

ings and then your desire will be fulfilled". Owing to the curse Vidhūma was born as Sahasrānīka, the illustrious King of Candra varīśa (Lunar dynasty) and Alambuṣā took birth as Mṛgāvātī, the daughter of King Kṛtavarmā and his wife Kalāvātī. (Kathāsarisāgara, Kathāṃmukhaḷambaka, Taraṅga 1).

4) *The curse of Tilottamā.* Sahasrānīka the incarnation of Vidhūma and Mṛgāvātī the incarnation of Alambuṣā fell in love with each other on the earth also. Before the wedding took place Devendra once invited Sahasrānīka to heaven. He lived there for a time as the guest of the Gods. After having defeated the Asuras it was time for him to return. Indra sent Tilottamā to keep company. The charioteer was driving. Sahasrānīka immersed in the thought of Mṛgāvātī was sitting silent. Tilottamā said something which the King did not hear. Tilottamā cursed him that he would be separated for fourteen years from the object about which he was thinking. He was not even aware of the curse.

5) *The period of separation.* The King returned to Kauśāmbī his capital city. Without much delay the wedding ceremony also was conducted. She became pregnant. One day she told her lover-husband that she had a desire to dip in a blood pond. The King made a pond and filled it with a solution of Lākṣā (wax, when dissolved in water, the water will look like blood) and such other substances. Mṛgāvātī was dipping and splashing in it when an eagle taking her to be a piece of flesh took her away. At the loss of his wife Sahasrānīka lost his senses and fell down unconscious. Immediately Mātali, Indra's charioteer, came down from the realm of Gods and brought the King back to consciousness, and then informing him of the curse of Tilottamā he returned. Without paying any heed to the consolatory words of his ministers or other inmates of the palace the King went on lamenting and moaning, "ha, my love Mṛgāvātī! Where are you now?" and waited for the end of the period of the curse, execrating Tilottamā. Casting Mṛgāvātī on the Mountain of the Rising Sun the great bird flew away. The horror-stricken queen, thinking of her present condition cried aloud. A very large mountain snake began to draw near to swallow her. A divine person saved her from that situation and vanished. The unprotected Mṛgāvātī decided to commit suicide. It was a forest which abounded in lions, tigers, bears and such other ferocious animals. But none of them came near her; over and above the exertion of carrying, she had to bear the difficulties of her forlorn condition, and she grew weary and worn and became unconscious. Then a hermit boy came there and questioned her who was now lean and ill-dressed, about her condition and consoling her guided her to the hermitage of the great hermit Jamadagni. When she saw the hermit who was as radiant as the Sun, she bowed low before him. "My daughter! Don't fear. You will get a heroic son here who will continue your family. You will be reunited to your husband." Said the great and noble hermit, who could foresee the future. Somewhat pacified Mṛgāvātī lived in that hermitage waiting for reunion with her husband. After some days she gave birth to a son who had all the symptoms of greatness. At the birth of the child Mṛgāvātī heard an unknown voice saying, "This boy would become the great and renowned King Udayana. His son would get the leadership of the Vidyādharaḥ (the musicians of the Gods)". At this the queen was immensely

pleased. The boy Udayana grew up in the hermitage, an incarnation of all good qualities. The hermit to whom the past, the present and the future were not obscure, performed the necessary rites and rituals becoming a Kṣatriya boy (Ruling caste) and taught him everything including the Dhanurveda (the Science of Archery). As a token of her intense love for the son, she put a bangle with the name of Sahasrānīka inscribed on the arm of Udayana. One day when Udayana was tramping the forest, he saw a snake-charmer catching a snake. Seeing the beauty of the snake he asked the snake-charmer to let the snake free. But the snake-charmer replied, "Oh Prince, this is my daily bread. I earn my livelihood by exhibiting snakes. My previous snake was dead and it was with the help of a good deal of herbs and spells and incantations that I caught this one".

When he heard this Udayana felt pity for him and gave the bangle to the snake-charmer and let the snake free. When the snake-charmer had gone with the bangle, the snake beaming with joy said to Udayana: "I am Vasunemi, the elder brother of Vāsuki. I am grateful to you for giving me freedom. I give you this lute producing exquisite notes of music, betels and some tricks to prepare never fading garlands and paste to make marks on the forehead. Receive them as my presents". Udayana accepted the presents with gladness and returned more luminous than before to the hermitage of Jamadagni. The snake-charmer took the bangle, given by Udayana to the bazar for sale. The police caught him and took him before the King, because they saw the name of the King inscribed on the bangle. The King asked him how he got the bangle and the snake-charmer told the King the story from the catching of the snake till he got the bangle. "This is the bangle that I put on the arm of my wife. The boy who gave this bangle to this snake-charmer must be my son." The King was thinking with sadness, when the King heard a voice from above say, "O King! the period of the curse is over. Your wife and son are in the Mountain of the Rising Sun". At these words the King felt extreme joy. Somehow or other he spent the rest of the day. Early the next morning the King followed by his army, went to the Mountain of the Rising Sun to bring back his wife and son. They took the snake-charmer to show them the way.

In due course the King and his train reached the holy hermitage of the eminent hermit Jamadagni. The place was always vibrant with sounds of the repeating and recitation of the Holy scriptures and covered with smoke mingled with the fragrance of burning herbs and other oblations burned in the sacrificial fire. The various wild animals which are born enemies of each other got on amicably there. The hermit who was an incarnation of the higher aspirations greeted the King who was the protector of the ascetics, with the hospitality becoming his status. The King who saw Mṛgāvātī with their son was overcome with gladness. Their reunion caused a shower of Ambrosia (Amṛta). The King stood before the hermit with folded arms and bowed head for permission to depart. To the King the hermit Jamadagni said: "Oh, King, you are welcome to this hermitage. To those such as you who are of the 'Rajogunapradhāna' caste (Ruling race) the peaceful atmosphere of our hermitage may not be appealing to the heart. But a holy hermitage is more respectable than the palace of an Emperor. There is no place for unhappiness here. You