But the Hindu wife, in that tender age had need of parents and brothers and sisters. She could not think of her husband alone as satisfying all the needs of her tender mind. The home meant to her, the home of parents and it would take years for her to grow up and accept her mate as her all absorbing care. How touching is the following conversation between the grown-up husband and his girl-wife! So long her parents were ministering to her wants and now she feels helpless not knowing exactly on whom to depend.

"I shall go to your country, my husband, but ill will it fare with me when I am in need of apparel."

"In my fair cities a colony of weavers will I found for you."

"I shall go with you, my husband, ill will it fare with me when I want shell-bracelets for my hands."

"In my fair cities will I make the bracelet-makers dwell, who will cut shells to adorn your hands."

"I shall go to your country, my husband, but where shall I get vermilion for my brow."

"From the adjacent countries will I import Bānias to my fair cities to sell vermilion to you."

"I shall go to your country, my husband, but where will a supply of rice come from?"
“In my fair cities the ploughmen will be busy reaping harvests for you, my love.”

“I shall go to your country, my husband, but who will be my mother there.”

“I have my mother and she will be a mother to you.”

“I shall go with you, my husband, but who will be my father there?”

“My father will be your father as well.”

“I shall go with you, my husband, but who will be my brothers and sisters there?”

“My brothers and sisters will, my darling, be brothers and sisters unto you.”

In our country, the gods are not unapproachable divinities—the dwellers of high heaven, they are merely those whom we see around us in our home. The rustic songs draw the gods after the models of the rural people. Hence so much tenderness attaches itself to the tales of the gods.

In this song, there is frequently a reference to money received by a girl’s parents from the bridegroom at the time of marriage. In one place, I find Gauri’s mother began to weep and cry (when Gauri left her parents for her husband’s home), but she tied Rs. 1,000 in the edge of her sādi. The consideration received by the girl’s mother was nearly tantamount to her price with all its legal bindings. In one place, Gauri, the young girl was unwilling to go and wept, “Oh
my papa, Oh my mama, won’t you keep me near you?”

“ But we have taken money before the whole village people, how can we keep you?”

Alas, these old good days are gone. In those days a daughter used to be called কন্না-রত্ন which suggests a purchase value. How the social aspect is changed, not daughter, but the son is a valuable thing in the Bengali matrimonial market.

The rural songs have a simple charm of their own,—even now, when refined ideas and Sanskritized Bengali have driven the charming things of the village into a corner. These songs sometimes under a religious garb and at others without any such garb at all,—indicate the soft feelings, the sorrows and joys that are nourished every day under the shade of green mango trees in a Bengali village. I remember to have heard a Bengali shepherd, a lad of barely 16,—filling the whole air with the pangs of a widow’s heart, conveyed in a song which he sang one evening, while returning from the field. The widow of the song is young and just stricken by her great calamity. I remember a line “Oh my darling, why have you left me—making me helpless, driving me mad with sorrow! In some past life did I purchase fish from a fisherman and forgot to pay the price, for that fault am I a young widow to-day.” Alas! the Bengali widows are not allowed to take fish or
meat of any sort, the passage has therefore a special appeal for us.

It is the fourth class of these folk-tales that are by far the most important of all. They are the *Gītā Kathās*, lit., tales interspersed with songs. In Eastern Bengal, old widows of the humbler classes, assisted by a chorus, used to recite them before ladies of high rank during the days of their confinement. On the sixth night particularly, when the Fortune god—the Vidhāṭā Puruṣa—is said to come down in order to write on the forehead of the baby its future fortunes, the mother and her attendants remain awake; and how can they do so better than by listening to the stories narrated by these story-tellers? These *gītā kathās* are not merely nursery tales. For the education of women, according to the ideals of the East, there cannot be anything more sublime or edifying. They smell of fresh grass and field-flowers that grow plentifully by the country-side and in them are embodied lessons of the highest renunciation and sacrifice. Some of them are distinctly and peculiarly Indian; so that none of the foreign nations that have imitated or adapted many of the Indian tales could reproduce them in their own language or assimilate them in their stories.

Babu Dakṣiṇā Raṇjan Mitra Majumdar has done yeoman's service to the cause of Bengali
literature by collecting some of these. The first edition of his Thākurdāār Jhulī reproduces the stories almost as he heard them from old women of the rural villages of Eastern Bengal. Their very language is preserved in this edition, as it was in some cases recorded by means of phonograph. The story of Mālañcchamālā which is typical of these tales, and has unique excellence, was obtained from an old woman of the Yugī caste. This woman was aged over 100. People said she was 150 years old at the time. She was an inhabitant of a village near Pinger in the sub-division of Tangail in the district of Mymensingh. The stories of Thākurdāār Jhulī were collected during the years 1896-1902. As the language of the first edition of this book proved too archaic and antiquated, the compiler at the request of his publishers had to change it in some places in the later editions. But though the language in the new editions is now closer to current Bengali, the intrinsic worth of the tales has to some extent suffered by the change. It must, however, be said in favour of these changes that the book could not have commanded the popularity that it now enjoys, if the archaic forms had not been changed in many places. But the alterations are not always happy. When an army marched in a hurry, what a dash and sweep of the movement of a large mass of human beings is implied by the line “অলা জাঙ্গাল নায় নাৰা
“उज्जाइया बुज्जाइया” (p. 18, first edition), which means that the low marshy swamps were raised to the level of plain land and the rivers were run up the stream and crossed, but this translation scarcely conveys the precipitous hurry and the dash implied in the original line. This line is omitted in later editions. The words “दंधरेर पृति” (lit., the son of the wielder of the sceptre, p. 22), “बाय बाह्तास निगुम” (p. 20) “विर खापाल करा” (p. 25), “निरबाणि अविधारपुरा” (p. 40), “बाय बाह्तास” (p. 49), “देखलेव बाय पाहारे” (p. 49), “निगुम निपुति राते” (p. 55), “गहिन पाहार नौटे” (p. 127), “चूयारे पापाले मानुष” (p. 131), and many such expressions have been changed or paraphrased in a simpler language in the succeeding editions. What words can convey the awful stillness of the night so powerfully as “निगुम निपुति राति”? The very word “निगुम” which means “without sound” and “निपुति” which means “merged in profound slumber” recall to us by association the terrible calm of a midnight in a child’s dream. Put any Sanskritic expressions in the place of these two Prakritic words, however pompous and grand they may be, they will fail to make a similar impression. But we, in whose ears still ring some of the powerful expressions of country-Prakrit by associations of childhood, do understand and appreciate their rural charm and significance. Our younger generations accustomed
to Sanskritic words have not learnt their meanings partly because they have lost touch with the old country-life, and partly because the present vocabularies scrupulously avoid illuminating scholars about Prakrit expressions, confining themselves to Sanskritic words. It was therefore prudent from the publisher's point of view to change एहि into ए (p. 53), एकहि into एक (p. 54), बिहा into बिहा (p. 60). But the old fascination still lingers in the archaic forms and the same literary beauty, I am afraid, is not preserved in the tales.

How unfortunate is it to substitute गहिन पात्र by कचि पात्र (p. 127). गहिन means impenetrably dense. In our childhood we understood by this density as if it could not be pierced by the point of a needle. कचि means tender.

But the versions of the tales given by Dakṣiṇā Rañjan, in spite of the occasional changes in the style, which he was obliged to make in view of making them suitable for popular use, possess a unique merit. Sir Rabindranath Tagore has written in his introduction to one of these compilations that no other man in Bengal has succeeded in reproducing the tales in the popular dialogue so well as Dakṣiṇā Babu has done. The compiler put aside his own learning, his own notions, and his own language and did almost the part of an automatic machine. Thus the old world is here with its antiquated forms, with its
manners and with its ideals, unvarnished and un molested by modern influences. The old Bengali life of the 10th century is vividly before us in the story of Mālaṇchamālā. The professional women who used to recite these tales in the palaces of the kings as well as in the huts of the poor had a formed style with fossilised ideas. (The stops, the sighs, and even the caughings passed from one generations of reciters to the others, preserving the original stories in a really wonderful manner, not indeed like the Egyptian mummy which is lifeless, but like a flower-woman’s wreath, fresh with life and fragrance. If the stories were not preserved in this manner, how could an illiterate woman, who did not even know how to sign her name, reproduce such an excellent thing as the tale of Mālaṇchamālā? Dakṣīṇā Raṇjan got it from one of these women, as an automatic record. In reading these tales, we need not attach any importance to the name, that appears on the cover, of one who compiled them except for the purpose of grateful acknowledgment of his unselfish labour. He had simply acted as a medium in bringing down to us a treasure that lay hidden in the rustic villages of Bengal. He did not, like Harināth Majumdar, build a new tale out of the materials of the past, nor did he, like Lāl Bihāri Dē, give a
gist of the stories in another tongue, nor like the Mahomedan writers did he introduce into the stories foreign elements divesting them of their original elegance; neither did he like Fakir Rām Kavibhūṣaṇa try to invest the old stories with a classical dignity and adorn them with borrowed metaphors from Sanskrit. Dakṣiṇā Raṅjān is an elegant writer of Bengali prose and we can well conceive what a control he had to exercise on himself in order to shut himself up altogether while compiling these stories. But a deep love for the rural life inspired him; and merged in his cause he forgot himself altogether like all great workers.

We shall attempt here to reproduce the story of Mālanchhamālā, as we find it, in Dakṣiṇā Babu's compilation. As some of the great merits of Bengali tales will not be understood or recognised until the readers find an opportunity to be acquainted with this story, I may be excused for introducing a full narrative here at this fag-end of my lectures. There are many stories which may be more or less elegant and attractive than this, but it presents the old ideal of womanhood in the most striking manner, and is typical of the great virtues of the fair sex as conceived by the Hindu nation.
Malanchamala

The King is childless.

His Majesty called all the astrologers, all the Brāhmaṇs and all the hermits of his country, and had sacrifices performed by them with a view to having a son. At the end of the ceremonies, the Sacred Oracle said:

"Observe fast, O king, for three days and three nights. On the fourth day pay a visit to your orchard. In it you will find a pair of mangoes of golden hue. Break your fast with them."

The Oracle further had it that the fruit on the right side should be taken by the king and that on the left by the queen.

By the king's order all music in the palace was stopped, the royal court remained closed for three days. His Majesty shut himself up in his room bolting its doors. For three days and nights the king observed fast and vigil. On the fourth day the favourite horse of his stall, the Pākṣṭīrāj, stood near his door-way. The king took his bath and performed the usual religious rites. He bowed to the sacred dust of the temples and then rode the Pākṣṭīrāj. Instantly he was in the orchard. There was a mango-tree in this orchard that had not borne any fruit for three generations;
this tree presented two beautiful mangoes of the colour of gold. The king rubbed his eyes with his two hands and when he was sure of what he saw, promised offerings of sweets to the gods.

The gold-coloured fruits lay half-hid under green leaves, hanging from one stalk. The king shot arrows, but the fruits did not fall. He pulled them by means of a hook, but still the fruits could not be brought down.

His Majesty said, "How strange! I am not able! The smaller stalks joining the fruits should be kept as they are, let some of you pluck the gold-coloured fruits, if he can."

The ministers, the architects, the courtiers all tried one by one, but failed. The arrows were shot, but they flew into an opposite direction. They applied hooks, which broke halfway; they tried to climb the tree, but the trunk became slippery, and they could not succeed; one broke his arm and another his leg in the attempt. With broken limbs they all returned and sat crouching in the meadow.

