

Chapter 6 – Sita’s Birth and abduction of Bhamandala



King Janaka also returned to his own kingdom and resumed his normal routine. As the days passed, the queen Videha conceived twins. While the twins were still in the womb, Pingala - a deity residing in the first celestial world learnt through clairvoyance (avadhi-gyana) that one amongst the unborn progeny of Videha was his bitter foe in the past life. The deity thought, "My foe is about to be born in a royal family. He will enjoy all the comforts and pomp that the noble birth will bestow upon him. I must abduct him when he is born and kill him." With this cruel intension, he invisibly came to Mithila and abducted Videha's newly born son.

He then flew towards the mountain Vaitadhya. He had decided that once he scaled the greatest heights of the mountain, he would hit the tender infant on some rock and thus take revenge; but the infant was not destined to die, probably because of his own virtue which he had acquired in his former lives. Probably, the virtue acquired by the deity in his former births rekindled his conscience.

The feeling of hatred residing in the innermost being of the deity somehow subsided when he reached the summit of the great mountain Vaitadhya. He began to think, "Through my previous good deeds, I have become a deity. But now, committing infanticide, why should I invite miseries in future births." He then dressed the infant in the finest clothes and jewellery and left him in a garden called Nandana, situated in the southern ranges of the mountain Vaitadhya and soared towards his own celestial abode.

Sitting on an ornate chair in the terrace of the royal palace, King Chandragati was enjoying the moonlit night and its bewitching beauty. Suddenly, he saw a brilliant light in the southern ranges of the great Vaitadhya Mountain. For a moment, he thought that the moon himself had descended on the earth to enjoy a few moments of solitude. He left his palace at once. On reaching the southernmost summit, he noticed an infant swaddled in the celestial finery. The finest jewels on his tiny body were emitting the brilliant light. As destiny would have it; Chandragati was the father of that divine infant in his former life. His heart was filled with love when he witnessed the lovely child. He lifted the infant and returning to the palace placed him on the couch of Queen Pushpavati.

Queen Pushpavati had no children and hence considered herself as a very unfortunate woman. King Chandragati awoke her up and said, "Behold, you have delivered such a handsome young prince." The queen replied, "Through the virtue of my former lives have made me your consort, I have brought you enormous misfortune. I am a barren woman. How can an accursed woman like me ever deliver a handsome baby?"

The king narrated his strange experience to the queen and finally told her, "You have neither conceived this baby nor did you carry him in your womb for nine months. You have not suffered the pains of delivery. Yet you have become a mother. Congratulations to you, for

you have given an heir to the throne." Early morning, the news of the royal nativity was announced.

The subjects reacted with a spontaneous revelry. For days, they celebrated the joyful occasion. Deity Pingala had gifted the finest earrings studded with the brightest gems to the new born. Their luster added to the brilliance of the infant's face; therefore he was named Bhamandala. As a result of his ill-actions in the former lives, the infant was separated from his mother immediately after birth, but as a result of the virtues he acquired in his former lives, he spent his childhood in the palace of King Chandragati, that offered him all the comforts in the world. This indeed is the power of Karma - the result of the good and evil actions in previous lives.

While the subjects of King Chandragati revealed with joy, clouds of despair and woes had dampened the hearts of the people at Mithila. Though the queen had delivered twins; she couldn't even see her new born son. Overcame with grief; she lamented, "God, surely some foe of mine has abducted my baby. Did I, in my former life, deprive some innocent mother of her infant that I am suffering now? Did I, in my former life, burn some innocent life in the fire of separation? Am I reaping the harvest of my evil actions now? God! I was blind and you blessed me with eyes, and once again you have deprived me of my sight. My new born baby is like a tender lotus lily. Where could he be? Why is my child suffering on account of my evil deeds?"

King Janaka offered solace to the wounded heart of his wife with words of endearment. He at once dispatched his trusted soldiers in every direction in quest of his son; but after a prolonged search, they all returned, their hearts laden with grief and despair.

Finally, the royal couple accepted the fact that, it was predestined that they would suffer the separation of their son; because of their own actions in the past lives. They named the baby girl Sita. Gradually, the royal couple forgot the pangs of separation, for joys and woes both are transitory in nature. They come and go. A wise person remains unaffected by both and strives for emancipation - for, only emancipation is the source of eternal and endless joy.

