



Translation

Harishchandra: The Truth Incarnate

(Translation of Nautanki Satyavadi Harishchandra into English)

Ravindra Pratap Singh
Characters

Indra

King of gods in Hindu religious tradition

Harishchandra

King of Kashi

Premier

Prime Minister to Harishchandra

Vishwamitra

A Sage

Vashistha

A Sage

Sadhu

Vishwamitra disguised as *Sadhu*

Brahmin

Vishwamitra in Disguise

Tara

Harishchandra's better half and queen

Rohit

Harishchandra's son

Initiation

Just relax and wait, have a seat dear friend,

I narrate a wonderful tale.

Its virtuous rays when beam their glow,
fades away evil, and all pangs of pain,

It saves one from humdrum lenience,
and purges the evils of misconduct.

Yes, it redeems us, in flash, the biggest
of the sins.

None so truthful ever I found,
for what to balance this age, in vain, it
shines.
People indulge in theft, they conspire
and graft,
A brother assails the other, siblings
harm- just see!
A reflection ever haunts my mind and
soul-
For our countrymen how can I make a
ingenuous start?
So I deliberate, I recall, and find a
sagacious soul,
who never compromised truth, and for
protecting truth.
he relinquished the empire and clan,
went for a paltry job at *Shamshan*-the
graveyard.
People call him Harishchandra,
Tara his consort, and Rohit the son.
Vishwamitra felt envious of
Harishchandra's fame,
and planned to validate it all.

SCENE: ONE

¹Indra's Court

Narration: *A pleasant morning, Guru Vashistha, reaches the court of Indra, and talks about the virtues of Harishchandra. Indra feels jealous. Coincidentally Vishwamitra also reaches there, the same time. Indra requests him to investigate the veracity of Harishchandra's glory and magnitude, devising a test whatsoever.*

*What happens next - let's perceive
Here it is offered in dramatic form.*

¹ In Hindu mythology, Indra is the King of gods.

(Indra is seated on his throne. Heavenly artists are performing dance)

Gate Keeper: Hail to Devraj! Trepidation to enemies!
Indra: Come in, clearly tell the fact.
Gate Keeper: *Rishi* Vashistha has arrived, My Lord!
If Your majesty permits, Should I fetch him in.
Indra: Of course, go and fetch him with due regards
Gate Keeper: *(Offering his obeisance)* Sure, my Lord!
Indra: *(Addressing the performing Apsaras²)*
Rambha, Urvashi and Tilottma³!
Disperse, you all, for now.

(Rambha and others depart. Sage Vashistha enters. Everybody greets him, arising from their seats).

Indra: Please have a seat!
Please recline! *(with folded hands)*.
Here, the king of gods bows!
Blessed I feel,
and so does the empire, *Maharishi*⁴!
From where does your grace arrive?
Vashistha: O, king of gods! Be blessed, and prosper, profuse.
Straight I come from a kingdom great-
That is a Harishchandra's ingenuous state.
Indra: Wonderful! Should I believe the fact-
That there's a truthful state!

² In Hindu mythology a celestial nymph

³

⁴ An expression for a great saint. It is a cultural term, and no equivalent is available in English. Such words cause problem while translating. So, such words have been put in italics.

The *Trilok*⁵ I see without a truthful
Soul,
I doubt there any trusting soul,
And so my senses complain.
Vashistha: King, any sham I never I have state;
always the verity, I narrate.
He lives in truth,
acts the truth,
performs the truth-
I've seen it; so I assert.

(Vishwamitra arrives. He receives due obeisance. By his mystic powers, understands the erstwhile development.)

Vishwamitra: Well, I know it too well- you are plain-
And you have never spoken a lie.
But it's like finding a mare's nest
Just fly-by-night, thinking ingenious
someone a mortal, who there in
Martyalok resides.
I doubt.
Never found someone so across the
*Trilok*⁶.

Vashistha: Just do one thing-
If you don't believe- go and test him,
You'll find indisputable, every inch.

Vishwamitra: Never call my patience on the test,
Whetting the anger would never bring a
chill.

If my irritation meets the form of rage,
You'll repent, just you'll repent.
Vashistha: Never do I speak absurdly, hey saint!
You know it too well; I mean what I say.
If you ever feel like testing the fact,

⁵ Three worlds- Dev Lok, Mrityu Lok and Paataal Lok

⁶ The Mratyu Loka, The Swarga Loka, and The Paatal loka, three habitats of creatures in Hindu mythology.

Why not you just make a move?
I'm sure,
King Harishchandra will never buzz.
Vishwamitra: So confident if you sound;
I will, of course, do,
I'll see-
How does he take the test, that I plan.
(Vishwamitra departs crossly)
Vashistha: *(Arising)* Well, Devraj⁷. Now I'll take
your leave.

