Sir James Mallinson translates and edits Sanskrit literature for the JJC Foundation, co-publishers (with NYU Press) of the Clay Sanskrit Library. He has also translated for the CSL Budha·svamin’s Emperor of the Sorcerers (two volumes) and Messenger Poems by Kali·dasa, Dhoyi, and Rupa Go·svamin.

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The name of Soma-deva’s eleventh-century Ocean of the Rivers of Story is no boast: in more than 20,000 verses it tells more than 350 tales. The reader has only to enjoy being swept away in the flood of stories, said to spring from that source of so much classical Indian literature, ‘The Long Story.’

The Ocean of the Rivers of Story
Volume One
by Soma-deva

Translated by
SIR JAMES MALLINSON

NEW YORK UNIVERSITY PRESS & JJC FOUNDATION

Here is a new Clay Sanskrit Library translation of Volume One (of nine) of Soma-deva’s Ocean of the Rivers of Story.

Soma deva composed his flood of tales in Kashmir in the eleventh century CE to amuse Queen Suryāvati. The vast collection is based on ‘The Long Story,’ a now lost—perhaps legendary—repository of Indian fables, in which prince Nara-váhana·datta wins 26 wives and becomes the emperor of the sorcerers.

This first volume takes us up to the middle of the third “Attainment” (of 18) and the return of Nara-vahana-datta’s father-to-be to Kaushámby with his wives.

By turns funny, exciting, or didactic, 350 tales within tales within tales illustrate the frame narrative or simply entertain the protagonists, and 20,000 plus verses of simple but elegant Sanskrit make the work an ideal text for students.

One of the best-known non-religious Sanskrit works, The Ocean of the Rivers of Story inspired, for example, Salman Rushdie’s novel Haroun and the Sea of Stories. Still the best way to enjoy the text is to dive in and relish each tale in itself.
THE OCEAN OF
THE RIVERS OF STORY
VOLUME ONE
BY SOMADEVA

TRANSLATED BY
SIR JAMES MALLINSON

NEW YORK UNIVERSITY PRESS
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SEVENTH WAVE
1.7.1 «TATOTṚ ṚṬUṬHĀMAUNO haṁ rājāṁtikam upāgamanam
tatra ca ślokam apaṭhaḥ dvijah kaś cit svayamkṛtaṁ.
taṁ c' acāṣṭa svayam rājā samyakṣaṁśamkṛtyā girā
tatr' ālokyā ca tatraṁha janaṁ pramudito 'bhavat.
tatāḥ sa Śarvavarmāṇaṁ rājā saṁvinayo 'bhavit:
svayam kathaya devena katham te 'nugrahaṁ kṛtah.

tac chrutv' 'ānugrahaṁ rājāḥ Śarvatman' 'abhyaṁbhāṣṭa:
ito, rājan, nirājāro maunaṁha 'haṁ tadā gataḥ.

1.7.5 tato 'dhvani maṇḍakoṣe jate tivraṁtapahkṛtaḥ
klāntaṁ patitavān asmi niḥśaṁśiṇo dharaṇītale.
«uttiṣṭha, putra, sarvaṁ te sampatsyata iti» sphaṭam
śaktiṁhastaḥ pumān etya jāne mām abravit tadā.
ten' 'āham amṛt'āsaraṁśaṁśita iva tatiṁśaṁam
prabuddhaḥ kṣutpipāṭ 'adhiṁnaḥ svastha iv' 'abhamvam.
atha devasya nikaṭam prāpya bhaktibhārājukulāh
snātvā garbhagṛhaṁ tasya praviśto 'bhūvam unmanah.
tato 'ntaḥ prabhunā tena Skandena mama darśanam
dattaṁ tataḥ praviṣṭa me mukhe mūrtaḥ Sarasvatī.

1.7.10 ath' 'āsau bhagavāṁ sākṣat ṣadbhir ānanaṁpaṅkajajāh
siddho varpaṃśaṁmāṇaṁ iti śūtram udairayat.
tac chrutv' āiva manuṣyaṁvatsulabhāc cāpalād bata
uttaraṁ śūtram abhyūhyā svayam eva may' 'ōditam.
ath' abravit sa devo mām 'n' āvadisyaḥ svayam yadi
abhaviṣyad idaṁ śastraṁ Pāṇinīyōpamardakam.
adhunā śvalpaṁtantrasvām Kāṭantar'ākhyāṁ bhaviṣyati
madhyāhnaṁ Kalāpasya nāmnā Kālāpakaṁ tathā.»

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"Then, having taken a vow of silence, I went before the king and some brahmin there recited a verse that he had composed. The king replied to him personally in perfect Sanskrit, and when they witnessed this the people there were overjoyed. Then the king humbly asked Sharva-varman, 'Tell us yourself how the Lord bestowed his favor on you.'

