



TAPESTRY OF WOMEN IN INDIAN MYTHOLOGY

poems



Edited by

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Foreword **DEV DUTT PATTANAİK**



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MALASHRI LAL

Manthara Dasi

Could I close my ears to those barbs—
'Koobra, hunchback, shame, oh shame'
Crooked, so I was born
The ugliest of women where beauty is praised
Mocked, derided as 'kunjo'
As though I bore a crooked soul.

Yet I loved—like a mother
I loved Kekayi and desired the best
For her.
Kingdom, fame, wealth and love
A perennial cornucopia,
She found it too, marrying Dashrath.
I wanted more for her
The supreme power of Queen Mother
The hunchback's wisdom
Observation, acuteness didn't fail me
And Kekayi, obedient daughter
Asked for her boons
Kingdom for Bharat, and Rama's exile.

Horror! The sublime dream turned into infernal curse
People pelted stones on my back,
Shouting 'koobra', 'kunjo'
My daughter shut her door against me
I slunk into a hovel to save my life
Slept among worms and putrid soil
Bereft of care or sympathy
Hated, reviled for my ugliness

What wrong did I in protecting my child?
Doesn't every mother dream of a princess, a queen?

Radha's Dilemma

The Palace messenger said Krishna is grievously ill.
Only feet-washed water from a beloved would heal Him.
Is it true that Rani Rukmini and all the sixteen hundred
wives refused,
Saying it's a grievous sin to
Feed their *charanamrit* to a Husband ?
Curse would fall upon a woman for insulting her *Patidev*.

Radha mused
God needs a cure
The World runs by His Command.
I'm neither His wife nor a woman of social power
My love for *Murli Manohar*
Is unconditional
If my feet-washed water will heal Him
This is my service to my eternal beloved.

Here, messenger, take this small offering of water
Humbly sent,
It touched the skin of one on whom
He bestowed endless Touch.