

RAKSHAN

A Tale of Oudh



Rakshan

Between the snow capped mountains and the jungle hills, the golden city in the valley lay, the center and pride of the kingdom of Kalinga, the largest and richest in the land of Oudh, center of art and culture, and of commerce. To the south lay the kingdom of Ujjain, a land of beautiful women and bountiful earth and to the west lay the kingdom of Aparna, famous for its sea ports and fishing trade. In the east lay the kingdom of Prayag, long corrupt and ruled by evil sorcerers. In the mornings the golden peach light of sunrise reflected off of the gilded temple roofs of the city of Barajapuhr, as the mist retreated from the valley into the heavily jungled hills. On one particular morning, the air lay cool and moist, and the temple monkeys woke and climbed limberly between the layers upon layers of holy statues of elephants and harem girls, dedicated to the King and to the Gods. Temple prayers began rapidly, the chanting of the priests echoed by the delicate resonance of the priestess' bells. This woke the entire city, and the bazaars were bustling with patrons and the smell of rich teas and spices brought from far away lands, bright silks of red, orange, and gold flashing before the eye.

Typical days in Barajapuhr began in such a way, but today was particularly special since the newly crowned king, Lakha, was to bring home his new young wife, the rich and beautiful princess of Ujjain, named Sakina. The arrival of the royal couples' procession into the city was sounded with a fanfare of drums and trumpets. The party of the King and his young queen progressed through the market squares and rows of golden temples, and the people saw the young Sakina in all her raiment, draped in silks of deep emerald and gold, her arms glowing with bangles of gold and diamonds. Her face was that of a goddess, of divine beauty, with shimmering copper skin, and deep brown tiger eyes that shown with flecks of amber and gold, with a demeanor of purity and kindness. Looking at her, you could tell she was a princess of the purest royal blood, only fit for a king like Lakha, who rode next to her. He was a man of middle age, with light brown skin, and kind brown eyes, his dark hair and beard beginning to gray, and on this day he wore a robe of red and silver, and a simple gold crown on his brow.

Sakina was one of many of King Lakha's wives, and was the source of envy among some of the older women in the King's harem. The chief and first wife of Lakha was Laxmi, and upon Sakina's arrival, the woman immediately took an acute dislike to

the helpless young girl. Laxmi's beauty and charms were fading, as she had become overweight and her hair had gone grey and her face was worn into a deep furrowed frown, after years of serving Lakha and bearing his sons, all of which had been unhealthy. Most of the offspring from this union died in infancy, except for one son, Akhmed, though he was a simpleton and not fit to be heir of the throne of Kalinga. Naturally, Laxmi was jealous of the new bride due to her husband's waning affections, and the fear that Sakina would bear a healthy son to the King, who would stand to be heir to the throne of Kalinga. Despite Laxmi's vested interest in the situation, she let her husband and Sakina alone, for fear of suspicion on Lakha's part, for she knew that Lakha deeply loved the new queen.

Months passed in wedded bliss for King Lakha and his lovely Sakina, and the season of the festivals of the Gods was about to begin in the wealthy city, a time of grand temple prayer and services, parties, and celebration in honor of the Gods. The first festival of the year was to Shabana, goddess of wealth and harvest, not to mention fertility. The day began with a long parade of elephants, adorned with jewels and heavy cloth, woven by the queens of Lakha's harem, followed by the temple dancers adorned in blue silks and silver anklets performing their art for their goddess. At last came the royal party, with the King, his entire harem, and all his children together, riding on elephants. Queen Sakina and King Lakha rode together, she being his favorite and most cherished wife. Though despite happy appearances, Sakina felt empty for she was terribly lonely in the house of the king. She loved her husband deeply and with a sincere heart, but he was not with her often, and she was subject to the cruelty of Laxmi and her confidantes in the harem. Riding in comfort with her husband, she thought long and hard on her troubles as the procession of royals traveled through the city to the temple of Shabana, by the clear blue river Indra. Blue was the color of the goddess Shabana, for blue was the color of water, source of life and silver was worn always on this day as a sign of wealth and prosperity. Sakina and her king alighted from their bearer, and entered the temple, leading a long band of the royal and wealthy, and were then seated on soft blue bolsters, embroidered with mirrors and silver tassels.