The king tore off his pearled necklace and threw down his crown. He himself tried to climb the tree. The kotwal* was there. He came forward and said, "Victory be to the king. One who is a master of good qualities himself can

* The kotwal seems to be a police man of the status of an Inspector.
recognise the same in others. If Your Majesty permits me, I may try.

"The elephants and horses are drowned, the grasshopper says, "Let me fathom the waters."

All cried, "Shame" and hissed.

The king said, "All right, if you succeed, there will be a shawl for your reward; if you fail, you will go to the scaffold."

The kotwal bowed low till his head touched the very ground and observed, "If I am to kill any living thing, let me try the elephant; if I am to plunder, let it be the royal treasury, nothing short." Saying this, he took up a clod of earth and muttering some mysterious words, threw it at the fruits. The fruits fell down at the first stroke and rested at the hands of the king. All hang down their heads in shame.

The great music instantly sounded in the king's palace. The horses neighed in the stall; the queen awoke from her sleep. The king threw his own shawl over the kotwal's shoulders, and riding the Pakşirāj returned to his palace.

But the stalks broke in the way and which of the fruits was on the right, and which on the left, could not be known. The queen ate the one that was on the right, and the king the other.

Some months passed; the queen became enciente. The king was glad beyond measure.
He distributed the pearls and jewels of his necklace amongst his courtiers, and the royal treasury was opened for charity.

Ten months passed. By the king's order drummers were brought from the city of drummers; tabor-players were brought from the city of tabor-players. The great sound of kāḍā, nākāḍā, sānāi, chakāḍā, mṛdaṅga and other musical instruments was heard for ten days, and all this time no bird dared to come down on the earth for fear. On the night of the tenth day, a baby was born in the palace; the full moon of the sky was no match for it. In the natal room the baby prince lay surrounded by a halo of light.

The kingdom flourished. The king made offerings to God and distributed food amongst men and animals.* He had tanks and ponds dug in many places, established markets and opened roads; and everywhere his praises were sung.

The sixth night came. The king covered his courtyard with canopies, fringed with golden pendants. Three series of lamps burnt, fed by butter. There were 101 musical bands, they played incessantly. On four sides there were made four fire-places. The soldiers, sepoys,

* This is a Buddhist or Jain custom.
sentinels and armed men kept watch in the palace whole night. Paths strewn with flowers were opened up to the natal room. Over the posts, raised for the occasion, hung garlands of flower; and sandal and vermilion were sprinkled over the path. By this path, Dhārā, Tārā and Bidhātā would go to write the luck of the baby-prince on the forehead.

The sentinels kept watch, and at intervals the bands played. The maid-servants and nurses lay cross-wise at the threshold and narrated to the queen tales of princes and their lady-loves. The queen fell asleep as she heard the nursery tales. The flower-woman who was reciting the story, last of all, dozed till she also fell fast asleep. The mid-night clock rang and the sentinels were feeling sleepy. Dhārā, Tārā and Bidhātā chose this hour to visit the natal room by the path strewn with flowers, scented with sandal and reddened with vermilion. They carried with them bundles of pens. When about to enter, they saw a person lying cross-wise at the threshold. The gods had raised their feet but they withheld; all of them whistled together; but the person did not awake. Time passed, what could they do? They called the three stars of the sky to witness, and stepped over the sleeping person. They now entered the natal chamber.

It was Dhārā who first held the pen. He indicated the learning, intelligence, wealth,
number of followers and other fortunes of the child by signs. On his palm the signs of banner and lotus were marked, and the god took notes from them, and wrote details in full three hours; all the pens he had brought with him were thus exhausted.

As he finished, next came Tārā. He held the pen and touched the child’s forehead with it, but threw away his pen forthwith, and rose up. Dhārā asked, “What do you find?” Tārā turned his face and said, “What more? Let us go, the baby-prince’s life extends to 12 days only.” “Only 12 days? Let me see.”

The baby is to die on the 12th day.

Dhārā began to count for his satisfaction; each time he calculated, the same result—12. Dhārā put a zero after 12, but the zero mysteriously vanished.

Then Dhārā threw away the pen with disgust. If the gods wept, the whole world would cry and be wretched; so they hid their tears with the edge of their clothes and came out. But at the threshold was the flower-woman lying cross-wise. They called the three stars to witness and stepped over. Dhārā succeeded, but Tārā’s feet touched the flower-woman; she awoke and caught hold of the feet of the god. “Who art thou?—a god—a man—a spirit—or a robber? The king’s darling sleeps inside the room and I, the flower-woman, keep watch at the threshold. Even Death
has no power to come here." Tārā said: "Flower-woman, I am the god of luck, leave my feet."
"God of luck! Tell me what hast thou written on the forehead of the prince?" The god felt troubled, and said: "You need not hear that, flower-woman, leave my feet." The flower-woman tied, instead, the feet of the god tightly with her apron. Then the god let fall the drop of tear, that he had hid so long, over her and said: "What more shall I say, woman, the prince's life will extend to 12 days only."

"Only 12 days!" the woman burst into loud bewailings. The drums suddenly burst; the music stopped; the sentinel's spear pierced his own breast. The queen arose with a start and asked "What is the matter?" The king himself came out asking "What is the matter?" The ministers, the courtiers, in fact the whole city came out enquiring "what is the matter? what is the matter?"

The flower-woman beat her head against a stone and cried "How many sacrifices did you perform, oh King, and as a result got this child bright as the full moon. Not even a fortnight, oh King, this moon will vanish after 12 days. Oh God, is it just and fair?"

The king, his ministers, his courtiers fainted in grief. The queen lay as one dead.

The elephants broke their chains and fled from the stall. The horses died in the stable, the
Pakṣirāj, the favourite horse of the king, did not touch any food. The kinsmen of the king and the Brāhmiṇs of the city assembled near the mango tree and observed fast, resigning themselves to the will of God. Dhārā, Tārā and Bidhātā visited the other gods and said, "What justice is this that a son born after so many sacrifices and offerings to gods will live for 12 days only? The king's country stands on the verge of ruin, and the earth is flooded with tears."

The gods said: "Yea, have things come to such a pass?" Their chief assumed the guise of an old Brāhmiṇ and came near the mango tree. The Brāhmiṇ was surrounded by a halo of light. The citizens approached him and said: "Who are you, oh Brāhmiṇ? A light emanates from your body; whoever you be, the prince is going to die shortly. This is his fate. Pray, Save him if you can." The Brāhmiṇ said: "Even the sun and the moon fall into the jaws of the Demon of Eclipse. Who can alter the divine decree? Yet despair not, I shall be able to say more if I see the child once." The king and the ministers took him to the natal room. The Brāhmiṇ examined the palm, the forehead and the face of the child and said: "The life of this baby, seven days old, may be prolonged if you can get it married to a girl who has completed her 12th year to-day. Adieu" The king placed the richest stones
and other valuables of his treasury at the feet of the Brāhmaṇ. What will a god do with them? He, however, chose a bright diamond and carried it with him. On his way he threw it towards the cottage of the kotwal and then departed.

The night passed. The flowers bloomed in the garden and the birds began their songs. Messengers were sent all over the country, seeking a princess, just 12 years old, to be the bride of the baby prince. The messengers returned from far and near and reported that not one was found who had completed her 12th year that day. They all went to the self-same mango tree and waited observing fast.

On the other side of the tank facing the tree stood Mālāñchamālā (lit. the garland of the garden), the daughter of the kotwal who had completed her 12th year that day. She was washing the diamond, thrown by the god. She had picked it up from her cottage-compound, where it had lain, covered with mud and dirt, as it had rained only shortly before. She carried a pitcher with her and the cymbals of her feet made a merry sound on the landing steps of the tank.

"Who is it whose cymbals sound so sweetly—a goddess or a maid?" wonderingly asked all. The musician playing on stringed lyre stopped and said "Is it the hum of bees
flying near a hive in the flower-garden?" Another who played on a musical organ, cried "Is it the cackle of the merry geese swimming in the tank?"

"Not so, then what?"

The ministers and courtiers came near the tank and saw that it was a girl of 12, whose cymbals had sounded.

"A girl of 12! whose daughter is she?"

She is the kotwal's daughter. The king fell into a mental confusion. The sound of the cymbals of her feet is like the humming of bees; flowers bloom in the path which she treads; her arms are like swan's neck; her hair is of wavy curl; the face is like the moon and she looks like an image made of gold. But after all, she is the kotwal's daughter. The king was perplexed. The report was carried to the queen who said "If the girl is so handsome, no matter, though she is the kotwal's daughter marry her to the prince and raise the kotwal to the status of a feudatory chief."

"What am I to do?" asked the king to himself; he pondered over the matter. Sometimes he sat in a pensive mood and then rose up and after a good deal of thinking he commanded,—

"Well, be it so. Send words to the kotwal."

The report went there forthwith. The kotwal put on the shawl presented by the king. He took a spear in his hand and visited his
neighbours. He told them "I plucked the fruits. The results is that my daughter is going to be married to a prince. The king will be my brother-in-law now. You must pay me nazar."

The kolwal made a spacious road in his courtyard. The main door of his house, he changed into a gate; he did not know what he should do to meet the occasion. The kolwal's wife said "Here we humble people live in huts and the sneeze of the king is even heard here.* We are required to give our daughter in marriage to a baby who will die after 12 days. Tell the king I am not going to comply."

Mālaṅchamālā, the daughter said "Pappa and Mamma, allow me to go, as it is the king's command. But Pappa, go to him and first ask if he will agree to my conditions."

"What conditions?" "Whether the bridegroom will be permitted to visit his father-in-law's house?" The kolwal said "Certainly." Mālaṅcha said "Another condition, whether my father-in-law, the king, and mother-in-law, the queen, will agree to partake of the food prepared by me?" The kolwal said "Yes, daughter." "The third" she said "is whether they will be prepared to give me dowries and presents as usual.

* The king would oppress us though we are so humble.
on the marriage night." The kotwal came to the palace to meet the king. Meantime Mālanchā said "Mamma, help me to dress myself." What would the kotwal's wife do? She opened the toilet box and with tears in her eyes helped her daughter to dress herself.

The kotwal addressed the king thus, "Oh thou, King of kings though thou art, yet I shall have the privilege of calling thee a brother, be it to-day, be it to-morrow. Thou wilt accept my daughter but shalt not thou allow the prince to go to the house of his father-in-law?" The king glanced at him crookedly and brushing his hair with fingers said "let the girl first come to the palace on the marriage night, the question will be settled then."

The kotwal next asked, "Will Your Majesty and the queen eat the meal prepared by my daughter?" The king said "Take care, kotwal, these matters will be settled on the marriage night." But, "Oh king, will not my daughter receive the dowries and presents that are usual in marriages?" "Look here, kotwal, but stop I say, I will tell everything, when the girl comes to the palace."

The kotwal returned and told all these to his daughter. Robed in her best of attires she touched the feet of her parents and said "Mamma, grant me leave, Pappa, lead me
now to the palace; but Pappa, tell the king, if my husband dies on the first night of marriage, may I be permitted to take away his dead body?" The kotival went to the king and said as instructed.

Now the king was wrath "Such big words from this mean fellow! This rustic girl has the audacity to extort pledges from me in all matters and dares worry me again and again; she crosses me beforehand and speaks evil things. Who is there? Put the kotival to prison and bring his daughter here through the air path and get her married to the baby-prince."

It was the king's command. His people forthwith went. They tied a palanquin high up to the tops of some tall bamboos, and carried Mālañcha by the air path.

