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TRANSLATION

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**Translated Short Story****Vikram and Vidhata** By Jhaverchand Kalidas MeghaniTranslated by Vandana Pranav Soni

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To inspect about his people's standard of living and to ensure about their well-being the King Vikram toured in disguise. Once upon a time during his journey; Vikram made a night stay in a village at the house of a Brahmin. In that house a Brahmin woman had delivered a baby boy before six days and it was the sixth night of the birth.

As the King Vikram was very much exhausted; he soon fell asleep by putting his weapons beside a pillow. A male Brahmin also went to bed after eating *Shiro* which in fact was cooked for his wife. He snored alike the bellows that blow in the kiln of Blacksmith. A hungry brahmin woman also fell asleep.

Exactly at midnight, the goddess of Destiny arrived. She was holding in her hand an ink-pot containing *kumkum*, a pen was kept around the space of top ridge of her ear; and in the armpit she held a tabular form for counting.

The Goddess tiptoed into the house. She sat down near the bed of a newly born. The *Diya* of *ghee* was burning. She brightened the light of the lamp rising up the wick. She drew lines of destiny on the forehead and palms of a child.

What did she write?

It was written that every day his metallic pot would be filled with two and half kg flour. It was forecasted that in the future, he would get an authority to charge the highest amount during every religious ceremony, along with the other gifts that are usually received by a priest after performing religious rites. He was destined to get a special coin and also the amount that is given to the state during the marriage of a girl. It was prophesied that in his profession of a priest, he would receive ample of *dhotis*. The Goddess of Destiny also wrote that, he would marry a sixteen-year-old priestess, but while drawing his age span---

*Arrrrrr!* The pen fell down from the hand of the Goddess of Destiny. Soon the Goddess got up. The burning lamp was blown out. Beating her forehead, the goddess walked out.

As she went in a lobby, she bumped in with the body of the King Vikram who got up and he was startled; soon he held the legs of the Goddess of Destiny. He asked, 'who are you? Are you an enchantress? Are you a witch?'

The Goddess said, "Hey, King Vikram, let me go, I am the creator of the fate of the people of the three worlds, viz., the heaven, the earth and the hell."

"The Goddess of Destiny: why did you come here?"

"I came here to inscribe future of a newly born child that is usually written on the sixth day after birth."

"Mother, what did you write?"

"Master, please do not ask me."

"Please share, otherwise, I cannot allow you to walk a single step because I am on guard."

“Vikram, his future is bright, but his age span is about only eighteen years. During his fully bloomed youth; and in the middle of his marriage ceremony when he would be taking promises of marriage during the fourth *mangal fera* in *chori* itself a lion will attack and kill him.”

Vikram underwent a frightful stroke. “Oh, Goddess, will bride get widowhood right itself in the *chori*? Is there any solution to escape from this mishap?”

“No solution and no way out!” By saying so, the Goddess stepped out.

At that time challenging the goddess: Vikram shouted, “Listen Goddess! Today during my vigilance, you have cheated me and wrote a premature death of the one who gave me the shelter, but keep in mind that the destiny of a new born Brahmin boy forecasted by you will be proved wrong by me. I cannot bear to be proved worthless or burdensome for one who has provided me the shelter.”

The Goddess went away. In the morning, Vikram became more alert; while leaving the house he advised, “Hey Priest, whenever you get your son married please send me an invitation card at Ujjaini. As a maternal uncle I would come at the time of ceremony by bringing all the gifts given to daughter’s sons by maternal grandparents as well as maternal uncles on the occasion of nephew’s marriage.”

The eighteen years passed away within the wink of the eyes. The Brahmin on reaching Ujjaini said: “Hey King, I have brought a *Kankotri*.”

“Priest I am ready, I am present. Let it strike at the beat of the drum. Get the army ready. I want to attend the marriage procession of my nephew.”

The army marched swiftly at the pace of surging waves of the sea.

“Be alert and cordon the *mandap* by keeping innumerable swords ready. Patrol at the gate with a gun loaded with bullets and keep a wick burning for firing a gun and cannon. If a lion approaches here, then shoot him down with a bullet.”

There was a pin drop silence in the village. People were amazed to know about the King Vikram’s resolution to make the Goddess Destiny’s prophecy wrong in the case of the Brahmin’ son. Aah...ha!

