

Ṛśyaśṛṅga

110–13 (B. 110–13; C. 9989–10094)

110 (110; 9989). On the bank of the Kauśikī lies the hermitage of Vibhāṇḍaka Kāśyapa, father of Ṛśyaśṛṅga; the latter restored the crops to King Lomapāda of Anga and married his daughter Śāntā (1–5). At Yudhiṣṭhira's bidding (5–10) Lomaśa narrates. Vibhāṇḍaka engages in austerities by a great lake. On seeing the Apsarā

Urvaśī he spills his seed in the water (10). A thirsty doe drinks the water, becomes pregnant, and gives birth to Ṛśyaśṛṅga, who wears an antelope horn; he never meets a human being but his father (15). King Lomapāda abuses the brahmins who thereupon leave; Indra stops raining. Lomapāda is advised that the brahmins are angry with him; he should seek their pardon and also fetch Ṛśyaśṛṅga (15–25). Placated, the brahmins return. To lure Ṛśyaśṛṅga, Lomapāda summons the courtesans, who consider it impossible. But one old bawd will try (25–35). 111 (111; 10077). The woman has a lovely hermitage built on a boat and moors close by Ṛśyaśṛṅga's hermitage; she sends the daughter to the hermit (1–5). She greets him and is welcomed; she scorns his gift of fruit, instead offers him her own delicacies and fine raiment (5–10). She plays with a ball, plucks flowers, and sets out to seduce him, then retreats (10–15). Vibhāṇḍaka appears and questions his strange-looking son (15–20).

112 (112; 10051). Ṛśyaśṛṅga describes his visitor's beauty, earrings, breasts, girdle, and anklets in hermit's terms (1–5). He recounts her ball-playing, embraces, offer of sweets and wine; he now feels lonely (10–15).

113 (113; 10070). Vibhāṇḍaka warns him that his visitor is from the demons, who should be shunned; he goes looking for her for three days (1–5). The courtesan returns, and Ṛśyaśṛṅga follows her into the floating hermitage. They sail to the king's palace, and the king houses him in the serail. Indra starts raining, and Ṛśyaśṛṅga marries the king's daughter Śāntā (5–10). The king stations herdsmen and cattle on Vibhāṇḍaka's road to his capital Campā. When Vibhāṇḍaka reaches them, they explain it is all his son's property. Vibhāṇḍaka is mollified; Ṛśyaśṛṅga should return to the forest after the birth of a son. Ṛśyaśṛṅga and Śāntā live happily (10–25).

Lomaśa said:

This is the Kauśikī, the holy river of the Gods, bull of the Bharatas; here shines forth the holy hermitage of Viśvāmitra. And so does the Hermitage, called Puṇya, of the great-spirited scion of Kaśyapa, the father of an ascetic son Ṛśyaśṛṅga, who was the master of his senses: it was he who by the power of his austerities caused Vāsava to rain:

out of fear of him the Slayer of Vala and Vṛtra brought rain during a drought. This Kāśyapa's mighty and splendid son was born from a doe and performed a great miracle in the realm of Lomapāda. When the crops had been restored, King Lomapāda gave him his daughter Śāntā, as the sun gave Sāvitrī.

Yudhiṣṭhira said:

How was Ṛśyaśṛṅga born from a doe as Kāśyapa's son, in forbidden miscegenation, and how did he acquire austerities? Why did Śakra, the Slayer of Vala and Vṛtra, rain forth when a drought was on, out of fear of the wise boy? What beauty did Princess Śāntā of strict vow possess that she seduced his heart when he lived like a deer? While it has been heard that Lomapāda was a law-abiding royal seer, how did it come about that the Chastiser of Pāka failed to rain in his realm? Pray, reverend lord, tell me, for I am curious to hear it, in full detail and truthfully, the geste of Ṛśyaśṛṅga!

Lomaśa said:

Then listen how to the brahmin seer Vibhāṇḍaka, who had perfected his soul with austerities, whose virility was never-failing, and whose luster was as Prajāpati's, the majestic Ṛśyaśṛṅga was born a son at a great lake, a most splendid boy, honored by the elders.