The prayer services began with the chants of the priestesses and they rang their bells in joyous cacophony to praise their beloved Shabana, and during this time Sakina confided in the goddess. She cried out silently to her: "I pray to you, for you are the source of all fertility, and all I want is a child to keep the loneliness at bay. This

is my only hope for happiness outside of what my Lord Lakha can provide to me.” The queen’s prayer did not go unheard, and Shabana hearkened to the sad young woman, for she hated to see one so kind and so pure to be in such despair. At the close of the ceremony, the young queen left with her husband feeling apprehensive and dreaded the banquet later in the night, faced with the torment of her fellow wives. Feeling forlorn and tired, Sakina decided to spend the evening in meditation to calm down, but sensing that something was troubling his young wife, King Lakha insisted on spending some time alone with her to reassure of his devotion to her. Lakha and Sakina never went to the banquet that night, and it was then that a son was conceived.

When it was made known throughout the palace that the young queen was with child, there was much uproar and anger among the other wives of King Lakha. There were many plots to murder Sakina by putting a poison draft in her tea, and terrible tricks were played on her. On one occasion when she was sitting in her apartments near the palace gardens, she reached into her basket of supplies and pulled out a piece of a tiger’s bone, which was a terrible thing to happen to her as tigers were sacred animals to the Lord of all the Gods, Garishaman, god of creation and destruction, of sunlight and grace. The taboo object had been planted there by her scheming housemates, and it soon became apparent to her that she had to leave the home of her beloved Lakha, for the sake of their child. Confiding in her husband, his advice to her was to abide in one of the temples in Barajapuhr, and so it came to pass that Sakina, the young queen of Kalinga left her beloved husband and resided and served in the temple of Garishaman, to repay the Lord of the Gods for her sin in touching a cow’s bone. It was in that temple, that Garishaman forgave the pure young woman, and passed on his divine grace, *rakshan*, into that of her unborn son, who would become a great king, and would have a divine soul upon death, and would join the gods in their kingdom.

During this confinement in the temple of Garishaman, it came to pass that the head priest had several dreams of prophesy, in which the golden city of Barajapuhr fell into ruin, swallowed by jungle and forgotten throughout the course of history. This was preceded by the crowning of an incompetent king, who was under the influence of an evil king who really held control of the kingdom of Kalinga, driven by war and greed, slowly corrupting the once grand city into a slum of poor and war worn people. This greatly troubled the priest who meditated and prayed on the matter for

several weeks until another dream came to him. He saw the once grand palace of Barajapuhr, the puppet king seated on the throne, holding council with his advisor and controller, when all of a sudden the doors of the palace burst open, and a bright ray from the sun entered the room and blinded all, leaving king and teacher prostrated in shame on the floor. This dream occurred just as the first pains of birth hit Sakina in her chambers just above, and the holy man realized the meaning of this dream. The symbol of Garishaman was the celestial sun, whose light was said to be the bringer of life and justice, and a ray of light was the divine symbol of *rakshan*. With these dreams he knew that baby about to be born was special, divinely graced by his Lord, and would be a bringer of justice, peace, and wealth. The baby boy came swiftly, and at birth he bore a birth mark on his shoulder, in the symbol of the sun, a definite sign of *rakshan*, and he had eyes of green and grey, another sign of grace. And so, a divine prince was born in the temple that night, and was named by the priests, Devanand, which meant gift or joy of God, but his mother referred to him as Anand, because he was her source of joy now.

It came time for Sakina and Anand to return to the palace to King Lakha who anxiously awaited the arrival of a healthy son, one to inherit his throne and lavish joy in the palace once again. The queen and prince arrived in great grandeur, and the young prince was anointed and blessed by the priests of both the goddess Shabana and the Lord Almighty, Garishaman, but one of the priestesses of Shabana took Sakina aside and warned her to be on her guard, for the jealousy of Laxmi had been rumored far and wide, for now Sakina held greater status among the wives of King Lakha, for she had borne him his only healthy son. Sakina was given a draft of health both for her and the baby, to ward off evil and bad luck, and the years to come were uneventful. Anand grew up with great love from both his mother, father, and teachers, and even became the friend and companion of his poor quivering brother Akhmed, though this angered Laxmi.

