Chapter IV

THE EVOLUTION OF THE STORY OF

RSYASRINGA AS IKKAKUSENIN

The word Rsyasringa denoting the saint with a horn is very ancient and is present in the first two great epics of Indian literature. The term has several variants like Isisinga, Ekasringa, used in different works though having the same meaning. This theme is an example of the dissimilar or heterogenous parentage this case being the off-spring of a saint and a doe representing a dimension of human-animal relationship. A unique evidence of its presence since antiquity is its presence in the carvings found in Barhut\(^1\) dating back to 200 B.C. There the motif appears in two parts i.e. in the upper half the birth of a child from a hind is depicted whereas in the lower half a sage taking the child out from the womb of a hind is portrayed. Referring back to its presence in the epics, the Ramayana story does not mention about his parentage and is found in the form of being quoted from Puranas, the works of pre-epic age containing eighteen volumes, the name 'Purana' literally meaning the tales of antiquity. The Ramayana\(^2\) story is told in story form to the King Dashratha by his

\(^1\)Barhut: A.1.a.7 (Cun.Pl xxvi 7)
\(^2\)Ramayana: ch.X, Balkaand
charioteer minister Sumanta in Balkand. According to it, the sage Shanta Kumara mentioned in Puranas, that the son of saga Kashyapa, Vibandhaka will have a son Rsyasringa who will be so virtuous and pious that he will know nothing besides the constant service to his father. In those days King Lomapada shall be the ruler of the country of Anga. Due to some transgression by the King there shall be severe drought in his kingdom, the King shall go to Brahmins for their advice who will tell the King "fetch here by any means the sage Rsyasringa. O! King give away (to him in marriage) your daughter Santa according to the scriptural ordinance with a devout and unquestioned mind". Santa being the daughter of Dasharatha given to Lomapada in adoption. Now in order to bring Rsyasringa without inviting his father's wrath, it was decided to send a team of charming courtesans to the forest and befriend the sage who had tremendous self-control and always stayed in his hermitage. Ever since his birth, he had never seen a woman. When his father was away, the courtesans would seize the opportunity and approach him catching him unawares. The courtesans would manage to lure him to the country of Anga to be married to Santa. The arrival of Rsyasringa would bring rain all over the kingdom and the drought shall be averted." Incidentally later in the epic, King Dasharatha, on the advice of the Brahmins, then approached Lomapada to allow the same Rsyasringa to officiate as the head priest for conducting the yagna to get a male progeny. On the other hand in the Mahabharatha the story of Rsyasringa reveals his parentage. According to it:
"Rsyasringa was born as the son to Vibhandaka who was a saint of the Brahmin caste and had cultured his (Rsyasringa's) soul by means of religious austerities. He was learned and bright like the Lord of Beings". Now regarding the birth of Rsyasringa it says Vibhandaka who was the son of sage Kashyapa had devoted himself to the practice of penances. "One day, early in the morning when he was washing his face at the river he saw the celestial nymph Urvashi bathing there, where upon passed the seminal fluid. Just at that time a hind lapped it up along with the water she was drinking and got pregnant. She gave birth to a male child. The child grew up to be a great Saint. There was a horn on his head and because of his parentage thus, he was called by the name Rsyasringa, meaning "the Saint with a horn". Like his father Vibhandaka he was a devoted mendicant and undertook penances rigorously staying in the forest. He had never seen any other man or woman except for his father and was completely devoted to meditation and practising austerities.

At that time the ruler of the land of Anga was the King Lomapada who was a friend of the King Dasharatha. Suddenly Lord Indra the god of rain stopped giving rain in his territory and the people suffered greatly. The King consulted many Brahmins and it was suggested that if the sage's son Rsyasringa was brought to the territory it would rain. Now one of the ministers suggested that the courtesans should be sent to allure the sage. However no one came forward as they were in a dilemma. On one hand

