

THE PRINCESS IN THE BOAT

(Of Viharadevi and Danae)

In an article titled *Of Perseus and Pandukabhāya*, which I published in the preceding issue of this journal,¹ I discussed what appeared to me evidence of the exploitation of a motif from Greek mythology by the author of the *Mahāvamsa* at this point to give romantic background to the birth of one of the early kings of Sri Lanka, viz. Pandukabhaya.²

This is the myth of Danae, of whom it had been prophesied that if a son were born to her, he would kill his grandfather, Acrisius, king of Argos. For this reason Acrisius (it will be recalled) had the princess locked up in a brazen tower to protect her from men. But even so a man got to her - as some say, Zeus himself metamorphosed into a shower of gold, or as others, her uncle Proteus - as a result of which she conceived the hero Perseus, who lived to fulfil the dreaded oracle by killing Acrisius.

The *Mahāvamsa* makes use of this motif, deriving it through the *Ghata Jātaka*.³ But it is also remarkable that, while in some of its details the chronicle may be approximating to what was palpably factual in the island's history, in some others it appears to reflect more closely the motif of the original Greek myth so as to suggest an independent acquaintance with it. The hall-mark of this motif continues to remain, however, the seclusion of the fateful princess in some kind of tower-like edifice to protect her from being made pregnant by a man, viz. the *πύργος* or *turris* of Danae, the *ekatthambha pasada* of Devagabbha (the *Ghata Jātaka* princess), or the *ekathunike gehe* or, more popularly, the *ඊජ් ඊජ් ඊජ්* of Ummadacitta. So, for this reason I shall continue to refer to this motif as that of the Princess-in-the-Tower.

-
1. *Sri Lanka Journal of the Humanities* vol. IX, nos. 1 and 2 (1983) p. 34-66.
 2. *Mhv.* ix. 1-18.
 3. No. 454.

Readers familiar with the story of the birth of king Pandukabhaya in the *Mahāvamsa* will recall that when his own mother, Citta, was born to King Panduvasudeva and Queen Baddhakaccana as their youngest child and only daughter, it was foretold of her that "for the sake of sovereignty will her son slay his uncles" (*rajjahetu suto assa ghatayissati matule*). So, in due time her brothers lodged her in a chamber, an architectural curiosity having but one pillar, and within it they placed a serving-woman, and without, a hundred soldiers. But notwithstanding these precautions a man got to her - her cousin, Dighagamani - and in consequence of their sexual congress on that occasion she gave birth to Pandukabhaya, a son, who went on to fulfil the dreaded prophesy made over Citta by killing her brothers and taking over the kingdom.

If in the manner of a *sanodhana* popular in the Jātakas, we were to effect an equation of characters between the Sri Lankan historical anecdote of Ummadacitta and the more ancient Greek myth of Danae, Citta would be Danae, the princess protected from men in a tower because of a similar prophesy that a son born to her would kill his grandfather (or uncles, as the case may be), who ruled the land. Panduvasudeva (and *in loco parentis* Abhaya *et al.*, as a concession to history and perhaps also in deference to the Jātaka source) is Acrisius, the kinsman threatened by the birth of a son to his daughter. Likewise Dighagamani is our Proteus (an easy substitution of cousin for uncle), who made the princess pregnant in her tower, coming to her by stealth and cohabiting with her. And of course Pandukabhaya is Perseus, the son born of that union, who went on to fulfil the prophesy by killing the royal kinsman (or kinsmen), who was fated to die at his hands, and taking over the kingdom.⁴ But the most remarkable

-
4. At the time I made the study, I had difficulty getting at the account of the myth as given by Pherecydes of Athens, the genealogist (c. 456 B.C.), whom Schol. on Apoll. Rhod. iv. 1091 cites. Now that I have traced it (F. Jacoby *F.Gr.Hist.* vol. I (A) Berlin (1957) p. 61. fr. 10) I find mention there of a serving-woman (*τροφός*) placed to look after Danae, like the *dasi* who was kept with Citta. When Acrisius found his daughter had a child, he killed this woman. According to Pherecydes Perseus was three to four years old by the time Acrisius learnt the fact - he heard the boy's voice (contd.)

of the parallels remains the unique edifice in which the *Mahavamsa* says Citta was confined, a tower of sorts, which reared from the ground upon a single pillar. For, as I have shown, it substitutes as a close equivalent for the $\mu\upsilon\pi\omicron\gamma\omicron\varsigma$ in which the lovely Danae was reputed to have been confined.

The Princess-in-the-Tower motif does not, however, exhaust the motifs drawn into the *Mahavamsa* from the saga of the Greek hero, Perseus, to embellish the history of the island's early kings. For, two other motifs will be found taken from the same source and run into each other to weave the remarkable circumstances which led to the birth of yet another of the hero-kings of ancient Sri Lanka - this time none other than the redoubtable Dutthagamani.⁵

I refer of course to the involvement of the queen of King Kelanitissa in an affair which led to the inundation of the land by the sea, the offer of his daughter, Devi, as an appeasement to the angered sea-deities, her launching upon the waters in a boat-of-sorts by the king, her drifting to another realm (Rohana), where the vessel was brought ashore, her encountering there the king of the land, who finds she is a princess and consecrates her his queen. (Prince Gamani-Abhaya (popularly Dutthagamani), born to them in due course, was to fight many a historic battle with the Tamils and regain the territories which had come under their sway).

Even on a superficial reading of this apparently historical anecdote in the *Mahavamsa* the two motifs which constitute it - (a) the committing of a princess to the waves of the sea by a king to assuage the wrath of the sea-deities, against whom an offence (directly or indirectly involving the queen) had been

as he played. The *Extended Mahavamsa* (ed. G.P. Malalasekera vol. II, Colombo (1937) ix. 5 says Citta's nurse was a hunchback (*dasim khujjakam*) - a detail found nowhere else. The story had apparently made its way along the Silk Route as well, for it was narrated around Tashkurgan of a soldier, that he was detailed to escort a princess from China to Persia as a bride for a king, but encountering a war, guarded her in a tower. Afterwards, when he went in to fetch her, he found her pregnant. The explanation was that a god had come down to her. The son born to her later became a famous hero.

5. *Mhv.* xxii. 12-22.

committed, and (b) the floating of a princess in a vessel upon the waters of the sea by a king (her father), who is brought ashore in a different land, there to be consecrated queen of the king of that land - will not fail to recall respectively the fates of Andromeda, sacrificed to an irate sea by her father, Cepheus, and of Danae, set adrift in a box by her father, Acrisius, in the mythology of the Greeks, just as surely as the seclusion of Citta in her *Ḍḍ* *Ḍḍ* *Ḍḍ* by her brothers (in lieu of father) would have called to mind, for all who were acquainted with it, the imprisonment of that same princess, Danae, in her tower of bronze by that same father of hers, Acrisius.

In this article, which is the sequel to my study of the motif of the Princess-in-the-Tower, I propose therefore to draw closer attention to what I would, for convenience as for their consanguinity, call the motif of the Princess-in-the-Boat, and to show how in the *Mahāvamsa* it is constituted of elements derived from the myths of both Andromeda and Danae, the former being exploited to provide *the reason for the Sri Lankan princess (Viharadevi) being set afloat upon the sea*, and the latter, *the event itself and its consequence*, viz. her marriage to King Kavannatissa and her mothering of the hero, Dutthagamani.

