

said that he had come from Vidarbha and that he was a friend of Damayanti's brother. Damayanti recognized Sudeva and she cried aloud. Sunandā who saw this scene, told her mother about it. The queen sent for Sudeva and asked him what the matter was. He revealed everything about Damayanti, to the queen. When they heard the story all the women in the harem cried. Then with tears the queen said, "Hear this, Damayanti, your mother and myself are the two daughters of Sudama the King of Daśārṇa. Father gave your mother to Bhīma the King of Vidarbha and me to Virabāhu the King of Cedi. I have seen you when you were an infant."

When the King of Cedi knew everything he sent Damayanti in a palanquin to Vidarbha.

9) *The search for Nala.* Damayanti told her father that she didn't want to live any longer unless Nala was brought to her. Bhīma had been trying hard to find out Nala. One day Parṇāda one of the numerous Brahmins who were engaged in the search for Nala, came to Bhīma and said, "while I was wandering from place to place, I happened to reach the palace of Rtu-parṇa the King of Ayodhyā. There I made enquiries about Nala the husband of Damayanti, in the presence of the King. But nobody gave me any answer. When I returned Bāhuka the charioteer of Rtu-parṇa followed me. An ugly man with short hands, an expert in driving horses, and an excellent cook, he asked me several questions about Damayanti."

When Damayanti heard this she had horripilation. She secretly went to her mother and compelled her to send Sudeva the Brāhmaṇa to Ayodhyā. Her mother consented. She called Sudeva, in the presence of her mother and told him to go to Ayodhyā and tell Rtu-parṇa that the second svayamvara (marriage) of Damayanti would take place before sunrise next day and that he should come earlier. Sudeva instantly went to Ayodhyā.

Rtu-parṇa, hearing the words of Sudeva, wanted Bāhuka to take him in the chariot to Vidarbha within the period of a day time for the second svayamvara of Damayanti. Nala consented with a breaking heart. Immediately they started. Vārṣṇeya also got into the chariot. The chariot flew through the sky with tremendous speed, to Vidarbha. On the way the upper garment of the King fell on the ground. He ordered the chariot to be stopped for taking his upper garment. Nala said that within that winking time the chariot had travelled a yojana (league) and gloried in his power of driving horses. Then they saw in the forest a Tanni tree (*Terminalia bellerica*) with fruits. Seeing the Tanni tree the King said, "O Bāhuka, if you are an expert in horse-driving I am an expert in reckoning. I will tell you how many leaves and nuts there are in that Tanni Tree. There are five crores of leaves in both the branches together and two thousand and ninetyfive nuts. They stopped the chariot and checked the tree and found the reckoning of the King correct. The King had the knowledge of the art called 'Akṣahrdaya'. It was with this art that the king calculated the number of leaves in the tree, at one look. Bāhuka drove the chariot with the speed of wind because he had known the art called 'Aśvahrdaya'. Then and there, Bāhuka taught the King the art of 'Aśvahrdaya' and the King taught Bāhuka the art of 'Akṣahrdaya'. The

moment Nala learned Akṣahrdaya Kali vomitted the poison of Karkoṭaka and got out of the body of Nala. Long ago, the mother of Indrasena, a god, had cursed Kali and drove him out. Since then Kali had been living in the body of Nala. As soon as he came out Kali begged Nala for pardon. Nala curbed his anger. But Kali was afraid of Nala. So he made the Tanni tree his abode. Because of that Tanni became detestable.

Rtu-parṇa, Vārṣṇeya and Bāhuka reached Kuṇḍinapura in the evening. When the sound of the chariot of Nala reached the ears of Damayanti her heart bumped with joy. The chariot was stopped and Rtu-parṇa entered the palace. The King Bhīma welcomed Rtu-parṇa heartily. As there was no sign of any preparation for the svayamvara (marriage) Rtu-parṇa understood that some sort of trick had been played on him.

10) *Test of Nala.* Damayanti sent her maid Keśinī to Bāhuka to watch him. Keśinī had a secret talk with Bāhuka. Though Nala did not reveal himself, he cried when she talked about Damayanti. Keśinī returned to Damayanti and told her what she had heard and seen. Damayanti became more and more convinced that Bāhuka was Nala himself. So she sent Keśinī again to Nala. She discovered the following facts about Bāhuka, after a keen observation, and made a report of them.

(1) Bāhuka does not stop to pass through even a small door. The upper sill lifts by itself for him to pass through.

(2) He gets enough room for him to pass through even a big crowd.

(3) Empty pots are filled with water at a look from him.

(4) When he stretches out a grass to the sun, it catches fire.

(5) Fire does not burn him even if he touches it.

(6) When he crushes a flower, it blooms more beautiful and fragrant than before.

When Keśinī said all these facts to Damayanti, she became fully convinced that Bāhuka was none other than Nala himself. Damayanti sent Keśinī again to Bāhuka to get some meat cooked by him. Damayanti tested the taste of the meat brought by Keśinī and she knew that the food was cooked by Nala. She sent Keśinī again to Bāhuka with her children. Seeing Indrasena and Indrasenā coming to him, Bāhuka ran to them, gathered them and embraced them and cried aloud. Then he told Keśinī that he had done so because the children were just like his two children.

11) *Reunion.* After having tested Bāhuka so far Damayanti sent Keśinī to her mother to tell her everything, and to say that she was convinced of the fact that Bāhuka was none other than Nala and that the difference was only in shape and to request that she may be permitted to see Bāhuka in person. The queen informed the King of all these facts. With the permission of her parents Bāhuka was brought to the room of Damayanti. The moment Bāhuka saw Damayanti he began to shed tears. Damayanti also was filled with emotion. But she told him thus :—

"Bāhuka, have you seen a man who had left his sleeping wife in the forest? Who else, but Nala the famous and the righteous would discard his blameless and loving wife who had been sleeping, with fatigue and