\[1\text{Mahabharata: ch.III, Tirthayatra Parva}\]
they were hesitant to defy the King's order and on the other hand dreaded a curse from Rsyasringa's father. Finally one old woman came forth and taking a number of young and beautiful courtesans went to the forest. As per her plan, she made a floating hermitage and anchored it near the saint's hut. On finding the right opportunity she sent her daughter to the hut who engaged the sage in conversation and gave him intoxicating foods and drink's thereby captivating his mind through the womenly viles and then disappeared. Thereafter the young sage's mind was over-powered with longing for her. When his father returned he found the son lost in thought. He questioned the reason whereby the son replied, "Here comes a religious student with a golden complexion and eyes as big as lotus petals. His departure has saddened my heart and my desire is to go to him as soon as I can to have him everyday walk about here". On hearing this sage Vibhandhaka on one hand warned his son that he must be aware of such wicked demons who were trying to obstruct his meditation and on the other hand he himself went out in search of the culprit. In the meanwhile the girl turned up again and Rsyasringa rushed to her saying,"Let's go to the hermitage before my father is back." She readily took him along and as he entered the floating hermitage, it was unmoored. The courtesans kept him pre-occupied till they reached the capital. The moment he stepped out on the land of Anga it began to rain heavily. The King Lomapada gave his daughter Santa to him in marriage. Now fearing the wrath of Rsyasringa's father, the King in order to pacify him, sent his men along with plenty
of cattle to work in the fields all along the way that Vibhandaka could have taken to come to the palace. He instructed them to tell the sage Vibhandhaka when he came by, that the fields and all other things belonged to his son Rysasringa. Now in the forest when Vibhandhaka returned back to the hermitage and found his son missing, he suspected it to be the deed of the King and in a rage walked towards the city. By the time he had reached the settlements of the men sent by the King, he was hungry and fatigued. He spent the night there and was treated respectfully. On asking he was told that everything belonged to Rysasringa. On arriving at the capital he saw his son look like Lord Indra in the heaven, and this pleased him. Then the great sage whose power rivalled that of the sun and fire gods told his son, "As soon as a son is born to thy family and having performed whatever the King says, to the forest come thou without fail". Rysasringa did exactly as his father told and entered the holy path once again. Here in Mahabharatha, the story is not a part of the main plot but is included as a quote from Ramayana. The parentage of the sage from a hind which is not mentioned in Ramayana is added. Furthermore the Ramayana plot does not mention about Rysasringa's father's reaction to his son's abduction. While in the Mahabharatha story the citizens convince the old sage, on the orders of the King, about the authority and land in possession of his son. Incidentally it is similar to the one described in the European tale of 'Puss in Boots', in which the clever puss in order to impress the King, asks the peasants working in the
fields which were on the way to the castle, "If anyone asks you who your Master is, answer the Marquis of Carabas." 

Due to such additional elements whereby the place, names of the Kingdom etc are given, the legend attains historical authenticity. In later periods this plot of the Indian epics has been widely adapted in the Buddhist literature, the theme being used to admonish people against the company of women which can bring about the downfall of even the greatest of sages. Buddhism is known to have initially discarded women as being the objects of distraction. This theme serves this view well and so is found in various works like Mahavastu, 2 Jatakas, Avdanas 3 etc.

In Jatakas itself it appears as Alambusa Jataka 1 and Nalinika Jataka 5 both being named after the main female character. Regarding the parentage Alambusa relates how Bodhisattva born in a Brahmin family in Kasi, the ancient name of Varanasi, grew up to be a grim ascetic and lived in a forest. There, near his dwelling, a doe drank water mixed with his semen and ate the grass wet with it and conceived. She then halted at a spot near his hermitage and gave birth to a male child. The great Bodhisattva aware of this fact brought him up naming him Isisinga. In due course of time, he was admitted to the holy order. Isisinga living in the region of Himalayas grew up to be a grim ascetic with all his senses mortified. By the power of his virtue the abode of Sakka was shaken. On discovering the cause he decided to send one of the heavenly nymphs to distract the

---

1 The Story of Puss in Boots & Other Tales by Peter Haddock, p. 14
2 The Mahavastu: vol. III
3 Avdana Kalp Lata: vol. II, 65
4 Jatakas Stories: no. 523
5 Ibid. : no. 526
sage. Beautiful Alambusa was selected and sent. Alambusa although fearful of being the subject of the Saint's wrath complied. However she was in constant awe of some curse and finally asked to be forgiven for her misdeeds and was pardoned.