Tradition obviously had no independent interest in King Kelanitissa outside of the episode which led to his providing his daughter to be the mother of the paladin of Buddhism and Sinhala nationalism in the island. Neither is the origin of the family that ruled in Kelani nor any other noteworthy deed or achievement of this king recorded in the *Mahāvamsa* or any other chronicle; he is not mentioned before this and is forgotten soon afterwards. Indeed his name itself has a fictitious ring - the ready-at-hand 'Tissa' tagged on to the name of the city of his rule - and were it not for the fact that it has been found in a fragmentary Brahmi inscription at an ancient site in the south-eastern part of the island, along with evidence of a practice of nicknaming kings, may have given grounds for suspecting that, even if a king did exist to whom this name has been assigned in tradition, this was not his actual name.⁶ Observe that the reverse is recorded with respect

6. *Ext. Mhv.* xii 36 f. calls him 'Piyatissa'. Epithets like 'Gōtha' (Short) and 'Kakavanna' (Crow-coloured) were surely nicknames, which may not have been used officially when the kings who bore them were alive. See *UCHC* vol. I, pt. I, p. 147. 'Vihara' of Viharadevi is itself another example - though not one to be resented.

PLATE I



(a)



(b)

PLATE II

to his brother, Ayya-Uttika; a district acquires its name from him.⁷

The *Mahāvamsa* narrates the anecdote of our concern here by way of explanation of who Viharadēvi was, who was the consort of the pious Kakavannatissa, the son of Gothabhaya, who succeeded him to the throne of Rohana at Mahagama.⁸ I quote the chronicle in Geiger's translation thereof, italicizing the details which I identify as constituting the motifs suspect of derivation ultimately from Greek mythology, and immediately afterwards supplying the verses of the Pali original, which include them.

Now in Kalyani the ruler was the king named Tissa. His younger brother named Ayya-Uttika, who had roused the wrath (of Tissa) in that he was the guilty lover of the queen, fled thence from fear and took up his abode elsewhere. The district was named after him. He sent a man wearing the disguise of a bikkhu, with a secret letter to the queen. This man went thither, took his stand at the king's door and entered the king's house with an arahant who always used to take his meal at the palace, unnoticed by that thera. When he had eaten in company with the thera, as the king was going forth, he let the letter fall to the ground when the queen was looking.

The king turned at the (rustling) sound, and when he looked down and discovered the written message he raged, unthinking, against the thera, and in his fury he caused the thera and the man to be slain and thrown into the sea. *Wrath at this the sea-gods made the sea overflow the land; but the king with all speed caused his pious daughter named Devi to be placed in a golden vessel, whereon was written "a king's daughter", and to be launched upon the same sea. When she landed near to (the) Lanka (vihara) the king Kakavanna consecrated her as queen. Therefore she received the epithet Vihara.*

7. *Mhv.* xxii. 14.

8. *Mhv.* xxii. 11-12.

18. *Saddena tena rājā taṃ nivattitvā vilokayam
ñatvāna lekhasandesam kuddho therassa dummati*
19. *theraṃ taṃ purisaṃ tañ ca marapetvāna kodhasā
samuddasmiṃ khipapesi: kujjhitvā tena devatā*
20. *samudden'ottharāpesuṃ taṃ desaṃ, so tu bhūpati
attano dhītaraṃ suddhaṃ Devīṃ nama surapiniṃ*
21. *likhitvā "rājadhīta" ti sovannikkhaliyā lahuṃ
nisīdapiya tatth'eva samuddasmiṃ visajjayi.*
22. *Okkantam taṃ tato Lanike Kākavaṃṇo mahīpati
abhisecayi, ten'asi Viharopapadavhaya.*

The *Dīpavamsa* makes no mention of Viharadevi or of the circumstances which led her to marry the king of Rohana Mahāgāma, Kakavannatissa. But it would be unwise to argue *ex silentio* from a work like the *Dīpavamsa* that it did not know the story nor found it in the *Attakatha*, to which it too had recourse like the *Mahāvamsa*. There is evidence that it knew a great deal more than it cared to narrate, but the brevity and terseness it has adopted has no place for much romantic elaboration. Indeed, it devotes no more than thirteen couplets to Duttthagāmani, where the *Mahāvamsa* has assigned as much as eleven whole chapters (from the 22nd to the 32nd) and has the amplitude to bring in such material.⁹

Even so, it must be admitted that the *Mahāvamsa* presents the story with remarkable brevity, if also clarity. And in doing so, even in this earliest form in which the anecdote makes its appearance, it has on the one hand preserved for us a detail in its proper significance, which the later tradition is in danger of dissipating, on the other, has omitted mention of a detail

9. See W. Geiger *Zeitschrift für Indologie und Iranistik* vol. vii, no. 2. p. 259. He suggests that this was because the story of Duttthagāmani originally came from a different source from that which dealt with the other parts of the *Mhv.* and thinks its birthplace was Ruhuna. But see G.P. Malalasekera (ed. *Vamsatthappakasini* vol. I, London (1935) p. xcv. f), who points out that the *Dpv.* obviously knew the episode, because in the few verses dedicated to him the main features of the story are mentioned. Malalasekera agrees, however, that it may have formed the theme of a special saga, which came to be attached ultimately to the *Attakatha*.

(perhaps taking it for granted) that is made explicit in the later tradition, and would have, even if in a small way, strengthened the parallel we have been observing between the anecdote and the Greek material. The resurgence of the latter as much as the disorientation of the former, together with much else that is possibly both old and new, constitute the tradition by the time it makes its way to such later works as the *Thupavamsa*, the *Saddharmalankaraya* and the *Rajavaliya*.

The first of these (that which the *Mahāvamsa* preserves in its true form but suffers distortion in the later tradition) concerns the inundation of the land by the sea - a phenomenon which all versions of the story, however, agree took place on account of King Kelanitissa's crime against the innocent arahant. The *Mahāvamsa* author attributes this to the anger of the deities, implying (as Geiger rightly translates *devatā*) "the sea-deities". For the king kills arahant and imposter (the manner is of no importance still) and throws their bodies into the sea, thus implicating these gods in his foul deed. The nature of the catastrophe is also apt in the case of deities of the sea - an inundation (*samudden'ottharapesumī tam desam*), and relates punishment to crime with 'poetic justice', just as afterwards the manner of the recompence - the sacrifice of the offending king's daughter to the sea. Thus offence, retribution, recompence, all involve the sea and are interwoven by it - or if you like, the gods of the sea.

First evidence of a misconception of who the gods were, who were angered by the killing of the thera, comes from the commentator of the *Vamsatthappakasini*, the *Mahāvamsa Tikā*, even when he has nothing to add to the manner in which the holy man and the imposter were killed and disposed of. For he explains the *devatā* of the chronicle as *tasmim desē adhivatthā devatā*, i.e. "the resident gods of that locality".¹⁰ This fault of interpretation is immediately avoided by the compiler of the *Extended Mahāvamsa*, a work younger than the *Tikā* and tentatively dated by Malalasekara to the 9th or 10th century,¹¹ even when he qualifies the word

10. *Vamsat.* p. 432.


11. *Ext. Mhv.* p. lii.