On hearing this, Sharva-varman told the king about the boon:

'Sire, when I left here I went on a fast and took a vow of silence. Then, when there was but a short way left to go and I was exhausted and emaciated from my severe austerities, I fell to the ground unconscious. After that I remember a man with a spear in his hand arriving and saying to me in a clear voice: 'Get up, my son, everything will turn out well for you.' Then, as if I had been showered by a downpour of the nectar of immortality, I awoke feeling well, free from hunger and thirst. Next I arrived in the vicinity of the lord, overcome by the burden of my devotion. After bathing, I excitedly entered his inner sanctum. Inside Lord Karttikéya granted me his darshan and then Sarásvati took bodily form and entered my mouth. Immediately afterwards the blessed lord recited with his six lotus-mouts a sutra that was a perfected form of the alphabet. As soon as I heard it, with the impertinence that, alas, comes so easily to mankind, I guessed the next sutra and said it myself. The lord then said to me, 'If you had not spoken it yourself, this treatise would have wiped out that of Pánini. Because it is now so concise, it shall be called the 'Ka Tantra' and also the Kalāpaka, after the name of my vehicle.'"
THE OCEAN OF THE RIVERS OF STORY I

aty uktvā śabdaśāstraṁ tat prakāṣyā’ abhinavam laghu sāksād eva sa māṁ devah punar evam abhāṣata:

1.7.15 «yuṣmadiyah sa rā́j” āpi pūrvajanmany abhūd trāh Bharadvājaśāthane śisyah Krṣṇaśaṁjaśīva mahātapaḥ.
tuly’|ābhilāśāṃ abloka sa c’ ālāṁ muniśkanyakām
yayav aḵasmā pusp’|eṣu|saṅghata|rasajñatām.
ataḥ sa śaṁto munibhir avatīrṇa ih’ ādhunā
sā c’ avatīrṇā devīte tasy’ āva muniśkanyakā.

itham ōyavatāro ‘yāṁ nṛpatiḥ Sātaḥanaḥ
drṣṭe tvayy akhilā vidyā prāpsyat eva tvadācchayā.
akleśalabhyā hi bhavanṭy uttam’|ārthā mah”|ātmanām
janm’|āntar’|ājitāḥ sphaṁaśaṁkār’|aksipta|siddhayāḥ.

1.7.20 ity uktv’ āntarḥite deve niragacchham ahaṁ bahiḥ
taṇḍulā me praddattā ca tatra dev’|opajivbhīṣ.
tato ‘haṁ āgato, rājaṁs, taṇḍulās te ca me pathi
citraṁ távanta ev’| āsan bhujyāmāna āne dine.

1.7.25 svapn’|jādeśena devyā ca
tay” āva preśitas tataḥ

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ATTAINMENT I, SEVENTH WAVE

On saying this, he revealed that new concise grammar and then before my very eyes the god continued by saying to me,

“That king of yours was a sage in a former life, a great ascetic called Krishna, pupil of the hermit Bharad-vaja. He once looked at a sage’s daughter who desired him as much as he did her, and suddenly he felt a blow from an arrow of the god who has flowers in his quiver. As a result the sages cursed him, so he has now incarnated here and the hermit’s daughter has become his wife. Thus King Sata-vāhana is the incarnation of a sage. When he sees you he will acquire all the sciences as you wish, for great things are easily attained by those with noble souls, having been acquired in a previous birth, and their successful reacquaintance is brought about by a sudden transformation.”

With these words, the god disappeared and I went outside. I was given some rice by the god’s attendants there. Then, sire, I returned, and the amazing thing was that on my way I ate the rice every day but there always remained the same amount.” After Sharva-varman had thus told his story and fallen silent, the delighted Sata-vāhana got up to bathe.

Then I, excluded from the proceedings because of my vow of silence, took my leave of the reluctant king with nothing but a bow. I left the city with two pupils and, having decided to become an ascetic, came to have darshan of Vīndhya-vāsini. It was because of an order in a dream from that very goddess that I set forth from there and entered this terrifying forest in order to meet you. At a Pulinda’s suggestion I found a caravan and somehow, through a stroke
Vindhyāṭativo praviṣṭo 'ham
tvāṁ draṣṭum bhīṣaṇāṁ imām.
pulindavāyād āsādyā sārthaṁ daivāt kathaṁ cana
īha praṅpto 'ham adrakṣaṁ piśācāṁ suṣbahūṁ amūn.
anyonyālāpam eteṣaṁ dūrād ākarnya śīkṣitā
mayā piśācaḥbhāṣāḥ ēvaṁ maunaṁmoksasya kāraṇam.
upagamyā tataṁ c āitāṁ tvāṁ śrutvā Oḷājñinīgatam
pratipālīravān asmi yāvad abhyāgato bhavān.
dṛṣṭvā tvāṁ svāgataṁ kṛtvā caaturthāyā bhūtaṁbhāṣayā
mayā jātiḥ śṛṣṭaṁ ēty cṣa vṛttānto me 'tra janmani.'