By keeping a sword ready, the King stood in the *mandap*; meanwhile the call of *Samay Varte Savdhan* came from the priest who was performing the rituals of marriage ceremony.

The first *mangal fera*, the second *mangal fera* and finally the third *mangal fera* was over.

“Oh, now why to worry? Very soon when the fourth *mangal fera*; would be over; then the destiny written by the Goddess would be nullified.”

But as soon as they went to take the fourth *mangal fera* at that time a Lion came by roaring, leaping, wagging tail and emitting the sound *hu-hu-hu-hu*. By holding the bridegroom by the neck; the lion sucked bridegroom’s throat’s bone. Where it came from? How this deadly disaster happened? Did the Lion come out by slitting the earth?

Oh no, it neither came from the sky nor it came out of the earth; the picture of a lion that was painted on the decorated pot of marriage became alive as the Goddess of Destiny sprinkled nectar from the sky. It was a very stout Lion. It had sharp teeth; on beholding his scary look, a man might die out of fear.

After sucking the bridegroom's throat suddenly, it settled in the pot and became a still painting. Vikram turned pale as the piece of dry mud; due to shame his blood of the body froze and one could not find a single drop of blood in his body even if one cut him. He felt embarrassed to that extent that he thought; if the earth split up and give him a way then he would bury himself.

“Do not worry. Brothers please do not cry. Do not shed a single drop of tear. Oh, father of a bridegroom, consider your son as dead for only six months. Hey, father of a bride, consider your daughter as a widow for only six months. I want the six months the period. I would bring a pitcher of resuscitating nectar at any cost otherwise; I would not rule over again. By stuffing, medicines in the corpse keep the lamp of *ghee* burning before the dead body and wait for the six months. If I come empty handed, then along with your son I would end my life by burning myself in a funeral pyre.

Giving such advice, Vikram drove away his horse. On the way, he came across a vast jungle in size it was equivalent to forty-eight villages. As he entered into the jungle; a frightful, mammoth flame was burning and appalling yelp for help was echoing from it: ‘I am burning, burning! If there had been the King Vikram then he could not remain without saving me.’

‘*Ohhoho*, some dejected, is wailing by using my name.’

As he went, he saw one large serpent, completely poached in fire. Vikram by putting his hand in intense blazing fire took out the serpent. The serpent said, ‘A benevolent man, who are you?’

“I am the king Vikram whom you were calling.”

“*Aaha, hey* the King, the remover of other's misery; in my body there is severe burning sensation. Please, allow me to abide in your nectar type soothing body for a short duration. I would come out of your body as soon as pain caused by burning sensation would alleviate.”

Vikram opened his mouth and the *Sinduriyo Naag* speedily crept in and sat in the abdomen of the King.

After sometime, the king said, “Brother as per your assurance, please make an exit.”

The snake who was sitting in an abdomen of Vikram replied, “*Ram Ram*, I am not mad that I come out by leaving such a cozy abode.”

Vikram thought, ‘no issue, how could I disregard or cause the extinction of one, to whom I had given a shelter. I had a habit of taking a dose of opium every day. If I would take opium then the serpent, sitting in my tummy might lose his life. So, from the day onward opium would be forbidden to me.’

Vikram gave up his everyday intake of opium but he walked by dragging himself. His belly bloated like pot, his hands and legs became scrawny. His eyes became feeble and painful. Nobody could identify him. He had an extremely grievous ache in abdomen.

Losing awareness of all the senses, Vikram was dragging his legs in the market. During that time what happened?

The king of that town had two daughters. By keeping the hands-on heads of both the daughters, the father asked, “Tell me, dear Are you a self-reliant or a reliant?”

The elder one said, ‘Father, I am a reliant.’

The younger one said, “father, in this world, everyone receives the results of their own deeds. No one can erase even two digits that are written on the foreheads by the destiny; nor could one add any. So, I am a self-reliant.”

“E...M girl, this much haughtiness; is there any attendant?”

‘Soon on a single call, twenty-one attendants came.’

“Tomorrow morning by making younger princess sit in the chariot you go to the market place of the town. If you come across any blind, deaf, dumb, orphan, handicapped or ailing man, then get her married to him; then we would see how long her spirit of self-reliance will last.”

The attendants went to the market, and then on the raised platform of one shop they saw Vikram who was lying there. His pupils of the eyes were hauled in. There was a little life in him. Soon the marriage was arranged and soldiers got the younger Princess, married to Vikram.