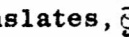
devatā of the *Mahāvamsa* with the *Tikā's* explanatory *adhivatthā*; for he avoids *tasmim̄ dese* and makes *adhivatthā* look back to *sagare*, the 'sea', into which *thera* and imposter were killed and thrown, and thus restores the connection between the sea (or sea-gods), the crime and the punishment.¹²

In none of these works is there any inkling of the manner in which the *thera* and the imposter were done to death. But it must be the fact that they were already dead before being thrown into the sea that lay opportunity open for development of the story at this juncture with the now popular account of the boiling of the *thera* in a cauldron of oil. I find it difficult to believe that, if the tradition of the cruel manner in which the *thera* was killed was an old one, it would have passed without a hint in the works mentioned. To all purposes it appears to be a subsequent monkish elaboration, which at the same time emphasises the Buddhist admonishing (exemplified, for instance, in the *Kāka* and *Kapī Jātaka*)¹³ that kings should not act rashly, and certainly never against the *sangha*. It may have been imagined some time round the 9th century, to judge from the evidence. Reference to a shrine erected at the spot where the *thera* was said to have been boiled in oil is found in the *Salalihini Sandesaya* (15th century)¹⁴ and the Kelani Vihara Inscription of Dhammaparakramabahu IX (c. 1491-1513)¹⁵ also makes mention of අගඤ්ඤ නරක භෙද, or

12. *Ext. Mhv.* xxii. 54-56.

13. Nos. 140 and 404. Consider also the *Mahā-Pāduma Jātaka* (No. 427), in which a young prince (the Bodhisatta) is rashly condemned to death by the king, his father, over a matter involving the queen. This *jātaka* clearly emulates the plot of Euripides' *Hippolytus* plays. In the extant *H. Kaluṭṭomenos* a letter too figures prominently in the innocent youth's death, resulting from the king's rashness. I cannot say whether the story of the *thera* was in any way inspired by the *Hippolytus* motif, as the *Mahā-Pāduma* certainly was.

14. vs. 71. See the text ed. S. Wanigasinghe, Matara (1956) p. 107. There is reference to a statue () of the monk, which the *salalihiniya* is asked to worship there.

15. For the text and translation of this inscription, see 'Kelaniya through the Ages' by Vimala in *Here is Kelaniya*, souvenir number ed. D.C. Wijewardena, Colombo (1946) (no pagination). Vimala translates,  (at line 16) as 'thoroughly rebuilt; 'thoroughly restores' would have been more accurate.

'House of the Oil Cauldron', thus suggesting that such a shrine was in existence up until the time the Portuguese sacked the place. The tradition itself is palpably much older than this reference to archaeological evidence and takes us back to the Pali *The lakataha Gathā*, a compilation of near hundred stanzas, which the arahant was said to have recited when in his cauldron of oil. For it is evidently traceable in the early Polonnaruwa period, when gathas from it were quoted by the poet Gurulugomi (12th century) in his *Dharmapradipikava*.¹⁶ Reference to the torture the arahant underwent also appears in the *Amavatura* (Gahapati Damana).¹⁷

Other elaborations upon details of the *Mahāvamsa* story of King Kelanitissa and the flood appear along with that of the manner in which the thera was put to death when the tradition resurfaces in later literature. Not the least of these are the nature of the insult offered to Ayya-Uttika, which dramatises the *Mahāvamsa* detail of his departure to the district which was later to bear his name; the reason why neither the thera nor the king suspected the imposter when he came into the palace to receive alms; the basis on which the thera was implicated with the imposter on a letter written by Ayya-Uttika; the extent of the area the sea inundated, and likewise, the manner in which King Kelanitissa himself was destroyed by the waters - (indeed, his death is something not even mentioned by the chronicle).

As far as I am concerned, the later tradition is welcome to all this, provided it does not blunt the point of the story that it was the sea-deities who were directly affronted by the king's crime, which is wherefore it was the *sea* that reacted (or was caused to react) as it did, and which is why the king sacrificed his daughter *to the sea*. But there was danger of this happening, more especially with the emphasis shifting to the manner in which the thera was killed. For instance, in the *Thupāvamsa* the imposter is killed and thrown into the sea, but nothing is said of the disposal of the thera's body, once the oil had done its work.¹⁸ In the *Rajavaliya* imposter and queen are both thrown

16. See the Dharmarama ed. (1938) p. 112, 116, 117, 120 and 122.

17. See *Amavatura* ed. Kodagoda Gnanathilaka. Colombo (1959) p.87.

18. See the *Sinhala Thupāvamsaya* ed. Gunapala Senadheera, Colombo (1966) p. 3.

into a river! (හෙට) - the former killed, the latter alive with hands tied; nothing again is said of the disposal of the therā's body upon his death in the cauldron⁽¹⁹⁾. The *Saddharmalankara*, however, abides by the old tradition and persists that, even with the death of the therā caused by boiling in oil, therā as well as imposter are cast into the sea (මරවා මුදුට දැමූහ) ²⁰ Consequently all these texts talk of deities in general when it comes to the divine anger at the deed and the subsequent inundation, the *Rajavaliya* even of "the deities who preside over Lanka" (නෙට අරක්කන් දෙවියෝ) ²¹.

We may now turn to the detail which is bypassed in the *Mahāvamsa* as perhaps being unimportant and in any case assumable, but surfaces in the later tradition. I refer to the role of fishermen in the finding of the vessel in which Vihārādevī was when it drifted to the coast of Rōhana. In the later works cited, they are explicitly mentioned, simply as "fishermen who dwelt at the harbour-village" (*Saddh.* නොටුගම වසන තෙවුළෝ) or more specifically as "King Kavantissa's fishermen" (*Thv.* කාවන්තිස් රජපුරුවන්ගේ තෙවුළෝ) or "the fishermen who supplied King Kavantissa fish" (*Rajv.* කාවන්තිස් රජපුරුවන්ට මත් දෙන තෙවුළෝ).

In the terseness of its account of the episode the *Mahāvamsa* not only leaves out the details of the discovery of the vessel on the coast of Rōhana, and by whom, but even a more valuable piece of evidence on the vessel itself in which Vihārādevī had been floated; the chronicle merely say that, upon her landing close to the Lanka Vihāra, King Kakavanna made her his queen. I shall advert to this missing detail when I need to bring it in.

If one reviews the details I have italicized in the *Mahāvamsa* story of King Kelanitissa and Vihārādevī, two motifs will manifest themselves, which have been run together to constitute the larger motif, which I have here labelled the Princess-in-the-Boat. These

19. *Rajavaliya* ed. A.V. Suraweera, Colombo (1976) p. 170.

20. *Saddharmalankaraya* pbl. M.D. Gunasena, Colombo (1954) p. 464.

21. At any rate, in the *Rajavamsa* (p. 171) they are the sea-deities (මුදුට අරක්කන් දෙවියෝ) who drown the king, while cloud-deities (වලක දෙවියෝ) and sea nymphs (මුදුමනි මේඛලාවෝ) waft the vessel to Rōhana. In the *Saddharm.* (p. 467) the deities to whom the princess is sacrificed are the gods of the sea (සමුද්‍රා දේවතාවන්ට විලිනම් යයි කියා සමුද්‍රයට අලුර්ථය).

can be tidily pulled apart, if one repeats the princess in both sub-motifs - or, to put it differently - think of the princess in the one as overlapping the princess in the other so as to become one and the same princess, i.e. Viharadēvi of our story.