(Everybody offers obeisance. Vashistha departs)

SCENE: TWO

Harishchandra's assembly: Early Hours in the Night

(King Harishchandra is presiding over the procedure, a sentry rushes in)

Sentry⁸ *(Paying obeisance)* Jai Ho. Be fear to
enemies!
Your Excellency! I see hurly- burly at the
gate.
The royal gardener wants to appear before
you, my Lord!
Harishchandra: Call him accordingly,
Sentry: *(Bows in respect)* Positively my master!
(The royal gardener arrives)
Gardener: Excellency! See my appearance, riff-raff,
Please decode it all,
How should I spell- what's happened
untoward?

⁷ King among gods, Name of Indra

⁸ Sentry word is English, but it has been adapted in Hindi. In Hindi folk expression, to which this folk text belong, the word Sentry is written as *Santari*. In the present case *Santari* word has been translated as Sentry.

A boar, mighty King, a boar suddenly appeared,
 And made our garden threshed.
 The royal lawns turn withered slouch,
 As the hog cluttered the fauna and flora
et al.

Harishchandra: Let it go, if the lawn goes arid,
 Let it go if the vegetation decent,
 never has it suited-robbing of a life;
 But, wait, when the cordon of night is
 unveiled- he'll fail to save his verve,
 whosoever.
 Just wait for the Sun.

Gardener: Excellency! And you command for me?

Harishchandra: Go, and have a proper rest,
 I'll see with the rays of the dawn
 that the perpetrator departs this world.

Gardener: (*Paying obeisance*) No doubt, my Lord!
 (*departs*)

Harishchandra: (*addressing the Prime Minister*) Mr.
 Premier!

Premier: My Lord!

Harishchandra: Raise the guards for seizing up the lawns,
 by the time the Sun sucks up dark.

Premier: For sure my Lord!

(*the assembly adjourns*)

SCENE-THREE Early the next Morning

Harishchandra and his forces have cordoned off the royal gardens.

Harishchandra: Kill the Boar will seek accolades.
 Letting it go will be a catastrophe

Soldiers: Of course, Maharaj⁹! In no way will the
 Boar escape,

⁹ Used here for Emperor.

In no time, our arrows will slake their fate.

(The forces take their position tactfully. The Boar jumps over. The lights turn off on stage. In the backdrop, the noise of 'trap and kill', 'catch and kill' is heard. A big hullabaloo is observed. Again, a flashlight streaks on the stage. The boar¹⁰ is seen, and the soldiers chase him.)

Narrator: The Boar takes the wrong course; chasing it, Harishchandra reaches the river bank.
(Suddenly, the boar disappears.)

SCENE: FOUR
Bank of the Ganges

Vishwamitra appears in the guise of a Brahmin

Harishchandra: Greetings, revered Brahmin!
May like to share some clues of a Boar,
If you have seen it coming this way.

Vishwamitra: Torturing an animal is how far fair?
It upsets our ecosystem.
Leave it all, and come on,
The moon shines complete today,
Bring forward *Daan* my way.
It's a propitious time, don't waste for the game.
Take a dip in the Ganges' flow,
And let the delaying mood go.
You'll execute on Brahmin's hopes so.

Harishchandra: I forgot, it's the full moon today!
Linger a spell, let me take a bath.
But, nothing I have to offer at this instance,
Holy man, no idea what to pledge?

Vishwamitra: You have nothing!

Harishchandra: Nothing but the keys of royal reserves.

Vishwamitra: If nothing else, your belonging makes,

¹⁰ (Animals) an uncastrated male pig

Harishchandra: Let these keys be your pledge partake.
It sounds great, holy man. Please accept these.

(Harishchandra offers the keys. Sadhu accepts it with a smile.)

Vishwamitra: Thanks, but *Dakshina*¹¹ for this *daan*¹²?

Harishchandra: Of course, please speak; I'll fulfill your wish.

Vishwamitra: Not much I wish for,
Yellow metal 60 thousand will *make dakshina*.

Harishchandra: Gracious Brahmin!
Just 60 thousand coins¹³!
You don't want more?

Vishwamitra: The more is meaningless, Maharaj¹⁴!
Sixty thousand would suffice my daughter's nuptials.

Harishchandra: Fine, grace my abode.
Here is a promise for 60 thousand.

(The king and Brahmin reach the royal palace. The retinue bends)

Harishchandra: Please, noble Brahmin, have a seat.
In no time, I am paying off dues
(Dictates the Prime Minister) Mr. Premier!

Premier: Your Highness!

Harishchandra: Bring 60 thousand gold coins, and offer them to the Maharaj.