1.7.30
 evam ukte Gūṇādhvyena Kāṇābhūtir uvacā tam
tvadāyamo mayā jñāto yathā ēdyā niṣī tac chṛṇu.
rākṣaso Bhūtivarmāṇāḥ khyo divyaḥ śṛṣṭāṁ sākham āsti me
yatataṁ asmi c ōḍyānam Ujjayinyāṁ tadātpadam.
tatr āśau niṣaiśpāṁ āntam pratī prṣto mayā ābravīt:
dīvā nāsti prabhāvo nas, tīṣṭha rātrau vaddam atāḥ.
tathā ēti c āhaṁ tatrasthāṁ prāptāyāṁ niṣī valgatām
tam aprcchaṁ prasangena bhūtām khaṇākaraṇam.
purā Vṛīṅciḥ/saṁvāde yaṃ uktam śāmkreṇa tat
śṛṣṭa vacma ēti mām uktvā Bhūtivarmāṁ āthā so 'bravīt.

1.7.35
dīvā nāiśāṁ prabhāvo 'stī dhvastāṇām arkaḥtejasā
yakṣaṣaṭkṣaṣahpiśācāṇāṁ tena hṛṣyanty amī niṣī.
nā pūjyante sura yatra na ca viprā yathā dīcitam
bhūjyaṭe 'vidhinnāv āpi tatrā āte prabhavanti ca.
aṁmaṁsaṁbhakṣaḥ śādhiḥ vā yatra tatra na yānty amī
üciṁ śūrān prabuddhāṁ ca nākraṇmanti kādā caṇa.
of fate, I arrived here and came across all these pisháchas. From afar I listened to them talking among themselves and learned this pishácha language, which is how I was liberated from my vow of silence. After learning it from them I heard that you had gone to Ujjain and I waited until you returned. When I saw you and welcomed you in the fourth language, that of the demons, I remembered my original birth. That is what has happened to me in this life.”

After Gunádhya had told him this, Kana·bhuti replied, “Listen to how I found out last night about your arrival. I have a rákshasa friend called Bhuti-varman who has divine sight, and I went to the garden in Ujjain where he lives. There I asked him about how my curse would come to an end. He replied that his magic did not work during the day, so I should wait and he would tell me that night. I agreed. When I was there after night had fallen and the demons were cavorting about, I asked him in passing why they were so happy.

‘Listen and I shall tell you what I heard Shiva say long ago in conversation with Brahma,’ said Bhuti-varman to me. He continued, ‘Yakshas, rákshasas and pisháchas are harmed by the brightness of the sun and have no powers in the day. That’s why they rejoice at night. And they can work their magic in places where the gods are not worshipped, or where brahmins are not given due respect or where people do not eat according to the rules. They won’t go where there is a man who doesn’t eat meat or a virtuous woman, and they never attack those who are honest, brave or awake.’

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ity uktvā me sa taṛkālaṃ Bhūtivarman ābravēt punah:
«gacch’āgato Gunāḍhyas te tāpamokṣasya kāraṇam.»
śrutvā ātad āgataś ca āśmi tvam ca dṛṣṭo maya, prabho,
kathayāmy adhunā tām te Puṣpadantaḥ’ōditaṃ katham.

Kaṇabhuṭer iti śrutvā Guṇāḍhyas tam abhāṣata:
«Gaṅgātīre ‘graharo ‘sti nāmnā Bahusuvraṇakaḥ.
tatra Govindadattākhyo brāhmaṇo ‘bhūd bahūśrutah.
tasya bhārya’ Ṛgnidattā ca babhūva patīdevatā.
sa kalena dvijas tasyaṃ paṇca putrāṇa aśiṣinat,
te ca mūrkhāḥ suśūpāḥ ca babhūvur abhimāninaḥ.
aha Govindadattasya grāhāḥ atithir āyaya
vipro Vaiśvānaro nāma Vaiśvānara iv’ āparah.

