

# BALADITYA

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OBAMYIN

INDIA

Before the battle  
of  
KARUR



# BALADITYA

A Historical Romance of Ancient India

BY

A. S. PANCHAPAKESA AYYAR, M.A. (OXON.), I.C.S.

*Author of*

*'Indian After-Dinner Stories, Vols. I and II', 'Sense in Sex  
and Other Stories of Indian Women', etc.*

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DEDICATED TO  
THE MEMORY OF MY BELOVED MOTHER  
WHO LEFT ME WHEN I WAS FIFTY DAYS OLD.  
THE AUTHOR.

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## INTRODUCTION

No apology is needed for writing a historical novel about Ancient India. So few novels exist about this period of India's history that the descendants of the Ancient Hindus feel it very difficult to visualize the outstanding events and personalities of old. No amount of dry historical details will serve the purpose of a novel. A historian writes what he considers to be literal truth, but, by the very nature of his work, he cannot supply his reader with that far higher form of truth, imaginative truth. In his attempts to give us the details about a period, he almost always fails to convey the spirit of the period, a correct impression of what the life of the period was like. It is as if we attempted to describe a man by giving the measurements of his face, nose, tongue, arms, chest, stomach, legs, etc. without giving an idea of his facial expression or character. It is this defect which a historical novel serves to remedy. In England the ancient national heroes Alfred the Great and Hereward the Wake have been made the subjects of novels which bring the reader in active touch with those worthies. But in India though there have been no lack of first-rate national heroes in our ancient history we have not made them the subjects of popular novels. All that our students know of such heroes as Chandragupta Maurya, Asoka, Kanishka, Samudragupta, Chandragupta, Vikramaditya, Yasodharman, Harsha, Mihira Bhoja and Lalitaditya are a series of dates and facts. Of the real men behind the dates and the facts few of our students know. No wonder, then, that these great heroes of old, and no country has produced greater ones, have remained mere names. Still, it is my firm belief that they deserve to be remembered by posterity. Their

characters must be a living inspiration to their descendants. A country's heroes are among its most valuable possessions. They are the heirlooms of the national family to be carefully preserved and fondly cherished. India has honoured the memory of her ancient religious teachers, poets, dramatists, astronomers, grammarians, physicians and philosophers. Buddha, Mahavira, Rama, Krishna, Valmiki, Vyasa, and Sankaracharya; Bhasa, Kalidasa and Bhavabhuti; Brahmagupta, Aryabhatta, Varahamihira and Bhaskaracharya; Panini and Patanjali; Charaka and Susruta; Yagnavalkya, Gargi, Satyakama, Ashvaghosha and even Charvaka; these names were handed down to posterity. Little or nothing of the actual lives of most of even these was recorded. With a supreme indifference to the petty facts of this fleeting life, our ancestors concentrated their attention only on their works, the most permanent part of them. I cannot say that they were wholly wrong. It is no doubt true that we would like to hear the details of the lives of these great men, and perhaps we may understand their works better by having their lives before us. But then, there is a real danger of the details of their lives taking a prior place to their works which is the last thing these great men desired. Again, interpreting their work with the aid of their biographies not infrequently leads to the narrowing of the meaning. Hence, I do not view the lack of biographies so far as these great minds of old are concerned with unmixed sorrow. But I do consider the lack of biographies of India's political heroes as a national calamity, for it led to their undeserved oblivion.

Why did India forget these heroes who played so prominent a part in her ancient history? Four reasons may be given. Firstly, the ancient Hindus never attached much importance to political events. Wars and conquests they considered to be far less important than philosophical discussions since the former affected only this life which they

regarded as transitory whereas the latter affected both this life and the Vast Eternal from which this life and its predecessors and successors emanated. A new thought interested the ancient Hindus more than a new conquest. Alexander must have appeared to them as far less interesting a person than even a third-rate philosopher like Charvaka. Why this furious sweep from one country to another? Had this man really understood the purpose of life and the scheme of the Universe? These must have been the questions asked by them. Not that wars and conquests were in any way wanting in ancient Hindu history. There were plenty and to spare. The vast majority of the men who really counted, the thinkers, worried little about these. They left them to be recorded by some court bard whose heroic lays were forgotten as soon as his master died. No great poet like Valmiki or Vyasa or Kalidasa worried himself with these purely lay wars, devoid of any religious significance. And this in spite of the fact that some of them, like Kalidasa, were court poets. The very Kings who patronized them agreed with them in their opinion!! It is no accident that Kalidasa wrote a *Kumarasambhava* but never a *Chandraguptavijaya* or even a *Samudraguptadigvijaya*. Secondly, the old Hindu Kings confined their wars to warriors, and never molested the priests, poets, philosophers, astronomers, physicians, grammarians and farmers. So the normal life of the country was not disturbed seriously by wars. One King superseded another, but the people never seriously cared so long as he left them undisturbed. This very non-disturbance of life was an important element contributing to the forgetting of the political heroes. It is significant that when conquests began to disturb people's lives violently, as the Muhammadan conquest of Muhammad of Ghori, Indians began to remember something more of their political heroes. Prithvi Raja earned a place in the nation's memory, and a great work, *Prithvi Raja Rasau*, was