In a gift they gave her a seven generation older small cart. They gave her two weak bullocks that stopped often just by walking three *gaw*. They provided one female attendant. The Princess sat in the cart and went along with the king Vikram.

In the afternoon under the shelter of a banyan tree, they parked the cart. The Princess sat down and took her unconscious King in her lap. The maidservant fell asleep. The Princess was caressing her ailing husband. After sometime by putting down the head of her asleep husband on the floor, she went to fetch water.

What did happen when she went away?

The gallant Vikram was asleep. His mouth was open. Slowly, slowly *Sinduriyo Naag* lying inside stomach peeped out to take fresh air. As it popped out his head and looked here and there by clobbering its tongue, suddenly a sound came... ‘Oh, disgusting shameless, mean serpent of inferior breed!’

The snake got startled and looked around here and there, then it saw that another snake sitting in the opposite burrow was shouting “you malignant, you do not belong to the Nine Lineages of Serpents.”

The *Sinduriyo naag* made a hissing sound and retorted, “Why are you reviling me?”

“What else can I do if I do not abuse you? You did not find any other person that you sat in an abdomen of that King Vikram who removes others’ predicament; it is shameful on your part! There is no preceptor over you.”

“Keep your wise words with you”, *Sinduriyo* said: “You had inappropriately overpowered somebody’s wealth.”

“I am sitting on somebody’s wealth, but like you I am not sitting in somebody’s body. Oh, sinner right now, if anyone makes you drink by pounding *sava ser nux vomica* then you would realize; your pieces of the body will come out.”

“Have you come into this world with the title of immortality? You have exposed me as a thief; but remember if someone by boiling *adhman* oil pours it in your burrow then soon you would become lumps of gold. The Seven broad mouthed vessels containing treasure that you possess would go into somebody’s hand.”

By saying such, both the serpents oscillated their heads against each other and went back.

One went into its burrow and the other crept in an abdomen of King Vikram.

The Princess came back by fetching water. She overheard the conversation of both the serpents. She awoke her attendant.

“The attendant you please go quickly to the market and buy *sava ser nux vomica*, *aadhmann* sweet oil and frying pan made of iron.”

Soon all the ordered items were bought. The Princess thought that if these conversations of the snakes would go wrong then *arrrr!* If I give venom to my husband, and if he might die then what to do? If it would happen then I would be a criminal. Therefore, the first thing was to do test on the Snake lying in the burrow.

She ignited a bonfire and heated the oil. Both the women by lifting together the pan of oil poured hot oil into the burrow. Soon by making snorting sound, the snake came out and soon it turned into a lump of gold. They started to dig the burrow. As they dug knee deep pit, then one broad mouthed vessel, two broad mouthed vessels, three broad mouthed vessels, and four! Thus, seven containers of brass were shoved out. They opened the vessels and found that they were brimming over with gold guineas.

They covered the burrow with sand. She pounded *sava ser nux vomica* and slowly poured the drops into the mouth of the King. As *pa sheer* went into tummy soon the *Sinduriyo Naag* choked within and gushed out and soon its body shattered into pieces.

By carrying a tiny pot of milk in hand, the Princess gradually started to pour drops of milk into the mouth of Vikram. As soon as he gulped down the milk, soon his hand and legs were vitalized. His internal 32 bodily cells brightened. By twisting arms and casting off indolence, the King Vikram woke up. On getting up, he got startled.

“Oh Princess, what you did? The three pieces of *Sinduriyo Naag*! How it happened? Who killed him?”

The Princess elaborately narrated each detail of the whole incident.

“*Arrrr!* Woman, you have made me the victim of a wicked sin. You killed the one who was under my protection.

Vikram put the pieces of a serpent in the secret recess of his shield. The King had not taken bath for many days. His complexion became dark. The royal luster looked blurred.

‘Hey *Satti* I want to take a bath in the well.’ “Welcome *Swaminath* I would give you bath by massaging you with my hands.”

As they went down into the well, they heard the sound of mourning, ‘*arrrr; who* is wailing?’ By keeping the knee touching long, silky hair, one woman was shedding tears and was continuously making desperate sigh “My lord, my husband.” Due to excessive crying, her rosy eyes became puffy and swollen; she had removed all her ornaments and made them scatter everywhere.

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“Oh no, unfortunately we are the killer of your husband. Look, these are the pieces of his body.”