The Nalinika Jataka, is alike structurally though more vivid. For example Indra being threatened of the growing virtue of the sage stopped rainfall in the kingdom of Kasi and then himself suggested to the King in a dream to ask his daughter Nalinika to violate the virtue of the sage. The King for the sake of his people tells her, "Go Nalinika and with thy charm of beauty thou shalt bring him neath thy sway". She agreed without any resistance and after doing the job returned back to the capital. In the hermitage Rsyasringa's father, on finding him abnormal, could perceive what must have happened and admonished him by telling him that she must be a demon disguised as a woman. Thus the young sage petrified at the thought of having encountered a Yakshini a female goblin cleared his mind of the thoughts for her and pursued the holy path under the guidance of his father and developed mystic meditation once again. However the main schemes of plot is retained with the central elements depicting the shift from austerities to worldly distractions and the return back to penances. In all these variants, in spite of the mention of the doe-mother of Rsyasringa and the very name given to the protagonist, Isisinga which means hermit with a horn there is no mention of the saint having a horn. As pointed out by Prof.

1 Jataka Stories: vol.V, p.101
Winternitz it could have been used metaphorically in order to symbolise the lonely habits of the unicorn, often compared with the lonely ways practised by the Pratyekabudha. It is clearly pointed out in the Mahavastu version of this theme in the form of 'The Jataka of Nalini'. According to it the saint father when naming the child "remembered the saying 'the one horned beast wanders all alone' (Rhinoceros) and gave the child the name of Ekasringa". On the other hand in the case of Japan where it popularly disseminated through Buddhist literature the name of the hermit is translated literally as Ikkakusenin or the hermit with a horn and in most of the adaptations, the word is taken literally viz. the protagonist is given to be having a horn, even though his doe-birth is not mentioned. In case of Japan the prime source apparently is the Chinese work of "Hoenjurin" which is rated as the encyclopedia on Buddhism. Here the outline of the plot is given including the portions of doe-parentage as well as the birth identification in true Jataka tradition. However, it is in Japan that this theme could attain the heights of popularity and was adapted not only in pure literature but also in the performing arts, especially the classical drama of Noh and Kabuki. In the case of the Kabuki theater especially, it has been Japanised completely in the play 'The Priest Narukami' and is staged even till date.

In Japan this theme first appears in the work Konjaku Monogatari as follows:

---

1 History of Indian Literature: Winternitz, H.
2 The Mahavastu: vol. III, p.140
3 Konjaku Monogatari: vol.V, 4
Once upon a time in the land of Tenjiku there lived an ascetic called Ikkakusenin (ascetic with a horn) who had a horn on his forehead and because of this he was named so. Due to his long years of penances deep in the mountains he had attained divine powers. He could wander in the skies riding on the clouds and could even move big mountains. Once due to a heavy rainfall the mountain path became muddy and slippery. The ascetic's foot slipped and he fell down. He found it frustrating and in a fit of rage he thought, "It is the act of the dragon gods who make the rain fall" and so in order to teach them a lesson he imprisoned them in a jar. The dragon gods cried in distress, being closed in a narrow jar in which they had to struggle even to move yet they were unable to break it because of the extraordinary powers of the ascetic and failed to do anything. Now in the absence of the dragon Kings there was no rain at all. It was already twelve years since it had rained. Without water the people suffered endlessly and there was a severe drought all over the country. The Kings of all the sixteen kingdoms offered prayers for the rainfall but in vain. No one knew the solution to this. Ultimately a fortune teller told them, "In the direction of north east, deep in the interiors there is a mountain where lives an ascetic. He has captured and put in a jar the dragon Kings who cause the rainfall and so it has ceased to rain. The endless prayers offered by our saints are no match for the enormous powers of the ascetic."