The prince Devanand was a strong boy, and grew into manhood quickly, and his father's health was beginning to fail, as the king was entering old age. The older queen Laxmi and the other older wives of the king grew nervous, as it became apparent that Devanand would soon have to take the throne, so tensions grew in the household. Though Sakina held high status in the house of the king, Laxmi was still the senior wife and head of the household. Clever and resourceful, Laxmi could find a way to put her own son on the throne, and she was plotting to do just so. She called

one of her guards to her one late evening and asked him to send a message to her cousin, King Ashwatthama, in the kingdom of Prayag in the east, the recently sworn enemy of King Lakha, to help her in her quest to rid the house of Devanand. Her request was for this king to send his forces to the banks of the Indra River and threaten to burn down the holy temples of the city unless King Lakha conceded and made Akhmed his successor, and to banish Devanand from Kalinga. Ashwatthama was certain to comply for he was an evil man, a practitioner of the black arts, who despised the gods and religion, and whose eyes were set on the riches of the golden city. The evil king complied, and King Lakha, being a religious man had no choice but to concede, and it came to pass that Devanand and his lovely mother were chased from their beloved city into the wild jungle hills, and King Lakha died without his beloved son and favorite wife there to ease his passing. Akhmed took the throne, but since he did not have the capacity to be king, he was a puppet ruler under the control of Ashwatthama, a large and imposing man, with long black hair and a wild beard, with piercing eyes, one blue and one brown, which was the sign of evil.

With Devanand gone, Ashwatthama seized power, and began to work his evil magic on the city, for he was a man of industry, not of arts or religion and was determined to break the spirit of the people of Barajapuhr. The new king under Ashwatthama declared the selling of a new drink, produced by his cousin as a way to reach divinity, and the wealthy of the city began to buy and consume it, but it was really a magical drink, laced with a poison that corrupted the hearts of men, and Ashwatthama was its inventor. He was seen late at night in the palace in his working room, chanting over a burning concoction of herbs, communicating with evil spirits. As the days grew darker and darker, the artisans of the city weren't going to work, walking around in a daze as if confused, and the women of the city kept indoors and were forbidden by all the men to leave the home. No one went to the once bustling bazaars anymore, the only business that went on was in food, and the prayers of the faithful were no longer heard in the city, the temples empty of worshippers. The temple priests and priestesses were greatly concerned and appealed to the Gods for help, but it seemed to them that they had been abandoned by their lords. The lights of the temple still burned, but their brightness began to fade, and the dark spells of Ashwatthama hung over the city like a black cloud, corrupting the souls of those who were once good, and the streets became dangerous places. The city became rife with

crime, gambling, money laundering, prostitution, drinking and murder for hire, because the once honest wealthy men of the town had become corrupt due to the new drink.

Ultimately, the goal of Ashwatthama was to wipe out the temples and the temple priests and he knew that he needed to put out the lights of the temple to defeat the gods. These lights were kept lit by the faith and devotion of the people, and of the priests. They burned low now that the people of the city had no faith, and could easily be put out with magic, but it would take a powerful spell to do so. Ashwatthama climbed the golden staircase to the tallest tower in the golden city, and he uttered a call for all the evil spirits in the realm to form a terrible wind, but not like any wind from nature. This wind was the color of smoke and of blood and it swept through the city, encircling the houses, killing those on the street, and finally it encircled the temples and the evil of the wind blew out the lights of the gods, whose power now lay dormant in the city, and the priests and priestesses disappeared, the shadows of their bodies left behind on the temple walls, as if they were trapped inside the stone. The gods abandoned the city, leaving it to destroy itself. The jungle began to encroach on the city, trying to swallow up the evil that had happened there, but the henchmen of Ashwatthama were clever and cut down the strangling trees and burnt them for industry, making weapons of death and war, and its smoke covered the city in a dense black smog, tarnishing the once splendid golden roofs of the city and the wondrous statues of the temple.

Ashwatthama called for the destruction and melting of all the gold roofs and temple statues of Barajapuhr, to create coin and money for his treasury. The men of the city were called to join a mass army, and were promised to be paid handsomely from King Akhmed's gold, but these men really sold their souls to Ashwatthama for the cursed gold that once had made the city shine in glory. The men of the army lived within a camp set up by Ashwatthama, and it was all under spell; the men who lived there became possessed by the evil spirits that served Ashwatthama, who sent the good souls of the men into rocks and stone, jailing them in an inescapable prison. The army was ever thirsty for bloodlust, and was often sent marauding to the surrounding kingdoms of Ujjain and Aparna, who were peaceful and undefended, wiping out whole villages and destroying the temples, the homes of the gods. For years and years this blood bath continued.