“Oho! Now there is no need to worry. I would puff life into these pieces.”

After saying so, Padamni plunged into water returned within a twinkling of the eye. In her hand, there was a pitcher full of nectar.

By joining the three pieces, *Padamni* sprinkled nectar. One, two, and during the third sprinkle of nectar; the serpent swiftly got up by rocking its massive hood. The Serpent was empowered with the human speech. “Hey woman, I am a sinner. This King had saved me from the intense fire. He allowed me to sit in his abdomen! Oh, his stomach was very soothing, but I offender forbade to come out. To keep me alive he renounced his regular dose of opium.”

‘Hey, Vikram, demand, demand.’

“If I want to ask anything, then the God serpent, I would ask only one thing that one Brahmin’s son during his marriage ceremony died in the *Chori*. I am the culprit; I owe the biggest blot of his death on my forehead. Would you please give me two, three drops of nectar?”

“Why did do take only two-three drops? You could take the whole pitcher of nectar.”

The King went along with the queen by carrying the pot of nectar.

It was the last night of the six months. All were waiting for the King. The dead body was kept by stuffing medicines into it. The three wicks made of ghee were burning incessantly. There was a cloud of smoke of fragrant incense; at that time, Vikram made a loud call----

“Oh brother, are you awake or asleep?”

“The King we are awake, we had not taken a single wink of eye in the past six months.”

One, two and three, with the three sprinkles of nectar; soon the son of a Brahmin got up by twisting his body and he cast off his indolence. The Goddess of Destiny made an oracle, “I failed and Vikram you have won.”

By getting nephew married, the king and the queen came to *Ujjaini*.

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“Hey King Bhoj, if you had done such type of tasks, then only you sit on the throne; otherwise, you would not last on it.”

On saying, such the first puppet became mute. Soon with the *zaannnn* sound, the second puppet started dancing and in a human voice started to speak smilingly:

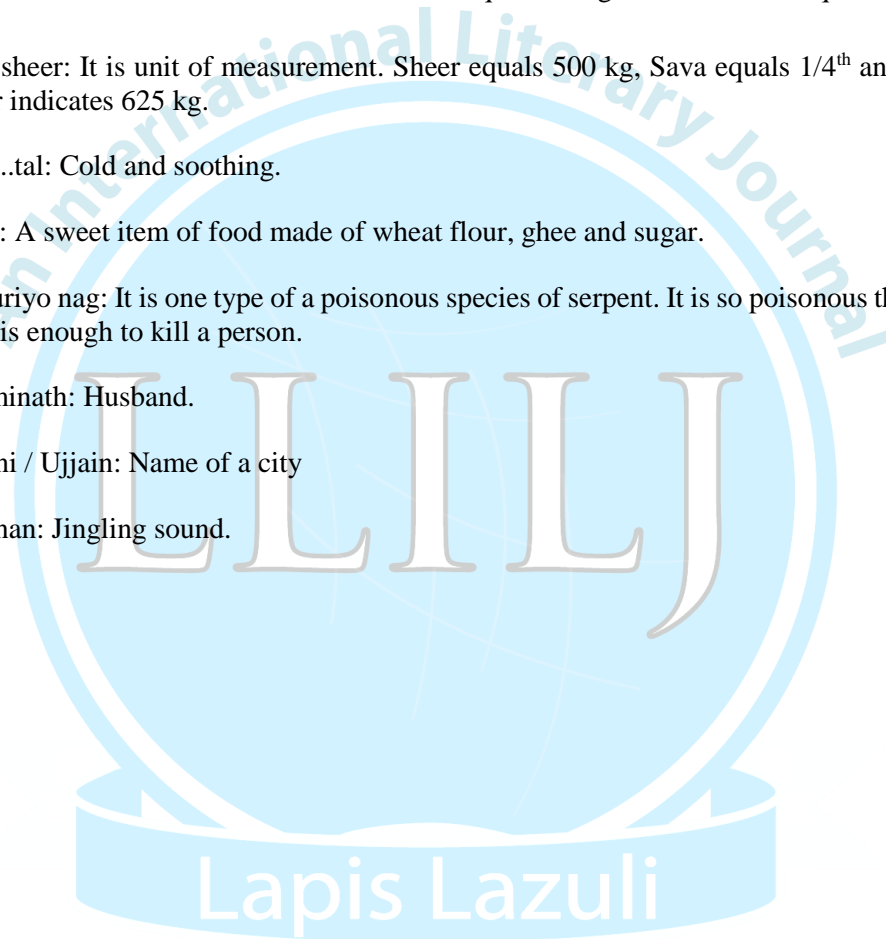
“Listen hey King Bhoj! I would tell you another story of the King Vikram who was sitting on the throne.”