On hearing this the people of various kingdoms were at a loss as to what should be done. Then one wise minister
suggested, there is one way that we can try. It is said that even the most wise saints are captivated by the lust for women and music. In the past, the saint Udaraka Ramputra who was much more accomplished than even the Ikkakusenin fell prey to the lust for woman and lost all the extraordinary powers. So, he suggested that beautiful women with lovely voices selected from the sixteen kingdoms should be sent to the ascetic. They should move about the high peaks and deep valleys where his hermitage may be and sing beautifully with a touch of melancholy. By this even a sage of the greatest order would be moved. Now working on this suggestion five hundred beautiful women were selected. They dressed up gorgeously and applied sandalwood powder and Daphne perfumes on their bodies and thus decorated well they rode on five hundred carts and departed. These women reached the mountains got down from the carts and walked in a group looking magnificent beyond description. They scattered all over in groups of ten or twenty each, and walked around the caves, between the cliffs, under the trees strolling while singing. Their voices echoed in the mountains and spread in the valleys as if inviting the gods to descend. However after sometime from a cave in deep in the interior an ascetic appeared dressed in bark, thin and emaciated, his body like a skeleton covered with skin. Looking at him one would wonder as to where his soul existed. He had a horn on his forehead that made him look all the more dreadful. Holding on to a stick like a shadow he held a jar and came out. Then approaching the women he enquired, "Who are you? What has made you come here and
sing. I have been living here on this mountain for the last thousand years. I have never heard any one sing here before. Have the heavenly beings come down or is it the act of some demons?"

The women replied, "We are neither from heaven nor sent by the demons. We are the five hundred kinnara women travelling all over the Tenjiku. This part of the mountains is magnificent with beautiful landscape, colourful flowers and rivers flowing all over. Above all we have heard that a great sage lives here for a long time. We are singing especially for him since living in mountains he would not have heard singing ever before and also to converse with him. We have come thus. The ascetic on hearing them sing and looking at the beautiful women he had never seen before was perplexed with his eyes glittering brilliantly and spirits soaring high. He approached a woman and said, "Will you just listen to what I say". The woman thought, "The ascetic seems to have been influenced. Let me coax him more" and she answered, "Tell me what is it? I would do anything you say". The ascetic replied sheepishly, "Will you let me touch you for a while". The woman was in a great dilemma. On the one hand she had to concede to this dreadful man's desire, the very task for which she had been sent, and on the other he was too repulsive with the horn on his forehead. Yet she conceded to him. As soon as he touched the woman the dragon Kings broke the jar and released themselves. Joyfully they ascended into the heavens and there was a heavy rainfall soon after with

---

1 Heavenly women musicians

2 Ancient name used by the Japanese for India
thunder and lightening. The woman unable to identify the
way back did not know where to go and thus remained there
only. The ascetic completely captivated by her remained
with her. On the fifth day the rain slowed down and the sky
cleared up. The woman said, "I cannot remain here for ever.
Let me return back." The ascetic disliking her separation
looked dejected and suggested, "Must you go?" The woman said,
"I am not accustomed to the mountain way and so my legs are
aching. Moreover I do not even know the way to return."
"In that case let me show you the way back, through the
mountains" and he led her. The ascetic looked horrible with
his completely grey hair, wrinkled face, horn on the
forehead and waist bent completely. Wearing bark cloth he
appeared ridiculous leaning on a stick to which a crosier
was fixed and walking staggeringly on the mountain path
leading the woman. On the way there was a steep valley with
a narrow bridge suspended across it. On both sides the
cliffs stretched perilously and between the high caves there
was a gushing waterfall falling into an abyss and creating
white foam when falling from such a height. It appeared as
if the mountains close and far were engulfed in waves of
clouds or mist. It was humanly impossible to cross it
unless one had wings or one rode on a dragon. On reaching
this point the woman told the ascetic, "It is impossible to
cross. Only looking at it I feel dizzy what to talk of
crossing it. You must be accustomed to it O! ascetic.
Would you carry me on your back across the bridge." The
ascetic being captivated by the woman completely could not
refuse her and said, "It is hardly anything. Get on my back
immediately." His fragile limbs appeared as if they would crack any moment. The woman was scared to death fearing to fall down any moment. Yet she was carried over safely. Even after crossing she did not get down from his back and kept on insisting, "Carry me a little further please", until they reached the castle town. All those people who saw them on the way spread the news that the hermit was coming carrying a 'kinnara' (dancing woman) woman on his back. So everybody high and low, men as well as women flocked to watch. They saw a hermit having a horn on forehead, with his hairs white like snow and limbs thin like match sticks. The crosier in his hands touched the back of the woman he was carrying and slid down sometimes and his manoeuvering to hold it up was the laughing stock of all. The ascetic went straight to the palace. The King had heard about the great ascetic but on seeing him coming like this he ordered him to leave the palace immediately. The great ascetic who could once fly high in the sky returned back with staggering steps like a worthless fellow. There was such a hermit, it has been told to us successively.