Meanwhile, Devanand and his mother had been exiled to the jungle hills surrounding Kalinga, and through the years spent living in the jungle wilds, they could

see the rising black cloud covering the city, and the absence of the gods. Devanand had grown into a strong young man of muscular build with golden brown skin, and his mother's dark hair. His eyes, despite their strange color of grey and green were soft and doe like, and his still bore the mark of the sun on his shoulder. Though her beloved son seemed happy in the forests, Sakina would never let him forget his destiny; his purpose in the world, to rid Kalinga of the corruption and evil, and restore the grace of the gods, but living in exile, Devanand had no friends but his mother and his pet hawk. Sakina's beauty was beginning to fade, as she had fallen ill after months in the jungle and was practically blind. Devanand was devoted to her, as King Lakha had been before his death, but Sakina knew that Devanand needed to seek others in the jungle with ties to the gods, to help make them strong once again. Truly, the gods were still powerful, but needed to test Devanand's will and his faith in them. The people of Oudh believed that everything in nature was divine, and an unusual experience with the natural world was a sign that the gods were trying to communicate with a person. An experience like this was to occur to Devanand, to test his strength and his faith.

One day while Devanand was hunting in the jungle, he and his hawk were tracking a small bear for meat. The tracks led him into an unknown part of the jungle, where no living soul was said to have been for centuries, but Devanand followed in pursuit of the bear. The air here seemed to be cooler, not like the sticky humid jungle air he was used to, and the sun shown clear through the openings in the trees. The vegetation was more lush and green, and flowers grew along the ground. The youth was awestruck, as he had never seen such a beautiful and pure sight, yet he was afraid for this place was unnaturally still and he became aware that he should not have entered this place. On his path he kept seeing flashes of white, orange, and black in the thickets, and he had the distinct feeling that what ever these were, they were following him. He was frightened despite his bravery, but he followed the bear tracks still, with the creatures in the thick underbrush in hot pursuit. Suddenly, the creatures pursuing him charged ahead and leaped out into his path with a flash of sunlight. Two tigers, one white and black, one orange and black stood before him, and both roared and bowed to him. Devanand was unafraid now, and the tigers knew him because they saw the glow of *rakshan* in him, for tigers were often the messengers of the gods Shabana and Garishaman. The majestic animals turned on the path, and the young Devanand though struck with wonder at these majestic creatures, knew that this

unusual encounter with nature was a message from the gods. The tigers looked back at Devanand and he understood he was meant to follow, and he followed them for quite some time through the day and a whole night until at dawn they reached a magnificent sight.

Before Devanand's eyes stood a magnificent stone city, filled only with temples, for it was the earthly home of the gods. The tigers climbed the steps and roared their arrival, and out of an alcove came a woman of most mysterious beauty, dressed only in white and had strange markings of henna and kohl on her hands and feet; her only adornment was a silver anklet and a silver chain down the part of her hair. She had the same eyes as Devanand, grey and green, for she was born with *rakshan* as well. Days passed in the city of gods before Devanand saw the girl again, when she brought him cool water to drink and a simple meal of rice and lentils. Still wearing her white garb, she explained that she was called Devi, and she served the gods by tending to their sacred tigers. She did not remember the origins of her birth, or her parents, for she was taken by the tigers from her home when she was just a child, and raised by the temple priestesses, for she was a special girl. She took Devanand to meet with one of the temple priestesses, a young woman named Vrindi, which meant great beauty in the classic language of the priests. Devanand fell immediately at ease with Vrindi, but his thoughts drifted to his sick blind mother, who he had left behind a week ago. He said to Vrindi, "What is to become of my mother? She is sick and needs medicines, and I have been a bad son to her, leaving her alone in the jungle." Vrindi replied "That was meant to pass, and it was seen to that your mother was brought here, but you cannot see her, for she has pledged to give her soul to Garishaman, to allow you to leave the ties you have to this wilderness. Her life on this earth has ended, and it is time for you to fulfill your destiny. You will need to learn the good magic of the gods to defeat the evil Ashwatthama, and bring light back to Oudh."

