

KING PANDUKABHAYA

The second ruler

The second ruler of Sri Lanka was King Panduvasudeva, the nephew of Vijaya. Panduvasudeva married Baddha-Kacchayana, an extremely beautiful princess from India. The couple had ten sons, the eldest of whom was named Abhaya, and one daughter named Chitra.

When a sage prophesied that Chitra would bear a son who would kill nine of his uncles and claim the throne, nine of Chitra's brothers told King Panduvasudeva to have her killed. However, Abhaya would not allow it and Chitra was spared. She married a prince named Digha-Gamini (who, incidentally, was her cousin) and had a son, who was named Pandukabhaya.

The exchange of babies

Chitra and Digha-Gamini had been made aware of the prophesy at the time of their marriage and had promised to put to death any son that Chitra gave birth to. However, once Pandukabhaya was born, Chitra was unwilling to kill the infant, and so she decided to exchange babies with another woman who had given birth to a baby girl that same day.

Chitra announced to her father and husband that she had given birth to a girl. Only her mother, Baddha-Kacchayana, knew of the secret exchange.

The woman who gave up her daughter took Prince Pandukabhaya to a nearby village called Dvaramandalaka where he would be brought up as a herdsman's son.

The attempts on Pandukabhaya's life

The first threat to Pandukabhaya's life came while he was being transported to Dvaramandalaka. The woman who had exchanged infants with Chitra carried Prince Pandukabhaya to the village in a covered basket. Unfortunately, she ran into nine of Chitra's brothers (the ones who had wanted their sister to be murdered for fear that her child would kill them). They asked her what she had in the basket and she replied that it contained food. Not satisfied with the answer, they asked her to open up the basket and show them its contents. Luckily, two wild boars happened to run past them, and they forgot about the basket in their eagerness to hunt the animals down. The baby was delivered to the herdsman safely.

That same year, King Panduvasudeva died and Abhaya became his successor. He was not a great king, but he was certainly a kind one and he was well-loved, especially by the poor.

Several years went by and when Pandukabhaya was about seven years old, rumours reached his nine uncles about a boy in Dvaramandalaka who supposedly was a herdsman's son, but who showed all signs of being of royal background. They suspected that this child may be their sister's son, because they had reason to believe that the little girl who was being brought up as a princess in the palace was not Chitra's daughter. They sent out people to kill all boys in the village who were around the same age as their nephew.

It was known that all the boys of Dvaramandalaka bathed at a certain pond, and it was planned that they should be killed while they were bathing. The plan was executed and several young children were murdered. Pandukabhaya, however, had been hiding at the time, and so he escaped death.

While Pandukabhaya's uncles were satisfied at the time that they had eliminated their nephew, some years later they became suspicious again when they heard stories of a village boy who looked more like a prince than a herdsman's son. They attempted to have him killed again, and the attempt failed once more.

When Pandukabhaya was about sixteen years old, Princess Chitra, fearing for her son's safety, arranged to have him live with a Brahman named Pandula.

Once he was old enough to become king, Pandukabhaya left Pandula, married his cousin Pali and fought his uncles to claim his right to the throne. Eight of his ten uncles perished in the war, which lasted for seventeen years. Abhaya, who had never fought against Pandukabhaya, and Girikandasiva, who was Pali's father, were not killed.

Pandukabhaya was a good king and reigned over Sri Lanka for seventy years, leaving the country in a prosperous state when he died.