Evidently the Konjaku story has a proper narrativie form, being a blend of the Indian story of Rsyasringa, the Japanese locale and certain Chinese elements, the most pronounced being the concept of ascetics.

The basic theme of the Indian plot, as evident in Ramayana story is the great ascetic's fall from that position and later his endeavours to regain that position. Even in Ramayana, the sage Rsyasringa in spite of his marriage to Shanta continues to be considered as a sage of great order.
as he acts as the head priest in the Yagna performed by the King for a male progeny. In Mahabhartha story the elements of the parentage of the sage and his return back to the world of penances and austerities as promised to his father are added. These are retained in the later versions in most cases.

The doe-parentage of the sage is indicated but of all the variants it is the Mahabharata story that points to the presence of a horn on the ascetic's forehead. In the case of the Buddhist version, as mentioned earlier also, it is possibly used metaphorically to describe the lonely habits of the ascetic. On the other hand in Konjaku story nothing is mentioned about the parentage of the sage and it simply indicates that the ascetic had a horn on his forehead rather than his head. It is quite likely that the Japanese writer took the word, used metaphorically in the Buddhist works, in a literal sense and showed the sage as having a horn on the forehead like an unicorn to justify his name without giving any mention of his parentage. It might not necessarily mean that the Konjaku writer considered the birth of a human child from a doe as unnatural as there are stories of heterogenous parents in Konjaku the closest example being the story, "The King, on a deer hunting expedition meets the Lady Rukamani and marries her" \(^1\) which finds a place next to the story of 'Ikkakusenin' in the same volume of Konjaku in which the mode of doe-conception is the same. A doe, laps up water around the place where the two ascetics perform their daily chores and washing, and thus conceives

---

\(^{1}\) Konjaku Monogatari: Vol.V, 5

Page 119
by drinking the semen containing water. Thereafter the doe gives birth to a girl who was adopted and raised by the ascetics. Thus it can be safely surmised that there could be some other reason for not including this element of doe-birth in the story of Ikkakusenin. In Japan traditionally there are several stories about the human offsprings from animals like fox, eagle, doe etc. and abandoned by them near some house or temple of some village. There is the famous legend of Kitsunenyobo the fox wife associated with a community living in Saga Prefecture in Mino province.\textsuperscript{1} A fox transforms herself into a girl, marries a warrior and begets his children. One day accidentally on being chased by a dog she reveals her true identity and returns back to the forest leaving her children behind. The people of the aforesaid community are regarded as the descendants of those offsprings of the fox. In Japanese folklore too there are several similar themes like monkey bridegroom,\textsuperscript{2} frog wife\textsuperscript{3} etc. Specifically if we narrow down to the doe-child cases, then there are two cases which could be pointed out in this context. First, according to the temple accounts of Fukuzenji temple\textsuperscript{4} located in a village named Izumi in Hakuseki town of Bizen presently in Okayama prefecture, a fox (in some cases a bear) used to come to the temple compound frequently to eat the offerings made to the deity. One day the cries of a human child were heard from behind the main hall. Later a fox was found to be feeding a new born child. While they

\textsuperscript{1} Mihon Ryouiki: vol.I
\textsuperscript{2} Taisei: vol.II, p.73
\textsuperscript{3} Ibid.: vol.II, p.175
\textsuperscript{4} Yanagita Kunio Shu: vol.VIII, Irumishikibu no tabi

Page 120
were arguing about the child an old couple arrived. They claimed of having dreamt the previous night that in the main hall of the temple a child was lying which they were told was for them. Ultimately the girl was handed over to that childless couple. They brought her up and according to one legend she grew up to be one of the accomplished poetesses of the Heian period, Izumi Shikibu. This story has been further confirmed by the accounts found in the temple diaries of Fukuzenji temple compiled during the Showa years. According to it the temple Fukuzenji is located somewhere in the Saga Province where a childless couple got a child due to the mercy of the temple deity, Yakushi Nyorai, the 'Bhaisajyaguru', the Buddha of healing.