The next months were spent with Vrindi, learning how to conjure a divine light that would shine even throughout the most impenetrable darkness, the languages of magic and of creation, and how to find the strength and grace of Garishaman within himself. Vrindi was his constant companion, and there was a growing affection between them. Once Devanand had tried to act on these feelings but he was stopped by Vrindi who said "I am promised as a bride forever to the monkey god, Kishtaya, and our love must remain unacted upon. I will always love you, but our love must be divine; always shared but from a distance." She encouraged Devanand to find a wife among

the servant girls of the god city, and he thought of Devi, the tiger girl, for they had become friends in the last months, and would be happy in life together. Vrindi approved of this choice, because they were both blessed with *rakshan*, which would be passed to all their children, and their union was auspicious. The gods smiled upon their wedding day, for Garishaman had intended the two for each other, and their meeting had not been by chance.

It came time for Devi and Devanand to leave their home in the god city after a few weeks of marriage. Devanand was sad to leave the presence of Vrindi, but heeded her message that they would always love one another, but could not have each other. He found confidence in Devi, and she was a pleasant wife and companion, skilled in magic and was ashamed by bloodshed of any kind. She refused to eat any meat of any animal, and so Devanand became like her, a lover of all creatures. When it came time for the couple to depart their home, the tigers of the gods came to them and lead them back to the edge of the jungle. Devi wept when they vanished into the underbrush, comforted only by Devanand's assurance that in their new kingdom she would have tigers to tend in the menagerie of the palace.

Devi and Devanand traveled for two weeks until they reached the outskirts of what was once the great city of Barajapuhr. During their travels they had seen the black cloud, but now they were walking through it, the air was thick and stank of rotten meat, and all the streets seemed deserted, as if everyone in the city was hidden away. The smog of Ashwatthama's industry was so thick, the couple could barely see through it, and the city had changed so much since Devanand's exile, that he almost couldn't find his way throughout the foggy streets. Eventually, Devanand found an inn that looked relatively safe and he and Devi hid there for the night, for tomorrow would be the day of reckoning.

As the sun rose at dawn the next day, the sun's rays barely penetrated the cloud of Ashwatthama's evil sorcery, but it allowed enough light for one to travel about the city, through the dense smog. It was then that Devanand and Devi arose from their slumber, and prepared for the arduous day ahead, for they knew they would spend much of themselves in their use of divine magic, to restore the temples and the gods. Under the disguise of black cloaks, the couple made their way to the palace where they were mistaken as henchmen of the dictator, and were let inside the massive defensive walls. The once gilded palace with its glass tile roof had been diminished to one of grey stone, unadorned and ugly. Statues of the gods had been replaced with

statues of people being tortured by evil minions and eaten by crocodiles, and the moat that was once clear blue around the house and gardens was now a stagnant green sludge filled with crocodiles and fish that ate human flesh, where Ashwatthama sent his prisoners to die. The couple needed to get the torch of the king, which is what was needed to light the torches of the gods once again in the abandoned temples.

Devanand made it into the throne room unnoticed, where his half brother, the poor fool, sat in a daze on the throne. Akhmed had once been a joyful boy, taking pleasure in small things, since he had not the capacity for learning and the games of other boys, but that light and carefree spirit had left him and this grieved Devanand immensely. He promised himself that he would restore Akhmed to his former way, even if he had to spend up all his soul in magic to heal him. Devi followed in close pursuit, and while Devanand had delayed in despair over his stricken brother, she stole away the torch of the king. She went to Devanand and said "Anand, we must show the meaning of haste before your evil cousin notices this torch is missing" and with that she deftly replaced the torch in its holder with one of plain wood, so perhaps it would go unnoticed that the real one was gone.

Devi and Devanand rushed away from the palace in extreme hurry and duress, and no sooner had they gotten out of its walls that they heard the screaming of Ashwatthama. He had noticed the torch of the gods was replaced with a plain wooden one, and was in a fit of rage, and then they saw his large, imposing form on top of the highest tower in Kalinga, and all for miles heard his deep ringing voice when he exclaimed a spell in the language of destruction, "Dashprata linga Gruk! Bata galkartu garam Devanand, bata galkartu garam Kalinga" which meant "Go forth Gruk! Spill the blood of Devanand, spill the blood of Kalinga" and with that a massive blood colored cloud of demons, Gruk, gathered swiftly, and chased Devanand and Devi throughout the smoggy city, calling out with screaming and terrifying demonic voices that shook Devi to the core. Devanand had to carry his stunned companion part of the way to the temple, but was unable to continue. He had to use his own magic to disperse the cloud of spirits, and he called out in the language of the gods "Taparta piya balarman Gruk, upanda drugan Garishaman!" which translated as "disperse and be gone Gruk, by the power of Garishaman", and it was then that Devi and Devanand emanated the rays of the sun from their bodies, as it was a sign that *rakshan* was within them, and that the power of Garishaman had grown

stronger again. The cloud of spirits wailed a tortured cry when the light hit them and it vanished into oblivion.