The two sub-motifs can then be identified as follows:

- (a) An offence committed against the sea (and involving the queen, if you wish) causes the sea-deities to be wroth and therefore inundate the land. To placate them the king offers his own virgin daughter as a sacrifice to the sea. (With the offer the fury of the sea abates).
- (b) A princess is for some reason put in a boat and set adrift on the sea by her father, the king, so that she may perish. But the vessel lands and is discovered, or is pulled ashore, by fishermen in a different land, who take her to their king. The king sees she is a princess and consecrates her his queen.

(It transpires afterwards that the destiny that saves her makes her the mother of a prince, who achieves great things by his heroism and recovers the kingdom that is his due).

As mentioned earlier, then, sub-motif 'a' provides the *Mahāvamsa* story with the circumstances which lead to the launching of Princess Viharadēvi upon the waters of the ocean, while sub-motif 'b' lays out the event and its consequence, which is her marriage to King Kakavanna. Together they contribute to the destiny that accompanied the princess in the role she was to play by becoming the mother of the great hero of the epic's concern here. But what is remarkable - and it is just this that I wish to remark in this article - is that our chronicler, or his source at one or more removes, has derived both these motifs from the saga of the mythical hero of another civilization, but one about which the Buddhist lands of North-west India, and through them, our own island had become increasingly acquainted. For both these motifs, just as much as the one I treated in the precursor to this article, derive from the cycle of myths which antiquity narrated of the Greek hero, Perseus.

The story of Perseus' adventure, in which he rescues Andromeda and which provides the *Mahāvamsa* anecdote here with the reason for the sacrifice of Viharadēvi to an angered sea, is narrated by

Apollodorus, Athenian grammarian and mythographer of the second century B.C. as follows:²²

Being come to Ethiopia, of which Cepheus was king, Perseus found the king's daughter, Andromeda, set out to be a prey of a sea-monster. For Cassiopeia, the wife of Cepheus, vied with the Nereids in beauty and boasted to be better than them all; hence the Nereids were angry, and Poseidon, sharing their wrath, sent a flood and a monster to invade the land. But Ammon having predicted deliverance from the calamity if Cassiopeia's daughter Andromeda were exposed as a prey to the monster, Cepheus was compelled by the Ethiopians to do it, and he bound his daughter to a rock. When Perseus beheld her, he loved her and promised Cepheus that he would kill the monster, if he would give the damsel to wife. These terms having been sworn to, Perseus withstood and slew the monster and released Andromeda.

If we for a moment disregard the sea-monster (κητος) and retain only the inundation (πλημμυρα), which is the most natural manner in which a sea would express its anger, we have in this myth the clear outlines of the motif that forms part of the Kelanitissa-Vihāradēvi episode. For here is an offence involving a queen, for which her daughter is made to pay the price; here are sea-deities, who are angered by the offence; here is a flooding of the land by the sea, which they cause by way of revenge; here is a king, who has to save his land from the calamity and here is he doing so (as no doubt King Kelanitissa also did, on the advice of an oracle or soothsayers) by the sacrifice of his virgin daughter to the waves of the sea.

The sea-monster in the Greek myth need not distract us, even if it is true that he begins to gain prominence in the myth *even to the exclusion of the inundation*. For, the intrusion of this creature as part of the retaliation of the sea-gods into what is evidently a motif based on a primitive ritual of sacrifice of an unsullied maiden to appease the hostility of an element (as King Agamemnon sacrificed Iphigeneia to the winds at Aulis) is necessitated by, and may indeed have accompanied, the intrusion of a hero into it, *who actually rescues the sacrificial victim!* The dramatic possibilities, which the motif thus opened up with the introduction of

22. *Bibl.* ii. 4.3.

the κήτος were not lost on Sophocles and Euripides, who dealt with it as their theme in their respective tragedies, *Andromeda*,²³ and so much prominence does the sea-monster get as against the original flood (if indeed it continued to receive mention - as well it may - by such writers) that it won itself a place among the stars of the zodiac along with the chief characters of the myth.²⁴ Otherwise it must be believed - and this also of the story of King Kelanitissa and Viharadevi - that, with the very offer of the sacrifice of the maiden and its acceptance by the sea-gods, the sea's fury abated and its waves receded, no matter what they had in store for the maiden, who was now their property.²⁵

On the other hand a discrepancy with a more positive relevance to the Sri Lankan story's parallelism with the myth exists in the manner in which the respective kings, the Ethiopian Cepheus and the Sinhalese Kelanitissa, put out their daughters to be taken by the sea. For, in our island's story Kelanitissa does not chain his daughter to a crag or stake in the sea, as Cepheus in this Greek myth did his daughter, for the sea-deities to take their sacrifice in whatever way they desired. Instead, he does so in the manner of the king of a different Greek myth, yet one which belongs to the Perseus saga and involves the same hero. And this is none other than the myth of Danae, the fore-part of which had already been exploited by the *Mahavamsa* for the story of Ummadacitta, and which we have already treated in our article, of which this present one is the sequel. In other words, sub-motif 'b' of our Princess-in-the-Boat motif emulates closely the fate of Danae following her father, Acrisius' discovery that, notwithstanding his bronze tower, Danae had become pregnant and borne a son - a son, at whose hands he was fated to die.

23. For Sophocles' play, see Eratosth. *Kataster*. 16 (Westermann Mythogr. p. 250) Κασιόπειρα and *ibid.* 39 Κήτος. See also A.C. Pearson *The Fragments of Sophocles* vol. I, Cambridge (1917) p. 78-86. For Euripides' play, see F.G. Wagner *Poet. Trag. Gr. Fr.* vol. II, Vratislavia (1844) p. 56. Perseus' rescue of Andromeda in this play is parodied by Aristophanes in his *Thesmophoriazusae* (990 f.).

24. Eratosth. *op.cit.* 17 and 39.

25. With the offer of the girl to the sea, says the *Saddharm.* (*loc.cit.*), the gods becalmed the waters (ඳාඪ ඳේඳාඳෙඳි ඳාඳ ඳේඳාඳි ඳාඳෙඳ.)

For, it will be remembered that when King Panduvasudeva found that a man (Dīghagāmani) had got to Cittā in her മിഴി തിരിയ്ക്കി and that she had conceived by him, he did not follow Acrisius and set her afloat on the sea like Danae, but (leaving such action to be made use of by King Kelanitissa, as it were, for his daughter) tamely gave Cittā in marriage to the adulterer, saying, "He too must be received among us; let us give her (in marriage) to him" (*posiyo so pi amhehi, dema tasseva tam*).²⁶ The only precaution the sons took - and this they might have adopted from the first then - was to declare that, if it was a son that was born to her, they would kill him. It is a son that is born - but from here on the *Mahāvamsa* story deviates from the Greek, except that in his own way the son fulfils the prophesy.

To pick up the thread of the Greek myth of Danae, however, we may turn again to Apollodorus.²⁷ For he continues:

When Acrisius afterwards learned that she had got a child, Perseus, he would not believe that she had been seduced by Zeus, and putting his daughter with the child in a chest he cast it into the sea. The chest was washed ashore on Seriphus, and Dictys took up the boy and reared him. Polydectes, brother of Dictys, was then king of Seriphus, and fell in love with Danae

According to Apollodorus, Polydectes did not succeed in his attempt to marry Danae and harassed her until Perseus, returning from his adventures with the head of the Gorgon Medusa, flashed it at him and turned him to stone. (This is the theme of Euripides' tragedy, the *Dictys*.)²⁸ But equally popular is the version reflected in Hyginus,²⁹ which says quite definitely that, when Dictys found Danae with her infant son in the chest, he took her to King Polydectes, "who married her" (*qui eam in coniugio habuit*), sending Perseus to be brought up in the temple of Athena.