Vishwamitra: O, hello, I can't make sense;
Which treasury are you referring to?

Harishchandra: Fair enough, the treasury of the state
Maharaj!

Vishwamitra: Good job! Wow truthful!
Once you've given away the keys in *daan*,

¹¹ Offering in complement to charity.

¹² Charity

¹³ Used for Hindi word "*Swanra Mudra*"-the Gold Coins.

¹⁴ Here the word Maharaj is used for a Noble Brahmin.

Harishchandra: How can you claim control?
(thoughtfully astonished) Yes, you are right.

Vishwamitra: It's not me but you who owns the treasury.
 Then, alright,
 Offer me Dakshina or express your inability
 So that I could move homeward.

Harishchandra: How can I drift from the truth?
 Don't fret, come may what,
 Unquestionably, I'll pay the *Dakshina*,
 As promised.

Vishwamitra: Well, set off to manage by any means.
 Don't ravage time.

Harishchandra: *Maharaj, please* take it easy.
 I'll be back, conferencing with the queen,
 in next to no time
 I will shell out the *Dakshina* due.

Vishwamitra: Sanctioned, but speed up.

Harishchandra: Clear in your mind, *Maharaj*¹⁵ *(departs)*

(Tara is seen on the other side of the palace. She looks alarmed. Rohit approaches her and gets amazed)

Rohit: Why do you feel distressed, Mom?
 What causes you to be anxious, and so
 helpless you look?

Tara: Where to start the cause of concern
 I don't know, my child, why do I feel
 distraught?
 It's an impulsive dream unpleasant.
 That makes me torn.
 It's a vista where a saint,
 in malice, usurps our throne,

15

A king or prince in India ranking above a raja, especially the sovereign of one of the former native states

We move like a pauper, learning it all,
 You, my son, are famished a lot.
 Numbness makes my body feel,
 And the heart fully sinks at its flaws
 My regent since then, I am at a loss.
 May the Almighty maintain,
 I'm famished.

Rohit: Dreams seldom come true, *Maa!*
 Nothing is going to happen so,
 You're shedding tears in vain,
 drop the doubts far aside,
 Come on, give me a loving hug!
 It's not fair, *maa*¹⁶ You're losing patience
(Harishchandra enters)

Harishchandra: Your dream comes true, my sweet consort.
 I was a king yesterday, now as a beggar I
 stand. Since Palmy days we have spent,
 now, just passing 'today', thinking the days
 are imminent.

Tara: *(uneasily)* Please speak again! Has my
 dream turned into a nightmare?

Harishchandra: It did, Tara, the dream twisted valid. The
 context, I narrate:
 Chasing the Boar, I reached river riverbank
 and found a saint over there.
 For charity, he pushed for.
 In custom, I pledged and took my bath.
 It was the key of the Royal treasury,
 all that I had,
 following the *Dharma*, without a pang,
 I gave them away in *Daan*¹⁷.
 The saint wished for 60 thousand gold
 coins more,
 as *Dakshina*,¹⁸
 With a promise to pay, I took him here,

¹⁶ Mother

¹⁷ Charity

¹⁸ A part of the *Daan* (Charity)

It was an ill omen.
I sensed, what right do I claim?
Over the reins and wealth of the state?
The saint now exerts all sway over royal
treasure.
Dear Tara!
Losing the empire is not my
apprehension's cause;
I'm helpless in paying *Dakshina*- It pains
me a lot.

Tara: Don't be anxious, relax, my Lord!
My necklace comes greater than coins
-60 thousand.
Offering it to the *Sadhu*¹⁹
Shed the distress off.

Harishchandra: That's the issue-don't you think- the
necklace is the property of the state,
neither mine nor yours.
It is now an asset, now to the gracious saint.

Tara: But, my Lord! It is my father's gift,
The necklace is solely mine.
Come on, don't delay.
(*The family approaches the saint*)

Vishwamitra: If you intend for offering *Dakshina*²⁰,
come and make it fast.
Delay sounds void,
If you feel unable, state it plainly,
no use pretending.

Harishchandra: Drifting from the promise,
Impossible until I respire ultimate.
Death, I prefer to deviate from the right
path.

Tara: Believe me,
I'm happy to know my lord's charity for
the state.
Your *Dakshina* is left - here it fulfills-

¹⁹ Saint

²⁰ Offerings after charity, a kind of charity in Hinduism

Vishwamitra: I offer my necklace -please have it.
How come?

Tara: It is the owner alone who uses the property.
Right, Sir, but the necklace is my father's gift, not my husband's.

Vishwamitra: Gracious queen!
Your father has offered not the necklace alone
but you too, tell me,
Does he still own you?
Am I wrong, saying:
You owe only your husband.