Govindadatte taṛkālaṃ grāhā api bāḥīḥ sthite
tatputrāṇaṃ upāgatyā kṛṣṇaṃ ten ‘abhivādanam.
ḥāṣāmātraṃ ca taśa tasya kṛṣṇaṃprayābhivādanam
tataḥ sa kopān nirgantuṃ prāṛtebh tadbhāvāb bhājā.
āgaten’ atha Govindadattena sa tathābhāvaḥ,
kruddhahṛṣṭo ‘nunīto ‘pi jagad’ āvam dvij’ōttamaḥ.
‘putrās te patitā mūrkhās taśsaṃpkaṇḍ bhavān api,
tasmāna bhokṣye tvadigehe prāścittaṃ nu me bhavet.»
aha Govindadattas tam uvacca śapath’ōttaram
‘na spṛṣāmy api jāt etān ahaṃ kuṭanayān iti!’

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Having told me this, Bhuti-varman immediately added, ‘Go! Gunâdhyâ, who is to bring about your release from the curse, has arrived.’

When I heard this I came and found you, my lord. Now I shall tell you the story told by Pushpa-danta. However, there is one thing I am curious about: tell me why he was known as Pushpa-danta and you as Mâlyavan."

On hearing this from Kana-bhuti, Gunâdhyâ replied, “On the banks of the Ganga there is a piece of land called Bahu-suvârnaka that was given to some brahmins. A very learned brahmin called Govînda-datta lived there and he had a wife called Agni-datta, who treated him like a god. In time, that brahmin had five sons by her. Foolish and handsome, they grew conceited. Then a guest arrived at Govînda-datta’s house, a brahmin called Vaishvânara, who was like a second god of fire.* At that moment, Govînda-datta was away from the house and the guest went up to his sons and greeted them. They just laughed back at him and the furious brahmin started to walk away from the house. Then Govînda-datta arrived and, finding that finest of brahmins in such a rage, he questioned him and tried to calm him down, but he said the following: ‘Your idiot sons are sinners, and through association with them so are you. Therefore I shall not eat in your house, for I would have to perform a rite of expiation.’

Govînda-datta replied with an oath: ‘I shall never even touch these wicked sons of mine.’
THE OCEAN OF THE RIVERS OF STORY I

1.7.50  
tadbhāryaḥ api tathā āvī āiyya tam uvāc ātithiḥpriyā
tataḥ kathaṃ cid ātithyāṃ tatra Vaiśvānaro 'grahīt.
tad drṣṭavā Devadattaḥ ākhyas tasyā āikas tanayās tadā
abhūd Govindadattasya nairghṛṇyen 'anutāpavān.
vyaṣṭratvam jīvitam ālokya pīṭhbhyām atha dūṣitam
saṁnirvedaḥ sa tapase yāyau Badarikājāśramam.
tataḥ pariṣṭāsanaḥ pūrvam dhūmapaś ć āpy anantarām
tatthau cīrāya tapase toṣayiṣyann Umāpatiṃ.
dadau ca darśanam tasya Śambhus tīvratapo'rajitaḥ
tasyā āvī 'ānucaratvam ca sa vavre varam āśvarat.

1.7.55  
'vidyāḥ prāpnuhi bhogāṃ ca bhuvī bhunākṣya tatas tava
bhavitā abhimataṃ sarvam iti Śambhus tam adīśat.
tataḥ sa gatvā vidyājāriḥi purāṇī Pāṭaliputram
siṣeve Vedakumbhaḥ ākhyam upādhyāyaṃ yathāvidhi.
tatatras tāṃ upādhyāyapatni jātu smarjāturā
haṭhād vavre bata strīnām caṅcalāś cittaṁvṛtyayāḥ,
tena saṁtṛtya jaya tāṃ deśam anāṅgaṅkṣaṁ viplavah
sa Devadattaḥ prayayau Pratiśṭhānam aṭandritaḥ.
tatra vṛddham upādhyāyaṃ
vṛddhayāḥ bhāryayāḥ āṅvitam
Mantrasvāmyāḥ ākhyaṃ abhyarthya
vidyāḥ samyag adhitvān.

1.7.60  
kṛta-vidyāṃ ca tāṃ tatra dādāraṇī nṛpateḥ sutā
Suśarmāḥ ākhyasya sūbhagāṃ Śrīr nāma Śrīr iv' Ācyutam.
so 'pi tāṃ dṛṣṭavān kanyāṃ sthitāṃ vātāyaṃ āśpari

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ATTAIEMENT 1, SEVENTH WAVE

His wife liked to be hospitable, and she too came to him and said the same thing, at which Vaishvánara grudgingly accepted their hospitality there.

When he saw this, one of their sons, Deva-datta by name, was filled with remorse by Govinda-datta’s lack of pity and, deciding that a life censured by one’s parents was pointless, then went resignedly to practice austerities at the Bādarika hermitage. Next he spent a long time propitiating Shiva with austerity, at first eating just leaves before subsisting merely by inhaling smoke. Won over by his severe austerities, Shiva granted him his darshan, and as a boon from the lord he asked to be his servant. Shiva instructed him, ‘Obtain the sciences and enjoy pleasures on earth. Then you will get all that you desire.’

