was eating, flies swarmed around the molasses. The boy cleverly dropped a little molasses on the ground and drove the flies away from his bowl. The flies all settled on the molasses on the ground. The boy ate in peace, washed his hands, and rinsed his mouth. Chambhī saw this and thought: "If Cūlani could so easily get rid of the flies, when he grows up, he will take the kingdom from me. I should kill him now."

He told Queen Talatā, and she replied, "Very good, My Lord. I killed my husband for love of you. What is the boy to me? Nevertheless, let us kill him secretly."

She sent for the cook and said to him, "Friend, my son, Prince Cūlani, and your son, Dhanusekha, were born on the same day, and they have grown up together. Chambhī wants to kill my son, so I must ask you to save his life. Let my son stay in your house and sleep with you in the kitchen. After a few days, put some sheep's bones in your bed, set fire to the house, and flee with the two boys to another country. Here is enough gold to sustain you for many years. Please take care of my son, but do not tell anyone that he is a prince."

The cook agreed, and, several days later, there was a great outcry throughout the city: "The cook, his son, and Prince Cūlani have perished in a fire!" Queen Talatā showed King Chambhī the sheep's bones and assured him that his wish had been fulfilled.

The cook had escaped to Sāgala, where he became cook for the king of Madda, and the two boys played in the palace. After some time, Cūlani and the king's daughter, Nandā, fell in love. As they played together, Cūlani often told the princess to fetch his ball or to give him a toy. If she refused, he hit her on the head and made her cry. When the king or one of the nurses asked her why she was crying, for fear that Cūlani would be punished, she never let them know what he had done. One day, the king saw Cūlani hit the princess and thought, "This lad is fearless and handsome. I don't believe that he is the cook's son." He commented to the cook that his two sons were not at all alike, and the cook replied that they had different mothers.

The king answered, "My mother has many virtues, and I acknowledge all she has done for me, but she has her faults. Although she is now advanced in years, she still wears cosmetics and jewelry like a young woman. She shamelessly flirts with every man in the palace. She writes letters in my name to foreign kings, extolling her charms as though she were an available maiden. That is why I would allow the yakkha to take her."

"So be it, Sire," said the ascetic. "Next, you would give your wife. Sire, Queen Nandā has been dear to you since childhood. She is completely devoted and clings to you like a shadow. She is prudent and exceedingly gracious of speech. Rarely showing her anger, she is always concerned about your well-being. Why would you so readily give your wife to the yakkha?"

"Queen Nandā has many virtues, but her sensual attractions have made me liable to evil influences. She sometimes makes unreasonable requests for her sons. She is haughty in front of my other wives and unkind when they receive my favors. She is so greedy for herself and her sons that, when I give presents to her or to them, I often come to regret my generosity. That is why I would allow the yakkha to take her."

"So be it, Sire," said the ascetic. "Next, you would give your younger brother. Sire, Prince Tikhinamanti has been extremely generous to you. When you were living in exile, he brought you back and gave you the

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(continued) The king doubted this, so he kept watching Cūlani. Several days later, the nurses gave some food to the princess. She offered it to the other children, and all of them, except Cūlani, knelt to accept it from her. Cūlani, however, never put down his toy but stood before her and held out one hand. The king noticed this, too, and wondered. At another time, Cūlani's ball rolled under the king's couch. The boy ran to get the ball, but, when he saw where it had gone, he used a stick to retrieve it. The king saw this and immediately understood that Cūlani was refusing to kneel in front of the seat of a foreign king. The king summoned the cook again and said, "My good man, I am sure that Cūlani is not your son."

"Your Majesty," the cook replied, "he is my son."

Drawing his sword, the king threatened, "Tell me the truth, or I will strike you down!"

"Sire," the cook replied, trembling with fear, "I will tell you, but I must I ask you for secrecy."

The king agreed, and the cook told him the truth. Not at all angry, the king adorned his daughter and gave her to Prince Cūlani in marriage.

kingdom.[4] He is a peerless archer and a great hero. Why would you so readily give your brother to the yakkha?"