It was a mockery of marriage; there was no present of scents, oil, no fasting and other rites usual before marriages. Only one musical pipe sounded, and the marriage came to a close. The Brahmins recited the mantras; the new born baby cried, the queen came to suckle it and the drummers tried to stop its crying by beating their drums. No flowers, no garlands; the bride went seven times round the baby-prince, and then carrying him in her arms entered the nuptial room. As soon as she came to her apartments, there came down an outpour of rain; the towers of the palace broke and the palace itself caught fire; the
baby-prince vomitted milk and died in the arms of his wife. There was a great bewailing in the palace; the king ran mad and the queen fainted. The citizens in bewildered grief came to the palace, and waited near the room where Mālaṅcha lay with the dead prince. The king said "There is no doubt of it, she is a witch, catch her by the hair and drive her out of the room. Pick out her eyes and burn them." There was a great agitation among the crowd. They forced open the room. Mālaṅcha said to the nurses and maid-servants "Ask my father-in-law and mother-in-law what will they do regarding the words they pledged." "What words?" "They gave assurance that the bridegroom will be permitted to go to my father's house; will they agree to it now?"

"Who is there?" cried the king, "send the kotwal to the regions where the prince has gone." A sound indicated that the kotwal's head was struck off. Mālaṅcha said "I have seen enough, O nurses, ask the king and queen about the other words that they solemnly gave me." "What are those?" "Will they not eat the meal prepared with my hands?" "Nurses, cut off the hands of the kotwal's daughter." The nurses cut off her hands, with the knife that was among the dowries; blood gushed out and flowed past the drain. Mālaṅcha
said, "I see it clearly, what about the other promises that he had made." "What promises?"
"Tell the monarch to give me as dowry a milch cow, five lights fed with butter, sandal-wood, a stove of gold, a spoon of pearls, cups of silver and gold, pillows of white mustard seeds, hand-made beddings of fine needle-work, silver pencil to put the black paint in the eyes. Let him not make any enquiries about his son and the bride."

"See how audacious is this daughter of the kotwal! Who is there, break open the doors of her room." Then the dowry was offered in the following manner; an ass for the cow, gravels for sandal-wood, a basket of cane for the golden stove, a broken earthen pitcher in place of the spoon and cups. And the shells of cocoanut fruits were strung together and put around her neck. A basket was filled with cow-dung and tied behind her back. She was made to put on rags and refuse-clothes picked up from the cremation ground, and with a looking glass in her hand she was made to ride the ass, and in this condition was carried round the city. Her head was shaven and order was passed to banish her, as she was a witch. Mālaṅcha said "Ask my father in-law and my mother-in-law what about other pledges?" "What are they?" "My husband died in the nuptial room. They had
promised to make a gift of him to me.” "A gift?" “All right, who is there, kindle the funeral fire.” The fire was prepared, the flames rose up and there was great noise. The dead prince was given to Mālañcha. Her nose and ears were cut off and she with the baby was thrown into the fire.

Then came down a great outpour of rain, jham! jham! jham! The fire was nearly extinguished. The gobblins and spirits of the air came there with hungry looks. The Pakśirāj horse went mad; it neighed and came there. The king, the ministers and his people left the funeral ground and saved themselves by shutting the city gate. In the midst of the funeral fire, Mālañcha sat with the baby-prince in her lap.

Mālañcha asked, “Is my husband dead or asleep?”

"Dead."

Malañcha again asked, “Is my husband dead or asleep?”

"Dead."

Again the same query “Is my husband dead or asleep?”

"Asleep."

She smiled and took up the child in her arms and pressed it to her breast. Blood gushed forth from her nose and ears that were cut; The gobblins licked them.
"Mālañcha, is it you that are sitting there?"

"Yes."

"What will you do with such a husband? Offer us the dead body."

"No."

The wood of the funeral pyre gradually became stirred with life; hands and legs grew in them, they walked *hop, hop, hop.*

"Is it you, Mālañcha, that are sitting there?"

"Look here Mālañcha, so many of us are lying in wait for the dead body, give it to us."

"No."

Sometime passed: the smoke issuing from the funeral pyre took the shape of a series of grim teeth. Loud laughter came all on a sudden. "Mālañcha, are you still sitting there?" "Yes, what of that?" "Give us the dead child, the fire will be extinguished." "No, I will not give." "Will you not give?" "No."

From one side rose an old woman with a strange and coarse voice "Mālañcha, you are going to be killed, make over the dead body to me." From the other side, an old man sprang up with a grimace, "You will be killed ere long, give me the child and save yourself." The crocodiles and sea-fishes came up to the river-bank and called out, "Mālañcha, make over
the child to us, we will appease our hunger with it.” In the sky the very rains and lightnings and the spirits that rove in the air gaped open their mouths, sneezed and yawned, exclaiming “Mālancha, give us the tender bones, how glad shall we be to eat them up.”

Mālancha did not heed all these: She clasped the baby close to her breast and sat quietly. Days and months passed on; on the sandy shore of the river a great forest grew up. The brother of the Messenger of Death was Kāladuta, his brother was Çāladuta who approached Mālancha and said, “It is the command of the Lord of Death, give up the dead body.” Mālancha replied, “Who are you? Take, if you have the power to do so.” Kāladuta and Çāladuta melted away in the air. There was moon-light all around. Next came an exceedingly pretty girl with a bright complexion and lovely intelligent face. Her hands and feet were tender. She said, “Is it you Mālancha? We were great friends when we were children. You seem to have forgotten all. Oh, what is it? Oh God, what a condition! With a dead rotten baby in your lap! Throw it away, throw it away.” Mālancha said, “Who are you that profess friendship to me? Have you no feeling of a wife for her husband?” The girl said, “Alas Mālancha, is this corpse your husband? Make it over to me for a moment and go and
THE BABY RESTORED TO LIFE

fetch a little water from the river." "There is no water in the river." "Oh yes, if there were water in the river, things would not come to this pass." "Bring some medicinal herb." "There is none." "Oh Mālancha, look up there, the sky is overcast with clouds, the floods come pouring, arise, dear, here is my hand, place the baby in my lap, arise, haste. I say." Mālancha clasped the baby closer to her breast and said, "Be witness, oh gods, here is my baby-husband in my lap, if I am chaste and devoted, oh you tempter, do but touch me, and you will be reduced to ashes; I am Mālancha and none other; you are an evil spirit, go hence. Oh thou night, if thou dost not pass away, with my baby-husband in my lap, here do I solemnly say, I will transform the stars to fire and flowers to stars." The night was frightened and passed away trembling; the dawn peeped into the forest-lands. The girl, her friend, said, "Mālancha, look at the baby." Mālancha felt that the apparitions were all gone. The baby in her lap was gently moving its hands and feet, and she seemed to be in the midst of a vast expanse of sands. Mālancha, intensely willing to see the baby, gradually got her sight; she went in quest of a pitcher for milk. Ready for service she felt that her hands grew. She recovered her ears;
her nose became what it formally had been; the hair of her head fell in luxuriant curls behind her back. Mālaṅcha addressed her girl-companion and said, "May your husband be long-lived. Who are you? I abused you, look at my condition and pardon me." Mālaṅcha found there a stove of gold, sandal-woods, pillows of white mustard seed and spoons made of pearls. She made a fire with sandal-wood, warmed the milk and put it in a silver cup; then with the spoon made of pearls, she fed the baby; she wiped away the neck and the face of the baby with her silken apron; then on a bed delicately wrought with needle, she made the baby sleep, resting his head on the pillow. She sat with her back towards the sun, and with a silver pencil applied the black paint to the baby's eyes.

Thus did she live in the sandy shore with her little husband. She fasted all the while. She got milk and every thing, and fed the baby. She applied the black paint to its eyes, and warmed it with her apron. There she sat all the time, gazing at the child. The little husband laughed, and she smiled; he cried, and she wept. When he began to utter inarticulate words, she gave replies; the little thing moved hands and feet, she played with him; she bathed him with tears, wiped away his dust with her hair, warmed him with her breast, covered him with the edge of
her cloth and sat clasping him close to her breast.

Days and months passed, and even a year rolled away in this way. Mālancha had a pitcher of milk which was never to be empty. The gods, with mouths, pointed like needles, drank off this milk. Mālancha found there was no more milk in the pitcher. Carrying the baby-husband in her arms, Mālancha set out in quest of human habitation for cow's milk.

In that limitless expanse of that alluvial land, she walked on and on. If the sun smote the baby's face, she covered him with her cloth; if rain fell, she protected him in her bosom; if dust blew, she kept it away by spreading her hair; she fanned him with her flowing hair. She went one step and then stopped, thus did she proceed in her journey. At last she reached a dense forest. Alas! where is human habitation? Where is milk? She saw, instead, a large tiger; it approached her with a hungry growl. "I am grown old, dear maid, I have no strength to go seeking for prey, I am almost starved. I must eat this baby," it said. "Look here, tiger, he is my husband, he is so small that if you eat him, your hunger will not be appeased, so eat me instead."

"Is he your husband, child? With such a one you are in a dense forest! I will eat none of you; live here, child, I will be your guard."

Mālancha said, "Uncle, that's good, but how can I feed my baby husband? Where is milk to be had?" "Milk? Yes, you are human beings the baby must drink milk. All right let me see, if I can secure a cow for you." The tiger went away. Mālancha wept and said, "Where are ye, oh gods? The baby is crying for hunger; if by sacrificing my life, one drop of milk I can get, I am ready to do so." The tigress appeared at this moment with her cubs. She said, "Who art thou, child, weeping for milk in this forest? If my milk will do, you can have it from me."

"Yes, it will do." The tiger meantime returned and said that he could not procure a cow and looking at the tigress exclaimed, "You are here, now see, I forgot all about it." Chandramānik (the baby prince) was suckled by the tigress and grew up. The tigress and her mate were their guards. Mālancha thus lived in that forest; she watched her little husband at every step; she walked keeping pace with him; she gathered flowers and fruits for him; she sang lullabies to make him sleep and played with him when he awoke, and thus spent five years.

With tearful eyes, Mālancha one day said, "Uncle and aunt, I have to leave this place now." "What word is that? In quest of a tutor, Do not say so again. Tell us what has happened, whose neck shall we break? Name the offender; we will instantly eat him
up.” “No uncle and aunt, nothing of the sort. You do not know it, my husband is a prince; he has just stepped into his fifth-year. How can I avoid placing him under a tutor.” “Is that all? Then make arrangement for it at once. There are so many scholars who rove here in mornings and evenings, crying out ‘hukkā huā’; you have simply to ask for it and we shall secure some of those from the forest for education of the prince.” “No uncle, they will not do for us, I am going away; enquire about us now and then, I shall live close to some city.” Mālañcha took leave with tears. The tigress and her mate accompanied her till she got out of the forest. For four days after her departure, the grisly couple of the forest ate nothing. The cubs wandered about uncared for.

Mālañcha proceeded in her journey with Chandramānik in her arms. After some days she came near a garden, belonging to a flower-woman. The tank there was without water and no flower had bloomed in it for twelve years; the garden had become a regular forest of thorny plants and an abode of snakes. It was a hot day and Mālañcha rested there a while, greatly fatigued.

1 “Hukkā huā” is the familiar word in Bengali to denote the yell of the fox.
As she sat there, the bees began to hum and birds with coloured wings flew near about her in numbers. Each tree became covered with green leaves, and each of them had on it a creeper laden with flowers. Their fragrance drew the attention of the flower-woman, who came out.