Tara: Maharaj²¹! A husband always exerts his rights over the wife.

Vishwamitra: If so, in the case that a husband has his right over the wife, nothing but logically Harishchandra commands his rights over the jewelry and other belongings, including this necklace. By virtue of me, as the recipient of the charity, not only the empire, but every item of the state, comes to me. Come on, prompt- the three of you. Give up your jewelry and the royal clothes. Manage to pay *Dakshina*, and get in the *Bhagwa* clothes.

Harishchandra: Dear Tara, Maharaj is right. Just shed off these clothes and ornaments (*Tara, Harishchandra, and Rohit give up their royal clothes and jewelry and put on the cheap minimum*)

Vishwamitra: Well! Now offer the *Dakshina* and choose the path whatever you like.

Harishchandra: Maharaj, now you own us. May like to collect *Dakshina* by selling us.

Vishwamitra: (*Surprisingly*) Repeat, you want to pay by selling yourselves!

²¹ Here used for husband.

Harishchandra: (*addressing Vishwamitra*). Maharaj, there is no way out.

Vishwamitra: Well, but where to put you on sale?
You have ruled over the state....

Harishchandra: That is the point, but I have never claimed my influence over Kashi, the town of Lord Shiva.
Let's move over there, so I can pay my debt by selling us.

Vishwamitra: Your wife and son are also prepared for the auction?

Tara: (*Interrupting*) Unquestionably, I am already of a mind to be sold just for paying the liability of my husband. Come on, saint, don't delay.

Vishwamitra: (*Addressing Rohit*) And you?

Rohit: Why to qualm if being sold for paying father's obligation,
I'm ready even to die for the cause, hurry up Maharaj, please.

Vishwamitra: Well then, just move.
If you are ready to be sold,
clasp it as the royal plan, and move.

Rohit: Are you really concerned for our pleasure and pain or simply aim at realizing the *Dakshina*! Come on, Maharaj, why to delay.

Vishwamitra: (*Loudly beckons his disciple*)
Moorkhanand²², my child!

Moorkhanand: (*the disciple responds in tatters and appears*)
I'm here *Guruji*.

Vishwamitra: Listen carefully, take them to Kashi, and manage 60 thousand gold coins, selling them off.

²² There is no mythological evidence of this character. It has certain folk comic vibrations.

Moorkhanand: *Guruji!* It does not sound appropriate moving from here. Please you may like to marshal the task.

Vishwamitra: Not appropriate! But why?

Moorkhanand: So simple *Guruji!* Here, everything is in dole drum! The system will collapse without me. I have to put things a right.

Vishwamitra: Which system, what is detracted?

Moorkhanand: So simple, gentleman, many *Dharamshalas*²³ function here, that need to be turned into the alehouses. In lieu of fine steed, donkeys need to be taken for general transport. The art- premises need to be turned into brothel.

Vishwamitra: *Moorkhanand!* You remained just a blockhead, what prospects do ye see in doing all this.

Moorkhanand: (*surprisingly*) *Guruji* don't you reckon the benefits? Big dividends! Please allow me to share. If the *Dharamshalas* are closed the free eaters will return to work, so state's revenue would be saved. Ale houses at their places shall add to state income. Secondly, finding Donkeys for the steed is for their low cost of maintenance. In battle field also the donkey riding soldier would hit at the enemy from the front, and the donkey will follow the course with the hind feet, and thirdly. . . .

Vishwamitra: Stop nonsense, and follow what I say (*Dictates whispering in his ear*)

Moorkhanand: Nodding, Got it *Guruji*²⁴, got it well. (*Addressing Harishchandra and family*) You trio, Follow me. (*The three follow him*)

²³ Inns made for the pilgrims

²⁴ Preceptor

Harishchandra: The nation no longer promises shelter,
neither food.
What owed allegiance till the movement
past,
now keeps no charm.
The mirth incarnate- my son,
It's this all- this all -
all set to bear the blows black.

Rohit: My feet, now, refuse to move,
Excruciating pain they do shoot
Within the twinkling of eyes, you know,
I feel, I'll lose my life.
Now it is unbearable.

Harishchandra: From where to manage potable water,
Almighty!
Keep patience, my child, let me search for
it.
Some hill appears nearby; it may have
some source there.
Let's move and manage a draught, for son.

Moorkhanand: (*addressing Rohit*) Child! How come have
you thought for dying
Without paying the dues? (*Offering
Kamandal²⁵ to Harishchandra*) Take it,
there is some water in it, drinks yourself,
and offers it to your child and queen as
well.

Harishchandra: Sorry Maharaj! Neither I'll drink the water
nor offer it to them.

Moorkhanand: You won't drink my water! Do I stand
untouchable?

