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TRANSLATION

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**Chitrangada's Woe**

(A Bishnupriya Manipuri One-Act Play)

By Biresh Ranjan Singha

Translated from Bishnupriya Manipuri by **Bijit Sinha**

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**Characters:**

Chitrangada: The princess of Manipur and wife to Arjuna

Babhruvahana: The son of Chitrangada and Arjuna

Ulupi: The second wife and consort to Arjuna

Arjuna: The third Pandava

In the aftermath of the heated battle that lasted for several days, the overcast sky in the land of Manipur turns crimson red, as the crown prince, Babhruvahana, looks upon the slain soldiers and the fallen corpse of Arjuna on the red-stained soil of the land. Being unaware that Arjuna was his father, he returns to the palace with a monumental victory, while Chitrangada, his mother waits upon him with arms laden in despair.

Chitrangada: O Babhruvahana! What a terrible fate has befallen upon us!

The horizon of Manipur lies crestfallen.

The skies roar with tumultuous thunder.

Why have you obstructed the path of the yajna horse?

What fate has come upon the land of Manipur?

Babhruvahana: Why did you give me permission then, O Mother,  
To cross swords with the invader upon this battlefield?

Chitrangada: Permission?! I gave you permission,  
To show the embodiment of your father's spirit in battle,  
I never asked you to shed Partha blood on the battlefield.  
Alas! Today, the chest of Chitrangada has been torn asunder.  
Why couldn't you recognize your own father?

Why wouldn't you recognize the third Pandava?

The one who had won numerous battles on the bloodied land of Kurukshetra,

The one who had defeated Karna and Drona,

Bhishma and Duryodhana alike.

The one whose anger had perplexed Indra and made him flee from the earthly realm,

The one who armed himself with the glorious Gandiva bow in battle,

The one who was able to string the divine bow of Shiva,

And shoot the eye of the fish from a mere reflection in the water.

The one who was victorious amidst several kingly assailants,

And had won the hand of Draupadi.

O Babhruvahana, how could you not recognize him?

Babhruvahana: I couldn't recognize him by his face, Mother.

His expression did not belong to that of a father.

Having not solicited my name, I was being shamed in my own kingdom.

My oblations of aparajita flowers and tulsi didn't bear fruit.

My attempt to return the yajna horse didn't amount to anything.  
With each step of mine, I was berated with agonizing veracity.  
As a new sapling shows potential as it emerges from the soil,  
He asked of me, "O Babhruvahana! If you indeed have the warrior's blood  
in you,  
You would not have returned the horse to me in this manner!  
If you cannot bear to hear this, O coward prince,  
You will now show me your prowess on the battlefield!"

Chitrangada: So what if you were deemed a coward?

Let him diminish our royal blood!  
But killing your own father?! What led you to do this?  
What led you to commit this grave crime, my son?  
You have defiled our smriti, our tradition, my prince.  
Recall that you were born under the celestial calling of the Gandharvas.  
Know this! I am Chitrangada, daughter of king Chitrabhanu,  
And Queen of the land of Manipur.  
The very fact that you have Partha blood in your veins,  
Was the sole reason you defeated your father in battle.

Babhruvahana: You speak the truth, Mother,

What ill-fated stars had driven me to capture the yajna horse?  
Had I not borne arms in battle, this disastrous fate would not have happened.  
I had forgotten to bear my astra during my duel with father.  
In spite of the several victories held over warriors of fame,  
I had abandoned all sorts of astra for this one battle,  
Be it the agni-bow or the braja-bow endowed to me.  
Even then, there was no victory in sight for either of us.  
And yet time had turned in my favor,  
When I was reminded by the Ganga incarnate,  
To release the Ganga-astra in my stead,  
And finally vanquish the enemy in sight- my father in battle.

Chitrangada: Now I do realize this cursed chain of events has been ordained by the divine.

Predestined by the vengeful Goddess Ganga, mother of Bhishma-Pitamah.  
Am I not able to voice my laments unto the heavens?  
Am I not even worthy to curse her bidding in this war?  
Am I just a mere puppet at work against the divine will?

Ulupi: Compose yourself, o Chitrangada!

Chitrangada: Now is not the time to compose myself, Ulupi-sati.

My chest has been rendered ablaze in agony.  
All I wanted was to lay my eyes upon the glory of Hastinapur,  
And pay my respects to my mother-in-law, Kunti,  
and King Yuddhisthira,  
I would have been graced with the divine presence of Lord Balarama.  
But all is in vain, as my wishes have been nullified.

Ulupi: Chitrangada! Stay your patience.  
Why must it pain you this much, O princess?  
He will reach Vaikuntha,  
As he had died a glorious death in battle.

Chitrangada: What did you just say? What misfortune has befallen your speech!  
You claimed that there is no death for one under Lord Krishna's protection.  
But my son, a mere mortal, has proven the benediction wrong!  
You gave your word that this pomegranate tree shall live as long as he does.  
But alas! Fate has claimed both lives!  
Who could have predicted that the heaving tree would wither in my lifetime?  
O Ulupi-sati! Should the tree emerge from its remains,  
Would my husband of golden glory be alive again?  
Am I supposed to lose everything?  
Only to turn into a woman of lament sung in tales.

Ulupi: Everything is led by fate, Chitra.  
You cannot hope to undo what has been decided.  
The doors of the underworld have swung open,  
Unto the grace of Yamaraja in Pataal.

Chitrangada: Then ready the pyre, my son,  
One of sandalwood and incense.  
I will embrace the flames of the pyre and die in everybody's presence,  
As I enter eternal union with my lord.  
The earth shall not be troubled with the burden of my body again.