"For twelve years there has been no flower in my garden, no water in the tank, but to-day the garden smiles with flowers, and a beautiful lotus has bloomed in that tank. It seems there has come a change over my luck. What is it that has made the garden so to-day?" As she looked out, she saw that under the shade of a Vakul tree on which sat a cuckoo making the place resonant with its cooings, there sat a goddess with a baby in her lap, bright as the moon. The flower-woman approaching her said, "What heaven is that of which you are a dweller, child? Your presence makes a desert bloom, tell me who you are?" Mālañcha said, "I am a humble being of the earth, I have sat here to rest a while." "Come inside my cot. Your face and hands and complexion resemble those of my niece who died twelve years ago. All this time, I have wept over her untimely death; is it she that has come back to me in the lovely form I see before me?" "I do not know that aunt, I have just now come to your garden." "Never mind, come to my house." The flower-woman
was pleased that she would be able to sell flowers to the palace every day, and Mālañčha felt she would be able to get information regarding the city from her. Both entered the cottage. The flower-woman said, "You look pale, child, take some food." Mālañčha said, "Give me some milk if you have it." Mālañčha fed the child and dusted the room fixed for her and brought some flowers from the garden, which she placed around the bed of her little husband. And then she told the flower-woman, "Aunt, I do not take meal prepared by others, help me to get things, I shall cook for myself." The flower-woman was pleased and did as she was asked. Mālañčha did not disclose to her that the child was her husband. The cottage of the flower-woman was a wretched one. Mālañčha said, "It is not a good house, aunt, appoint men to build a good one." A new house was built, formerly there had been only a single hut in the house and now it contained three huts. In one she lived with the prince, in another the flower-woman and the third had no occupant. Mālañčha asked the flower-woman one day, "Where do the students read in the city?" "Why, there is a teacher in the palace who has a number of scholars in his charge. There is quite a legion of them! There are hunchbacks and frog-voiced scholars, there are those who have elephantiasis and others who are huck-shouldered. Besides
there are sons of the king also. Day and night, they hum like bees and croak like ravens. It is a sight worth seeing—a veritable mart of crows and cranes.”¹ “Then aunt, the prince must go there. Get for him inkstand and pens and take him to the school.”

Chandramānik goes to school and returns with marks of ink all over his face. The room that was unoccupied serves now as his reading room. Mālañcha engages the flower-woman to help him to bathe, to wash his face marked with ink. Mālañcha cooks the meal and keeps it ready and then goes away. The flower-woman brings him to the dining place and sits by him when he eats. But Mālañcha no more appears before Chandramānik, fearing lest the child takes her for his mother. Mālañcha remains in her room and from there gazes at her little husband with eyes full of love; but she retires when Chandramānik comes to a place from which he may see her. Thus passed another seven years.

The name of the king of that country was Dudhabaran or ‘milk-coloured.’ His seven sons and the young princess read in that school. But the latter makes no progress in her studies.

¹ “কেন রাজার বাজীর পাপত কত পড়ুয়া পড়ায়। কৃঞ্জো, হুলো, পেঁপো, পোলা কত পড়ুয়া। আবার, রাজার রাজপুতূর ও আছে। দিন রাত হিলিমিলি কিলিমিলি, কাঁক রকের হাট।”
The brothers ask, "How is it, Kāṇchi, that you make no progress in your studies, though you evidently take pains?" "Look at him, brothers, how glorious does he look like the moonbeams; his face, and his forehead have the air of a god. They say that he is the son of a gardener. I have acquired all the learning that is in the four Vedas and eight Puranas by gazing at his face. Was ever a human being so handsome?" The princes were startled at these words. They all said, "We must see that the gardener's son never comes to the school again."

They called him to their presence and said, "Your face and hands are spotted with ink; we shall not allow it. If you come to the school with dirty clothes to-morrow, we shall hand you over to the public executioner." The princes thought, "How can the son of a gardener be expected to have clean clothes, he will not attend school from to-morrow."

Chandramānik left his books and returned home weeping. Mālañcha said, "See aunt, why is he weeping?" The flower-woman—"He tells me there are only a few hours of the day and the intervening night, in the morning he would be made over to the public executioner." "Why?" The flower-woman gave out the history. Mālañcha said—"Aunt, here is the money, go and get such fine
dresses as may even be coveted by a prince." Mālañcha was in possession of immense wealth as she had got the diamond. The next day the princes were surprised to see Chandramānik robed like a king's son. "Where could the fellow get such a splendid dress that even we have not got?" Kānchi said to her seven brothers, "What do you say now? Does a gardener's son look like that?"

The princes then addressed Chandramānik and said, "You little gardener, you have come with a gorgeous dress! But shame! with such a dress you came walking. If you do not come to-morrow in a stately palanquin, we will make you over to the executioner." They thought "He may have got a gift of the dress, but it will not be possible for him to get a stately palanquin, so he will not be able to attend school to-morrow." Chandramānik returned home that day also weeping. He left aside his dress and threw himself on the dusty ground. Mālañcha asked the flower-woman the reason. "There are a few hours of this day and the intervening night, after that he will be handed over to the executioner." "To-day also to be handed over to the executioner, why?" "He dresses himself well but goes walking." "Very well take money, bring all the best palanquins available in the city." The flower-woman went, but no palanquin-bearer would consent even for wages to carry a gardener's son. Mālañcha said, "Pay each man ten gold coins."
So a basketful of gold coins was distributed, and the best of the palanquins were brought. There was among them one used by princes and noblemen only, with a gold umbrella overhead and in this sat Chandramānik, and other palanquins went surrounding it. Men assembled to see the procession in the street. The scholars sprang to their feet. "Come princes," said Kānchi, "See how glorious the school looks to-day! Like a jewel shining in the middle of a gold-string he looks. I am your only sister and you are seven brothers; if you do not marry me to Chandramānik, I will commit suicide." The seven brothers found themselves really in a puzzling situation. They said, "You gardener's son, you have done all, now you must have a horse. The horses of us, seven brothers, will be at several points within the range of seven and a half miles. Your horse will occupy the last point. We will apply whip to our horses, if you can win the race, well and good, if not, you will be handed to the public executioner." The princes thought "The gardener's son will never be able to ride a horse, as soon as he will try to do so, he will fall down and die." Chandramānik was sorrowful again and returned home with tears in his eyes. Mālañcha said, "Aunt, see what has happened again." The flower-woman gave the account. "All right aunt, here is the money. Spend it as need arises. I shall
go in quest of a horse. I will stay out not more than three days at any event, but return with the horse within the time."

Mālaṇcha went on and on. She passed through 13 territories that belonged to 12 Rājās, and then came to a city where she saw the palace-gate closed and doors of houses all bolted from within. The courts did not sit, their doors lay closed also. The good luck of the king had left him and the city looked like a desert. The Pakṣirāj, the favourite horse of the king, had run mad; it ran wildly and killed every man that walked in the city. Mālaṇcha, when she heard all these, cried out "Where art thou, Oh Pakṣirāj? Dost thou remember Chandramānik?" The voice reached the horse, and it ran up to her with ears erect. It said, "How could you know the name of Chandramānik, child, shall I ever get him back?" Mālaṇcha said, "Pakṣirāj, come with me then." Mālaṇcha set out for her place, followed by the horse. The citizens were astonished. "Chandramānik died years ago. She names him; she catches the mad horse; what charmer is she?" They all felt a surprise. The queen said, "Who is she? Go and find her out." Mālaṇcha sang as she went "O king, it is the self-same horse which you rode when you went in quest of the two fruits. You got a son whom you married to kotwal's daughter, carrying her through the air-path. It is she that has come
back to take away the horse. Only a few
days still remain to complete twelve years.
After that you will have the full account, not
now.” And Mālañcha went away. The king
said, “What? Is it Mālañcha? Mālañcha has
saved the city from the horse. Mālañcha has
cought it. I had her hands and ears cut off and
punished her in the most cruel manner. Alas!
has she come back? Open your doors, citizens.”
Her mother recognised her, her brothers re-
ognised her. To-day her ears and nose are fine
as flower-buds, the fingers look like champaka
flowers; her eyes have a keen sight, bright
as the sun or the moon. They all cried out,
“Mālañcha, Mālañcha,” and ran after her. But
they could not find her for she had left the city
with the Pakṣirāj by that time. The king sent
messengers in all directions. He invited the
kotwal’s wife to the palace and entertained her
with a rich banquet, and the queen herself dined
with her. Days and nights passed, they anxiously
waited for news about Mālañcha.

Now in the city of Dudhabaran, the king, the
morning conch-shells sounded. The scholars
rose up and attended their lessons. The words
of a true woman never fail. She had returned
with the horse. The flower-woman saw fire
coming out of the eyes of the animal; its ears
were erect, and the sharp hoofs cut the earth that
trembled under their strokes. The flower-woman
said, "What am I to do now, child?" Mālañcha said, "Take the horse, it is ready." "What else you would say, I am ready to do, but I venture not to come near that animal." "Don't fear, it will not hurt you, aunt." "No child, for my life I will not be able to do it." Mālañcha hung her head down for a moment; she wiped away the sweat from her brow, and then spread a beautiful seat on the back of the horse; with eyes downcast and head drooping low, she helped her husband to ride" the horse. She then tied several knots in the edge of her sādī, and addressing the animal said, "You know what you should do; my husband is a boy, I place him in your charge. I will open the knots in the course of the day. By the time all be opened you must bring him back to me." At this moment she held up the reins so that her husband might catch them, and took the opportunity of seeing his face for a moment. On the plea of dusting his shoes, she bowed down to his feet. Chandramānīk said, "Who are you? You are always near about me, but do not speak to me. You cook my meal but do not serve me. I have seen your hands and feet to-day, you have to-day looked at my face and touched my feet. Who are you to me?" "Who? You ask me, I am the daughter of the kotwāl." She hid her face with her hair on the pretext of arranging them, stopped a little and then in haste drew out a thread from her
THE PRINCE WINS

cloth and put it round the neck of the horse and let it go. The Pakṣirāj ran as if flying in the air. Mālaṅcha threw herself down on the bare ground near the tank in grief.

In the school the princes were surprised to see the horse. "It is of the Pakṣirāj-species, we have not got such a horse in our stable; where could the gardener's son get it?" Like the young one of a bird feeling its wings just grown, the horse brooked no delay. Chandramānik held the reins tightly. The horse's body moved like a wave, its four feet struck the earth in impatience. The princes were at their wit's end. They spoke between themselves. "As we have given word, we must be ready for the race. Even if he wins, the kingdom is ours, who will prevent us from sending him to the scaffold?" They cried out, "Hlo, gardener's son, if you go ahead of us, we will put you to death. You must be seven and a half miles behind." This really was the arrangement. Each rider was ahead of the next by a mile and the last of all was Chandramānik. He called out, "Have you commenced the race, or have you not?" No reply. They had set out long before. Now Chandramānik started. The Pakṣirāj flew through the air, and went ahead of the others in no time. The princes exclaimed, "No. The race is not yet won, it is only the east, now come to the north." Chandramānik only smiled and beat them in the north. In the
west also he beat them and he won also in the south. The princes said, "We are satisfied. Your horse is a very fine one; now the people of the palace will like to see it. So let us return."
"Yes, be it so," said Chandramānik and applied his whip to the Pakṣiraj. The stroke tore off the thread Mālaṅcha had tied round the neck of the horse. The thread was wrought by all the virtues she had acquired in her past lives, it was charmed by her tears. It fell in the earth's dust—uncared for. Pakṣiraj drew a heavy breath, and then set off. It stopped near the gate of the palace, and all voices cried, "Who is it that has won the garland of victory?" On the golden tower of the palace where lay the golden cup, sat Kānchī, the princess, who herself looked like a statue of gold. From that height she observed Chandramānik coming, and flung down the garland she had woven; the garland touched the head-dress of Chandramānik and then hang on his neck.¹ The multitude cried, "What is it? What is it?" But the princess had given her garland to Chandramānik and this implied marriage and there was no help. All became silent. The seven princes came, and with outward cordiality escorted Chandramānik to the court of the king. The king called his councillors and said, "Does our law permit that

¹ The present of a flower-garland to a man implied his election by a woman as her bridegroom.
the king's daughter should marry a gardener's son?" They said, "It may be so, if the gardener's son remains in prison for 12 years."