The empowered couple rushed to the temple, and found it partially swallowed by jungle, crumbled and in ruin. They saw strange shadows on the wall, and the whole place seemed to be crying in agony, as they saw in one shadow tears falling out of the stone wall where there would have been on a person. Devi found some scented jasmine oil hidden away under the former altar of Garishaman, and poured it into the ravine in the wall where the fires of the gods had once burned brightly. Devanand threw the torch of the king up into the crevice in the wall, and the oil ignited in a flash of blue fire, and Devanand once more emitted rays like the sun. As the rays touched the walls, the spirits of the priests and priestesses that were trapped there were released and the former servants of the temple reappeared in a burst of light, for *rakshan* had freed them from their prison.

The temple servants and Devi followed the ray of light that was Devanand back through the smog covered city, gathering a crowd of women, and children as it seemed like all the men in the city had disappeared. The crowd came upon the camp of the demonic army of Ashwatthama, once men but corrupted, and they were also set free from their enchantment by the *rakshan* that Devanand and Devi emanated, and fell back into the love of Garishaman. As the crowd reached the palace, Devanand stopped. He addressed the people following him, "My people, I am your true king and have come to restore justice and light to this land, but you must not follow me into the palace for a great peril lies within. Whatever the outcome of this day, I say to you, do not forget the love of the gods in your hearts, for if we all must die falling on the swords of the evil, your souls will be preserved in the cycle of birth and rebirth and shall live evermore." He took Devi aside, and told her that although she had *rakshan* also, he must do the task of deposing Ashwatthama alone. Secretly he planned to kill the man, but he knew Devi would stop him, for she believed that all bloodshed was evil, even in the name of justice.

Devanand entered the palace fortress, and emanated light all around, blinding all who saw, and as he reached the doors to the throne room all the power of the gods entered him, and he felt a great strength though it was a heavy burden. Inside the throne room, Ashwatthama sat in front of King Akhmed, chanting an evil spell in the language of destruction, as the doors burst open by the power of *rakshan*, and a blinding and burning light, like the light of all the sun burst into the room and the power

of *rakshan* shot out from it and pushed Ashwatthama and Akhmed to the floor, in a position of prostration. A voice boomed out of the light and said in the language of creation “Ashwatthama haruna aahna kallor! (Ashwatthama your powers have left you!)”. The light subsided slightly and Ashwatthama could see Devanand in the light, holding a silver sword, Akhmed quivering and crying on the floor next to him.

Devanand charged as Ashwatthama, waving his saber when suddenly a hand grabbed him from behind, and he turned to see Devi with tears running down her face. “This is not our way! You must find some other way to punish him!” she cried, as she looked at Devanand with her face aflame. So it came to pass that Ashwatthama evil sorcerer and traitor was banished to the jungle forever, his power forever taken from him, and legend has it that he was eaten by tigers. After dealing with the worm, Devanand rushed back to the palace, where his brother lay in terror on the floor, for Akhmed was afraid of his brother’s wrath. Devi took him in her arms, and comforted him, and Devanand said kindly to him “I know this terror was not of your making or of your choice, it was the fault of your mother and her cousin. I am not vindictive, and the gods are not angry with you. Go, my brother, and replant the gardens as they once were, tend to flowers and to small animals, be the gentle soul you once were” and at once the terror stricken Akhmed was relieved and he lived on in the palace with his brother and Devi.

Devanand came to be the best king the kingdom of Kalinga had ever witnessed. He rebuilt the city in its former glory, the gold roofs, the bazaars, and the temples were rebuilt with the statues of elephants, harem girls, and of Devanand himself, seated with Devi. Devanand grew to love Devi as he had once loved Vrindi, and they were blessed with many sons and daughters, a line long and prosperous, though he still had love in his heart for Vrindi. He never took any other wives other than Devi, for that caused problems as he well knew, and the happy royal couple grew into old age together. When it came time for Devanand to give the throne to his eldest son, he and Devi donned their former white garbs, and headed into the jungle, and were never seen again, but it is said that they went to the temple of the gods and died there, and their souls resided with the gods for eternity.