Harishchandra: Not at all, Maharaj! In fact, I already owe a
lot, how come I commit a sin further. It
leads to the punishment for hell by
consuming a Brahmin's water.

Moorkhanand: I see!

²⁵ A pot (like jug) for carrying water generally used by saints in India

Anyway, if you don't want to have my water, go and bring some, and make him drink. I won't object.

Harishchandra: *(To Rohit)* Let's . . . my son, let's move anyhow up to the mound, and drink some water there.

Rohit: Father, but I am unable to move even a step more.

Harishchandra: Come into my lap. *(Takes Rohit in his lap)*

Moorkhanand: Veracious Harishchandra! What an irony! You've taken the child up in the lap, and make me move on feet. Now you move alone, if you feel like, I'm not going to buzz even a step. Yes, an option is there if you want me to perform, step him down, and walk along taking me in your lap.

Harishchandra: But, Pious Soul!

Moorkhanand: *(interrupts)* No ifs and buts, if you want to take me, come on and do as I said, otherwise pay off the *Dakshina* here and now.

Harishchandra: *(addressing Tara)* Tara, may you take Rohit in your lap, I'm picking up Maharaj *(addressing Moorkhanand)* Come on Maharaj!

(Makes him seated on his back, and walks on, slowly)

Narrator: They have entered the town of Kashi.

SCENE: FIVE

A Market at Kashi²⁶

Harishchandra: We are on sale, please buy-whoever intends, They two on sale, I've brought wife and son. They won't deny!
Folk, whatever be the job; we are hardship torn. This queen- maid turned, shall all chores perform, and this loving son shall become a crony;
no complain ever this slave would make,
It's just ill luck; this moment has struck.
(*A harlot appears*)

Harlot: Oye! Is this beauty on sale? Tell me the price, don't delay.

Harishchandra: Why to delay, if you're a genuine buyer.
Go, bring twenty thousand gold coins in cash she would be yours.

Harlot: Definitely, I will pay twenty thousand gold, just follow me to my *Kotha*²⁷.

Harishchandra: You simply ask one to follow,
Why don't you introduce first.

Harlot: A celebrated harlot here I stand,
Never should your smell a rat.
Wait, I'm just coming.
(*The harlot departs*)

Tara: O God! What's my sin that I stand for sale facing a harlot? Is it an enigma or your plan that a queen is set to become a harlot. If to her I am sold, oh God, who, in you, shall keep faith. Nobody will ever remember you;
Neither will you be known as the savior of the world.

²⁶ The City of Benaras, Varanasi.

²⁷ Used for Brothel in Urdu, Hindi

(Suddenly appears *Dharma*²⁸ in the guise of a *Seth*²⁹)

Seth: You want to sell her, if so, pronounce the rate,
In search of a maid here I stand,
tell the price without getting late.

Harishchandra: Coins twenty thousand golden she does cost.
If it suits come on, make purchase,
Yes please note, less than that, the deal would lost.

Tara: As fate is making me a maid,
Do a small favour more.
Save this child from mother's separation,
Buy him too, paying ten thousand more.

Seth: Well, if you urge, I purchase the child too.
Here are coins ten thousand.
(By the time the harlot returns, the deal has been finalized)

Harlot: Take it and count twenty thousand coins gold!
I'm rushing for home.
Offer me the Beauty, where is she?"

Moorkhanand: Sorry, the beauty is sold, the child as well.
This matador *(indicating Harishchandra)* stands,
He'll do everything, accept him in lieu.

Harlot: Of what use this musketeer stands?
What the hell, would he sleep with customers?
(She leaves the street muttering, appears another customer, named Kalua.)

Kalua: Kalua they call me,
I'm born in *Bhangi*³⁰ clan,

²⁸ A god, keeper of good and truth in Indian mythology

²⁹ A businessman

³⁰ A caste name in Indian caste system. Mostly they were sweepers.
Now a scheduled caste under the Constitution of India

Moorkhanand: I need this man; proclaim the rate.
Stand apart, speak from a distance,
you graveyard's Lord.
If really you want to purchase, offer gold,
in coins,
that too thirty thousand.

Kalua: (*Offering the money*) Here it is thirty
thousand coins of gold
(*to Harishchandra*) and hello, why you still
stand still? Come along.
Oh yes! You haven't told your name how I
would address you?

Harishchandra: Sir, people call me Harishchandra.

Kalua: Nice name, but sounds quite big!
If I address you Hariya, hope you won't
object.

Harishchandra: Not at all.
(*Aside*) If the loss of kingship, wife and son
could not affect, how would this paltry
change do?