There was no alternative left. The marriage took place. For three days and three nights there were great amusements in the palace. On the fourth day, the seven princes put a chain round Chandramānik's neck and led him to the prison and there left him.

Now the Pakṣirāj came back where Mālaṅcha lay on the bank of the tank. She was on the dusty ground and saying to herself, "Alas! why did I not let him know who I am! Why did I not tell him when he asked it?" Then she saw before her the Pakṣirāj. She asked, "What is it Pakṣirāj, where is my husband?" Mālaṅcha's eyes became fiery. She rose from her dusty bed, "Alas, what do I see? what have I done?" She threw herself on the ground in grief.1 The Pakṣirāj said, "What should I say to you, child? On the tower of the palace there sat the princess with a garland in her hand, that garland has drawn your sweet husband to the palace." As she heard this she rose up, but did not weep.2

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1 She felt misgivings as regards Chandramānik's life, not seeing him on the horse-back; she regretted having sent him for the race.
2 Mark the change of emotions in her. There had been a presentiment of something wrong having befallen her husband, but now she was assured that he was safe and happy. Her own happiness was lost for ever, but she did not care for her personal sorrows.
She said, "Pakṣirāj, it is all right now! My mission in bringing up my husband for these 12 years is fulfilled to-day. To-day the 12th year is complete. Pakṣirāj, I have given you trouble, pardon all, and remember me the fortunate¹ one. I will give you a letter. Please give it to my father-in-law, the king. Then Malaṅcha, wrote thus: "Oh king, my father-in-law, the life of the prince was to close on the 12th day. Twelve years are now complete. If you come to the palace of the king Duddhabaran, you will find there the prince, your son. The princess there is an expert weaver of garlands. He has married her and all his trouble is over. When this letter will reach you, Oh great king, my father-in-law, dip your toes for a moment in the water of the tank where you first saw me, recollecting me—the kotwal’s daughter." She gave the letter to the horse. She gave it some grass and water and then bade adieu. With her clothes soiled with dust, with dusty feet, she returned not by the roundabout garden-path by which she had been used to go, but by the road facing the cottage, which she had

¹ The word ‘fortunate’ has a significance. The mission of her whole existence was to see him happy. That mission was now fulfilled. She was not swayed by any personal consideration. She called herself fortunate, because her husband was now happy in every respect; to a parallel passage one may quote Chandi Dās’s familiar lines, "আমি নিজ স্বহ সুখ কিছু না জানি | তোমার কৃপে সুখ লাভ কানি।"
not trodden before. She arranged all her things and made them over to the flower-woman, saying, "Aunt, I did not disclose to you all this time, but I do so to-day. He whom I brought up all these years is my husband. All that I have, I give to you. Do not remember my faults, dear aunt, I shall bear the burden of my debt of gratitude to you for the rest of my life. Aunt, I have come to bid adieu to you." The flower-woman saw everything dark before her eyes and almost fainted. And Mālaṅcha went away from her presence and set out for her own city, in order to drown herself in the tank of her father’s house. "In the tank near which I got the diamond, in the city where I lost my father, will all my griefs come to an end. How happy is the princess Kānchī in the arms of her husband! How happy shall I be to-day drowning myself in the beautiful water of the tank!" Mālaṅcha thought, "What fault can I find in my husband? He wanted to know who I am, I never told him that he was my husband!"

Mālaṅcha followed her course. The flower-woman’s garden was left behind—the big and small tanks were left behind. In that path

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1 She did not appear before Chandramaṅik when he was grown-up lest he called her mother; this was the reason for her avoiding the main road to the cottage.
neither any human being nor any animal was to be seen. Proceeding still further, she met the tiger and the tigress. Mālañcha said, addressing them, "Aunt, eat me up, uncle, eat me up;" she turned to the cubs now grown to full vigour, and said, "Ye are my brothers, eat me up." "Oh child, here are you again, tell us where had you been all this time." "In the garden of a flower-woman." "Where is he whom you carried in your arms and whom we nourished with our milk, where is that darling child of ours—Chandramānik?" "The princess of that country has given him her garland. Aunt and uncle, what day can be more happy to me than now? Eat me up to-day." The tiger and the tigress heard the whole story from Mālañcha and sat crouching near her, "Child, then it is not the marriage-garland, it is the prisoner's chain." "Prisoner's chain, why?" "If a gardener's son marries the daughter of a king he shall be subjected to a penalty of 12 years' imprisonment. This is the custom of the land." Mālañcha bit her lips and firmly stood up.¹ The tiger said, "Take this glue from our head and put it on yours. Now let us all go to the city." Mālañcha said nothing, as soon as she applied the glue to her hair, she became

¹ She had thought that there was nothing more in the world, for which she would care to live! But there was a complete change in her attitude. She was resolved to rescue her husband from danger.
invisible to others. The tiger and the tigress with their whole flock started for the city of Dudhabaran.

Meantime the Pakṣirāj returned to its own city. It carried the letter to the king. When it came up to the palace-gate, the whole city was frightened. The king and the queen trembled, fearing that the horse must have killed Mālaṅcha and come back. The Pakṣirāj said, "No cause of fear, Your Majesty may read this letter." "If it is a letter, let it be carried to me by means of a hook from a safe distance." The king read the contents and became greatly elated with joy. He said, "I have got my Chandramānik again." "Where is he?" cried all. "In the kingdom of Dudhabaran." The king called back all the messengers that he had sent in quest of Mālaṅcha; he called all his army and sent them out in four divisions, viz., to the east, west, north and south, in quest of the capital of Dudhabaran. The king after much search arrived at a place where a mad flower-woman was found to tear off flowers by her fingers, break small twigs and branches, pelt clods of earth into a tank and cry "Oh my niece, Oh my darling boy."

Song.

"My darling Chandramānik is in chains. The chaste wife, my niece, has gone away to the forest losing her husband. Here in this
tank, my niece, used to bathe every morn and eve; here by this path she used to come to the cot with her pitcher filled with water. Chandramānik, my darling, used to sit and read here; and there on that couch he used to sleep.”

The king said, “It is all right. Stop and pitch our tents here.” The king sent a letter to Dudhabaran to the following effect. “King Chandra of Chandrapur sends this letter to Your Majesty. Is my son in your palace? Hear, Oh Dudhabaran, give me the right information, where have you kept my son and how is he doing in the palace. Chandramānik is the name of my son; he used to read in the school attached to your palace. Is it true that your daughter has given her garland to my son? If you wish everything well, give back my son to me and take away his chains, and also send to my camp my daughter-in-law who belongs to our family now.”

Dudhabaran said in reply, “If he is your son, come and fight. If you be the victor, take him by force.” The king gave order to attack Dudhabaran’s capital, and himself led the expedition. Dudhabaran’s army was stronger, so he could not succeed in his attempts and became a prisoner himself.

The day passed and the night approached. Made invisible to others by the charm given
by the tiger, Mālaṅcha went inside the prison-
room where her husband lay. He was reduced
to half his normal weight. There under the
heavy chain he lay in the dust. Mālaṅcha wiped
away her tears and went near him. She had nothing with
her. She took up the iron chain and applied all her might to break it by
her teeth. Was it possible to do so? In full three
hours she broke one of the four folds of the chain
the attempt costing her eight teeth; thus losing
all her teeth towards the end of the night, she
broke the four-fold chain. The chain broke and
fell down with a sound. Blood streamed forth
from her gums; she smiled in her triumph but
fainted.

Chandramānik now awoke from his sleep; he
did not notice Mālaṅcha lying there in an
unconscious state. He, however, found that the
chain was broken. A tigress had suckled him; so
his strength was great, he rose up and broke open
the door and came out. Chandramānik was sur-
rrounded by a halo of light, and it took the tiger
and the tigress no time to recognise him. They
said to their companions, “Now we have got our
Mānik; let us go and eat up the inmates of Dudha-
baran’s palace.” The tigers
in great number came and
attacked the palace. They killed
the horses and elephants, the domestic animals
and men, and made a feast with them. They ate up Dudhabaran and his seven sons, they all growled setting up a terrible roar and went in quest of Dudhabaran’s daughter—the princess Kāñchi. Now Mālañcha had come back to her senses, she ran like a mad girl towards the tigers. “What are you doing, Oh uncle, you have indeed done a great evil; you have left no one to light the evening-lamp in this great palace. Don’t eat my husband’s father-in-law, his mother-in-law and their sons. Don’t eat the princess Kāñchi, the treasure of my husband’s heart.” The tiger said, “Alas, what have we done? We have eaten the king, the queen and their sons and followers! we have been greedily pursuing the princess. You forbid us to do so.” Mālañcha beat her head against a stone and said, “Don’t do so, if you are still hungry, eat me.” Mālañcha approached them and the tigers left the princess and said, “We have had a sumptuous feast, we are now very thirsty.” Mālañcha brought some pitchers and went to the tank to fetch water.

Dudhabaran’s city was thus depopulated by the tigers. The captive king now came out, and Chandramānik was in the midst of his own men. The king ordered drums to be sounded, and with his son and the new bride marched towards his own capital. On his way he descended the landing steps of a tank to wash his face and hands. Mālañcha was filling
her pitcher with water at the time. She placed two pitchers filled with water on the left of the king, put two blades of green grass over them and then bowed to him. The king said, ‘Who are you?’ Māلاucha’s reply:

Song.

“What a good fortune to-day! Miserable as I am all my life, I have seen the feet of my father-in-law after 12 years. You are now going to your palace. A woman’s highest heaven is her father-in-law’s home. I have been denied the good fortune of getting a place there. Oh my father-in-law! what consolation have you to offer me?”

The king exclaimed, “Here is that kotwala’s daughter again! I shall have nothing to do with her. No more, my men. Do not tarry here, but proceed; I have got a princess for my daughter-in-law. The case of the kotwala’s daughter is out of the question. His counsellors said, “She saved us by putting the paksiraj in check.” “What of that?” “Your Majesty knows it is she that had set the tigers against Dudhabaran’s city.”

“What of that?”

“Your Majesty, it is she to whom the prince owes his life.”

“Now listen to me, my men. If you speak a good deal, you will die; this will be
my sentence. Whatever she may have done, she is a kolwal's daughter. Whoever has heard that a beggar became a queen? If she wants audience, tell her to approach me in true dignity worthy of a king's daughter-in-law in stately conveyances."

Malañcha gave water to the thirsty tigers and borrowed money to secure state-palanquins. She now set out in a right royal palanquin attended by the tigers. The old tiger stood in the king's presence and said, "She has now come here in a way worthy of the palace, accept her and take her with you." The king's reply was a shower of sharp arrows. The tigers said, "How can we, Oh Malañcha, hear this? Permit us by a mere word, and we will eat up this army; we will eat up the princess—the new bride and give you your own Chandramāṇik."

"Say not so, uncle; before you eat up my father-in-law's army, eat me, I pray.

Song.

"I will dust the path for my father-in-law with my hair. I will go by the thorny path, but still accompany him. Uncle tiger, aunt tigress, do not take offence, but leave me."

They, however, did not leave her. The king went with his army by the royal road and she
followed him close by the thorny path.¹ And the tiger with his flock accompanied her. The king entered the palace with the prince and the new bride, to the sound of the drums and other music. But she remained at the gate in grief, and the tigers also remained there, because they would not go away leaving her in her destitution. For seven days she was there. She wept and sang.