Kāśyapa had gone to this great lake, where he for a long time engaged in austerities, exhausting himself, and was honored by the Gods and seers. There he saw the Apsarā Urvaśī, and his seed spilled forth while he was bathing in the water, king. A thirsty doe drank it up with the water, and became with young, O lord; for the destiny laid down by fate unfailingly must be. From that doe a great seer was born a son, Ṛśyaśṛṅga. The boy, always austere, grew up in that very forest. The great-spirited child wore an antelope horn on his head, king, and hence became famed as Ṛśyaśṛṅga. Besides his father he had never seen a human being in his life, so that his mind was ever set on a life of chastity, my king.

At that time a friend of Daśaratha, Lomapāda by name, was the king of Anga. The story goes that he arbitrarily forced his whims on the brahmins, and the brahmins deserted the lord of the earth. So, because the king's priest had run away, the Thousand-eyed God spontaneously stopped raining and the subjects suffered. The king interrogated wise and austere brahmins, who were capable of making the lord of the Gods rain: "How will Parjanya rain forth? Find a means!" At his urging the sages spoke their own thoughts. But one eminent hermit among them said to the king, "Indra of kings, the brahmins are wroth with you—seek atonement! Fetch the hermit's son Ṛśyaśṛṅga, king, he is a forest child, ignorant of women, and devoted to uprightness. If the great seer descends to your realm,

himself in it. Then he left the sleeping Damayanti and ran away mindlessly. But his heart held its string, and he went back to the lodge and looked upon Damayanti as she lay. The sovereign of Niṣadha wept.

20 "Neither sun nor wind has ever before seen my love, and here she lies now, in the middle of a lodge, unprotected, on the bare ground. Here she is clothed in a cut-up skirt, she of the happy laughter and beautiful hips, as though she were crazed—how will she be when she wakes up? All alone, beautiful, and deserted by me, how shall the daughter of Bhīma fare in the ferocious jungle that is haunted by game and beasts of prey?"

5 Nala went and went, but came back to the lodge every time, drawn forth by Kali, drawn back by his love. The suffering man's heart was cut in two; like a swing it kept going back and forth to the lodge. Finally, drawn forth by Kali and bemused, Nala ran away, deserting his sleeping wife, while he lamented piteously and much. Lost of soul, touched by Kali, not reckoning this or that, the prince went in grief, abandoning his wife in the empty jungle.

Brhadāśva said:

0.1 When Nala had run off, O king, callipygous Damayanti, refreshed from her fatigue, woke up trembling in the unpeopled forest. She did not see her husband and, panic-stricken, she cried out aloud in fear for the Niṣadhan: "Mahārāja! Ah my protector, ah Mahārāja! Ah master, why did you desert me? Ah I am lost and dead; I am afraid in the empty forest! Haven't you always been true to your word, and wise in the Law, great king? Then how could you speak such a lie and go and desert me while I was asleep? How shall you fare after deserting your submissive and obedient wife, you who were done no wrong whatever, done wrong only by your enemy? Shall you be able to make true those words that you once pronounced to me in the presence of the World Guardians, king of men?"

"Enough of this jest, it has gone far enough, bull among men! I am frightened, tough warrior, show yourself, my lord! I see you, I see you, king! There you are, Niṣadhan! You are hiding in the bushes; why don't you reply to me? Ah cruelty, lord among kings, that you know how I am crying here and yet do not comfort me in your arms, my king! I do not lament over myself or anything else but you—how will you fare by yourself? That is why I am weeping, my king! How will you be when evening falls, king, thirsty, hungry, gaunt with exhaustion, lying at the root of a tree, and not seeing me?"

Burning grief consumed her and rage inflamed her as she ran into every direction, weeping grievously. One moment the young woman started up, the next she collapsed confused, again she huddled

And is he, O brahmin, pleased with you?
Have you done your lessons, *Ṛśyaśṛṅga*?

Ṛśyaśṛṅga said:

As an opulent light dost thou glimmer forth,
And I deem thy honor worth saluting.
I shall gladly give thee the foot water, sir,
And according to Law the roots and the fruit.

Pray sit at thy ease on this *kuśa* cushion,
Decked with a black deerskin and comfortable.
Where is thy hermitage, what is the name
Of this vow thou, brahmin, observeth like a God?

The courtesan said:

My lovely hermitage, *Kāśyapa*'s son,
Is beyond these three leagues of mountain range.
There salutations are not of our Law,
Nor do we use water to wash our feet!

Ṛśyaśṛṅga said:

I will give you fruit that have ripened, sir,
Like marking-nuts and myrobalans,
Parūṣaka, *inguda*, *dhanvana* berries,
And *priyāla* fruits for you to enjoy.