At this, he went to the city of Pātali-putra in his quest for the sciences. He served a teacher called Veda-kumbha with due propriety. When he was there, the teacher’s wife became stricken by love and propositioned him insistently—women’s minds are, alas, fickle. So Deva-datta, having been distracted by love, left that place and set out for Pratishthána, his energy undimmed.

Once there, after making a request to an elderly teacher called Mantra-svamin, who had an elderly wife, he learned the sciences in full.* After he had acquired the sciences, King Sushárman’s daughter, who was called Shri, saw the handsome boy there and it was like Lakshmi seeing Vishnu.* He saw her at a window looking like the moon’s tutelary goddess wandering about in her aerial chariot. They were bound together by that glance as if it were the chain of the god of love, and the pair became incapable of moving away
viharantīṁ vimānena candrasyaḥ eva ādhidevatām.
baddhāv iva tasyaḥ ānyonyaṁ Māraśrūkhalaṁ dṛśā
nāpiśaṁ samarthau ταυ babhūvatār ubhāv api.
sā ṣṭha tasyaḥ aikayā āṅgulyā mūrtayā eva Smar’ājñaya
to nikaṭaṁ ch’ iti samjñāṁ cakre nṛṣ’ātmajā.
tataḥ samīpaḥ tasyaś ca yayaव antāḥpuraḥ ca saḥ
dī ca cīkeṣaṁ dantena puspaṁ ādaya taṁ prati.

1.7.65
samjñāṁ etāṁ ajānāno guḍhāṁ rājasūṅkṛtāṁ
sa kartavyaṁvīrūḍhaṁ sann upāḍhyāyaṛghaṁ yayau.

luloṭha tatra dharaṇau na kiṃ cid vaktum śvaraḥ
tapena dāhyamāno ‘ntar mukhaḥ pramuṣito yathā.
vitarkya kāmajaś cīnaṁ upāḍhyāyena dhīmatā
yuktāṁ prṣṭaḥ kathaṁ cīc ca yathāvṛttam śaśāṁsa saḥ.
tad buddhāv taṁ upāḍhyāyo vidagdho vāyam abravit:
<‘dantena puspaṁ muṇicantyā tayā samjñāṁ kṛta tava
yaḥ etat Puṣpadant’ākhyāṁ puspa’ādhyāṁ sūraṁdīrāṁ
tat’ āgatyā pratikṣeṇāṁ, sāṃpratanām gamyātāṁ iti.’>

1.7.70
śrutvā ṣtī jñātāsambhārthaḥ sa tatyaja śucaṁ yuvā
tato devaṅghasyā ‘ntas tasya garvaṁ sthito ’bhavat.
śa ṣṭāy ṣaṭaṁśa samuddisyā tatra rājasūtaḥ yayau
ek’ āiva devaṁ draṣṭuṁ ca garbha’āgāram ath’ ‘aviṣat.
dṛṣṭo ‘ta dvāraśaṇaya paścāt so ‘tha priyas taya
gṛhit’ ānena c’ ēkṛthaya सा kāṃṣe sahasā tataḥ.
<citmar’ tvaya kathaṁ jñataḥ सा samjñ‘? ētya udite taya.
<upāḍhyāyena सा jñataḥ na mayaḥ ’eti jagāda saḥ.
‘muṇca mām avidagdhas tvamaḥ ity uktvā tatiṣaṇāṁ krudhā
dvandbhedabhayāt śa ṣṭha rājaṁkanyā tato yayau.

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from one another. Then, as if it were the embodiment of a command from the god of love, with a single finger the princess signaled him to come to her. At this, he approached her and she fetched from her apartments a flower, which she threw down to him with her teeth. Not understanding this secret signal made by the princess, he had no idea what to do and went to his teacher’s house.

There he rolled about on the ground and, consumed within by his torment, was unable to say anything, as if he were dumb and disoriented. The clever teacher, having made an inference from the symptoms of love, questioned him skillfully and the boy somehow managed to tell him what had happened. The shrewd teacher realized what it meant and said to him, ‘By dropping the flower from her teeth, she signaled to you that you are to go and wait at the temple called Pushpa-danta, where there are many flowers. You must go now.’