It is obvious that Vihārādēvi parallels Danae in that she was not only set adrift on the sea by the king, her father, but also (as I shall show) not intended to escape. And yet she is more

26. *Mhv.* ix. 20; see also 21.

27. ii. 4 1-2.

28. Wagner *op.cit.* p. 164 - 173 for the fragments and commentary.

29. Fable 63.

akin to Andromeda in the role in which she is thus put out to sea - which shows the surprising ingenuity of the Sri Lankan chronicler (also found in the Jātaka composers) in the rehandling of familiar motifs in a novel manner, including transposition. For, like Andromeda, Viharadevi is a sacrificial victim offered to the sea-deities as recompence for an injury offered them, which had made them inundate the land. It was for them, not for chance finders of the girl, that the inscription *rajadhita* ("the king's daughter") was affixed to her vessel.³⁰ Emphasis is placed in the *Mahāvamsa* not only on her beauty (*surupinī*) but also on her purity (*suddham*) and later works go on to elaborate on the decking of her for the purpose. Nor have they any hesitation in describing her as a "sacrificial offering to the gods of the sea" (සමුද්‍ර දේවතාවන්ට බිලිකළ යයි කියා)³² and again, as "the princess offered as a sacrifice to the sea" (මුදුටු බිලි කළ කුමරිය)³³ etc. Thus, if she was incarcerated in her vessel (as I shall show she was) she was not unlike Danae, who was similarly treated, in so far as both were meant to die; but in so far as she was meant to die as a sacrificial victim, her incarceration is not incomparable to the chaining of Andromeda to a rock or stake for the sea-deities to take their offering.

As mentioned earlier on, it was quite the thing to expect that fishermen saw the vessel in which Viharadevi had drifted to Rohana and pulled it ashore. This detail did not appear in the *Mahāvamsa*, but nearly all the later accounts of the story, including the කියවන ක-
 ටුව of the *The lakataha Gatha* refer to them as *dramatis personae* of the episode. However, the parallel is not immediately evident with the Greek myth of Danae until one appreciates the meaning of the name of the man who invariably finds the larnax, in which Danae and Perseus had been carried to Seriphus, Dictys. For *diktuon* (δίκτυον) in the Greek means no less than a "fishing-net"; and when Dictys is found by the sea, drawing things from it, there is reason to believe that his name reflected his profession - a fisherman, who caught fish by the cast of his net. There is no need to labour the point, however, since Pherecydes of Athens, who is our earliest source for the story of Danae, says that Dictys was fishing with

30. *Mhv.* xxii. 21.

31. *Mhv.* xxii. 20.

32. *Saddharm: loc.cit.*

33. *Rjv. loc.cit.*

his net when he drew them in (αὐτοὺς ἐξέλκει Δίκτυς....διπλοῦν ἄλιεῦν), unmistakably punning on the man's name.³⁴ On the other hand, Hyginus, who explicitly calls Dictys a fisherman (*piscator*) simply says he found (*invenisset*) the chest with them inside, when it was carried ashore (*delata*) at Seriphus. A lost satyr-play of Aeschylus, the *Dictyoulkoi* ("net-haulers") i.e. *Fishermen*,³⁶ apparently dealt with the fishing of the chest from the sea and may have, quite appropriately then, had as its chorus a group of fishermen.

Two tragedies are attributed to Sophocles, the *Akrisios* and the *Danae*, which treat of the mythology involving these two characters.³⁷ Jacobs identified the *Akrisios* with the *Danae*, taking it to be an alternative title, and Weckler tended to agree with him, though he thought the dramatist may have reused the material for the production of a satyr play as well. Euripides also had his *Danae*, which was more famous than that of Sophocles, and of which more extensive fragments survive.³⁸ Brunck considered Sophocles' *Akrisios* the same as his *Larissaei* and that its subject was the accidental killing of Acrisius by Perseus with the throw of his discus. But Pearson tends to agree with Jacobs that the surviving fragments of the *Akrisios* (especially 64 and 65) are more suitable to the story of Danae.³⁹

If this is right, Sophocles' *Akrisios/Danae* treated the story up to the point when Acrisius discovered the birth of Perseus and

34. *apud* Schol. Apoll. Rhod. iv. 1091.

35. *loc.cit.*

36. Wagner *op.cit.* p. 25-26. Wagner is uncertain what the plot of this play could have been. But see Peter Levi (tr. *Pausanias: Guide to Greece* Penguin ed. vol. I (1971) p. 166 n. 94); "The fragments of Aeschylus's satyr play *Diktyoulkoi* are about the box being fished up".

37. On the plot and fragments of these plays see Pearson *op.cit.* p. 38-46 (for the *Akrisios*) and p. 115-117 (for the *Danae*).

38. Wagner *op.cit.* vol. II, p. 154-164.

39. *op.cit.* p. 38. The review of the views of the authorities cited here is from Pearson.

sent mother and child adrift on the Aegean in the chest.

The sufferings which Danae endured upon the sea through her father's cruelty (οἷα δὲ καὶ Δανάη πόντιω ἐνὶ πήματι ἀνέτη / πατρὸς ἀσφαλίῃσι)⁴⁰ touched the hearts of many a poet. One of the longest fragments of Simonides (c. 556-468 c.) is her beautiful lament as she lay in her vessel, cuddling the infant Perseus to her breast, while the winds wafted it over seas in the gloom of night. This fragment is the earliest reference to the vessel in which Danae floated as a *larnax*.

ὄτε λάρνακι κειτ' ἐν δαιδαλέα
 ἀνεμος τέ μιν πνέω ἔφορεῖ
 κινηθεῖσά τε λιμένα,
 δεῖμα προσεῖπε τοι' οὐκ ἀδιάντοιαι παρελαῖς
 ἀμφὶ τὲ Πέρσει βάλεν φιλαν χεῖρ' εἶπέ τ' ὦ τόκος
 οἶον ἔχω πόνον:
 συ δ' ἄωτεῖς γαλαθηνῶ τ'
 ἦτορι κνώσσεις ἐν ἀτερπεῖ
 δούρατι χαλκεογόμφῳ
 νυκτὶ ἀλαμπει κυανέῳ τε ὄνοφῳ ταθείς.

Pherecydes,⁴² and afterwards Apollodorus,⁴³ who followed him, also call the vessel a λάρναξ. It is again a λάρναξ which is the vessel in which Apollonius Rhodius tells us Hypsipyle, queen of the Lemnian women, had floated her father, Thoas, in what could well be a story made by the inversion of the roles of Acrisius and Danae.⁴⁴

40. Apoll. Rhod. iv. 1091-1092.

41. See *Oxford Book of Greek Verse* p. 197, poem 206.

42. *loc.cit.*

43. *loc.cit.*

44. i. 620-626.

Λάρνακι δ' εν κοίλῃ μιν ὑπερθ' ἄλός ἤκε Φερεσθαι
αἶ κε Φυγῆ.