Kalua: All right then.
Look, Hariya, I am a *Bhangi*, and reside on
the graveyard. You, too, will stay over
there, doing an alert job. You have to take
the tax from whosoever brings corpse,
Oh yes, once in a blue moon, our job
warrants the task for hanging the culprits.

Harishchandra: Sure, sir got it.

Kalua: Handing over a bamboo stick. Let's leave.
(*Moorkhanand and Kalua depart*)

Moorkhanand: Good, the deal is done!
The client is alive
or he's no more,
It makes occasion for a nice feast
Be it *Pooja*³¹, or *Barahi*³² be

³¹ A religious rite in Hindu household.

³² Celebration on the 12th day of the child birth in some Hindu families
in North India.

Be it *Terahi*³³ or foundation of a home,
 Be it reception or a *bon voyage*
 There should be some nice feast.
 Be it *Mundan*³⁴ or *Yagyopaveet*³⁵
 be it some offering great,
 A Brahmin is pleased, when belly is full.
(Vishwamitra enters irately)
Vishwamitra: You remained just a moron.
 Even my company couldn't help you.
 Simply filling up the belly-all your
 business count.
Moorkhanand: What happened to them? Answer.
 Take a chill pill, lord. Selling away wife
 and the son,
 he, in a go, sold himself.
 Thus, and he paid off the remaining dues.
 Truthful was he, and remained, till the end.
 He has put us all ashamed, oh Guru!
Vishwamitra: Never shall I accept defeat; I'll attack
 through all means. So furious I'll become,
 that it'll break erstwhile horrible
 landmarks. *(Departs)*

SCENE: SIX The House of Seth

Tara is shown washing dishes

Tara: Now tears chase my vision to naught,
 The pleasant days are past.
 Who had minions at beck and call,

³³ A purgation feast on the 13th day of the death of a person. A Hindu rite in North Indian Hindu households.

³⁴ A *samskara*. The first shaving off the head of a child in Hindu families.

³⁵ A *samskara*. A sacred thread is put on by a child in Hindu family. On this day traditionally a Brahmin used to go for Vidya in Gurukuls.

now spends her days on petty falls.
Whom the heavenly charms couldn't apart,
just for a morsel her fortune rests.

Sethani³⁶: I observe from the very first day you have
stepped into this household, nothing but
tears, in shower flow.
You are shirking from all the work
Just for unwanted spans of working duties.

Tara: The work you gave is fully finished
I never shirk from work, Mistress!
It does not sense you blame in vain,
Its just aversion I guess.

Sethani: I don't find words to express,
You so impertinent.
The saying holds cent percent true -
a walnut tree needs beating alone.
(Sethani hits kicking Tara)

Tara: It's your right, mistress mine,
Kick as much as you wish,
Silently, I'll stand and bear,
Be it kicking
Or ragging mean.

Sethani: Lock up your lips, you coquet,
lest I should be lead beating you to death.
Oh yes, where roams your gourmand son,
the entire day he continues his game?
Does he feel it her granny's home?

Tara: Since morning last, hunger impinges on my
son.
He was sobbing standing here. So to
diverting his attention, tactfully I have sent
him for a move-
Just for diverting attention-
You say...
(Rohit comes suddenly)

Rohit: Mother, food! . . . Unbearable my hunger.
Sethani: Why don't you die, Rascal!

³⁶ A Hindi expression for the wife of the Seth(A Big Businessman)

Every moment just hunger chant.
 No work: just born to eat.
(Addresses Tara) Listen, this warning last-
 This day onward, what to speak of a meal,
 I won't give even a grain of food,
 He remains alive or succumbs to death.

Tara: I do my entire share, and complete this
 child's part.
 I'll do everything what you command,
 Please don't admonish him anymore.

Sethani: Tell him to bring flowers; I need them to
 offer to the gods.
 Its a failure –not to speak scolding, indeed
 I'll bang him.

Tara: Where would this naive move?
 I'll bring them soon.

Sethani: You'll move for bringing flowers!
 Who will wash my clothes, then?
 your man?
 I'm leaving for my bath.
 Send him on errands for flowers sake,
 Lest my aggression should bring fatality.

Tara: Go my child, and pass some flowers from
 the garden.

Rohit: Well, mom! *(Departs)*

SCENE-SEVEN³⁷

(Rohit is seen in a garden. He approaches to pluck a flower, and suddenly falls down. An older boy is seen roaming nearby. He rushes to Rohit with an intention to help)

Narrator: *Rohit reaches the garden for bringing flowers. Vishwamitra in the form of a*

³⁷ The heading of this scene has been inserted by the translator. In the original text, this scene division is not there. But no change in the dialogue is done.

serpent bites him. Rohit falls down and dies.

Boy: *(Surprisingly)* what happened to him, he helped and fell down!

