

Lavaṇa was the King of Uttarapāṇḍava, a country of great fame. He was the grandson of Hariścandra and wished to earn fame by performing a Rājasūya yāga as Hariścandra had done. Lavaṇa decided to perform the yāga in his mind only. He made grand preparations for the yajña. He invited the Ṛtviks and after invoking the devas inflamed the sacrificial fire. For one year he observed yāga like that and in the end gave gifts to the brahmins and the poor. It was all an imaginary performance that the King had in the course of a single day when he indulged in a reverie. In the evening as usual he continued his day to day duties.

One who performs Rājasūya will have to bear woes and sorrows for a period of twelve years and since Lavaṇa had performed it mentally, Indra sent his agent to give Lavaṇa worries mentally. Indra's agent appeared in the court of King Lavaṇa in the guise of a magician. The magician bowing before the King with awe said, "Lord, I shall show you a magic. See it sitting on your throne. It will be as astounding as if seeing moon rise on the earth".

Saying this the magician took a bundle of peacock-feathers and waved it against the face of the King. That bundle was capable of producing different objects and visions. The King fixed his eyes on the several glittering spots on the feathers and soon he saw a relative of the Saindhava King approaching the court. Behind him was a beautiful horse. Holding the horse by the reins the new-comer addressed the King thus. "Lord, this horse is as good as Uccaiśravas and it has been sent by the King of Sindhu to be presented to you. Best things should be given to the best people and only then the value of the thing would be correctly understood." The magician who was standing near-by supported the statement of the new-comer. He said "Lord, what he says is true. This horse has wonderful powers. Take a tour of all the worlds riding on this horse". The King sat staring at the horse and he sat thus for an hour and a half. The entire court was perplexed.

After some time the King awoke from his meditation and looking at his courtiers in wonder he said thus : "I shall tell you what happened to me during the short period I was sitting in meditation. While I was looking at the peacock feathers of the magician I felt a desire to go hunting riding on this horse. So I went to the forest alone riding on this horse. Very quickly the horse took me a long distance deviating from the main path and I soon found myself in the dark depths of a huge forest. By the time we reached that forest my mind and body were equally tired and still we went on moving till evening came. Somehow we crossed the forest and reached Jāṅgala. There I found a cluster of lemon trees and to ease my body I caught hold of a creeper hanging from one of the lemon trees. As I did so, to my horror, I found the horse running away from me and leaving me alone. Tired by the day's travel I sat at a place and dozed. Darkness was creeping in and soon the whole place was in complete darkness. It was very cold also. Somehow I spent the night and when morning came, with hopes I walked around the place. The place was still and no living thing was in sight. As I roamed about I saw a forest-

girl coming with a pot of rice. I approached her and asked for some rice. She did not pay any attention to my request and moved on. I followed her and she said she would give me rice if I promised to marry her. In despair I agreed to her condition and she was pleased with my reply. She gave me half of the rice and curry she was carrying to her father and also some lemon-juice to drink. After taking that food I rested for a while.

Her name was Hārakeyūrī. As soon as her father came from the fields she told him everything. The caṇḍāla was immensely pleased to hear about our marriage and all of us went to their hut. The scene I saw at the hut was astonishing. At one place was the flesh of boars, horses, fowl and crows in a heap and on the intestines of animals hanging from ropes sat birds pecking at them. In the hands of children there were pieces of raw meat and flies hovered round them. The hut presented a disgusting atmosphere and yet I entered and sat on a leaf and my marriage with Hārakeyūrī was conducted there. The celebrations of the marriage lasted for seven days and all these days people danced and shouted amidst loud noises of drumming in a hilarious mood of drunkenness.

Eight months passed by very soon and Hārakeyūrī became pregnant. She delivered a girl first and soon we had two or three children more. I had to do many cruel and nasty deeds to feed my family and gradually I became old. My hair became grey.

At that time there occurred a great famine and those residing in the forests were put to great trouble. There was no water to drink as all ponds and lakes went dry. Some of us migrated to the vicinity of the Vindhya mountain where there were plenty of water-fountains. A few committed suicide. We also left the place and started walking, taking the children also along with us. After some time we sat under a palm tree completely exhausted. My wife began to weep profusely. She then kissed her children and lay down and started sleeping. Thirsty and hungry my children lay there awaiting death. Unable to witness the scene I jumped up from there deciding to commit suicide myself. Suddenly my vision faded and I was able to see this court and you all. This is the work of that magician".

The courtiers sat dumb-founded at the incredible story of the King. Suddenly the magician disappeared. The magician after making the King experience the woes of twelve years in a very short time left for the court of Indra.

Next morning King Lavaṇa in the hope of seeing the place and people of his dream in reality near the mountain Vindhya started with his retinue on the false pretext that he was going to conduct a victory march. When he entered a big forest he met with many familiar places and hunters of his dream. Then he saw the hut where he had lived. The same men and women were there all around. Then he saw an old lady lamenting thus: "Oh my dear sons, where did you go from my lap? My dear daughter, have you forsaken me? Oh prince, you came here abandoning all luxury and the beautiful girls of your palace and married my daughter. But God did not allow even her to be your permanent wife. The river of life has to take worthless and mean paths forced by circumstances. A