Babhruvahana: Why do you choose Sati, O Mother?  
Punish me, for I have caused you unspeakable grief.  
Mother, I cannot will myself to make the pyre for my father,  
For he who remained undefeated even at the hands of gods,  
Has fallen at the hands of his own son, beget by his lover.  
Tell me, o Mother,  
Do I have any chance at salvation?

Ulupi: Chitrangada! Hold your bearings!  
Haven't I shown you the way?  
He can still be revived, your love.  
But you might have to go against fate.

Chitrangada: Going against fate?! Haven't we already committed that crime?  
When we slew our own blood?  
For I do not know what might happen to me.  
But I choose to stake my own life, come what may.  
Babhruvahana! Fetch that stone.  
Fetch the Naagmani, the stone of the Nagas,  
That was in Ulupi Sati's hands,  
Who still remains their princess.  
Journey to the underworld into the coils of Ananta Sesa-Naga,  
So that glory could be restored to the blood of Partha.

At the order of his bereaved mother, Babhrvahana undertakes his journey to Pataal, and pays his obeisance to its ruler, Sheshanaga, before narrating the unfortunate incident that had befallen his blood. A merciful Sheshanaga grants him the Naagmani so that he could revive his father and free himself from the terrible sin he had committed.

Babhrvahana: Mother, I have brought the gem! Take it so that you may restore Father's life and  
remove the taint on our family's name.

Chitrangada: Prince Babhrvahana! It is not I who will right the wrongs.  
Even though I decide our dynasty's future,  
It has to be you who bears the burden,  
And absolve our name by reviving your father.  
For these are the hands which had claimed his life.  
Thus, the stone has to be borne by the same bloodied hands,  
Which will bring your father back to life.  
Remember the true companion of your father,  
The dark one, Shri Krishna.  
Chant His name thrice,  
And devote your prayers unto Him.  
Whisper it as you hold the Naagmani,  
As it will open the chamber of the stone,  
For without His name and His blessing,  
Even a thousand tries won't crack it open.

Heeding the words of his mother, Babhrvahana chants Shri Krishna's name and opens the stone, letting the elixir liquid flow into the mouth of his lifeless father. Arjuna, the third Pandava, takes a huge gasp of breath as he is brought back to life.

Arjuna: H-How have I reached here?  
This is the palace that belonged to my memories,  
Which I now barely remember.  
O Chitrangada,  
How could you be here next to me?

Chitrangada (immediately falls at his feet):  
My lord! My breath of life!  
Your son, Babhrvahana,  
In an attempt to capture the Ashvamedha horse,  
Had engaged you in a battle to the death.  
The battlefield of Manipur had never seen  
Such an arsenal of astras that led to this familial tragedy.  
You remained speechless, both in life and in death.  
The bond between father and son remained unrecognized, unacknowledged.  
And that is what had led to this horrifying conclusion.  
Upon receiving news of your demise,  
I rebuked the act of the crown prince.  
And under my command,

He ventured into the underworld  
 And brought back the Naagmani,  
 So that you could be brought back to this realm  
 With its life-giving waters.  
 It is truly the miracle of the Lord.  
 Babhruvahana! Embrace the Pandava prince's feet,  
 And take the dust from his footprints.  
 So, that your lost eyes may finally meet his,  
 The adoring eyes of a father.

Babhruvahana (clasping his father's feet):

Father! Forgive me,  
 For I have crossed a line,  
 No son ought to have.  
 In ignorance, I have committed a grave mistake,  
 Grant me peace, not forgiveness  
 So that I may have strength to carry my sin till I reach the end.

Arjuna (recalls his Gandharva marriage to Princess Chitrangada and embraces his son):

My son! You have grown so much,  
 In a father's absence.  
 Please get up, my child.  
 Why would you seek peace?  
 When I have finally laid my eyes on my long-forgotten son.  
 Blessed am I,  
 To have a warrior son like you.  
 And to be overwhelmed with pride,  
 At having lost to a warrior greater than I.  
 Can there be a greater feeling than that for a man like me?

Chitrangada (embraces both father and son):

My lord! It has been a long journey for you.  
 Rest for a few days in our land.  
 My people rejoice unto your name and your exploits,  
 And yet they fail to remember your image.  
 Your soldiers rest in the palatial grounds.  
 Come, let us proceed to the palace,  
 So that you may recite your tales,  
 To your newly discovered family.

(Arjuna commands his army to rest in the state of Manipur, as father, mother and son retreat to the throne room.)

## BIO-NOTE

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Bijit Sinha is currently working as an English Mentor at The Ardee School, Gurugram, He has previously worked as an Associate Desk Editor at Cambridge University Press India. He has also published his short stories in three anthologies, Hope Reborn, The Other and The Stray Branch: Spring/Summer 2018. His retelling of four Jataka Tales in the form of one-act plays has been acquired by Half Baked Beans for an autumn release in 2020. He is presently working on two manuscripts concerning with mythopoeic fiction. More updates of his works can be found on [www.bijitsinha.com](http://www.bijitsinha.com).

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### **Author: Biresh Ranjan Singha**

Late Biresh Ranjan Singha was a retired Accounts Officer who had also served as the President of Nikhil Bishnupriya Manipuri Sahitya Parishad. Being a Literary Pension Holder under the Govt. of Assam, he was also a member of the Bishnupriya Manipuri Development Council. His prolific bibliography has been immortalized in the form of several plays, short stories, poems, folk songs written in Bishnupriya Manipuri and a case study of the festivals of Jaintias in Meghalaya. His one-act play, “Chitrangadar Bilaap” was a result of him watching a 1984 enactment of the same by college students in Sadhuthakur Ashram, Silchar.