Vishwamitra: *(Appearing in Sadhu's costume)* Oh, poor boy, perhaps a serpent has bitten him. I sense he is no more.

Boy: He died? *(the boy starts sobbing)* How will his aggrieved mother forbear more?

Vishwamitra: *(addressing the boy)* Listen child; rush up to his mother for putting it into words. *(The boy leaves. Vishwamitra disappears. Tara comes weeping.)*

Tara: *(crying)* Why are you leaving your unfortunate mother,
What's my slip?
realm is lost, the abode lost,
peace lost, grandeur stepped, lost spouse
too, my only anchor, now you, too, moving far,
For whom should I live.
I'll atone till death.
(Vishwamitra appears in the guise of a saint.)

Vishwamitra: Lady, hold on,
Your wailing goes in vain,
Leave fast, and arrange for rites,
It's now a sod, not your son.

Tara: I can't keep patience,
senses have turned numb.
How would I manage cremation³⁸,
not even a shroud, I can afford.

Vishwamitra: Follow any means,
And burn it on pyre soon,
if time passes, you cannot take it on.
The body is poisoned, it'll ruin.

Tara: You sound good!

³⁸ A Hindu cremation, by burning the dead body on pyre.

Soon, I'll bear my son's corpse
 And offer a part of my sari in a shroud.
(Tara is seen carrying the dead body wrapped in her sari's part. At the other side of the stage Harishchandra is shown around the Ghats of Shamshan³⁹, holding a bamboo stick.)

Harishchandra: Merciful Almighty!
 Your wishes infinite, enveloping the universe.
 It is unexplored, and stand
 Enigmatic even to the most knowledgeable.
 An emperor, who till yesterday, was ordained,
 Just watches the affairs of the *Marghat*⁴⁰ today.
 He, who vanquished the foes with a mighty sword,
 Now carries a bamboo stick as arms,
 But, firm as a rock, he stands for truth;
 Even having put everything at stake.
(Tara reaches there in tears, carrying Rohit's body)

Harishchandra: Was there none at your home
 You've come carrying the corpse?⁴¹
 Who are you? Just speak, come on- speak,
 Why you sob... and utter silence.

Tara: Who am I-I know not.
 Simply, I know- I am fate-torn.
 Will fate bring more batters?
 Being a mother, here I hold my child's corpse.

Harishchandra: Lady, only the aggrieved loom in this place,
 This is the daily course,

³⁹ Hindu cremation ground.

⁴⁰ Hindu graveyard

⁴¹ In popular Hindu cremation system, the women are not allowed to visit the graveyard /*shamshan ghats*.

If you want it to burn over here
 Simply pay a *taka* as a fixed tax.
Tara: Sorry, *taka* as tax!
Vishwamitra: Yes, bring a *taka* as tax, and then make the
 pyre.
Tara: If I had a *taka* for the shroud, why would
 have I shrouded in my Sari's part.
Harishchandra: Lady, I am bound by my master's
 command. I won't allow you to burn the
 corpse until you pay a *taka* as tax.
Tara: I beg your favour with folded hands,
 Feel pity on me, like a beggar I stand!
Harishchandra: Wonderful! One who wears a gold ring can
 never be a beggar.
Tara: This ring is my husband's gift. I cannot
 lose it.
Harishchandra: Is your husband alive?
Tara: Yes, he is....
Harishchandra: Where is he? What's an irony? He is not
 accompanying you to the funeral ground!
Tara: I don't know where he is, or in what
 condition. He is not with me.
Harishchandra: Lady! The ring seems familiar. Would you
 mind showing it to me?
Tara: Not at all, if you like, you may see it.
 (*Tara shows the ring*)
Harishchandra: (*recognizing*) Tara, it is you, dear!
Tara: (*surprisingly*) You? Lord of my soul! A
 coincidence! (*sobs*) See, the stiff.
Harishchandra: God! It's our heart that I see!
 The empire got lost; the habitat followed
 suit,
 What remained- my patience; that too
 shakes today.
Tara: (*collecting herself*) You'll stain your truth,
 and that too, at this juncture? Never, my
 Lord!
 Here's the corpse of your loving son.
 Please put it on fire.

Harishchandra: *(After a thoughtful silence)* Sounds good, Tara
 You have saved me from drifting from the truth. *(pause)*.
 Do you have tax?
 Tara, I am a sold-off slave,
 Neither can cremate the body
 nor allow you to do it without tax.

Tara: But I'm unable to pay.

Harishchandra: Essentially, do it by any means,
 Nothing but pay off the tax,
 Otherwise, take the corpse away
 and flow in the river somewhere else.