"When Tikhinamanti was young, he did indeed give me the crown, and I am grateful," replied the king. "Nevertheless, recently he has become proud. Thinking, 'I made my brother king, I gave the kingdom its prosperity, I am a peerless bowman, and I am my brother's wisest advisor,' he no longer comes to wait on me. That is why I would allow the yakkha to take him."

"So be it, Sire," said the ascetic. "Next, you would give your childhood friend. Sire, Dhanusekha has been devoted to you all his life. You were born on the same day and grew up together. It was his father who saved you from the wicked brahmin. He has been zealous in his service to you. Why would you so readily give this friend to the yakkha?"

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4. By the time Tikhinamanti was born, Queen Talatā had killed his father and was living with the brahmin Chambhī. When the prince was old enough, the brahmin presented the boy with a sword.

One day, one of the courtiers told the boy that the brahmin was not his father. "While you were in your mother's womb," the courtier said, "your mother, Queen Talatā, murdered your father, King Mahā-Cūlani, and made Chambhī king."

Tikhinamanti became angry and resolved to kill the brahmin. He secretly called two servants. He gave his sword to one of them and told them to begin quarreling loudly in the courtyard over the ownership of the sword.

As the prince was sitting with the brahmin, they heard the ruckus, and the prince sent a servant to find out what it was. The servant returned and said that two men were arguing about the prince's sword.

"What sword is that?" Chambhī asked.

"Father," Tikhinamanti asked, "did the sword you gave me belong to anyone else?"

"What do you mean, son?" retorted the brahmin.

"Well," replied the prince, "it seems that these men are having a serious argument about a sword. Would you recognize that sword if you saw it?"

"Of course, I would!" declared the brahmin.

The prince told the servant to bring him the sword. As the servant handed it to him, the prince drew it from the scabbard and, making as if to show it to the unsuspecting brahmin, cut off his head.

He ordered that the palace be cleaned and the city decorated and proclaimed himself king. When his mother informed him that his elder brother, Cūlani, was living in Madda, Tikhinamanti went himself to Sāgala, brought his brother back, and gave him the crown.

"It is true that Dhanusekha and I have shared many joyous times together for many years. I am very grateful for his father's courageous act and loving care for me as a young boy. Nevertheless, Dhanusekha has recently begun to take liberties. Sometimes, when I have been speaking privately with my wife, he has barged in unannounced. There have been instances where he has acted not only disrespectfully but shamelessly. That is why I would allow the yakkha to take him."

"So be it, Sire," said the ascetic. "Next, you would give your advisor. Sire, Kevatta has been your trusted advisor for many years. His skill in interpreting omens, signs, and dreams is known throughout Jambudīpa. He understands the stars and can predict the future. He is a master at devising schemes for augmenting your power. Why would you so readily give your advisor to the yakkha?"

"Often, while I am attending to court business, Kevatta rubs his forehead and stares at me with eyes like a yakkha's. He puckers his eyebrows and scares me out of my wits. Even in company, he stares at me with wide open eyes. That is why I would allow the yakkha to take him."

"So be it, Sire," said the ascetic. "Now you say that, despite your great glory, you would give yourself to the yakkha rather than the sage Mahosadha. Why do you honor him more than your own person?"

"Since Mahosadha came to me," declared the king, "I have not seen this steadfast man do even a trifling wrong. His conduct is impeccable and his wisdom is incomparable. This man neither sins nor errs. Should I die before he does, I would be confident that he would bring happiness to my sons and my grandsons. I would never give him to the yakkha."

"This gathering is too small," Bheri thought, "to demonstrate adequately Mahosadha's virtues." She prepared a throne in the courtyard and seated the king amidst the entire populace. Once more, from the beginning, she posed the Question of Dakarakkhasa so that everyone could hear the king's answer. When he had finished, she proclaimed, "Our great king, Cūlani-Brahmadatta would sacrifice not only his mother, his wife, his brother, his friend, and his advisor but also himself, before allowing the wise Mahosadha to be harmed. Marvelous is the power of wisdom, not only for good in this world, but for happiness in the next." In reply, the great assembly shouted in praise of the sage.

