

hanged, for a charge of murder, merely out of personal grudge and without any proof, and this is the third day since I was put on this scaffold. My life has not yet departed from the body. My tongue is dried of thirst. Have the kindness to give me a little water."

"Punished without proof! It will appear only so to him who is punished". Thinking thus the King asked Aśokadatta to give the man some water. "Who will go to a burial-ground in the night? I myself shall take water to him". Saying so Aśokadatta took water and went to the burial-ground and the King went to the palace. The world was in darkness. With here and there a spark of fire and light of fire-flies and lightning mingled with the shouting of ghosts and the roaring of the demons and occasional cries of birds and animals the burial-ground was a dreadful place, where Aśokadatta came and asked, "Who asked the King for water?" He heard a voice saying "Myself" and he went to the place of the voice and saw a man lying on a scaffold. An extremely beautiful woman also was lying under the scaffold crying, and getting ready to jump into the burning fire since she could not bear the separation of her husband on the new moon day. She had plenty of golden ornaments on her body. Aśokadatta asked her, "Madam! who are you, why are you crying here?" She replied, "I, an unfortunate woman, am the wife of the man on the scaffold. My intention is to burn myself along with his body. I am waiting for his life to depart. Because of my sin he is not dying. This is the third day since he is lying like this. He will be asking for water now and then. So I have brought some water. But his face being high I cannot reach it and I am seeing him burning with thirst, and am swallowing the grief." Aśokadatta said, "See! The King has sent this water for him. Now climb on my back and you yourself give him this water."

The woman instantly took the water and got on the back of Aśokadatta who had stooped down for her to climb on his back. After a while he felt drops of blood falling on his back and looking up he saw her cutting flesh from the body of the man on the scaffold and eating it. He got wild with anger and catching hold of her legs he was about to strike her on the ground, when she shook her legs free and ran away and disappeared. Because she dragged away her legs with force one bangle came off from her leg and was left with Aśokadatta. Her behaviour aroused in him at first compassion, detestation in the middle stage and fear in the final stage, and when she had disappeared from his sight he looked at the bangle she had left behind with astonishment. When he reached home it was dawn. After his morning ablution he went to the palace. "Did you give him water yesternight?" asked the King and he replied "Yes", and placed the bangle before the King. "Where did you get this from?" the King asked and in reply he said everything that had happened in the night. The King thought that Aśokadatta was an extraordinary man and calling his queen showed her the ornament and told her everything. She was filled with joy and wonder. She praised Aśokadatta a good deal. The King said, "Dear queen! This Aśokadatta is a young man of greatness, learning, bravery, truth and of good birth. He is handsome too. If he would become the husband of our daughter what a good thing it will

be? I have a desire to give him our daughter Madanalekhā".

The queen also said that the thought was pleasing to her. "This youth is the most suitable person to be her husband. Some days ago Madanalekhā had seen him in Madhu garden and from that day a change is visible in her. All laughing and playing is gone from her, and she spends time in loneliness and thinking. I knew this from her maids. Because of my thought about her I did not sleep last night and only just closed my eyes in the dawn. Then it seemed to me that a divine woman appeared and said to me, "My daughter, Don't give your daughter Madanalekhā to anybody else. She had been the wife of Aśokadatta in previous birth". I woke up immediately. Believing in the dream I consoled our daughter. I am glad that now you also think so. Let the Jasmine creeper entwine round the Mango tree."

When the King heard these things from his queen, without wasting more time he gave his daughter Madanalekhā in marriage to Aśokadatta. They suited each other so much that not only their relatives, but the others also were delighted. Brahmā is well experienced in joining suitable things together. As they were all getting on well one day the queen said to the King, "My lord! this Bangle being single doesn't shine well. We must have another bangle made in the same shape and design."

The King immediately had some goldsmiths brought before him. He showed them the bangle and asked them to make one of the same pattern. They turned it on all sides and looked at it and said, "Please your highness! This is not man-made. It is not possible for us to make one of this kind. Precious stones like these are not available in this earth. So the only possible way is to search for its mate in the place where this was found. On hearing these words the King and the queen were crestfallen. Seeing this Aśokadatta said that he would bring the mate of the bangle. Fearing danger the King tried to dissuade him. But Aśokadatta was not prepared to change his decision. He took the bangle and went to the burial-ground that night. To get the bangle he had to meet the same woman who had left the bangle. He began to think of a means to find her out. He procured a corpse took it on his shoulder and walked about calling out "Do you want flesh?" He heard a voice say "Bring it here", and he walked in that direction. He saw a beautiful woman who appeared to be the mistress, sitting in the midst of so many servant maids on a tree. He called out "Take the flesh". She asked "How much will it cost?" Aśokadatta said, "There is a bangle with me. If you will give me another bangle like this you shall have the whole body". Hearing the words of Aśokadatta the beautiful woman laughed and said, "That is my bangle. I have its mate with me also. I am the same woman you saw when you came to give water to the man on the scaffold. Now the situation is changed. So you do not recognize me. Tonight is the fourteenth lunar night too. It was good that you thought of coming to night. Otherwise you would not have seen me. Now see; let the flesh be there. If you will consent to do what I say I shall give you the other bangle also." Aśokadatta promised to do what she required. Then she began, "There is a city in the Himālayas known as Trighaṇḍa. There lived a giant in that city. His name was Lambajihva. I bearing the name Vidyucchikhā, am his wife. Only one daughter