

श्रीराम  
चरित  
कौमुदी  
No. 78

# SHRIDATTA



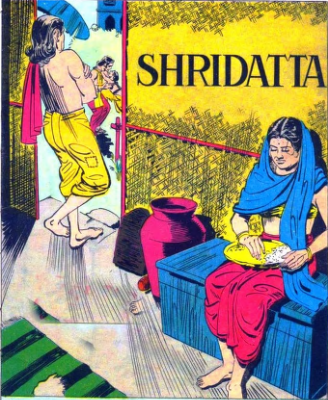
The *Kathasaritsagara* (The ocean of stories) of Somadeva is really an abridged version of that great treasure—the *Bṛhatkatha*. No version of the *Bṛhatkatha* has come to us, though we have many poems and plays in Sanskrit which draw on it for themes. The *Kathasaritsagara*, however, preserves, though in a very terse form, this great heritage. It abounds in tales of romance and adventure in wondrous worlds up in the sky, or in the bowels of the earth, or on the bed of the ocean, peopled by persons and semi-divine beings who deal in magic as an everyday commodity.

The story of Shridatta (a gift of Shri, that is Lakshmi) is adapted from one such tale. Shridatta is a universal favourite as one would expect a gift from the Goddess Lakshmi to be.



\* Funded for the printing of this book was made available by the Government of India at New Delhi, 1954.

# SHRIDATTA



*KALANEMI AND HIS WIFE LIVED IN THE CITY OF PATALIPUTRA.  
THEY WERE VERY POOR. THEY HAD NO CHILDREN.*



EVERYBODY SEEMS  
TO HAVE LOTS  
OF MONEY TO  
SPEND.

AND  
CHILDREN  
TO LOVE.



LET'S PRAY TO  
SHRIDEVI TO GIVE  
US CHILDREN  
AND MONEY.

A GOOD  
IDEA!

SO THEY PERFORMED A SACRIFICE TO SHRIDEVI, THE GODDESS OF WEALTH.



THE GODDESS APPEARED BEFORE THEM.

I AM PLEASSED WITH YOU, YOUR DESIRES SHALL BE FULFILLED.



SOON, A BOY WAS BORN TO THEM.

ISN'T HE A FINE BABY?



LET US CALL HIM SHRIDATTA AS HE IS A GIFT OF SHRIDEVI.



SOON AFTER THAT—

I HAVE MADE A BIG PROFIT THIS MONTH.

IT IS ALL THE GIFT OF SHRIDEVI.

I SHALL NOW BE ABLE TO ENGAGE THE BEST TEACHERS FOR YOU.

SHRIDATTA WAS TAUGHT THE SCRIPTURES...

...THE FINE ARTS...

...AND THE ART OF WAR.



HE GREW UP AS GOOD AS HE WAS TALENTED.



THE KING OF PATALIPTRA HEARD OF SHRIDATTA, KALANEMI AND SHRIDATTA WERE INVITED TO THE COURT.



THE KING SOON BECAME VERY FOND OF SHRIDATTA.



SHRIDATTA MADE MANY FRIENDS AT COURT—

I WISH SHRIDATTA WERE OUR PRINCE.

HE IS AS COURTEOUS AS VIKRAMASHAKTI IS RUDE.

I WOULD GIVE MY LIFE FOR SHRIDATTA.

ALL THIS MADE VIKRAMASHAKTI JEALOUS OF SHRIDATTA.

ONE OF THESE DAYS I'LL GET EVEN WITH HIM.

A FEW DAYS LATER SHRIDATTA AND HIS FRIENDS WERE NEAR THE RIVER GANGA. SUDDENLY—

HELP!  
HELP!

I MUST HELP HER.

TAKE CARE, SHRIDATTA. WE'LL WAIT TILL YOU COME BACK.





THE NEXT MORNING—



INSIDE, A STRANGE SIGHT MET HIS EYES.



I AM AN ASURA PRINCESS —  
THE GRANDDAUGHTER OF  
THE MIGHTY BALI.