When he heard and understood what the sign meant, the boy cast off his sorrow. He then went and waited inside the temple. And the princess, saying that it was the eighth day of the lunar fortnight, went there and entered the inner sanctum all alone in order to have darshan of the lord. She then spotted her sweetheart in there behind the door-curtain and he quickly stood up and embraced her. When she said, ‘It’s amazing! How did you understand the sign?’ he replied, ‘It was my teacher, not me, who worked it out.’ The princess straightaway angrily said, ‘Let go of me, you buffoon!’ and then fled in fear that her plan had been betrayed.
the ocean of the rivers of story i

1.7.75  so ’pi gatvā vivikte tāṃ dṛṣṭaṇaśṭāṃ smaran priyām
Devadatto viyog ‘agni-vigala-jīvitō ’bhavat.

dṛṣṭvā taṃ tādṛṣṭaṃ Śaṁbhuvḥ prakṛprasannah kil’ adiṣṭat
gaṇaṁ Pañcaśikham nāma tasy ’abhīpśitaśiddhye.

sa c’ āgataḥ samāśvāsya śrīveṣaṃ taṃ gau ’ōttamaḥ
akārayat svayaṃ c’ ābhūd vṛddha-brahmaṇa-rūpadhṛt.
tatas tena samaṇaḥ gatvā taṃ Suṣarmaḥmahīpatim
janakaṃ sudṛṣṭaḥ tasyaḥ sa jagāda gau ’āgraṇīḥ.

‘putro me prośitaḥ kv’ āpi tam anveśṣaḥ vrajaṁy aham
_taṃ me snuṣ’ ēyaṁ nikṣepo,’ rájan, saṁpratī rakṣyātām.’

1.7.80  tac chrutvā śapābhitena teṇ’ adāya Suṣarmaṇā
svaṣkany’”āntaḥ)pure gupte str’ iti samsthāpito yuvā.
tataḥ Pañcaśikhe yāte svapriy’āntaḥ)pure vasaṁ
śrīveṣaḥ sa dvijas tasyā visrambh’āspadatām yayau.

ekadā c’ ēṭaṇā rāt raṃ ten’ ātmānaḥ prakāṣya sā
guptaṃ gāndharva-vidhinā paripūṇā nṛp’ātmajā.
tasyaṃ ca dhṛtaraṣaṭbhāyaṃ taṃ dvijaṃ sa gau ’ōttamaḥ
smaṛtaḥmāt’ āgato rāt rātrau tato ’naiṣd’ālaṃkṣitam.
tatas tasya samutsārya yūṇaḥ śrīveṣaṃ āṣu taṃ
prataḥ Pañcaśikhaḥ so ’bhūr pūravaḥ brahmaṇ’ākṛtiḥ.

1.7.85  ten’ āśva saha gatvā ca Suṣarmaṇaṛpaṃ abhyadhadāt
‘adya praśto mayā, rájan, putras, tad dehi me snuṣām.’
tataḥ sa rājā tāṃ buddhavā rātrau kv’ āpi paḷāyitām
tacchāpabhaからないsamābhṛnto mantrabhya idam abravāt:
ATTAINMENT 1, SEVENTH WAVE

Deva-datta left, too, and then, reflecting in a lonely place on the sweetheart who had vanished as soon as he found her, felt his life drip away into the fire of separation.

When Shiva, whose favor he had of course previously won, saw him like this, he ordered a gana called Panchashikha to bring about what Deva-datta desired. That finest of ganas came and consoled him, made him put on women’s clothes and himself assumed the form of an elderly brahmin. Then that foremost gana went with him to King Sushárman, the father of the beautiful girl, and said, ‘My son has gone away somewhere and I am going to look for him, so I am entrusting you this daughter-in-law of mine. Please, sire, look after her for the time being.’

When he heard this, Sushárman, in fear of a curse, took the boy, presuming him to be a woman, and put him in his own daughter’s private apartments.

Then, when Pancha-shikha had gone and Deva-datta was living in his sweetheart’s apartments disguised as a woman, the brahmin boy won her confidence. One night he revealed himself to the pining princess and secretly married her according to the gandharva rite. After she became pregnant, that finest of ganas appeared by night simply by being thought of and led the brahmin away unseen. Then he promptly removed the women’s clothes from the boy. In the morning, Pancha-shikha assumed the appearance of a brahmin as before and went with him to King Sushárman and said, ‘I have now found my son, o king, so give me my daughter-in-law.’ When the king then discovered that she had run away in the night, he was panic-stricken in
THE OCEAN OF THE RIVERS OF STORY I

«na vipro 'yam, ayaṃ ko 'pi devo madvañcan'āgataḥ evaṃprāya bhavant' iha vṛtt'āntaḥ satataḥ yataḥ. tathā ca pūrvaṁ rāj" ābhūt tapasvi kuruṇāparaḥ dātā dhiraḥ Śibir nāma sarvaśatṛv'āḥbhaya-pradaḥ. taṃ vañcavyitum Indro 'tha kṛtvā śyena-vapuḥ svayam māyākapota-vapuṣaṃ dharmam anvapataḥ drutam.