Secondly, there is the legend of Risshu Senin or Saga Risshu. In the Yakushi temple located on Mt. Horai in Mikawa a doe gave birth to a baby girl. The temple was habited by a sage who was undergoing rigorous meditation there, confining himself to a cave only. He would come out only once in a while to answer a call of nature etc. A doe used to walk about that place eating grass and licking the plants and leaves in the vicinity and thus conceived. In due course of time a baby girl was born to her. The sage could perceive the truth behind her conception and had the girl sent away to Nara to be abandoned at the gate of some house. This legend is associated with the birth of the queen Komyo Kogo (701-760) the wife of Emperor Shomu, (reigned during 724-748), who was an ardent follower of Buddhism and did a lot for it in Japan. All these instances lead to the fact that the concept of the doe child in Japan is associated
with the birth of girls rather than that of boys, and that too of extraordinary beauty and talent. On the other hand, in the case of boys born of dissimilar parentage the legend of 'Kitsue Nyobo', the fox wife stated earlier is present. The writer aware of this fact and farsighted enough not to tamper with the existing beliefs consciously avoided it in case of the story of Rsyasringa, thus making it palatable to the Japanese readership. In the process the central theme has emerged to be a fall from grace of a human being rather than the off-springs from dissimilar parentage. Moreover the Konjaku story retains the structural components of the Indian plot but gives it a Japanese locale. The most striking example is the ascetic himself. His extraordinary powers are described at length about how he could ride the clouds to fly in the sky etc. This conforms with the Japanese tradition of ascetics or hermits who have extraordinary powers to fly about the sky, tame wild animals, capture the dragon Kings which tradition in turn was inherited from China. According to it such ascetics lived deep in the mountains and had divine powers to ascend in the skies and fly about. In Japan thirty seven hermits \(^1\) were considered to have lived until the Heian period (858). One of these, the hermit Kumei could be called the the prototype of Rsyasringa. It is prototype of Rsyasringa not in the sense of doe parentage but basically because like Rsyasringa he also is distracted by a woman thereby losing his divine powers but on making a serious attempt could regain them once again, so structurally it is

\(^1\) Honcho Sennin Den by Oetsu Makifusa
more or less like the Indian version where there is a scope for remorse.

Ascetic Kumei's period is pointed to be before the capital was shifted to Nara i.e. sometime before 710. His name is associated with the Yoshino-dera (the Yoshino temple) in Yamato Province near the ancient capital Nara. It is said that he confined himself in the temple Yoshino for meditation and attained divine powers of an ascetic, like being able to fly in sky etc. Once as he was flying with another ascetic of equally high order his attention was caught by the legs of a woman bathing in the river. With his mind thus distracted, he lost his divine powers and fell down from the sky. Then taking her as his wife he led a married life. At that time in Yamato the capital was being constructed. Kumei also took up a job there. He was affectionately called 'Sennin' by the other workers. The official in charge found it strange and enquired the reason for it. He did not believe their story and remarked sarcastically that if Kumei was an ascetic he would not labour by carrying the wood himself but would rather have it flown here. Kumei took his comment seriously. Then he confined himself to the hall for seven days and nights. On the eighth day it suddenly became very dark all over and violent storms blew. When it was over the logs small as well as big were seen flying through the sky. The ascetic had regained his lost powers. This story of Kumei is found in various works including the Japanese section of Konjaku Monogatari.² Coming back to the story of Rysyasringa in