"WHEN LORD VISHNU DEFEATED  
MY GRANDFATHER, BY  
STEPPING ON HIS HEAD..."



"... HE DROVE US  
OUT OF TRIPURA."



"A LION GUARDS THE GATE  
TO OUR CITY."



THAT LION CAN BE  
KILLED ONLY BY  
A STRONG  
HUMAN  
BEING.



PLEASE  
LET ME  
TRY.

THAT  
IS WHY  
I BROUGHT  
YOU  
HERE!



THE VERY NEXT DAY SHRIDATTA  
FOUGHT THE LION.



THAT  
SHOULD KILL  
HIM.

TO HIS SURPRISE THE LION TURNED  
INTO A YAKSHA.

I AM GRATEFUL TO  
YOU, SHRIDATTA.  
YOU HAVE RELEASED  
ME FROM A CURSE.



THIS SWORD  
IS CALLED  
MRIBANKAKA.  
TAKE IT.



WITH IT, YOU  
WILL ALWAYS  
WIN.

\*YAKSHAS ARE SEMI-DIVINE BEINGS, OF WHOM KUBERA WAS THE LORD.



THEN IT WAS THE TURN OF THE ASURA PRINCESS TO EXPRESS HER GRATITUDE.



TAKE THIS  
MAGIC  
RING!



IT HAS THE POWER TO  
WIPE OUT THE  
EFFECTS OF  
POISON.

THANK YOU.  
NOW I REALLY  
MUST GET  
BACK.



ENTER THIS WELL. YOU  
WILL FIND YOURSELF IN  
THE GANGA, AT THE PLACE  
WHERE YOU JUMPED IN.

FAREWELL!



MEANWHILE —

SHRIDATTA HAS BEEN AWAY FOR SO LONG! WHAT COULD HAVE HAPPENED TO HIM?

HE MAY BE IN DANGER...OR EVEN DEAD.



JUST THEN A VOICE WAS HEARD.

SHRIDATTA IS ALIVE! HE WILL SOON BE WITH YOU.



ANXIOUS TO GIVE SHRIDATTA'S PARENTS THE GOOD NEWS, THEY RUSHED TOWARDS THE CITY. BUT ON THEIR WAY THEY WERE STOPPED BY FRIENDS.

GO TO UJJAIN. I'LL HIDE NEAR THE RIVER AND BRING SHRIDATTA TO YOU.

DON'T GO TO PATALIPUTRA. THE KING DIED YESTERDAY. VIKRAMASHAKTI HAS KILLED SHRIDATTA'S PARENTS AND IS NOW LOOKING FOR YOU.





WHEN SHRIDATTA CAME OUT OF THE GANGA -

WHERE ARE THE OTHERS?

SHH! COME QUIETLY INTO THE WOODS AND I'LL TELL YOU. IT'S A LONG STORY.

SHRIDATTA WAS HORRIFIED WHEN HE HEARD THE NEWS.

I'LL AVENGE MY PARENTS WITH MRIGANKAKA, MY DIVINE SWORD.

LET'S FIRST GO TO UJJAIN WHERE THE OTHERS ARE WAITING.

AT UJJAIN -

YOU ARE ALWAYS MOODY, SHRIDATTA.

I HAVE REASON ENOUGH. MY PARENTS HAVE BEEN KILLED AND I HAVE NOT YET AVENGED THEIR MURDER.

LET'S GO TO THE FAIR. IT WILL CHEER YOU UP.



AT THE FAIR—

WHO IS THAT LOVELY GIRL?

SHE IS PRINCESS MRIGANKAVATI, THE ONLY CHILD OF OUR KING.

HE WANTS HER TO MARRY A RICH AND POWERFUL PRINCE. ONE FIT TO BECOME HIS HEIR.



SUDDENLY—

WHAT'S THE MATTER?



THE PRINCESS HAS BEEN BITTEN BY A SNAKE.



THE PRINCESS WAS CARRIED AWAY TO A HUT NEAR BY.

I CAN SAVE HER LIFE.

WHAT ARE WE WAITING FOR THEN?