Chapter 7 – Attack of Barbarians

As the days passed, Sita grew up like the growing moon. She was not only endowed with divine beauty, but also with great intelligence and humane nature. She had the lovable restlessness of the holy Gangas, longing for union with her beloved Mahasagara. Her eyes resembled the sporting fishes in a river. Sita was endowed with the regal persona of the goddess Lakshmi and the boundless intellect of the goddess Sarasvati. Sita, with her impish pranks, filled the hearts of her parents with enormous joy and with her compassionate nature and virtues offered a solace to their wounded hearts. Her intellect assured them that she would handle any situation cleverly and overcome the greatest of predicaments. Yet, at times their hearts were full of anxiety, for, they did not know what the future had in offering for their daughter. Like any other parents they worried, where would they find a suitable match for their lovely princess?

Once, the land of the noble emperor Janaka attacked by the semi barbarian king Antaramgatama and his allies. Like deluge, he marched ahead, razing the cities and villages, forests and fields, palaces of elite and the shanties of the poor folks. In spite of his

enormous army, Janaka could not control the aggressive barbarians. The barbarians demolished innumerable Jain temples and destroyed the centers of penance. This tormented the heart of the noble king Janaka. It is said that, apart from friends and well wishers, even the shadow of a man forsakes him in the hour of peril. King Janaka too was undergoing the same experience when he suddenly remembered king Dasharatha, his true friend and well wisher. He immediately dispatched a messenger to Ayodhya to beseech help in the hour of emergency.



King Janaka's messenger in King Dasharatha's Court

On reaching the court of Dasharatha, the messenger offered his obeisance. The emperor welcomed him warm heartedly, offered him a seat and asked him the purpose of his arrival. The messenger replied, "Hey Noble King! Though my lord Janaka has thousands of friends and well wishers, they all have deserted him in the hour of peril. You are the only friend

capable of helping him. During the sojourn in the forest, a strong bond of friendship has been developed between you two. Together you have shared the moments of joys and woes. My lord Janaka is being tormented by the boundless army of the barbarians, who are plundering the temples of Jineshvara. O Noble King! You are the worthy descendent of the first Tirthankara Lord Rishabhadeva. A man generally remembers his family deity and friends in the hour of emergency. In you, my master has found a true friend. I therefore beseech you to haste and help him."

He further said, "Sir, you and my master are inseparable as the body and soul, one meaningless without another. The semi barbarians that have attacked us are the inhabitants of the land, which is situated between the southern ranges of mount Vaitadhya and the northern ranges of the mount Kailasha. This stripe of land is known as Mayurashala and it is ruled by the cruel barbarian Antaramgatama, who hates the regime of Jineshvara. He is joined by many like-minded kings and together they have attacked the Mithila nagari. They have vandalized the Jain temples and the sacred places. My master's plight at this moment is like that of the great elephant Gajendra, whose foot has been grabbed by a crocodile."

Though Dasharatha was a kind and a gentle soul, the wrath that lay dormant within him was stirred by the words of the messenger. He immediately summoned his army officers. Rama, with folded hands, address thus, "My worthy father, you are indeed a true friend, who never hesitates for a moment while helping a friend in the hour of peril. I urge you to grant me and my brothers a permission to teach the barbarians a lesson. You might probably think that we are too young to tackle the foe, but Sire, a lion cub, in spite of his tender age, can easily kill a mighty bull. A tiny cinder of charcoal, in a moment, can turn a mighty forest into ashes, and Sire, we, the noble descendents of Surya dynasty, are gifted with two noble traits essential for warrior, valor and kindness, right from our birth. Therefore, do not hesitate in sending us to the battlefield. We shall slay all the barbarians and return victorious."

After convincing Dasharatha about their own valor and seeking his permission, Rama and Lakshmana left for Mithila along with their army. Mithila was seized by the barbarians. King Janaka was under tremendous stress. When the barbarians noticed the army led by young

Rama and Lakshmana, they attacked it with vengeance. They assumed that they would defeat the young boys within no time and cause a panic among the soldiers.



Rama showering arrows and Barbarians running away in panic

Rama pulled the string of his bow, and when the enemy heard its reverberating sound; their hearts were filled with awe and fear. Rama now began to shower arrows on the enemy. The wounded and bleeding barbarians began to beat a hasty retreat. So far the morale of Janaka's army was very low but, when they witnessed the valor of Rama and Lakshmana, they too attacked the enemy like lions. The barbarians knew that if they slay young princes, they could still win the war. Therefore, they attacked Rama in union but Rama retaliated so strongly that the scene on the battlefield was changed. The woes turned into joy. When Janaka heard the cries of victory he could not believe his own

ears. The joy of Mithila knew no bounds. Suddenly, the city wore a new festive look. People burst into spontaneous celebration of the victory.