²Konjaku Monogatari: vol.II, 24
Konjaku not only the characters but the locale also is Japanised completely. The slippery mountain path, mountain caves, steep cliffs, the gushing water falls, and a city located at the foot of mountain, the overall effect is of a mountainous country most probably the writer's own. Although the Indian versions indicate the ascetic to be dwelling in the mountainous region of the Himalayas, yet the scenic description to this effect are lacking. On the other hand, the Konjaku presents it as a story of Tenjiku viz. India, yet the concepts are Japanese. In the Indian versions the root cause of the trouble is the extraordinary powers of the ascetic that excelled even those of the most powerful Indra, the God of Rains. While in the Japanese version it is the Dragon Gods, responsible for the rains and being the culprits, who are captured. In spite of such variations the basic sequence of events is represented in terms of good (ascetic's divine powers) - bad (power lost) - good (divine powers restored). However, in Konjaku the last component is missing. Here the fall of the ascetic is carried to the extreme. The fall from grace of the hermit is such from where there is no return. In all other variants including that of Kumei, there is scope for return but in Konjaku story the fall of Ikkakusenin is carried out to the extreme and is irreversible typical of the Japanese narrative structure. Incidentally in all the versions the structural components are retained and the theme is based on the primary subject of rain bringing rituals of the agricultural societies. This, possibly along with the other added and deleted factors like Japanized locale, dropping
down of doe child concept etc., has contributed to the popularity of this story. Mostly in the typical Japanese narrative structure, the sequence of events in the case of human characters representing good, may move to bad but most of the times ends there and seldom moves back from bad to good, this being considered unnatural. Thus the fall of the ascetic is typical of this and the ultimate from which there is no coming back. In the Konjaku story the character of Ikkakusenin is very much like a human being. He, due to his long years of penances, attains supernatural powers, but unable to control his mind is captivated by desires and falls from grace whereby he not only loses his divine powers but is also an object of mockery of the people.

This theme also appears in the work Taiheiki, translated as the chronicles of peaceful reign which is a war fiction. Here the story of Rsyaringa appears as being identical to its original including the birth identification typical of the Jataka tradition. The sage is identified as the Buddha in his previous birth and the woman as Yashodhara. It incorporates the doe birth elements also whereas in the climax the ascetic after his fall from grace dies.

In Japan this theme has been adapted in the performing arts. In the classical drama form of 'Noh' it appeared as the play 'Ikkakusennin' around the eleventh century. This is structurally similar to the Indian version which is introduced as the story from India set in Benaras along with the element of doe parentage. However it is in the classical drama form of Kabuki that a complete Japanisation

---

¹Yokyoku Taikan: vol.1
of this theme appears. In the Kabuki play 'Priest Narukami' the Japanisation of this theme, initiated in Konjaku, is complete because here not only the locale but even the characters are Japanised without leaving any trace of its Indian origin. This play was first staged in 1684 with Ichikawa Danjiro as its playwright and was especially popular during the Genroku period (1688-1704), characterized by gayful hedonistic traits even in literature.

The outline of this play is given below:

The opening scene is of the hermitage of the Priest Narukami located on a mountain with a waterfall in the vicinity. Two of his disciples who are slowwitted are talking:

- Did you hear?
- Yes I did
- What?
- I heard the cries of bush warbler behind the main hall.
- Foolish I do not mean that. Did you hear the rumour about our masters vow
- No. I don't know any such thing.
- Then let me tell you that our master has vowed to carry on with the penances so that the dragons remain his captives and there is no rain at all. Our master is annoyed with the Emperor because he did not keep his promise in spite of his wish fulfillment.
- Already there has been no rain for more than thirty days.
- Well children might be enjoying it as they can fly kites in the clear sky. For farmers it is disastrous.

1 Kabukijuhachiban Shu: no.9
- Actually our master wants to see the emperor in distress and not the peasants. I say so because he is very annoyed with the Emperor. The Emperor did not build the altar in the temple as he had promised to our master, although his wish was granted. As they were talking the priest arrives who has captured the dragon kings.