THE VIK...  
SHR...  
IS NO...



THEY HURRIED TO THE HUT WHERE THE PRINCESS WAS LAID OUT.

ALAS! MY MISTRESS  
IS COLD AND  
STILL.

LET ME IN! I CAN  
REVIVE  
HER.

MAKE WAY  
FOR HIM.

LET ME PUT THIS  
MAGIC  
RING ON  
HER  
FINGER.

WHO IS HE?

THERE IS NO HOPE.  
BUT LET HIM TRY.

AS SHRIDDATTA PUT THE RING ON HER FINGER THE PRINCESS SLOWLY  
REGAINED  
CONSCIOUSNESS.

WHAT IS THE MATTER?  
WHO IS THIS  
STRANGER?

HE SAVED  
YOUR LIFE. YOU  
WERE BITTEN  
BY A SNAKE.

SHRIDATTA AND  
THE PRINCESS  
GAZED LONG  
AT EACH OTHER.

MY SAVIOUR!  
I OWE MY  
LIFE TO YOU.

HOW BEAUTIFUL  
SHE IS! I WISH  
SHE WERE MINE.

JUST THEN THE KING ENTERED.

WHAT IS HAPPENING  
HERE? HOW IS  
MRIGANKAVATI?

I'M ALL  
RIGHT NOW,  
FATHER.

SHE WAS BITTEN BY  
A SNAKE. THIS  
MAN HAS JUST  
REVIVED HER.

I'LL SEE THAT YOU ARE  
PROPERLY REWARDED,  
MY SON!

I DON'T WANT A  
REWARD. I AM  
GLAD I WAS  
THERE IN TIME.

AS SHRIDATTA AND HIS FRIENDS WALKED AWAY—

I JUST REMEMBERED...

MIND YOUR STEP, WHAT ARE YOU THINKING OF?



...I HAVE FORGOTTEN MY RING THERE.

SHALL I FETCH IT?



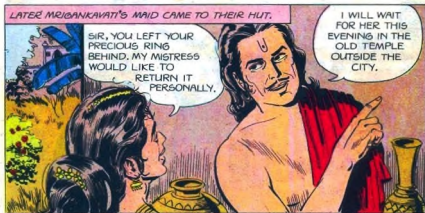
DON'T. IT WILL GIVE SHRIDATTA AN EXCUSE TO MEET HER AGAIN.



LATER MRIGANKAVATI'S MAID CAME TO THEIR HUT.

SIR, YOU LEFT YOUR PRECIOUS RING BEHIND. MY MISTRESS WOULD LIKE TO RETURN IT PERSONALLY.

I WILL WAIT FOR HER THIS EVENING IN THE OLD TEMPLE OUTSIDE THE CITY.



THAT EVENING WHEN THEY MET —



I LOVE YOU, MRIGANKAVATI. WILL YOU MARRY ME?

MY FATHER WILL NEVER AGREE. HE WANTS ME TO MARRY A RICH AND POWERFUL PRINCE.



THEN COME AWAY WITH ME.

I CAN'T LIVE WITHOUT YOU.

I WILL.

THAT NIGHT—



SHRIDATTA, YOU MUST BE SEEN IN THE CITY TOMORROW SO THAT PEOPLE WON'T CONNECT YOU WITH MRIGANKAVATI'S DISAPPEARANCE.

YOU ARE RIGHT. I'LL JOIN YOU LATER. TAKE CARE OF HER.

DON'T WORRY.

MRIGANKAVATI'S DISAPPEARANCE CREATED A STIR THE NEXT MORNING.



SHE CAN'T GO FAR.  
THE KING HAS  
ORDERED HIS  
SOLDIERS TO  
FIND HER.

DO YOU THINK SHE  
WILL BE ABLE TO ELUDE  
THEM? WHERE CAN  
SHE HIDE?



YOU ARE THE MAN  
WHO SAVED HER  
LIFE, AREN'T  
YOU?

YES! I CAME  
ON A VISIT TO SEE  
THE PLACE AND  
WAS HERE IN  
TIME TO BE  
OF SERVICE.