## Glossary

1. Arrr/ Arrrrrr: An exclamation of pain /pity- generally used during a sudden mishap.
2. Brahmin: He belongs to the highest caste of the Hindu. It is said that his origin is from the mouth of Lord Brahma {Brahma- the creator of the world}.
3. Chori: A square decorated structure where marriage ceremony is performed.
4. Dada ji Ni Vato: Grandfather's tale
5. Dhotiyu/ Dhoti: A large unstitched lower garment worn by the Hindu males.
6. Diya: A lamp which is lighted by pouring either oil or ghee into it.
7. Gaw: A measure of distance of about one mile and a half.
8. Ghee no Divo: A lamp lightened with a clarified butter.
9. Kankotri: A wedding card
10. Kanya dan: A ceremonial marriage of girl.
11. Kumkum: The red powder to make an auspicious mark.
12. Mandap/ Mandvo: A canopy or a platform decorated for marriage. It is a square type of platform.
13. Mang! Mang: Demand.
14. Mangal: Auspicious.
15. Mangal fera: In the Hindu religion in the marriage ceremony bride and bridegroom get married officially after taking four rounds around the sacred fire. These four rounds are termed as mangal fera.
16. Mataji: Mother/ goddess.
17. Naag Padamni: The most beautiful of female serpent.
18. Pa Sheer: One-fourth part of a sheer.
19. Padamni: A woman having a beautiful and delicate physique with sharp features. Padmini is one of the best among the four women explained by Kamasutra and Alankara Sastra.
20. Pheramni: The gifts which are given from the bride's side to the bridegroom and his relatives at the time of marriage.



21. Pokhnu: The act of receiving the bridegroom or the bride ceremoniously
22. Raja: The King.
23. Ram Ram: The mode of greeting or bidding a good bye.
24. Rani: The Queen.
25. Samay Varte Savdhan: During the Hindu marriage ceremony before the arrival of bride in the marriage pandal; the Priest makes announcement of keeping the presence of mind.
  
26. Satti: A woman full of chastity and devotional to husband.
27. Sava mann: It is unit of measurement. Mann equals 20 kg and sava mann equals 25 kg.
28. Sava sheer: It is unit of measurement. Sheer equals 500 kg, Sava equals 1/4<sup>th</sup> and so Sava Sheer indicates 625 kg.
29. Shee...tal: Cold and soothing.
30. Shiro: A sweet item of food made of wheat flour, ghee and sugar.
31. Sinduriyo nag: It is one type of a poisonous species of serpent. It is so poisonous that its one sting is enough to kill a person.
32. Swaminath: Husband.
33. Ujjaini / Ujjain: Name of a city
34. Zananan: Jingling sound.



**BIO-NOTE**

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**Translator: Dr. Vandana Pranav Soni**

Dr Vandana Pranav Soni from Noida (U.P) has 10+ years of experience in teaching undergraduates. Currently she is a guest faculty at The School of Engineering, JNU, Delhi. Her M.Phil research was on *The Partition in Indian Short Stories in English*. Her PhD thesis was based on, *A Translation of Jhaverchand Meghani's Non-translated Folk Tales from Gujarati into English with a Critical Evaluation*. She has presented many research papers in National Seminars and State level Seminars. She has also participated in National and State level conferences. Her area of interest is; English literature, Indian Literature, English Criticism, Indian Criticism, Folk literature, Translation and Technical Communication.

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**Author: Jhaverchand Kalidas Meghani**

Jhaverchand Kalidas Meghani (1896 - 1947) was a renowned writer, poet, folklorist, critic and researcher in Gujarati literature. This maestro was felicitated with the title of *Rashtriya Shayaar*, a poet manifesting nationalism as he inspired his generation with his soul stirring patriotic poems. This renowned folklorist and a pioneering researcher carried out painstaking excavation of the folklore of Saurashtra by wandering on foot, riding horses and camels and coasting aboard sailing ships. The fruits of this meticulousness were published in sixteen volumes of folk tales.