Impressed with the valor of Rama, Janaka announced that his young princess Sita would be married to Rama. In Rama, King Janaka found both, a protector of Jain Shrines and an ideal son-in-law.

Chapter 8 – King Janaka’s kidnapping

King Janaka was an enlightened soul, yet he was worried for the safety of his kingdom and people and the wellbeing of his daughter Sita. His announcement of Sita’s engagement brought a new set of troubles.

The news of the engagement suddenly brought Sita in limelight. Everywhere, discussions about her radiating beauty, intelligence and good nature began. When the divine sage Narada heard them, he too was curious to see Sita. The sage Narada is known for his celibacy. His being, his speech and heart bear ample testimony of his virtues and therefore, he is equally honored at the royal court as well as in the harems. Narada wanted to have a look at Sita, purely out of curiosity. He therefore walked straight into her chamber.

Sita so far had only heard about the divine sage, therefore, she was terrified when she saw him in person. His thin body, heavy belly, yellow hair and a long tuft on his head, his scant clothing and dreamy eyes scared Sita to such an extent that she began to shiver and screamed, "O Mother! Please hurry up and save me. There is a stranger in my chamber." The royal bodyguards, servants, maids, gate-keepers and soldiers ran when they heard her screams. Together, they pounced upon the divine sage. One grabbed his throat and another pulled his tuft. Some began to rain blows on him, some kicked him hard. The sage Narada somehow managed to escape from their clutches and flew towards the summit of mount Vaitadhya. On reaching there, he sighed with relief and began to think of what had transpired. He thought, "Like a lonely cow surrounded by hungry lions, I was assaulted by

the savage servants of Janaka. They attacked me without even ascertaining my identity. Sita is the root cause of all my troubles and I must take revenge."

He further thought, "I shall draw a beautiful picture of Sita on a silken scroll and show it to prince Bhamandala, the worthy son of King Chandragati, who rules southern ranges of this mountain. On seeing the ravishing beauty of Sita, his heart will surely fill with a desire to marry her. He will anyhow abduct her. In that case, she will not marry Rama as betrothed and thus, my bruised pride will get some solace'.

This is called the irony of karma. The divine sage Narada is lofty soul devoid of any attachment. He knows that the world is an illusion and yet when he was humiliated, his wrath knew no bounds. He was all set to get even with Sita. Not only that, but he chalked out a diabolical plan to take revenge. His actions in our sacred texts are called "Mohaniya Karmas". When these karmas torment a noble soul, he stoops down to the lowest depths and invites curses on himself and brings misery to others. Sita, like any other Aryan women in those days, was modest and timid. When she saw an absolute stranger in her chamber, her reaction was natural. She never wanted to humiliate the divine sage Narada.

Narada drew a lovely picture of Sita on a silken scroll and presented it to the young prince Bhamandala. When the prince saw the picture, he was immediately afflicted by the arrows of Cupid. He lost his composure, appetite and sleep. He would not sleep for a moment. He would not converse with anyone, nor was he bothered about his appearance and health. When the king Chandragati saw the plight of his son, he was moved and said, "My worthy son, what has caused your present state? Is it some secret sorrow or else you suffering from some kind of a malady? Has anyone disobeyed you or given you some trouble? Tell me, I shall immediately punish the culprit." Bhamandala did not utter a word, his head was drooped and countenance pale.

Bhamandala's silence introduces us to yet another face of our multidimensional culture. Discussion of love in the presence of elders is not encouraged in this land of Aryas. This regard for the elders and gurus is called 'Kula maryada'. Bhamandala was indeed afflicted by love, but the love did not make him forget his limits as a son. He therefore remained silent. Later on, King Chandragati consulted the friends of the young prince and learned the entire account of the picture.