Lomaśa said:

But rejecting all that he offered, the woman
Presented him with the costliest viands,
Exquisite of taste and beautiful-looking,
Which gave *Ṛśyaśṛṅga* pleasure aplenty.

She gave very fragrant garlands to him,
And colorful and flamboyant clothes,
And the finest liquors; and then she laughed
And happily played about, making merry.

She frolicked at his side with a ball,
Like a flowering creeper, loose and swirling;
And seductively touching his limbs with hers,
Embraced *Ṛśyaśṛṅga*, embraced him often.

She bent the branches and plucked the flowers
Of *sarjas*, *aśokas*, and *tilaka* trees,
And shamelessly, overcome with liquor,
She began to seduce the seer's son.

Then seeing the change in Ṛśyaśṛṅga,
She squeezed his body again and again,
And slowly retreated with many glances,
Pretending the *agnihotra* was due.

When she had gone, love crazed Ṛśyaśṛṅga,
And the seer's son went out of his mind;
Left empty by feelings that followed her steps,
He heaved many sighs, a picture of grief.

In a while, with the tawny eyes of a lion,
Covered with hair as far down as his nails,
Possessed of learning, conduct, and insight,
Appeared Vibhāṇḍaka, Kaśyapa's scion,

Drew near and saw his son, who was seated,
Alone, and in thought, his mind disturbed,
The eyes raised to heaven, and often sighing—
Vibhāṇḍaka spoke to his wretched son,

“No kindling wood has been fetched yet, son?
Have you still not offered the *agnihotra*?
Are the offering ladles cleaned? Did you bring yet
The offering cow and her calf for the milk?”

“You do not seem as you were, my son,
You are given to brooding and absentminded.
You look most troubled today, but why?
I ask you, who has been here today?”

Ṛśyaśṛṅga said:

A student came, who had braided hair,
Full of spirit, not short, but neither too tall,
Of a golden color and long lotus-eyes,
As radiant as a son of the Gods.

His opulent body shone like the sun,
His eyes were white and black like *cakoras*,
His braids were blue-black, translucent, and fragrant,
Fastened with gold thread and very long.

At his throat he wore what looked like cups
That shone as the lightning shines in the sky,
And below the throat he had two globes,
Without a hair on them, most beguiling.

About the navel his waist was pinched,
But his hips again were very full;
And beneath his habit there glittered a girdle,
Like this belt of mine, but made of gold.

What is more, and a wonderful thing it was,
At his feet he seemed to have a tinkle;
To his hands likewise were tied some strings,
Like my prayer beads, but his made music.

Whenever he moved, these beads of his
Would sound like mad wild geese in a pond.
His habits were a marvelous sight,
They were not like mine, but prettily shaped.

And his face was no less wondrous a vision,
The words he spoke seemed to gladden the heart;
His voice was like the cuckoo's song,
That bothered my innermost soul as I listened.

Just as in the middle month of spring
The forest wafts fragrance stirred by the wind,
So he wafted a holy and beautiful fragrance,
Whenever, father, the wind would touch him.

His well-combed braids were so arranged
That they split on his brow in equal halves;
His ears were surrounded, it seemed, by circles,
Which were full of color and finely shaped.

With his right hand he bounced a round
And colorful object that looked like a fruit;
When it got to the ground again and again,
It would spring back and upward, wonderfully.

He would hit it and then swing himself around,
His body aquiver like a wind-tossed tree;
When I saw him, father, a child of the Gods,
Great joy and love were born in me.

He embraced my body time and again,
And pulling my hair he lowered my mouth;
He placed his mouth upon mine and sounded
A sound that begot great pleasure in me.

He held no truck with foot water either,
Nor by these fruit that I fetched for him.

"My life rule is this," he said to me,
And gave me other and novel fruit.

Those fruit of his, I ate them all,
Their taste was not like these at all,
Nor had they a skin like these ones have,
And, unlike ours, they did not have stones.

Magnanimously he gave me liquids
To imbibe of utterly flavorful taste:
As soon as I drank them, surpassing joy
Seized hold of me and the earth seemed to sway.

These are the beautiful fragrant garlands
That he himself knotted up with string.
He scattered the garlands and left for his own
Place of hermitage, bright with austerity.

His leaving left me out of my mind,
And my body feels exceedingly hot.
I want to go back to him straightaway,
And have him return here every day.