1.7.90 kapotaś ca bhayād gatvā Śiber ankam aśiśriyat manusya-vācā śyeno 'tha sa taṃ rājānam abravit:

«rājan, bhaksyam idam muṇca kapotaṃ kṣudhitasya me, anyathā māṃ mṛtaṃ viddhi, kas te dharmas tato bhavet?»

tataḥ Śibir uvāc'āīnam «eṣa me śaraṇ'āgataḥ aṭyāyas tad dadāmy anyan māṃsasam etasāmaṇaṁ tava.» śyeno jagāda «yady evam atma|māṃsaṁ prayaccha me!»

«tath’ eti tapraḥṛṣṭaḥ san sa rāja pratyapadyata. yathā yathā ca māṃsasam svam utkṛṣṭy' āropayan nṛpaḥ tathā tathā tulāyām sa kapoto 'bhyaḍhiko 'bhavat.

1.7.95 tataḥ śārīraṁ sakalaṁ tulāṁ rāj" adhyaropayat «śāduḥ! śāduḥ! śamaṇ tv etad!» divya vāg udabhūt tataḥ. Indrā|Dharmau tatas tyaktvā rūpaṁ śyenakapotayoḥ tuṣṭāv aksataḥ|dehaṁ taṁ rājaṇaṁ cakratuḥ Śibim. dattvā c' āsmai varān anyāṁs tāv antar|dhānām īyatūḥ.

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fear of a curse from Pancha-shikha, and said to his ministers, 'This fellow isn't a brahmin, he's some god come to
deceive me, for things like this are always happening in the
world: Long ago there lived a king called Shibi, who was
self-disciplined, compassionate, generous and resolute, and
who granted safe haven to all beings. Then, in order to lead
him astray, Indra assumed the form of a hawk and chased
after Dharma, whom he had magically transformed into a
dove. The terrified dove went and took refuge in Shibi's
lap. The hawk then addressed the king in a human voice:
"King, this dove is my food and I am hungry. Release him.
You must realize that if you don't, I shall die: then what will
become of your dharma?"
Shibi replied, "He has come to me for refuge, so I cannot
release him. I shall give you an equal amount of some other
flesh."
The hawk said, "If that's the case, then give me some of
your own flesh."
The king was delighted by this and agreed, saying, "So
be it."
The more of his flesh that the king cut off and put on
the scale, the heavier the dove became. As a result, the king
put his entire body on the scale. Then a divine voice said,
"Well done! Well done! That's enough." Then Indra and
Dharma abandoned their forms as the hawk and the dove.
Satisfied, they made King Shibi's body whole again and gave
him some other boons before disappearing.
the ocean of the rivers of story i

evaṃ māṃ api ko 'py eṣa devo jiṣṭāsūr āgataḥ.

1.7.100

tac chrutva śāpaḥbhītena rājān tasmai nīva svāṃ tātā Devadattāya. tataḥ Pañcasīkhya yayau.

Devadatto 'pi tāva bhūyaḥ prakāśaṃ pāpya vallabhaṃ jāyambhe 'nanyaputrasya śvaśurasya vibhūtiṣu.
kalena tasya putraṃ ca dauhitram abhisācyā saḥ rāyā Mahīdharaṃ nāma Suṣarmā śīṣiyē vanam.
tato dṛṣṭva suṭaśvayaṃ kr̥̄tārthah sa tapo'vanam rājaputryā tāyā sākaṃ Devadatto 'py asīṣriyat.

1.7.105

tār' arādhya punaḥ Śaṃbhuṃ tyaktvā martyajakalevaram tātprasādana tasyā 'iva gaṇāḥbhāvam upāgataḥ.

priyādant'oṣjhihitā puṣpāḥ samjñāṃ na jñātaśvān yataḥ atah sa Puṣpadant'ākhyaḥ sampanno gaṇaḥṣamsadī.
tadābhārdya ca pratihārī devyā jātā Jayābhidhā itthaṃ sa Puṣpadant'ākhyaḥ madākhyāṃ adhunā śṛṇu.
ATTAINMENT 1, SEVENTH WAVE

This fellow is some god who has come to test me in a similar fashion.’ Having quietly told his ministers this, King Sushárman, bowing in fear before that finest of gana disguised as a brahmin, said to him, ‘Please show me mercy. That girl, your daughter-in-law, was abducted just last night. She has been magicked away somewhere, despite being guarded night and day.’

Then the gana dressed as a brahmin said, as if struggling to be sympathetic, ‘If that’s the case, o king, then give me your daughter for my son.’

When he heard this, the king, fearful of a curse, gave his daughter to Deva·datta. Pancha·shikha then left.