King Chandragati immediately sent for the sage Narada. He received the sage with due honor and after having paid obeisance, gently enquired in the following words, "O divine Narada, revered alike by the residents of three worlds, you showed a painting of a ravishing damsel endowed with beauty and brains to my son Bhamandala. He has taken a fancy for her and desires to marry her. Could you tell us who the beautiful girl is? Which noble family is she from? I beseech you to enlighten me, so that I can go and meet her parents." The sage replied, "Oh noble king Chandragati, the ravishing beauty, you are talking about, can surpass the celestial goddesses and nymphs in beauty. No offspring of a man can excel Sita in beauty. In fact, she looks thousand times more beautiful than the picture. For, though I excel in the art of painting, I could not captivate all her beauty in this picture. Your son has fallen in love with Sita, the daughter of King Janaka, whose forefathers ruled Mithila. I think your son deserves her. May I advise you to hurry and meet King Janaka without any delay?" King Chandragati rushed to the chamber of his son and promised, "The beautiful girl, who has coveted your heart, is Sita, the princess of Mithila. I assure you that she alone would be your wife."

Then Chandragati called Capalagati, who excelled in magic. He belonged to the family of Vidyadharas. The king ordered Capalagati to reach Mithila and abduct its king. On reaching

Mithila, Capalagati vidyadhara assumed the form of a fair horse endowed with auspicious marks. With his beauty, he succeeded in enticing King Janaka. A desire to add this extraordinary horse to his stable, smote Janaka to such an extent that he forgot his noble upbringing and the teachings of his parents and teachers. King Janaka was a learned person and yet his covetousness brought him sorrow. Overpowered by his desire, King Janaka stealthily followed the horse and mounted it. At once the horse galloped and reached the sky. He straightaway flew to Ratanupura nagar, the kingdom of Chandragati. The queen, the young princess and the citizens of Mithila began to lament when they learnt this news.



King Chandragati received Janaka with warmth. He embraced him and offered him a seat next to him and said, "Hey Noble King! The best amongst the Kshatriyas, you are indeed fortunate to have a daughter, who is the epitome of beauty, modesty and intelligence. I have learnt from my sources that you have already begun a quest for an ideal match for your only daughter Sita. My handsome son Bhamandala has youth, valor and all other excellent traits. I think their betrothal would intensify our friendship. Therefore, I request you to think over my proposal and accept it."

Janaka replied "Your proposal indeed would bring a tide of joy in any heart. I find no fault with your son, but I have seen the valor of Rama, the descendant of the first Tirthankara Lord Rishabhadeva in the battlefield. Had it not been for his timely aid, I would have been slain long time back. I have promised Rama that my daughter would marry him. A woman belonging to noble Aryan family is engaged and married only once. In this contingency, I think Sita's betrothal to your son is a remote possibility."

The King replied, "Hey Janaka! We have a bond of mutual friendship and love between us. I wanted to add a new dimension to our friendship. I could have abducted Sita easily, if my son had so desired, but I am a man of ethics and understand your dilemma. I have heard of Rama and his unmatched valor and now, I wish that Rama defeats us before marrying Sita. The celestial deities, who from their lofty abodes rule the earth, have gifted me with two bows. Their names are Vajravarta and Arnavavarta respectively. They both are guarded by deities. I offer both of these bows to you. If Rama manages to lift and string them, give away Sita to him in marriage, and if he fails, then Sita will marry my son Bhamandala. He thus, somehow succeeded in making Janaka accept his proposal. As Janaka had no choice, he agreed. Then Chandragati made arrangements for Janaka to return to Mithila. He followed Janaka along with his army and resided on the outskirts of Mithila.

On reaching Mithila, king Janaka straightaway headed to the harem and revealed everything that had transpired between him and King Chandragati. Queen Videha sobbed, "The merciless destiny is giving me mighty blows one after another. Years ago my newborn infant was separated from me, and now the ill fate is about to befall on my beloved daughter. Even a poorest man amongst your subjects has freedom to marry his daughter to a man of his choice and look at us. We cannot marry Sita to Rama. If Rama fails to string the bow we will be left with no alternative except complying with the desire of Chandragati."

King Janaka assured her thus, "Do not worry, and let us not forget that Rama is the descendent of the first Tirthankara Lord Rishabhadeva. I am sure; he would lift these divine

bows like dried creepers and string them. I have seen him in the battlefield. He was moving like a whirlwind slaying the enemies. I am certain that Rama and Rama alone would marry our daughter Sita.

Later on, king ordered his artisans to erect a pandal. The pair of bow was placed in the pandal. He also sent his emissaries to the kings and princes in the surrounding areas. They arrived at Mithila and were seated in the pandal.