Soon the lady Taemahime comes to the stage. She is wearing a (thin) transparent dress with one of her shoulders naked and wearing a bell around her neck. She is holding a bell hammer in her hand. She stops in front of the waterfall and recites the name of 'Amitabha Buddha'. On hearing this Narukami wonders who could be calling the name of Buddha at such a deserted place. He wakes up his two disciples and asks them to go and find out. On finding the beautiful Taemahime they both argue whether she was a dragon princess or a celestial maiden. When Narukami fails to get any convincing reply from them regarding the identity of that person he goes himself and asks her the reason for coming to such a lonesome place.

Taemahime relates her story saying she lives at the foot of mountain and was in distress due to the death of her husband. That day being the seventy seventh day of mourning she had come to the lake to wash her clothes. She had come all the way after climbing the difficult mountain path in search of water because the drought had been continuing for more than 100 days and so even the wells had dried up. Narukami expresses his sympathy and enquires about the reason of her husband's death. While relating her story she
points out that the noise of the waterfall was disturbing and so suggests that they should sit closer. At this point Narukami asks her to come to his hermitage so that she could speak without any disturbance. There his disciples initially resent this saying that a woman should not be allowed to come near the altar. Finally, three of them listen intently about how she had met her husband and their blissful life together. While she was relating the story Narukami slips and faints. On regaining consciousness he realizes that he was being comforted by her. He is disturbed and relates the story of 'Ikkakusennin' or Rysasringa from India. At this point he states his doubts that she might have come to allure him by her charms. So he questions her about her real identity. "...tell me whether you are the daughter of a noble or some commoner. You could be even the wife of some high official. Tell me honestly and answer me?"

At this point Taemahime laments that she was being doubted unnecessarily and she had come to enter his order. Then she on being doubted pretends to throw herself in the lake. When the priest stops her she expresses her wish to become a nun. Narukami sends one of the disciples to get the razor for shaving her head and the other one to fetch a saffron robe. On being alone with Narukami she complains of stomach pain. As the Priest tries to comfort her, he falls a prey to her womanly viles and there is a breach in his austerity. As soon as the ascetic loses his supernatural powers, and releases the dragons. There is a heavy rainfall and both his disciples return drenched wondering how it could have
happened. When Narukami realizes what had happened he runs after Taemahime in a fit of rage. Here the curtain drops. In this plot of Narukami the same contents are cast in a different mould. For example in the basic plot the object of the ascetic's wrath is the dragon gods with the resultant effect on the Emperor. In Narukami it is reversed viz. the object of the ascetic's wrath is the Emperor for which the dragon gods are made the scapegoat. Priest Narukami is annoyed with the Emperor because he failed to keep his word. As a result he captured the dragons in order to see him in distress because of the lack of rain. Ultimately it is the people who suffered. Likewise in the second part the solution sought to overcome the crisis is identical whereby some woman is sent to tempt the hermit in order to distract him and she succeeds. The plot evolves into a completely different story and arouses the interest of a Japanese audience in this case. Not only the plot but the characters, landscape, the very locale is portrayed in such a way that the overall effect is that of an original Japanese work rather than an adaptation. The finale especially, of this play Narukami, is typically Japanese and the ascetic in a fit of rage chases Taemahime as in other Japanese narratives. Thus it can be safely surmised that the prime factor for the popularity of this plot in Japan is its complete identification with the native Japanese locale and traditions. When speaking about the wide popularity of this theme its extent could be imagined from its presence in the children's magazine as a Japanese story. In the
magazine 'Kin no Hoshi' \(^1\) this work appears as 'Ikkakusenin Monogatari', "The Story of Rsyasringa". In the Indian story it is further modified by using the Western elements, in addition to that of the Chinese and Japanese, and is particularly close to the story of Beauty and the Beast. Incidentally in the case of juvenile literature the importance of magazines as a part of literature cannot be denied.

The element of heterogeneous parentage present here is amplified fully in one of the legends associated with the origin of the Island of Ceylon. These legends are of two types, one of popular origin and the other of Buddhist origin. In the fifth volume of the Indian section of Konjaku Monogatari, which is the focus of this study, both are accounted and these are discussed, besides other points, in the subsequent chapter not merely as an example of heterogeneous parentage but also highlighting the aspect of Kanno worship in Japan .

\(^1\) Kinno Hoshi : vol. VII-X, p. 96, published in Japan