The nature of this vessel gives us our best piece of evidence, and the most interesting at that, of the adaptation of the detail of the floating of Viharadevi from the Greek myth of Danae. For, if we allow for the degree of variation resulting from localization, if not also from the desire to disguise the adaptation - as we have already seen in the substitution, for instance, of an *ekatthambha pasada* and a *cakka* (*cakkrayudha?*) for the tower of Danae and the discus of Perseus respectively in the Princess-in-the-Tower motif)⁴⁵ the *sovannukhaliya*, in which Vihara-devi was put to sea in our *Mahavamsa* story is in design and effect no different from the Λάρναξ of Danae.

Simonides describes the Λάρναξ as a contraption made of planks fitted together with bolts (δούραι χαλκεογόμφω).⁴⁶ Apollonius simply calls it 'hollow' (κοίλῃ).⁴⁷ But this is no help against those who have carelessly conceived of the vessel as an open boat of sorts - even if we must reprimand ourselves too then of talking loosely of a princess in a *boat*.

Λάρναξ is used of the ark or cradle in which children were generally exposed in Greece - though such a thing would hardly have sufficed for putting mother, as well as child, to sea. On the other hand the word is used of a coffer or chest used for keeping household provisions; and it must have been in such an one that Deucalion embarked with his wife, Pyrrha, when the flood occurred in which they alone were saved.⁴⁸ An extremely exciting possibility comes up with the word in the sense of a funerary urn, in which the bones of the dead were placed for burial, for then it

45. See my 'Of Perseus and Pandukabhaya', esp. p. 45-51 and 51-53.

46. *loc.cit.*

47. *loc.cit.*

48. Plut. ii. 968 F. Luc. Syr. D.12, Apollod. *Bibl.* i.7.2. (cf. *Anth.P.* i. 62). Apollodorus (*loc.cit.*) writes, "Deucalion by the advice of Prometheus constructed a chest (Λάρνακα) and having stored it with provisions he embarked in it with Pyrrha". Hyginus *loc.cit.* translates Λάρναξ as *Lt. arca*, which again means a chest or box for keeping things.

would not only enhance Acrisius' action in depositing his daughter and grandson in such a thing, but might imply also that it was an earthenware vessel. For, as we shall see, it was in a large vessel, usually made of clay, a pot, that Vihāradevi was herself set adrift on the ocean. And with Homer talking of a gold one in which the bones of Hector were laid (καὶ τὰ γε (δοτεία) χρυσεῖν ἐς λάρνακι θῆκαν ἑλόντιες)⁴⁹ indeed example of *sovannukkhaliya!*

Two sorts of evidence vitiate against the conception of the *larnax* of Danae as an *urna*, even a funerary urn. The first of these is the evidence that the *larnax* used for the bones of the Athenians, who were the first to die in the Peloponnesian War, were made of wood - to be precise, cypress wood (λάρνακας κυπαρισσίνυας) and each of them large enough to hold the bones of the members of a single tribe, who had died.⁵⁰ The second are the pictorial representations of the λάρναξ in vase-paintings of the scenes from the myth, which show beyond doubt that what the Greeks conceived of the vessel in which Danae was set adrift on the waters of the Aegean sea was a box, not a pot.

Notable among these is a red-figure krater from Caere, the work of the 'Foundry Painter', or maybe the 'Triptolemus Painter', but in any case datable to between 490 and 470 B.C.⁵¹ One of its panels (Plate 1a) shows Danae, seated in profile on an ornate couch, her feet on a footstool, and looking up at the stream of gold which descends from above onto her lap. Satchel and hand-mirror hanging on the wall show she is in her boudoir - but there is nothing to indicate this is in a tower. It is the reverse panel (Plate 1b) that is of relevance to the present study, however. For it shows a

49. xxiv. 795.

50. Thuc. ii. 34.

51. In the Hermitage Museum. Stephani Vasenscml. St. Petersburg ii. p. 281 f. (no. 1723). See, among others, J.E. Harrison and D.S. Maccoll *Greek Vase Paintings* London (1894) p. 25, pl. 34, 1 and 2. E. Gerhard *Danae ein griechischen Vasenbild* Berlin (1854) p. 1-10. See also P. Hartwig *Die Griechischen Meisterschalen der Bluthzeit des strengen rothfigurigen Stiles* Berlin (1893) p. 395 f. J.D. Beazley *Attic Red-figure Vases in American Museums* Cambr. Mass. (1918) p. 94, and Hoppin *Red-figure Vases i.* p. 485 f. no. 17. See also Beazley *Attische Vasenmaler des rotfigurigen Stils* Tübingen (1925) p. 152 f. no. 14, p. 186. Since Danae's feet are not visible below the chest in 1b, it is perhaps suggested she is inside it already.

carpenter with a bow-drill (there is a mallet at his feet) working intently on a *larnax* - here obviously a chest, wider at the top than the bottom and having imitation lion's feet - while opposite him stands Acrisius, right hand outstretched imperiously. On the further side of the chest stands Danae, looking lovingly at an infant Perseus, whom she holds in left arm. Stars spangle the side of the chest - perhaps a stylization of the glint of gold plating. Two other red-figure paintings, one on a *stamnos*, also from Caere (Fig. 1)⁵² the other on a *hydria* now at the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston (Plate 2)⁵³ show the *larnax* no differently, though Acrisius now stands behind the carpenter, and it is a nurse, who, facing them on the opposite side of the chest, carries the infant Perseus.

This unique use of a *larnax* to float the princess of the Greek myth is matched in the *Mahāvamsa* by the equally unique use of a pot - *ukkhaliya*, which, considering this august role it was to play here in a sacrifice to the gods, is made of gold (*sovanna*; *Vamsat: suvannamayaukkhaliya*). This is carelessly rendered a boat (𑀓𑀲𑀢) by the author of the *Rajavaliya*,⁵⁴ but both *Thupavamsa*⁵⁵ and *Saddharmalankaraya*⁵⁶ (perhaps other works as well) rightly translate it as 𑀓𑀲𑀢 a cooking-pot - an inordinately large one, no doubt (𑀓𑀲𑀢, according to the latter), if it was to hold a princess in it.

52. At the Hermitage. Stephani *op.cit.* ii. 139 f, no. 1357.

53. *Bulletin of the Museum of Fine Arts Boston* (1914) xii. 6 fig. See Beazley *Attic Red-figured Vases...* p. 111. It is attributed to the Painter of the Munich Amphora, 2303. Also datable to 490-480 B.C. The nurse carrying the infant Perseus here cannot be the one who was lodged in the tower with Danae; Acrisius killed her (see n. 4 above).