Song.

“This is my father-in-law's place—my heaven. To me the place is sacred, for here did I get my husband, here was I married; this house of my father-in-law appears to me more precious than a house of gold.”

“I must stay here, uncle tiger, leave me here.” But the grisly uncle said, “Say even now, we will eat up the king and the new bride and restore you to your Chandramānik.” “How could you say such cruel words? Why not eat me up? Even if I be here as a servant of the cowshed in charge of the cow dung, I shall prefer such a life and dwell here for ages. Uncle and aunt, I bow down to your feet, leave me now and go.” They said, “Now what to do, she will not in any case take our advice. Let us depart for a time.” When they went away, the king felt greatly relieved. “She sheds tears at my gate, what an inauspicious thing! Drive her

¹ As the king would not allow her to go by the main road by which he passed, she had to choose the thorny path lying in the jungles.
away.” By the king’s command, they not only drove away Mālañcha, but also her mother from the palace.

The mother and the daughter wandered about weeping. The mother said, “What is the good of leading such a life? No more, let us drown ourselves.” And she drowned herself in a tank. Before she had done so, Mālañcha wept and sang:

“Oh mother, do not die, leaving me helpless. I venture not to drown myself as my hopes are unfulfilled. I am not allowed to see my father-in-law’s face, nor of Chandramānik once before my death! Wretched woman, as I am, how can I die now?”

But forlorn by all, she could not bear her lot, and went to drown herself. But whatever tank she chose for the purpose, she found filled with thorny plants or with earth, or watched over on four sides by guards, appointed by the king. Mālañcha knew not if she should be sorry or happy at this. “My father-in-law will not permit me even to unload the burden of my sorrow! Let him however do as he likes. Whom else have I in this world even to give me pain?”

At the interval of every three hours in the night, the drums sounded in the palace. Mālañcha went to the palace at that opportunity so that the sound of her footsteps was not heard. She advanced slowly, step by step, and
reached the room where the prince and the new bride lay. Slowly did she open the doors; the beauty of the full moon burst to her sight! Night lamps burnt fed by butter,—the room was fully lit up and bright; on a golden couch with beddings fringed with gold over it, slept the prince and the bride—like two flowers of a moon-lit night soundly did they sleep. Mālāṅcha stood at the door awhile and saw the sight;—she came in and saw,—she brightened the lamp and saw,—she came near them, stood near their pillows, near their feet, and beheld them for the rest of the night, yet her eyes did not feel a satiety. "Oh God, did you give to such a prince the wretched kotwal’s daughter!" As Mālāṅcha saw the pair, her unbraided hair fell profusely behind her back, the flower-buds on the bed bloomed at her breath, her tears of gladness fell there like pearls. The crowing of the crows indicated the morning. Mālāṅcha rose up and from the sacred plate took a few blades of grass and some grains of rice, and she tore off two hairs from her head—with these she blessed the new bride and then put them at the feet of her husband and sang:—

Song.

"Be happy, Oh prince, be happy, Oh princess,
"Be it so, if the prayers of a devoted woman,
are ever fulfilled.

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"May the candles that are lit up here brighten this house for generations to come and the royal umbrella of this house may remain unfurled for all future time!

"Oh forests, Oh trees, Oh land, Oh water, keep guard over this house.

"May the tower of this palace ever remain high and unconquerable.

"May the sun and the moon with their golden rays brighten the ever glorious pinnacle of this royal home for long-ages.

"May the house of my father-in-law and the throne of my husband be ever preserved as the seat of power and victory in this land.

"May the princess be happy and prosperous with her husband through long years; I seek this boon.

I have brought him up with great pains; a sight like this immensely pleases me. Whatever may befall my lot—whether I am reduced to dust or water or transformed into a bird or a lower animal no matter, a sight like this will ever delight mine eyes!"

Every night Mālaṅcha stole into the room in this manner. Three nights passed, and on the fourth, Mālaṅcha was singing her song in a humming tone, but suddenly the prince awoke; he rose up and said, "What is this? Who are you that sing in this way in our nuptial room?" Mālaṅcha said in a low voice, "One who has a right to enter here. I have disturbed your sleep, prince, pardon
me—do not take offence, I am a servant of this palace. You have no reason to fear, sleep prince as you were doing, I depart.” “A servant? Tell me the truth, or else look here at this sword of mine.

Song.

“A servant? But that can never be. It is the same face that I saw in the garden-path of the flower-woman’s house. If a servant, why is it that through my body passes a thrill of delight and there is an ebb and flow in my blood? I recollect as if I was brought up by those tender hands of yours. You a servant? Tell so to one who does not know you. I know you, but tell me to-day who are you to me.”

“Prince, through yonder window see the first streak of dawn’s light. I cannot say anything to-day, I cannot stay.” As Māḷañcha turned her steps Chandramāṇik held her fast by the edge of her sāḷi. “No, I will not allow you to go if you do not say that.” Māḷañcha bent her head down and said, “Prince you do me wrong.”

“What?”

The guards came up there, the sentinels hurried, the king himself came. “Who is it that has entered the nuptial room of the prince? Whose footprints do we see in the path?” On other days Māḷañcha took care to wipe away her footprints when she returned. To-day they are detected. All came close to the nuptial
room. They saw a strange light, they could not bear to look at it. The king hid his eyes from the dazzling light with his hands and said, "Who are you?" The prince replied, "Father, it is the kotwal's daughter." "Kotwal's daughter?" The prince said, "If she is to be treated so, because she is kotwal's daughter, who will deserve a better treatment?" "Son, tell her not to tread this compound any more, let her go away by the path by which she came." Mālaṅcha could not say what she had to say. She went away by the path by which she had entered.

Thus did Mālaṅcha depart from the palace. From that time evil befell the city. The high towers fell, the triumphal arch broke and many disasters overtook the palace. Twelve years passed in this way. Seven children were born to the prince and all of them died. The king said, "It is all the work of that witch." Seven or eight days passed after he had said so. One day as the king was passing by the main road, he saw the soft flowers blooming on each side; at every halting station the sound of the musical pipe sānāi was heard. He looked at the tower of his palace, it seemed to be restored to its former condition. His seven grandchildren came back from the regions of death and stood around him. The king wonderingly asked, "What
is this?" The prince said, "It is all the work of the kotwal's daughter. She can break and rebuild." "False," exclaimed the king, "if she could restore the dead to life, she would make her dead parents alive again, first of all." The king entered the court. The kotwal came up to him to his astonishment and said, "Hail Your Majesty, the king of kings." The queen was in her appartments, the kotwal's wife came up and accosted her thus, "We lived together for many years, I have come to see you, sister." The king said, "It is all very puzzling. I do not understand what all these mean; I must clear up my brain in free air, and go a-hunting in the forest." The king lost his way, and his attendants were devoured by tigers. He wandered about losing his way, and suffered greatly from thirst. There, by the side of a tank, the water of which was dried up, he saw a beautiful damsel with a pitcher in her arms. The king said, "If there is water in your pitcher, child, will you save my life by giving me a little?" The beautiful damsel said, "There is milk in my pitcher, no water." "Milk? But milk does not satisfy thirst, can't you give me a little water?" The damsel smiled and gave the king sufficient water from her pitcher. The king was very pleased and said, "Whoever you may be, child, may you adorn your

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father-in-law’s home, and as you have made me happy by giving me drinking water, may you be happy all your life.” Her pitcher she placed on the ground and reverentially bowed to the king’s feet and sang.

Song

“I am made happy, oh my father-in-law, oh my king, happy beyond what I can express. Fortunate am I to-day, for the first time I have heard sweet words from your lips. If I die to-day I shall die in happiness, oh father, allow me to touch the dust of your feet.”

“Who child? You the daughter of the kula-rul! Are you Malañcha?” Thrice did the king touch the ground with his hands and touch his head again. He said, “Come now child, come to the palace.” Malañcha sang.

Song

“This forest plain is my home now, for you have sweetly addressed me here. This place is heaven to me. I have got what I had wanted, and I care not for life in the palace now. Here on this earth, made sacred by your shoe-dust, shall I build a cottage and live for ever.”

The king’s eyes became filled with tears. “Child, I have given you much pain without knowing your virtues; pardon me and come to my palace.” Malañcha replied:—
Song

"I have heard you address me sweetly in this forest, how can I leave this dear forest, father! But I shall go, not now, but a few days hence."

The king said, "Why should you stay here? The kingdom is yours, pardon me and come to my palace." "What do you say, father, about pardoning? It is not right for me to hear such words from you, revered sir." She bowed at the feet of the king and said, "Father, I shall go to the palace after a few days, meantime I shall enquire about my uncle and aunt, and about the flower-woman whom also I call aunt." The king said, "Allow me then to go back. I shall meanwhile prepare roads, dig tanks and make other preparations for receiving your uncle and aunt with their train."

The king returned to his city. He distributed his treasure amongst his people, opened roads, dug tanks and set up camps everywhere. On both sides of the roads he placed heaps of cowries for distribution amongst the poor, while the roads themselves were reddened by vermillion.

The musical bands played, and he himself with his seven grandsons and the citizens waited at the gate to receive Mālañcha.

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Meantime Mālaṁcha went to the forest, and saw the tiger and the tigress wild with grief for her. She took them with her. She went to the cottage of the flower-woman. She found her beating her head against a stone for grief. Mālaṁcha wiped away her tears with her own hand. She went to the palace of the king Dudhabarana. It was desolate, there was none there to kindle the evening-lamp—no heir to the vast kingdom. She wept as she saw all these.

On the night of the full moon, she tore off a few shreds from her own clothes and kindled eight lamps with them. She kept them burning with butter. She took her seat in the great hall in the middle of the palace and sat in the attitude of yoga.

She restores the dead to life

Three days and nights passed and the doors of the palace suddenly opened. All its inmates, devoured by the tigers came to life. Mālaṁcha took with her the king Dudhabarana, the seven princes and the rest. She paid off the money she had borrowed for getting palanquins and couches. In the way the attendants of her father-in-law, destroyed by the tigers, were restored to life as she sprinkled over them the oil of the eight charmed lamps. What a great uproar of men arose there! When she was at a distance of seven days’ journey from her father-in-law’s palace, they could know that it was Mālaṁcha coming with her hosts.
As Mālaṁcha approached the palace-gate, the drums of the royal band announced her arrival triumphantly. It seemed as if the very waters of the tanks danced for joy; the lotuses bloomed; the armed soldiers, sentinels and guards, the ministers, the courtiers, in fact all the citizens, the king and the queen themselves cried out in exultation. For Mālaṁcha, the true bride, had come to her father-in-law's house.

She entered the palace, the kolaṇḍal and his wife also came there. Dhāna, Tara, Bidhata, and other gods appeared above to witness this happy event. Her parents, her father-in-law, mother-in-law and all kinsmen approached her. Some placed blades of grass over her head in order to bless her, others touched the dust of her feet with reverence. The whole palace was filled with joyous sounds. The Palaśirāj came and said to the king, "Your Majesty, I have restored to life all whom I killed during the last twelve years."

The king passed the mandate, "Beat the royal drums in honour of Mālaṁchanāla." The order was instantly carried out.

Mālaṁcha came to Kāṇchī, the princess, and said, "Sister, weave a flower-garland to-day." Kāṇchī wove a garland. Mālaṁcha took that garland and hung it round the neck of Chandramānik. She held Kāṇchī to her bosom and kissed her. For seven days and nights the palace was lost.