I am going, father, I'll go back to him,
Pray tell what the name of his life rule is,
I want to observe it together with him,
The awesome austerity practiced by him!

Vibhāṇḍaka said:

They are demons, son, who stalk the earth,
In all their wondrously beautiful shapes!
They are peerlessly lovely and very cruel,
And plot to prevent austerities.

Flaunting their beauteous bodies, my son,
They seek to seduce with various means;
And, dread in their deeds, they drop from their world,
And from their welfare, the forest hermits.

A self-controlled hermit must not frequent them
At all, if he seeks for the worlds of the strict.
They stop ascetics, and then they delight
In spoiling their penance, innocent son.

Those liquids were evil liquors, my son,
Forbidden, and cherished by wicked folk;

And garlands like these, fragrant and shining,
Are not described as fit for hermits.

Lomaśa said:

“They are demons!” Vibhāṇḍaka said to stop
His son, but then he went hunting for her;
Three days he searched, and when he failed
To find her, returned to his hermitage.

But meanwhile that Kāśyapa’s scion had gone
To gather fruit in ascetical fashion,
That courtesan woman herself returned
To seduce the hermit Ṛṣyaśṛṅga.

No sooner did Ṛṣyaśṛṅga see her
Than he happily met her in great confusion.
And he said to her, “Quick, let us go to your
Retreat before my father returns!”

Thereupon they enticed him into the boat,
King, Kāśyapa’s son, and sailed away,
While tempting him with all manner of lure,
Until they moored at the king of Anga’s.

He had that exceedingly beautiful boat
Moored and anchored in view of a hermitage;
And likewise he built close to the bank
A lovely wood named the King’s Retreat.

The king had Vibhāṇḍaka’s only son
Brought to and kept in the women’s quarters;
And suddenly saw the God raining forth,
And the earth being filled and flooded with water.

And Lomapāda, his wishes fulfilled,
Gave his daughter Śāntā to Ṛṣyaśṛṅga;
To counter Kāśyapa’s wrath, he worked
With cattle and had the roads plowed up.

Wherever Vibhāṇḍaka had to pass,
The king ordered cattle and warlike herdsmen:
“When Vibhāṇḍaka comes in search of his son
And the eminent seer interrogates you,

“You must fold your hands and tell him thus:
‘These cows are your son’s and the crops are his.

Great seer, what may we do to please you?
We are all your slaves and wait on your word!" "

Then came the hermit, whose fury was fierce,
After gathering fruit and roots, back to his place;
And he looked for his son and did not find him,
And failing to find him, he waxed very wroth.

Then, split asunder by his own wrath,
Suspecting that this was the work of the king,
He went to Campā to set on fire
That king of the Angas and all his realm.

Exhausted and hungry, Kaśyapa's scion
Encountered prosperous cattle stations;
The herdsmen paid him courteous honors
As though he were king, and he spent the night there.

Receiving all honors from those his hosts,
He said, "Good men, whose tenants are you?"
Whereupon they humbly drew near and said,
"All this is the wealth that your son dispenses."

In place after place he was honored as guest,
And as he heard their flattering talk,
His anger was all but appeased, and happy
He approached in his city the king of Anga.

The bull among monarchs welcomed him,
And he saw his son, an Indra in heaven;
He saw Śāntā there, his daughter-in-law,
Running up to him like garland lightning.

On seeing the villages, herds, and his son,
And Śāntā, his towering rage subsided;
Vibhāṇḍaka now, O Indra of men,
Showed the greatest grace to the king of the land.

The great seer left his son there in trust,
And spoke to him shining like fire and sun,
"Once a son has been born, you shall come to the forest,
After granting this king all the favors he asks."

Ṛśyaśṛṅga obeyed his father's behest
And returned to the spot where his father lived;
And Śāntā religiously waited on him,
As compliant Rohiṇī waits on the Moon,

As the lucky Arundhatī waits on Vasiṣṭha,
 As Lopāmudrā attends on Agastya,
 And as Damayantī did on Nala,
 Or Śacī does on the Thunderbolt-wielder.

And as Indrasenā Nāḍāyani
 Obeyed Mudgala always, O Ājamīdha—
 So did Śāntā obey in the woods Ṛśyaśṛṅga,
 King, caring for him, possessed by love.

Here shines the holy retreat of that saint
 Of holy renown, to Mahāhrada's luster:
 Bathe here; and, your duty done and hallowed,
 You shall, sire, proceed to other fords.