As for Deva·datta, having won his sweetheart in public, he basked in the wealth and power of his father-in-law, who had no other son. And in time Sushárman anointed as king the son of Deva·datta and his daughter, who was called Mahi·dhara, and retired to the forest. Then, when he saw his son in power, Deva·datta had done what he had set out to do and he, too, retired to a penance grove, together with the princess. There he propitiated Shiva once more and through his grace he cast off his mortal body and became one of his gana. Because he had not understood the signal when the flower was thrown down from his sweetheart’s teeth, he was known in the gana’s assembly as Pushpa·danta. His wife became the goddess’s doorkeeper and was known as Jaya. That is how he came to be known as Pushpa·danta. Now hear about my name.
yaḥ sa Govindadatt’ākhyo Devadatta pitā dvijaḥ
tasy ‘āiva Somadatt’ākhyah putro ‘ham abhavaṁ purā.
ten ‘āiva manyunā garva tappaḥ c ‘āham Himācalle
akāraṁ bahubbhir mālyaiḥ Śaṅkarāṇn nandan ahaṁ sadā.

1.7.110
tath” ‘āiva prakaṭṭibhūtār prasannād induśekharāt
tyakt ’ānyaabhogalipṣena tadgaṇatārṇ mayā vṛtam.
‘yaḥ pūjito ‘smi bhavaṭā savyam āḥṛtena
mālyena durga/vanāḥbhūtiṃ/samudbhhavena
tan Mālayavān iti bhavviṣyasi me gaṇas tvam
ity ādiśac ca sa vibhur girijāpārī rāma
atha martyrāvapūr vimucya puṇyāṁ
saḥasā tadgaṇatām ahaṁ prapannah
iti dhūrjaṭinaḥ kaṭṭan prasādād
abhidhānam mama Mālayavān itid idam.
so ‘haṁ gataḥ punar ih’ ‘adya manuṣyaabhavaṁ
śāpena śailaduḥhitur bata, Kāṇabhuṭe,
tan me kathāṃ Hara’kṛṭāṁ kathay’ ‘adunā tvam
yen’ ‘āvayor bhavati śāpaḍas’ ‘ōpaśantih.’

iti mahākaviṣṭrīSomadevaḥbhṛṭaḥvitracite Kathāsāritīṣāgare
Kathāpiṭhaḥlambake saptamas tarangaḥ.

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ATTAINMENT 1, SEVENTH WAVE

Long ago, the brahmin called Govinda-datta, who was
the father of Deva-datta, had a son called Soma-datta, and
I am he. That very same zeal made me go to the Himālaya
and perform austerities, constantly propitiating Shiva with
copious flower garlands. Pleased, the god with the moon
as his diadem appeared just as he had done before and I
asked to become one of his ganas, forsaking the desire for
other pleasures. That lord, the husband of the daughter of
the mountains, said to me, ‘Because you have worshipped
me with garlands of flowers which grow in the soil of inac-
cessible jungles and which you have collected yourself, you
shall become my gana and go by the name of Mālyavan.’*

Then I cast off my mortal body and immediately attained
the exalted state of being his gana. That is how through his
grace he who is weighed down by his matted locks gave
me this name Mālyavan. And here I am now, having again
assumed the form of a mortal because of the curse of the
daughter of the mountain, o Kana-bhuti, so tell me the tale
told by Shiva right away in order that the accursed condition
of both of us might come to an end.”

Thus ends the seventh wave in the ‘Story’s Throne’ Attainment
in the ‘Ocean of the River of Story,’ composed by the
glorious and learned great poet Soma-deva.
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Translated by

SIR JAMES MALLINSON

Here is a new Clay Sanskrit Library translation of Volume One (of nine) of Soma-deva’s Ocean of the Rivers of Story.

Soma deva composed his flood of tales in Kashmir in the eleventh century CE to amuse Queen Suryāvati. The vast collection is based on ‘The Long Story,’ a now lost—perhaps legendary—repository of Indian fables, in which prince Nara-vahana-datta wins 26 wives and becomes the emperor of the sorcerers.

This first volume takes us up to the middle of the third ‘Attainment’ (of 18) and the return of Nara-vahana-datta’s father-to-be to Kaushamba with his wives.

By turns funny, exciting, or didactic, 350 tales within tales within tales illustrate the frame narrative or simply entertain the protagonists; and 20,000 plus verses of simple but elegant Sanskrit make the work an ideal text for students.

One of the best-known non-religious Sanskrit works, The Ocean of the Rivers of Story inspired, for example, Salman Rushdie’s novel Haroun and the Seat of Stories. Still the best way to enjoy the text is to dive in and relish each tale in itself.