I SHALL  
RETURN TO  
PATALIPUTRA,  
TOMORROW.

COME BACK  
SOME  
TIME. WE'LL  
TELL YOU  
WHAT  
HAPPENED.

SHRIDATTA SET OUT TO JOIN HIS FRIENDS.

EVERYONE THINKS  
I HAVE GONE TO  
PATALIPUTRA...



...BUT I'LL  
SOON BE  
WITH  
MRIGANKAVATI.



BUT WHEN HE RODE UP TO HIS FRIENDS —

WHAT'S THE  
MATTER?  
WHERE IS  
MRIGANKAVATI?

SOME HORSEMEN  
ATTACKED US, THEY  
TOOK OUR HORSES...

...AND  
MRIGANKAVATI  
TOO.



GO AFTER  
THEM! RESCUE  
HER.

WHAT  
ABOUT  
YOU?



DON'T WORRY  
ABOUT US,  
GO, HURRY!



AH! THERE GO THE VILLAINS.

STOP!  
STOP!

HE ATTACKED THEM.

MY DIVINE SWORD WILL NEVER FAIL ME.

I THOUGHT YOU WOULD NEVER COME.

I'LL SET YOU FREE.



ON THE RETURN JOURNEY—

NOW TO HELP MY FRIENDS.

THEY TRIED SO HARD TO PROTECT ME.



AFTER THEY HAD COVERED SOME DISTANCE—

OUR HORSE IS TIRED. WE MUST DISMOUNT AND LET HIM REST.



AS THEY DISMOUNTED, THE HORSE COLLAPSED.

POOR FELLOW! HE DID HIS BEST. WE MUST WALK NOW.



I CANNOT WALK. I AM TIRED AND THIRSTY.

IT HAS BEEN TOO MUCH FOR YOU. REST HERE WHILE I FIND WATER.








SHRIDATTA AT LAST FOUND WATER. ON HIS WAY BACK —




A man in a yellow and black outfit is climbing a tree in a jungle. The background is a deep red, suggesting dusk or dawn. There are various tropical plants and trees.

IT'S GETTING DARK.  
I'LL CLIMB THIS  
TREE. MAYBE I CAN  
SEE HER FROM  
UP THERE.

BUT—

A woman in a red sari is looking up at a tree. She is holding a branch. The background is a deep red, suggesting dusk or dawn. There are various tropical plants and trees.

IN THE FADING  
LIGHT I CAN'T  
RECOGNISE  
A THING.

A woman in a yellow and red sari is sitting on the ground in a jungle. She is looking to the right. The background is a deep red, suggesting dusk or dawn. There are various tropical plants and trees.

I WILL HAVE TO WAIT  
HERE TILL MORNING.  
MAY GOD PROTECT MY  
POOR MRIGANKAVATI!

MEANWHILE —



WHAT COULD HAVE HAPPENED TO HIM?  
WHY ISN'T HE BACK?



IF SOMEONE COMES WHAT SHALL I DO?



WHAT IS THAT NOISE? IS IT A LION?



GRRR!  
KRRK!

IT WAS ONLY A HUNTER.



EEEEEE!



DON'T BE AFRAID, LADY!



GOOD SIR,  
PLEASE  
TAKE ME  
AWAY  
FROM  
HERE!

WHO ARE  
YOU? WHY  
ARE YOU  
HERE  
ALONE?



M-- MY HUSBAND WENT TO  
FETCH WATER. HE MUST  
HAVE LOST HIS WAY.  
HE IS NOT BACK  
YET.


COME! I'LL TAKE YOU  
TO MATHURA. IT IS NOT  
FAR FROM HERE.



OUTSIDE THE CITY OF MATHURA--

THE PRIME MINISTER  
IS A GOOD MAN. WE'LL  
GO TO HIS HOUSE.  
THEY WILL TAKE  
CARE OF YOU.


BUT HOW  
WILL MY  
SHRIDATTA  
FIND ME?  
PERHAPS  
I SHOULDN'T  
HAVE  
COME  
AWAY.