Tara: Almighty God! *(Pause)* What to do!
(silence for a while) Where should I
 manage the tax? *(gloomy thoughtfulness)*
 Well! Take it *(rips a part of her sari and offers)*

Harishchandra: *(Accepting the piece of sari)* How ill-
 timed!
 Almighty, why do I see it all? Go, Tara, go
 and set Rohit's pyre.
*(Harishchandra walks up the other side of
 the stage. putting the pyre of her son, Tara
 faints away. Vishwamitra appears
 suddenly.)*

Vishwamitra: (aside) You are great! Harishchandra!
 I put you through the mill,
 devising the tests odd, on and on.
 I failed to make you buzz.
 But still, the greatness is to be proved.
 Hmm. I'll devise a test and
 Harishchandra's truth will collapse like the
 palace of cards...the universe will astound.
 I will abduct Kashi Naresh's⁴² innocent
 son...and convey him that a witch has
 entered the town to practice cannibalism.

⁴² The King of Kashi

She has eaten several children and has rushed up to the graveyard with a kid. Listening to it, the King will, pat, order a sentence for her death; It shall be marshaled by Harishchandra. Yeah, let's see, how Harishchandra kills his beloved wife, now....

(Vishwamitra moves aside, Harishchandra is visible the other side of the Shamshan, fully watchful. A troop of soldiers is seen dragging Tara that way)

Soldiers: O Hariya, call Kalua, the keeper of Shamshan,

Harishchandra: The king, here ordained, to behead this soul
If my master is instructed by the King of Kashi

Bring her here,
My master is not here
I will behead her in a go,
But, which crime's sake?

Soldier: This witch (*indicating Tara*) has eaten up many kids, even
The prince of Kashi.

Harishchandra: Heinous! Don't delay, bring the sword.
Instantly, I'll cut off the head of this foe to humanity.
Since the master is absent, I'll act (*taking the sword*)

Be prepared, nasty witch!
Be ready to die.

Tara: No crime I have committed,
But readily I stand,
Cut off my head, my Lord!
The soul will get salvation,
In your hands.

Harishchandra: My Goodness! What here I see!
Who's she?
Tara, my love!
My dear Tara! (*pause*)

I know you're innocent, even then,
And my job.
I'll execute the royal will,
(drags up the sword for the act, but feels his hand numb)
I'll execute, but the hand turns numb,
I will perform my duty,
Let no mercy evaporate my eyeballs,
I'll cut your head. *(Mutters and closes the eyes with a tape. As soon as he sets for the blow, Vishwamitra appears and catches hold of his wrist.)*

Vishwamitra: Open your eyes, and look this way,
Please throw away the sword,
You're a victor all the way.
I'm vanquished, have nothing to say.

Harishchandra: *(Removing the tape off the eyes)*
Who's there? Sage Vishwamitra, you!

Vishwamitra: Don't call me a saint,
A deadly culprit, here I stand,
Listen, I got jealous in Indra's court
When Vashistha had for you, all praise,
It's me, who has perplexed you so,
put you on tests through all means,
Devising the toughest of the tasks.
(Pauses indicating Harishchandra)
Here, I find the truth's actual profile,
That's in you and you alone!
Don't worry; your son is living,
he's not deceased.
(Chanting some Mantra brings Rohit back to life)

Rohit: *(as awakening)* My mom! My dad!
Tara: *(in wet throat)* My son! My heart!
Suddenly appears Indra, with the King of Kashi and Kalua, etc. They feel guilty and apologetic facing Harishchandra. Indra offers him his crown. Vashistha blesses

Harishchandra, and Vishwamitra feels sorry.

Vishwamitra: Extremely sad and remorseful, here I stand. Please forgive me and ask a *Vardaan*⁴³, Emperor Harishchandra!

Harishchandra: Nothing to feel sorry, but if you really want it, please promise that you will not put anybody on such tests, otherwise, the truth will be called to question.

Vishwamitra: I have seen. Now rest assured, it will so happen, as you wish.

The Narrator: So, sailed, Harishchandra sailed in test obscure, in posterity, a place he secured.

Works cited and consulted

- Pahalwan, Srikrishna. *Sangeet Satyavadi Harischandra*. Kanpur: Bambai Pustakalay.n.d.
- Singh, R.P. *Translating the Representative Folk Drama of Hindi Speaking North India into English: Remapping the Texts, Contexts and Connotations*. Report of UGC Major Research Project. 2013.Unpublished.

Acknowledgements: This is the revised and updated version of a translated text that I submitted to UGC New Delhi under the report on my Major Research Project titled *Translating the Representative Folk Drama of Hindi Speaking North India into English: Remapping the Texts, Contexts and Connotations*. (2011-2013).

⁴³ A wish to be fulfilled, blessings