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in joy. The poor people ate butter and other preparations of milk to their heart’s content. The tigers devoured the armies of those monarchs who were enemies of our king, but they returned to his capital to satisfy their thirst with water. They were given golden couches to sleep on.

The king embraced the kotwal calling him a friend and brother, and made him a feudatory chief. He received the tigers kindly. They expressed high gratification at His Majesty’s behaviour, while bidding adieu to him. The flower-woman did not go back to her home but lived in that city and made a garden there for herself. Dudhabaran, the king, was immensely happy and after a stay of a few days there returned to his own capital.

Mālañcha made Kānchī chief queen, but the people installed Mālañcha in their hearts and called her the goddess of the palace. Heaven blessed them all. All men, birds and beasts and even insects were happy.

Then did the rays of the sun and the beams of the moon fall on the high towers of the palace causing them to glitter, as it were, with gold. The king, the prince Chandramānīk and His Majesty’s grand-children built a road decorated with gold and precious stones leading to the spot where stood the mango-tree and the kotwal’s house. They lived for long years and flourished.
A REVIEW

We have given here a rather long story. As I have already said, the story as translated seems to be but a meagre reproduction of the original. The tenderness of the Bengali style, used by women, its exquisite grace and suggestiveness are lost in the translation, and reading it side by side with the original, I find it dull, uninteresting and even verging on the grotesque. But it will not be fair to judge the original story by this translation.

There are other stories which are replete with amusing events and romance of love-stories that will excite the curiosity of the young and catch their fancy, but this story is very singular from several points of view. It brings forward vividly the Indian conception of the ideal womanhood in a most striking manner.

Mālañchamālā is not to be classed with any other heroine of any other Indian tale or poem. Behulā alone in our vernacular literature approaches her in point of devotion to her lord and bears a family-likeness to her. But Mālañcha’s virtues are of such high order and brought out in
such a charming colour of rural simplicity and
devotion that other heroines should be placed in
more or less distance from this towering charac-
ter. Like a diamond discovered in a Golconda
coal-mine, she has been one of our richest finds,
lying ignored in the unwritten and despised
patois of this province. The heroines of our
classics no doubt are glorious for their great
sufferings and devotion, but where is one like
Mālañcha who has taken the load of all possible
sorrows on her head, silently—without a word?
Like a rose or lotus—the sport of wind—the food
of worms—the plaything of a child, exposed to
all evils imaginable, she is Heaven's gift and the
heavenly smile never fades from her lips, the
heavenly forbearance never forsakes her. She
is to be compared only to a flower; the petals are
dried up, it smiles at death; it is worm-eaten,
or torn off by a child, but nothing will make
it divested of its loveliness and resigned spirit;
it is a gift of Heaven to this vile earth of
ours; you may destroy or maltreat it, but
you cannot vitiate it by your own vices; you
cannot teach it cruelty, however cruel you
may be; you cannot make it give up its
smile or change same into a grimace, by
frowning at it in the most terrible manner; for it
is not of this earth. Its purity and its beauty have
come down from the land of immortal beauty,
from the shore of eternal sacredness; like
the stream of the Ganges, it cannot be soiled by earth’s dust.

In the first place, an absolute indifference to body, its comforts and the ills to which it may be subjected, forms the main feature of Mālañcha’s action. It is the spirit that needs be nourished; that which is destined to perish or decay need not be a matter of vital importance to us in deciding our course; body is the vehicle and instrument to our spirit, so far its value; but the good of the soul should be the primary object in view while deciding our course of action. Christ has commanded us to take off the unrighteous eye to save the soul. If necessary this body of ours may be sacrificed or allowed to be put to any torment for the sake of keeping our virtues intact. When Mālañchamālā is about to be married, she states certain conditions. These conditions are necessary for the preservation of her self-respect, for keeping up the dignity of her parents raised to a new status in life, for being able to do her duties as wife in the palace to the fullest extent. But if like the average woman she would feel elated and glorified simply because a prince happened to marry her, without caring for the honour and responsibility attached to her status, she would sink into a very common level indeed! The king chose her as bride for the prince; he must
give her all the dignity, all the love and all the honour attached to this high place; she would not put up with any thing short of it. She claimed this not as a matter of favour or condescension but of right; she was conscious of the spirit of contempt prevailing in the court against her owing to her humble birth, for she was merely a kotwal's daughter; she would not brook that. And what a trial! Her eyes were taken out. She still insisted on the fulfilment of the conditions; her beautiful hands were cut off, but she insisted on, as if nothing had happened. This absolute indifference to body and heroic devotion to truth rank her as a martyr of the first order. This ideal womanhood is no unrealised dream in this country. Times without number instances have occurred in our history showing such firm rectitude and devotion in the fair sex. Sir F. Halliday, afterwards Lieutenant-Governor of this province, argued with a sati prepared for self-immolation on the funeral pyre of her husband, but failing in his attempts to dissuade her by arguments at last said, "You have no idea of what your sufferings will be." The woman who was young and beautiful smiled and ordered a lamp to be brought near her. To this she put her finger. Writes Sir F. Halliday, "The finger scorched, blistered and blackened and finally twisted up in a way which I can only compare to what I have seen happen to a
The temptations

quill in the name of a candle. During this time she never moved her hand, nor uttered a cry or altered the expression of her countenance.” This happened quite in recent times. The heroine of a fiction in the Buddhistic period is verily a cousin of this historic woman who lived in our Gangetic valley in the 19th century.

Then in the dark night when the very horses of the stall run mad and the goblins are at their wildest play and the city-gates are shut and the funeral pyres spread their smoke and gloom all around, she defies that spirit of evil—that great tempter who not only tried to lead astray and take a Buddha and a Christ to infernal regions, but in less pronounced forms appears to us in our little struggles for attaining a moral life every now and then. But see how she triumphantly sits with her baby husband surrounded by the invisible that had taken grim visible shapes, amidst all fears fearless,—amidst all horrors undaunted. The temptations and horrors that came to shake her resolve failed and passed away like gusts of wind dashing in vain against a lofty peak. The full beauty and blossom of the ideal of the Buddhistic renunciation, of undaunted heroism is here. The miraculous and the supernatural serve only to bring out and accentuate the triumphant conquest of the soul over material forces, however great these may be. It
is like the *siddhi* or reaching of the final goal of a *yogi* as we find in Tāntrikism. In the north the funeral ground is still the resort of many an aspirant in the path of *siddhi*, of soul’s strenuous struggling at any cost for a conquest over the flesh. The temptations, the appeals and the horrors are symbolical of the farewell-shot of animal passions on the eve of the soul rising above them. The attainment of the *nirvāṇa* of the Buddha is said to have been preceded by a visitation from the evil spirits, and since then it has been a common occurrence in the history of a Tāntrik’s highest spiritual achievements. Mālaṅchamālā and Behula are the two characters, described in our folk-literature, as facing such trials and triumphing over them.

This material form in which our soul is enshrined is but the result of our longings to come in contact with the outer world. Intense desire to attain a thing and unsparking labour bring the remotest, the highest thing within the hollow of our palms.

What one longs for one gets.

The animal that wants to escape from its pursuers, who will give it no rest till they kill it, longing with whole soul to go beyond their reach, gets wings and flies up. The small fish gets the power to go against the tide which an elephant cannot. I say all this power grows by longings and will-force in quite a
miraculous way. Mālaṅcha loses her eyes and her hands; but as she strongly wishes to have a sight of her husband, the eyes grow ready to serve him, the hands grow. In the case of such a soul, to whom the body is the mere vehicle of a strong will, the workings of the unseen forces of nature are most strikingly observed. The esoteric law is here explained without a spirit of propagandism and though it is all but a fiction, it grapples with the problem of and illustrates the hidden strength of the soul in the most convincing manner.

Then the child is newly born. You have heard that Sanskrit sloka which says that a true wife is also a mother. She is a sister and a friend as well. Here as in nowhere else in the world’s literature do we find wife in the capacity of mother. Yes the child is born to her, it was stone dead; it is motherly love that has given birth to it; it is reborn in the lap of Mālaṅcha-mālā, not born of the flesh, as an ordinary child is born, but born of love, of spirit; it is therefore a truer child than an ordinary one.

We pursue Mālaṅcha in the capacity of mother; but she has the background of a love greater than that of a mother—it is wife’s; gradually it comes to the front. With the growth of the feelings of the wife she retires from her habitual field of action and the flower-woman
becomes the instrument through whom she renders her service,—herself remaining behind the screen satisfied like a devotee with "sight"—‘dārsana’—which is the highest bliss in the spiritual world.

Throughout this story there is no agency but the human, though in the beginning mention is made of some local gods. These are, however, mere recorders of fortune proving the inscrutable ways of Providence and seem to possess no independent power. The characters solve their own destinies by their karmā and this is again a Buddhistic idea. Towards the end of the story Mālañcha would not enter the palace for a few days; she thus keeps in abeyance the realisation of the cherished dream of her life for one purpose. Not to taste any joy herself, until and unless the sorrows and wrongs of all the people with whom she came in contact or whom she knew, were fully remedied. This renunciation is again a purely Buddhistic idea; not to save oneself till the whole world is saved was the motto of the Mahāyāna Buddhists of those days.

The true wife in the Hindu society is one who is not only loyal to her husband, but is good to all the members of her husband's family, discharging her duties in the fullest manner to each. It is for this that we see Mālañcha so eager to have her due place in her father-in-law's
home. There she wanted to bind all by ties of affection, to remove all jealousy and petty quarrels by her self-denial and to create an atmosphere of purity, peace and renunciation by her example. The true wife is to give herself away to all; the husband is of course the god whom she secretly worships in her soul, but she does not make a display of her devotion to him; it remains, however, as the secret spring of her love which makes the whole family her own in every sense of the word. The husband's house is thus her highest temple. In the attitude of one who comes to a shrine she approaches it as a bride; if she can discharge her duties in a way which will win for her a good name there, is she then and then only called a good wife, but not if she merely becomes her husband's darling. It is for this reason that Mālañchā prizes her father-in-law's home; it is the sanctuary in which she is to develop her virtues by service and self-dedication. This was the old idea. When all these are merely recited by the priests and blindly followed or imposed on by the mother-in-law or some other elderly woman with a rod in hand, it becomes devoid of all beauty. But when a spirit of self-dedication blooms forth of itself without any external agency to help an artificial growth, it shows itself beautiful as the lily in an Indian tank.
Mālañcha's womanly virtues are thus shown in the most attractive manner. No priest ever told her what she should do, and what she should not do. The love she felt for her baby-husband was more than motherly at the outset but with this difference that she knew from the beginning that the child would grow in time and occupy his proper place in regard to her. When he grew to be five years old, she avoided his presence lest he called her mother which would be his first instinctive address—naturally opprobrious to wife. The fountain of all her action was of course profound love that pervaded her whole life. It was no animal passion. The mere sight of the beloved, to see him happy in all conditions even in the arms of her co-wife, was the highest recompense of this love; for she did not want reciprocation but merely the good of the object of his worship. The jealousies of an ordinary woman could not be in her. When the Pukṣirāj came back without her husband on its back, she was mad with grief; but when she learnt that he had married the princess,—that husband whom she had brought up as no mother could do, whom she had saved from the gaping mouths of the evil spirits and animals, for whom her eyes were taken out and hands cut off and her father beheaded, for whom in fact she had suffered as few martyrs ever did—that husband was
happy in the palace in the arms of the princess, she stood silent for a time but did not weep. She told the tiger that she was "fortunate" for the mission of her life was fulfilled, her husband was made happy and there was no more any need of her existence; she said touchingly to herself, "How happy is the prince now with the princess! how happy shall I be to die in the blue waters of our beautiful tank!"