written by Chand Bardi and became very popular. Chandragupta Maurya would have become equally popular if Alexander had completed his brutal conquest of India and changed the life of her peoples.

Thirdly, the political heroes left no permanent work behind like the poets, philosophers, grammarians, physicians and astronomers. The work of the latter was permanent and had a value for all time, but not so political work from its very nature. The empires founded by Chandragupta Maurya and Samudragupta lasted but for a few decades, and what were decades in India's calculation of time by Yugas and Kalpas?

Fourthly, India had a very high ideal even from the dawn of her history. Measured by that ideal, her historical heroes were found to be wanting. Ancient India's great minds stuck to their ideal and scorned to record the achievements of these petty heroes or cherish their memories. The conquest of the three worlds was a famous ideal with them and sometimes it became even the conquest of the fourteen worlds. What were the conquests of Chandragupta Maurya or Samudragupta compared to these conquests? Did they not but conquer one small portion of one of the fourteen worlds? Did they merit a place by the side of the conquerors of the fourteen worlds? Certainly not. Again, even Bharata of old had ruled all India from the Himalayas to Cape Comorin, and the whole country had been named Bharatavarsha after him. What were these Chandraguptas and Samudraguptas who were not even able to bring the whole of Bharatavarsha under one Umbrella? The political dismemberment of Bharatavarsha appeared to the ancient Indians as a falling-off from ancient ideals, and poor Chandragupta and Samudragupta were found fault with for not restoring a united Bharatavarsha instead of being praised for preparing for it.

Modern India cannot afford to consign back to oblivion her ancient heroes who have been rediscovered by much

patient research mostly by western scholars to whom we cannot be sufficiently grateful. The heroes of the past deserve a place in the heart of every Indian for they rendered yeoman service to the cause of the country in its hours of supreme need, and they also supply the necessary ideals for the growing generation. It is with the object of making two of these heroes, Baladitya and Yasodharman, familiar to every Indian that this book is primarily written.

In writing this novel, I have been more particular in representing what I consider to be the true spirit of the age rather than in sticking to historical facts even in details. A novelist is not bound to adhere to minute historical facts. Hence it is that out of seventy characters who figure in this novel, only four or five are definitely historical. The rest are of my own creation.

The period of which this novel treats was one of the most momentous in Indian History. A prosperous and powerful empire, that of the Guptas, was overthrown by a horde of fierce barbarians who had no civilization or religion of their own. The Huns are perhaps the only conquerors of India who did not contribute anything to her culture. Their sole work at first was a stupid destruction of the precious art monuments of the Gupta empire. But soon the barbarians became Hinduized. The process began even with Toramana who called himself a Maharaja after the Indian fashion. His son Mihiragula became a worshipper of Siva, and in two generations the Huns became merged in the Hindus like their predecessors the Sakas, the Kushans and the Yuehchis. The combination of Hunnish valour with Hindu chivalry gave rise to the Rajput warrior who in his best days reached the ideal of an honourable warrior. Thus out of evil came good, out of the blood-thirsty Huns came the Rajput warrior. The Gupta emperors had been administering the land so peacefully for a hundred and fifty years that the citizens had forgotten the art of defending

themselves. When the mighty empire fell and its armies were defeated by the barbarians, the common people knew not what to do. The Western provinces submitted to the invaders till the horrible tyranny of Mihiragula, so graphically narrated by Kalhana, led to the league under Yasodharman which finally overthrew the tyrant at Karur and sent him to distant Kashmir. Modern Indians, like the Indians under the Gupta Empire, have enjoyed unbroken peace for so long that they are also in danger of forgetting how to defend themselves. Fortunately, attempts are now being made to impart military training to those desirous of acquiring it and thus a serious prospective danger is being slowly averted. Let us hope that by the time the next horde of barbarians invades India from the north-west, the weakest link in her mountain frontier supplied by nature, Indians will not be found wanting as their predecessors under the Guptas were.

THE AUTHOR