Indeed, in all of Jambudīpa, as well as in all the heavenly realms, the citizens praised, honored, and glorified the wisdom of the sage Mahosadha.

Having concluded his story, the Buddha identified the birth: "At that time, Uppalavannā was Bherī, Suddhodana was Sirivaddhaka, Mahā-Māyā was Sumanādevī, Rāhula's mother was Amarā, Ānanda was the parrot Māthara, Sāriputta was King Cūlani-Brahmadatta, Devadatta was Kevatta, Culla-Nandikā was Queen Talatā, Sundarī was Princess Pañcālacandī, Yasassikā was Queen Nandā, Ambattha was Kāvinda, Potthapāda was Pukkusa, Pilotika was Devinda, Saccaka was Senaka, Ditthamangalikā was Queen Udumbarā, Kundalī was the mynah bird, Lālūdāyī was King Vedeha, and I was the wise Mahosadha."

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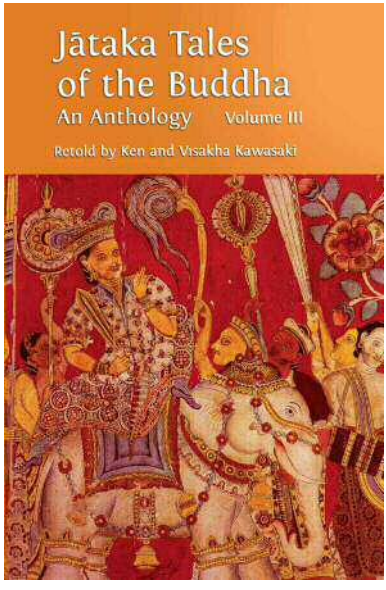

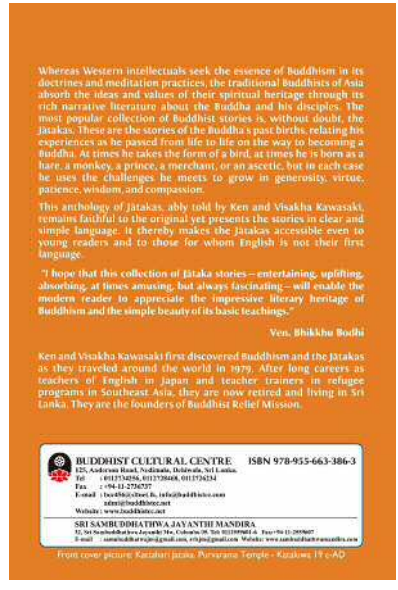

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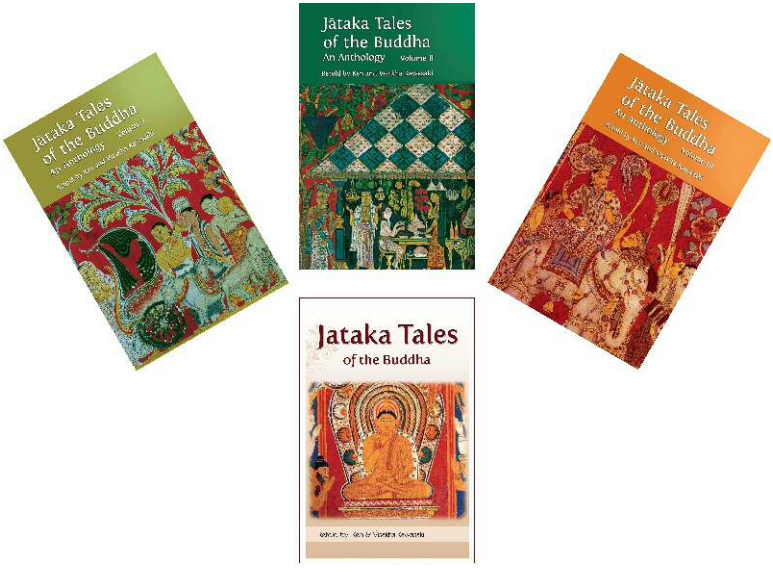

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