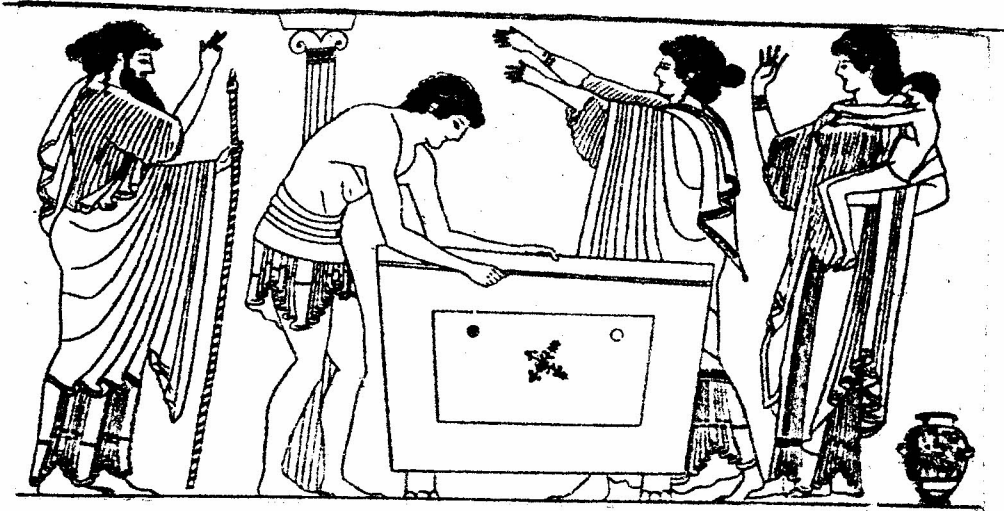
54. *loc.cit.*

55. *loc.cit.*

56. *loc.cit.*

For some time I kept wondering at the nature of this strange vessel - and perhaps anyone would, who had disabused his mind of the notion that it was some kind of boat as the *Rajavaliya* author saw it. No such vessel put to such use as this is to be encountered in the Jātakas and other such literature, from where it could have been adopted by the chronicle's tradition. Considering that it replaced an equally curious vessel in Greek story, I therefore turned - or rather, returned, to the mythology and art of Greece - and there discovered the prototype of Kelanitissa's *sovannukkhalīya*. You will find it in the golden goblet (χρύσειον δέμας) in which the Sun-god, Helios, crossed the ocean every night, sailing from west to east to rise again each morning in the east. It is golden, it merits the Pali term *ukkhalīya*, and it rides upon the waters of the ocean. Apollodorus, following Pherecydes as he did in the story of Danae, tells of how Helios lent Hercules this golden goblet and how the hero, in his quest of the kine of Geryon, rode in it over the seas to Erythia.⁵⁷ Pherecydes apparently added that when Hercules was on the open sea, Oceanos, to make trial of him, caused the goblet to heave wildly on the waves. But the hero threatened to shoot him with his bow, whereupon the god of the sea became afraid and bade him give over.⁵⁸ An interesting red-figure painting from a *kylix*(?) in the British Museum (Fig. 2) shows the hero, club in one hand, bow in the other, and his head peering from between the jaws of the Nemean lion's skin, riding inside a pot-like δέμας. Wavy lines (to indicate waves), fish and sea-weed on the body of the vessel show that it is afloat on the waters of the sea.⁵⁹

-
57. *op.cit.* ii. 5. 10. Stesichorus described the Sun embarking in a golden goblet so that he might cross the ocean in the darkness of the night and come to his mother, wife and children. See Athen. xi. 38. p. 468 E; compare *id.* xi. 16, p. 781 D. The voyage of Heracles in the golden goblet was narrated by the early poets, Pisander and Panyasis, in poems, both called *Heracelia*, which had as their theme the exploits of the hero. See Athen. xi. 38, p. 469 D; cf. Macrob. *Saturn.* v. 21 16 and 19.
58. Athen. xi. 39, p. 470 C-D.
59. The use of huge earthenware jars (πίθοι) for storage of grain, olives, honey, oil etc. was usual in Greece from Minoan and Mycenaean times and more popularly than the use of larnaxes; a considerable number of them survive. Such vessels were associated with jar-burials, even if later used only as grave-markers (e.g. the Dipylon Vase). The practice of burying bones in an urn (after cremation) follows from this. (contd)



(Fig. 1)

It would seem, then, that whoever the author was of the story of the floating of Viharadevi, he has ingeniously replaced the *larnax* of the Danae myth with the *depos* of Helios from the myth of another hero, and one who was even more famous than Perseus. Here then is our *ukkhaliya*, not earthenware but gold (*sovanna*); not of average size but large enough (၁၅၅) to hold a human being; and here is it used as a boat upon the ocean - even tossed about a bit, if it please you.

The festival of the *Pithoigia* ("Opening of the jars") at the Anthesteria may look back to this primitive form of burial. Mythology associates certain heroes with such vessels. Glaucus, son of Minos was found dead in a *pithos*, as certain Cretan seals show; Eurystheus hid in one, when Hercules brought the hell-hound, Cerberus, to him; it was in a *pithos*, not a tub, in which the Cynic, Diogenes, lived. One may justly wonder whether the story of the boiling of the thera in the cauldron was, on the basis of punishment and crime, inspired by the floating of the princess in one.



(Fig. 2)

One thing, however, it must concede to the role it now plays as a counterpart of Danae's *larnax*. And this is that it must be covered over, so that its inmate is 'cabined, cribbed and confined' in it, not riding it with the majesty of a Heracles.

The *Rajavaliya*, as we saw, had called the *ukkhaliya* a 'boat' (ඔරුව). It however makes good its carelessness about the nature of the vessel by supplying this important detail (important to imply that Viharadevi was a prisoner in the vessel), that it was covered by a lid (වියන් පත), and that this had to be removed (වියන් පත එසා විවූවා ඇර.) to rescue the princess within.⁶⁰ For this is just the condition in which we find Danae in her *larnax*, with Hyginus quite clearly saying that when it was carried ashore at Seriphus, it had to be "broken open" (*ea effracta*) to get her (and her infant) out.

60. *loc.cit.*

However, this information is not as late as Hyginus in surfacing with respect to the Greek myth. It is already found in Pherecydes, who had mentioned that Acrisius, when he put Danae and her child in the *larnax*, "shut them in" (κλεισας) - and that when Dictys found it, Danae (from within) "begged him to open it" (ἀνοιξαι ἱκετεύει τὴν λάρνακα); which he did (ἀνοίξας) and found out who they were.⁶¹ The *larnax* in the painting in Plate Ib quite clearly shows a lid, which Acrisius, by his action, A.B. Cook thinks, may be directing the carpenter to close "upon a protesting mother and her unheeding child".⁶² In Plate 2 the lid is evidently closed - or rather, not opened, but it is there all the same. It may have been the absolute darkness within such a coffin-like chest that Simonides makes Danae in her lament speak of as "the black gloom and lightless night" (συκτὶ ὀλαμπεῖ κυανέω τε δνοσῶ) in which her babe lay in her arms.⁶³

There has been a great deal of conjecture as to where in Rohana, the Seriphos of the Sri Lankan story, the princess Vihāradēvi was washed ashore.⁶⁴ The *Mahāvamsa* suggests there was already a vihāra

61. *loc.cit.*

62. *apud* Schol. Apoll. Rhod. iv. 1091.

63. *loc.cit.* T.F. Higham (*The Oxford Book of Greek Verse in Translation* Oxford (1938) p. 205, poem 206; 'Danae') translates
 " wrapt about
 With the darkness of our night
 And the raven gloom without."

