

The *Vidarbha* king *Bhīma* was granted by the *Brahmarshi* *Damana* a daughter, *Damayanti*, and three excellent sons, *Dama*, *Dānta*, and *Damana*. Both *Nala* and *Damayanti* had not their equals in beauty, and, continually hearing of each other's virtues, they conceived attachment to each other, though they had never seen each other. Once *Nala* in his garden saw a number of golden-winged swans and caught one of them, but let it loose, as it promised to speak well of him before *Damayanti*. The swans having arrived at the *Vidarbha* country, the one who had been caught by *Nala* led *Damayanti* to a secluded spot and fulfilled its mission. *Damayanti* caused it to speak to *Nala* of her (III, 53).—§ 345: As *Damayanti* became sick of love, her father invited all the kings to her *svayamvara*. At this time the *rshis* of the gods *Nārada* and *Parvata*, having arrived in course of their wanderings at the regions of *Indra*, told him that the kings did not now come to him because they were intent on the *svayamvara* of *Damayanti*. Hearing this, the *Lokapālas* set out on their vehicles for the *svayamvara*, but seeing *Nala* on the way and filled with astonishment at his beauty, they left their chariots in the sky and asked *Nala* to be their messenger (III, 54). *Nala* promised to do so, but when *Indra* told him to go to *Damayanti* and tell her that *Indra*, *Agni*, *Varuṇa*, and *Yama* desired her to choose one of them for her lord, he asked them to spare him as he had come with the same object; but, as they insisted that he should stand by his promise, he by their power entered without being perceived by the guardians into the apartments of *Damayanti*, and, saying his name, fulfilled his mission (III, 55). *Damayanti* declared that if she did not become the wife of *Nala* himself she would resort to poison, or fire, or water, or the rope. *Nala* advised her to choose one of the gods, maintaining that having come in a different mission he dared not seek his own interest. *Damayanti* then told him to come to her *svayamvara* in company with the gods, then she would choose him, at which no blame would be his, and *Nala* returned to the *Lokapālas* and told them what had happened (III, 56). At the sacred hour of the holy lunar day of the auspicious season *Bhīma* summoned the kings to the *svayamvara*, and that assembly of kings resembled the *Bhogavati* swarming with *Nāgas*. *Damayanti*, beholding five persons all alike in appearance, and recollecting the marks of the celestials, of which she had heard from old people, was unable to distinguish which of them was *Nala*. Filled with grief, she then decided upon seeking the protection of the gods themselves, and prevailed upon them that they assumed their true shapes. Thereupon she beheld the gods unmoistened with perspiration, with unwinking eyes and unfading garlands, not stained with dust, and staying without touching the ground, while *Nala* was revealed by his shadow, his fading garlands, and by his being stained with dust and sweat, and resting on the ground with winking eyes. She then chose *Nala*, seizing the hem of his garment and placing a floral wreath round his neck. *Nala* promised *Damayanti* that he would remain hers as long as he lived, and she spoke words of like import to him. The *Lokapālas* bestowed each a couple of boons on *Nala*: *Indra*, that he should be able to behold his divine nature in sacrifices, and blessed regions thereafter (*gatim anuttamām*); *Agni*, his own presence wherever he wished and regions as bright as himself; *Yama*, subtle taste in food and pre-eminence in virtue; *Varuṇa*, water wherever he desired and garlands of celestial fragrance.

Then the gods went to heaven and the kings returned home. *Nala*, after the wedding, stayed there for a time, returned home, ruled righteously, and celebrated the horse-sacrifice, etc. He begat the son *Indrasena* and the daughter *Indrasenā* upon *Damayanti* (III, 57).—§ 346: When the *Lokapālas* were returning they met *Dvāpara* with *Kali* going to the *svayamvara*, and *Indra* told *Kali* that *Damayanti* had already chosen *Nala*. As *Kali* threatened to avenge himself he was rebuked by the *Lokapālas*, as *Nala* had studied the four *Vedas* with the *Ākhyāna* as the fifth, etc. When the gods had gone to heaven, *Kali* said that he would take possession of *Nala* and deprive him of his kingdom, and asked *Dvāpara* to enter the dice (III, 58). *Kali* then went to the country of the *Nishadhas* and always watched for an opportunity. At last, in the twelfth year, when *Nala*, after answering a call of nature, touching water had said his twilight prayers without having washed his feet, *Kali* entered his person. Then *Kali* becoming *Vṛsha* ("vṛsho gavāṃ," the principal die, Nil.) (PCR. thinks we ought to read that "*Dvāpara* also approached *Pushkara* becoming *Vṛsha*") prevailed upon *Pushkara*, that he challenged *Nala* to a match of dice in order to acquire his kingdom. *Nala* and *Pushkara* gambled together for many months, *Nala* being always worsted; no one amongst his friends could succeed in dissuading him from the play; at last they came in a body, which was told by the *sūta* to *Damayanti*, who in vain represented it to *Nala*; he uttered not a word in reply (III, 59). Seeing that *Nala* had lost everything, *Damayanti* told her nurse and maidservant *Bṛhatsenā* to summon the councillors in the name of *Nala* and tell them what had been lost; the councillors approached *Nala*, and *Damayanti* informed him that the citizens had come again in a body, but he regarded her not. She then caused *Bṛhatsenā* to summon the *sūta* *Vārshneya*, who at her request yoked *Nala's* favourite horses and brought her two children to *Kuṇḍina* (the city of *Bhīma*, Nil.). There he left the children, the chariot, and the horses, and went to *Ayodhya*, where he entered the service of king *Rtuparna* (the king of *Koçala*, v. 2877) as a charioteer (III, 60).—§ 347: At last, when *Pushkara* had won all *Nala's* wealth and his kingdom, he proposed to him to stake *Damayanti*. But *Nala*, feeling as if his heart would burst and gazing at *Pushkara* in anguish without speaking a word, took all the ornaments off his body, and attired in a single piece of cloth left the city accompanied by *Damayanti*. They stayed for three nights in the outskirts of the city, living on water alone. Nobody showed him hospitable regards, as *Pushkara* had proclaimed through the city that he that should show any attention to *Nala* would be put to death. After many days *Nala* saw some birds of golden hue and covered them with his cloth in order to catch them, but they rose up to the sky taking away that garment of his, and then told him they were the dice that had come hither to take away even his cloth. *Nala* proposed to *Damayanti* to leave him, pointing out to her the roads to *Avanti*, *Riksharati*, *Vindhya*, *Payoshni*, *Vidarbha*, *Koçala* (C. *Koçalam*, B. and Bopp *Koçalan*), and the south. But she would not leave him, but suggested that they should go to *Vidarbha* (III, 61). *Nala* refused to appear before *Bhīma* in his state of misery. They went on attired in the same piece of cloth. Once when *Damayanti* had fallen into a profound slumber in a shed for travellers (*sabhā*), *Nala*, influenced by *Kali*, resolved upon deserting *Damayanti*, as separated from him