She never resisted evil but bore all patiently. She gave love to those who were hostile towards her, like the tree that gives its flowers and fruits to one who cuts it with axe; by her nature she was good and could not be otherwise. When evil came she tried her very best to ward it off from her beloved by her own great sufferings and by all that she had in her power to do. She did not lament like an ordinary woman, nor vehemently protested against her oppressors however autocratic and cruel they might be, but Christ-like bore all ills without complaint, sparing no pains to protect her great trust—the life of her child-husband from all kinds of danger. Whenever an occasion came she was always up with her greatest resources of energy, never appealed to God whom she did not see, but depended to the fullest extent on her own karma which is a reality with every one. In doing what she thought to be her duty, she
was not to be daunted by any circumstances, for she cared not the ills to which body is subject. When the boy was five years old and required to be placed under a tutor, she did not care a bit as to what might happen to her, but left the protection of her “uncle and aunt” under which she was happy and above anxiety for a long time. A solitary wayfarer with the baby in her arm she wandered, without knowing where to go and would not rest till she found a suitable place from which she could give education to the child, for he was a prince and must have due training. Almost mute, brief in her speech when she cared to speak, she offers a striking contrast to some of the heroines of our modern romances, whose enthusiastic speeches, like the babbling ripples on the surface of shallow waters often indicate a lack of depth. Our Bengali writers of romances may take a lesson from these tales; the heroines here seldom speak out their love. The tree offers flowers and fruits without words, the sun its rays without words and He that is behind this nature and supplies rain, sunshine, moon-beams and a thousand other things to us out of His infinite love, speaks not except to the mystic soul. True love works and sacrifices, but does not spend itself in frothy words. The mother seldom speaks of her love for the child; Mālaṅcha speaks but little. But when for the
first time in her life, her father-in-law speaks to her kind words in a spirit of repentance, she melts into tears and tells him, "Why should I go to the palace? This forest is far dearer, for have you not spoken here sweet words to me!" She is indifferent to material comforts so what is a palace or a mansion to her? Where her spirit finds a congenial thing she values that, and thus a piece of wood-land is elevated in her eyes to a shrine because she has got there what her soul wanted. The prayer she offers in her song in the nuptial chamber of her husband, sleeping in the arms of Kâñchi, is a unique one, and shows her to be in a far higher plane than Enoch Arden of Tennyson. In these days all weaknesses of the body and all lower passions in men are sometimes valued in literature as giving human interest to it. But all human beings are not in the same level of existence. Here in this land women have always evinced a high spirit of sacrifice at the altar of domestic love, and their self-immolation on the funeral pyre of their husbands and practice of austere Brahmacharya, have evoked wonder of all unprejudiced minds. In this country Mālañchamālā is no day-dream of poets, no dealistic or unrealisable mental phantom "without human interest," simply because the human being in this case happens to possess a super-human strength of soul.
Though Mālañchamālá, like many heroines in Indian literature lacks in professions of love, yet the romantic situations of the dawn of love are not wanting in this very interesting tale. She does not come before her child-husband but keeps gazing at him as he reads or sits to eat. When the flower-woman would by no means come to the fiery horse, and Mālañcha was obliged to come before him after long years, the delicacy of the situation ‘makes her modest grace at this interview charmingly beautiful; large drops of sweat stood on her brow indicating her confusion, and she touched the feet of her husband on the pretext of dusting his shoes. I do not know if my foreign readers will realise the true import of this situation. To a Hindu wife nothing can be a more pleasing privilege than to touch the feet of her husband. In the present case she did it with a confused sense of delicacy and ardour of her warm soul, which is exceedingly woman-like according to oriental conception of modesty. Then for the first time after many years she glanced at his face and met him eye to eye; she could have avoided doing so, but her great control of self yielded a little for a moment, she had not the heart to give up this opportunity, for he was going to win a game and might not return; when he asked her who she was,—she could not say, “I am your
wife"; feminine delicacy choked her voice and in half audible whispers she could merely say, "I am kotwal’s daughter." On another occasion in the night she had entered the room of her husband and found him with his new consort. Both were sleeping; he suddenly awoke and asked Malañcha, "Who are you to enter this room?" In great mental confusion she only briefly said, "One that can enter." This was her whole speech. The words were true for as wife she had every right to enter the room of her husband; then when the prince caught her by the edge of her sari, she bent down her head and said with down-cast eyes, "Prince, you do me wrong." The pictures are all delicately wrought, and nowhere is the veil of shyness which forms the true fascination of a woman’s nature withdrawn. The fine shades of a true woman’s heart, her mental psychology which silently offers service and devotion, and proves without words, that she can sacrifice every inch of herself for the beloved one, are traced in the most significant manner in this unassuming Bengali tale. Malañcha’s all-pervading love is ever employed in doing good to all, not merely those to whom she was personally indebted. When she was going to return to her husband’s home, she restored the dead to life by the great esoteric power that had grown in her by her conquest over the flesh. So that
none was miserable, none was unhappy. The wicked are not punished but reformed by love, proving its marvellous power of doing good in the human world, and surely this is a higher view of an esthetic situation in ethical planes.

She returns to the palace after many years, not to enjoy material comforts and what is strange not even to be in the arms of her husband. What other poets or dramatists would not make the husband and wife restored to each other's embrace after so much sufferings? Kānci's career might have closed in the mouths of hungry tigers or in some other tragic way suggested by the fruitful brain of an author, in order to make the path clear for Mālaṅcha. But we find in this tale "Mālaṅcha made Kānci chief queen." She willingly and gladly offered her own place to the co-wife. "But the people worshipped her as their goddess." Thus does indeed the heroine of the tale rise to the level of a true goddess that she was—a conqueror of the flesh; she who could break all her teeth in order to break a few links of the chain by which her husband was bound, was not a character to be won by the thought of the pleasures of the flesh. She was a thing dedicated and offered to love, from which
all elements of the flesh were completely removed.

The story is like an epic poem in Bengali with many exquisite lyrical notes, and the language is so forcible, brief and colloquial, that it is not in the power of any Bengali writer to change a word, without marring its naive simplicity and effect. Unfortunately, as I have already stated, this story will have an exotic air in my translation; it will appear like a Bengali lady, who looked so lovely in her sari, putting on a gown and having an outlandish air; but this could not be helped.

The weaving of the plot shows considerable art. Mālaṅcha is of course the central figure who connects the different episodes of the story and keeps up its continued interest. When the baby dies, the story might naturally end there, but we have a need of her for bringing it back to life. The natural end of the story is thus put off till the prince marries Kāuchi. Here again the story would end, but he is put into the prison and there we have again a need of Mālaṅcha’s help to set the prince free. Mālaṅcha does it and the king returns with the prince and the new bride to the palace and dismisses poor Mālaṅcha. The story would naturally end here. But now comes the moral need of showing that a devotee’s labour has not gone for naught. Mālaṅcha is
a true bride. She must enter the house to light the bridal lamp. After all that she has suffered and done, an ordinary reception will not do. The whole city, not to speak of the palace alone, should give the most cordial reception to the true bride by erecting triumphal arches and beating the royal drums in her honour. All the ceremonies that a devotee performs in the temples should be celebrated in honour of one who has proved by her action, too many to enumerate, that she is not an ordinary type of human being but a goddess. Any reception short of what was given her in the last part of the story would have been unworthy of her. Her reception has been late, but the author deferred it a long time only to make it fitting in the fullest measure, in order to pave her path to the palace by repentant tears, and wreath the garland of welcome by the overflowing joy of all the citizens who rejoiced on the return of one who had brought the dead to life again.

(The whole story is thus threaded by the episodes of sacrifices for love on Mālañcha’s part and at the end takes us by surprise by the statement that she did not return to the palace to share the joys of nuptial life with her co-wife, but show her greatest renunciation by inaugurating the rival as chief queen in her place.)
These tales have an old world charm which is irresistible to all of us. The revival of Paurânic religion has introduced a spirit of faith, and of devotion of a metaphysical type. But these tales disclose a beauty all of their own in which propagandism finds no place. Woman’s fidelity is shown in its truest colour; men are righteous, good and amiable; but they have no stereotypd models put before them by the priests; the characters are rewarded or punished for their action, but there is scarcely any reference to the scriptures, nor are analogies sought to be established between them and those described in the Purânas. All these marks out the epoch of literature which produced the tales as a very unique one; it has some very distinctive features of its own, characterised by literary excellence of a quite different character than is to be found in the literature of the Renaissance. The lovers swear, not by any gods or goddesses, but by the earth, “Because it is sacred where the flowers bloom.” When a princess takes the kotwal’s son to task for making a proposal of marriage, and says, “How bold must you be to approach me in this way! I will bring this to the notice of the king. How could you be so daring?” “If the king takes me to task,” replied the kotwal’s son boldly,
“Here is my answer; my ancestors have shed their blood for generations to make Your Majesty’s line of kings—this is my claim.” No question of caste or social status which would have been inevitable in the days of the Renaissance was raised. When the princess was convinced that it was her duty to marry the kotwal’s son because her parents had already pledged their words, the preceptor marked a change in her demeanour. On other days the cymbals sounded on her feet merrily as she entered the school room, to-day no sound of her steps was heard, so quietly did she enter the room with down-cast eyes, “and the sweet voice of hers in recitation did not charm everyone in the class room as was usual, but the voice trembled and its sweetness was gone, it sounded like a dry log.” There is a rural method of expressing ordinary ideas which has also a special appeal for us “From a thousand eyes the gods stole sleep and put it in the eyes of the princess” is meant to show that the sleeping princess was absolutely unaware of the danger that awaited her. In order to indicate the resolute muteness of a woman, we have this metaphor “like the sleeping night she says nothing, nor moves.”

The way in which these rural people used to reckon time, when there was no watch or clock to
guide them is interesting. In one place we find the following: “the day advanced, the peacock and her mate dropped feathers from their plumed tail; the birds suka and sari hung off the dust from their wings as they bathed in the muddy pools.” By these little things the country people gave an exact idea of time; for the birds did as described, at particular and specified points of time recorded in the daily observations of the men who live in villages.

In another place we find “before twilight had passed and the crows had crowed their last note indicating departure into the nests.” These softly lift the veil from nature, disclosing to the observer how she gives response to each hour that passes, in a way far more interesting than by the dull hand of a clock.

The manner in which the rural people indicated their condemnation and honest disparagement of a wicked deed is sometimes very curiously expressed. The flowerwoman in the story of Kāñchanmālā wants to drive away the princess from her husband’s home and get her own niece married to him. This wicked motive is frustrated in this way.

“If the flower-woman engages any house-wife to take part in the marriage of her niece, within three days the red mark of luck disappears from that wife’s forehead (she becomes a widow). The
Brahmin whom she appoints to perform the marriage function finds his cowshed void of cows and his school void of pupils. So no Brahmin would open his almanac to fix the auspicious day and no house-wife take part in the ceremony. The flower-woman goes to the oil-man for oil and to the grocer for turmeric, the oil-man’s bullock dies and the grocer loses his bargain. The flowers drop from the bride’s crown and the lamps cease to burn on the sacred plate.”

These are no doubt foolish, but imagine the glee and mirth with which children listened to this account of the wicked witch’s disappointment. There may be many things said that are foolish; the child says many such things and listens to many such things from his grandmother, but is not the heart of true poetry there? Sometimes a situation is made romantically poetic by a mere touch; I do not know if the foreign readers of our folk-tales will appreciate the simple poetry in these few lines.

“She came and bowed down before her husband. He saw this spot near his feet reddened with the vermilion of her forehead.”