64. The place generally identified as where Vihāradēvi put ashore is Kirinde, from whence she was conducted to Tissamaharama. Of the popular alternate location, my friend, Upali Elapatha-Katugaha writes in a letter to me, "There is a lovely shrine called Magul Maha Vihara on the Badulla-Baticaloa road and *not* the more well known shrine outside the Yala park. This shrine is close to Lahugala, where we used to go often to see elephants - a real 'elephants paradise', where one could see anything from 50 to 150 elephants feeding on the rich beru grass growing in the tank. It was a Buddhist monk there who first related to us the story of a Magul Poruwa, where Kavantassa married Vihāra Maha Devi. It was his view that the princess landed at Mudu Viharaya - a temple close on the coast to Potuwil. . . . Now. to make your own study more confounding. Two inscriptions were discovered at Magul Maha Viharaya mentioning a Vihāra (contd.)

in existence at the spot, be it called Lanka or Tolaka or Kotthala, which led to the epithet 'Vihāra' by which Dēvi now came to be known. This seems more plausible as far as the epithet is concerned than that she had to be kept waiting till a vihāra was built on the spot, just to get so-called. Parānavitana, who seems to have rightly had his own doubts about the whole story and thinks the derivation of the epithet itself "can easily be taken as an instance of folk-etymology"⁶⁵ conjectures 'Vihāra' to be a corruption of the name 'Savera' of a southern princess, who, with the courtesy title of 'Abi', had dedicated a number of caves at the site of an ancient monastery now called Kotadamuhela in the Yala sanctuary. Besides, the name 'Kelanika Tisa' itself has been found (as mentioned earlier on) in a fragmentary Brahmi inscription at an ancient site in the south-eastern part of the island, suggesting that the ruler of Kelani, the father of Kakavannatissa's wife, was connected to the rulers of that part of the country.⁶⁶ The *Dhatuvamsa*, a Pali work which has originated in Ruhuna and seeks to restore the image of Kakavannatissa, which has suffered diminution at the hands of the northern chroniclers to the greater glory of his son, Dutthagamani,⁶⁷ gives evidence

Maha Dēvi, the consort of two brother kings named Parakramabahu; the epigraphs are dated by Parānavitana to early in the 14th century. They are published in *Epigraphia Zeylanica* vol. IV. The vihāra was then known as Runu Maha Vihāra The question is, did the monk who gave me the story know of these epigraphs mentioning a Vihāra Maha Dēvi, and did he assume it was Kavantissa's wife? Or is it a genuine legend common in that part of Ruhuna in association with Mudu Maha Viharaya, where the first Vihāra Dēvi is said to have landed?" I have myself viewed these ruins when District Land Officer of the Batticaloa District in 1957 and learn with pleasure that the sites are now properly protected. According to R.A.L.H. Gunawardena, Professor of History at Peradeniya, these more easterly sites are older than those in the Tissamaharama region.

65. UCHC vo. I. pt. II, p. 147 f.

66. *Inscription Register of the Archaeological Dept.* no. 1095.

67. See N.A. Jayawickrema foreword p. x-xiii. This view contradicts Geiger's supposition that the epic of Dutthagamani, which found its way into the *Mhv.* was composed in the south (n.9 above). Malalasekera assigns the *Dhatuvamsa* to the 10th or 11th century (*Pali Literature of Ceylon* p. 256). The Sinhala version, by Kakusandha Thera, according to the consensus of opinion of scholars, may not be earlier than the 13th century.

of further bonds made between these two royal families in order to consolidate the Sinhalese against the foreign invaders. For it says that Kakavannatissa's sister, Somadevi, married Prince Abhaya, the brother of Siva, who was ruling at Kelani, and this Siva may have been the son of Kelanitissa, who, according to the tradition (not found in the *Mahāvamsa*) had lost his life in the inundation caused by his heinous crime of killing the holy thera.

What then are we to make of this story of the princess in her *ukkhaliya* except that it is romantic dressing for what may have been no more than a proposed marriage between two royal families, one from west central Sri Lanka, the other from the deep south, with perhaps a view to strengthening Sinhalese resistance against the Tamils, who were then holding large parts of the island. The ruling house at Kelani not only derived from Anuradhapura but may also have been related to the Kataragama *ksatriyas*, who were the neighbours of King Kakavannatissa, so that the marriage between our Danae and Polydectes, if we may call them these, was actually meant to unite the two rival *ksatriya* families of Rohana.

Knowledge of the Danae myth is traceable in Greece to the earliest of Greek writers, Homer and Hesiod themselves. Homer in the *Iliad* makes Zeus confess that his sexual desire for Hera in that context was even greater than it had been for, among others, "Danae of the slim ankles, Acrisius' daughter, who gave birth to Perseus, the greatest hero of his time".

οὐδ' ὅτε πὲρ Δανάης καλλίσφυρου Ἀκρисиῶννης,
ἢ τέκε Περσῆα πάντων ἀριδείκτιον ἀνδρῶν. (68)

Hesiod, in the *Aspis* refers to "the horseman, Perseus, child of the lovely-haired Danae" (ἐν δ' ἦν ἠῦκόμου Δανάης τέκος, ἵπποτα Περσεύς). (69)

Taken in the context of the familiarity of the myth as shown by succeeding poets and dramatists, it must then have belonged to an antiquity which takes it well beyond the seventh century B.C.

68. xiv. 319-320.

69. vs. 216.

The Andromeda adventure of Perseus is, however, not of the same antiquity - at least no trace of it is to be found in the literature before the fifth century B.C. - and it may be the attempt to graft this and other other adventures, independently accredited to the hero Perseus, on to the story of his sojourn in Seriphus that has led to the discrepancy in the versions concerning Danae's marriage to Polydectes. However, the Andromeda adventure appears to have been well known by the time of the Persian War (480 B.C.), if we are to rely on Herodotus when he says that the Persian king, Xerxes, claimed descent from Perses, son of Perseus and Andromeda. (70)

What then could one make of the romantic story of Vihārādēvi, reflected for the first time in literature in the *Mahāvamsa*, except that it is an admixture of fact and fiction typical of epic, the fact being drawn from the island's history, the fiction based on the motifs of two alien myths that had found their way to the island some time before the writing of the chronicle and woven themselves into the texture of the tradition when it was still oral. The same sort of thing was found true of the Vijaya legend⁽⁷¹⁾ and the birth of Pandukabhaya⁽⁷²⁾ in the researches undertaken by us before this and confirm, in their own way, the likelihood that, consequent on the presence of the Greeks in India in the centuries following the conquest of Alexander, some knowledge of Greek culture had permeated to this island as well.

What is truly exceptional about the Vihārādēvi story, however, is that nothing similar to the two motifs it engages is to be found in any earlier literature, whether Sri Lankan or Indian, and thus that it bespeaks an oral tradition that has found its way to the island, here to become literature for the first time. The story of Cittā and the birth of Pandukabhaya gave us reason to think that its author knew something of the original Greek mythology independent of what was reflected of it in the *Ghata Jataka* and, if you like, the story of the birth of Krishna. The Vijaya legend exhibits more than

70. vii. 150. Traces of Andromeda's fetters were still being pointed out on the rocks at Joppa in the time of Josephus.

71. 'Greek Elements in the Vijaya Legend' *JRAS(SL)* vol. XXVI (1982) p. 43-66.

72. 'Of Perseus and Pandukabhaya'.

one detail that is strikingly parallel with those found in Odysseus' adventure with Circe and yet was unavailable to it from any of the Jataka sources so far identified by scholars. But here in the Viharadevi story we have the ultimate instance of the presence of Greek mythological material in the *Mahavamsa*, of which no part is found in any earlier literary source. This is something for historians to mull over. For my part I would like to credit the intuition of Parnavitana (despite its tragic consequence) that this island in its antiquity had gained its share of acquaintance with the culture of the Classical World that was suddenly accessible to the regions of North-Western India, with which it was then closely associated in kinship and religion.

MERLIN PERIS