I'LL GO BACK TOMORROW  
AND TELL HIM YOU  
ARE HERE.


YOU ARE VERY  
KIND, SIR.

THE HUNTER LEFT MRIGANKAVATI IN  
THE PRIME MINISTER'S HOUSE AND  
RETURNED TO THE FOREST.



THIS IS WHERE I FOUND  
HER. I WILL WAIT  
HERE FOR  
SHRIDATTA.

SHRIDATTA TOO, WAS ON HIS  
WAY BACK.



BY DAYLIGHT, THE  
WAY IS SO CLEAR.  
THIS IS THE PLACE.

WHEN HE REACHED THE SPOT WHERE HE HAD LEFT MRIGANKAVATI—



ARE YOU  
SHRIDATTA?

I AM. WHO  
ARE YOU? HOW  
DO YOU KNOW  
MY NAME?



SUDDENLY—

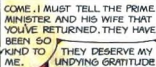


SHRIDATTA!  
I WAS SO FRIGHTENED.  
WHATEVER HAPPENED  
TO YOU?



AT LAST,  
I HAVE  
FOUND YOU!

WHEN THEY REACHED THE PRIME MINISTER'S  
HOUSE—



COME, I MUST TELL THE PRIME  
MINISTER AND HIS WIFE THAT  
YOU'VE RETURNED. THEY HAVE  
BEEN SO  
KIND TO  
ME.



THEY DESERVE MY  
UNDYING GRATITUDE  
AND RESPECT.



MOTHER!  
THIS IS  
MY LORD.



I AM  
SHRIDATTA,  
THE SON OF  
KALANEMI OF  
PATALIPUTRA.





KALANEMI! YOUR FATHER IS MY BROTHER. WE HAVE NOT SEEN EACH OTHER SINCE I LEFT HOME TO SEEK MY FORTUNE. HOW IS HE?

ALAS! BOTH MOTHER AND HE WERE KILLED SOME TIME AGO.

SHRIDATTA TOLD HIS UNCLE THE WHOLE STORY. WHEN HE HAD FINISHED—



GOD BROUGHT YOU HERE TO ME. YOU SHALL BE MY HEIR AND MARRY MRIGANKAVATI.

WE HAD NO CHILDREN. NOW I HAVE TWO — A SON AND A DAUGHTER.

SHRIDATTA AND MRIGANKAVATI WERE MARRIED, A FEW DAYS LATER—



NOW I MUST GO TO FIND MY GOOD FRIENDS IN PATALIPUTRA.

AND I SHALL TAKE MRIGANKAVATI TO HER FATHER. HE MUST BE SO UNHAPPY.



MRIGANKAVATI WENT WITH HER UNCLE AND AUNT TO UJJAIN.

I AM THE PRIME MINISTER OF MATHURA. MRIGANKAVATI IS MY DAUGHTER-IN-LAW.

I AM SO RELIEVED TO SEE YOU. WHY DID YOU RUN AWAY?

FORGIVE ME, FATHER.

SHRIDATTA FOUND HIS FRIENDS AND BROUGHT THEM TO UJJAIN.

YOU MUST CHALLENGE VIKRAMASHAKTI.

WE'LL MAKE YOU THE KING OF PATALIPUTRA.

THE KING OF MATHURA WILL BE ON OUR SIDE. YOU CAN DEPEND ON THAT.

I'LL COLLECT AN ARMY AND WE WILL ATTACK PATALIPUTRA.

MRIGANKAVATI'S FATHER MADE A BOLD DECISION.

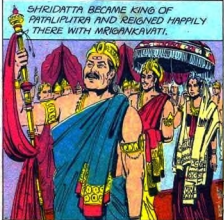
A TERRIBLE BATTLE WAS FOUGHT OUTSIDE PATALIPUTRA, IN WHICH...



...SHRIDATTA KILLED VIKRAMASHAKTI.



SHRIDATTA BECAME KING OF PATALIPUTRA AND REIGNED HAPPILY THERE WITH MRIGANKAVATI.





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