HARATA KUNWAR was one of six brothers, the youngest of them. From his very birth, he spent his time in shooting deer and wild pig, and never laboured in the fields: His eldest brothers, the five, did the field work. Then they, the five brothers, took counsel together with their father saying, "This I harata Kunwar does no field work but spends his time in hunting. Let us talk the matter over at night." So, that night, they talked it over. The father said to his eldest son, "How will you supply me with rice?" He answered, "As for me, I will become a headman of a village and sit in assembly night and day; from the rice beer which people bring me as the headman's perquisites, I will supply you with good white rice and beer." "And you, the second son, how will you supply me with rice?" "As for me, I will become a blacksmith; night and day will I spend in forging knives and arrows; with the money produced by these, I will furnish you with beer, betel, pan, good white rice, and all kinds of spirit." "And you, the third son. How will you supply me with rice?" "As for me, I will labour in the fields, and having filled granaries and barns with produce, I will give you good beer and good white rice." "And you, the fourth. How will you provide for me?" "As for me, I will go as a companion to someone, and what that person gives me of rice and beer, I will give to you." "And you, the fifth, how will you provide for me?" "As for me, I will become someone's slave and will support you with the rice and beer he gives me." "And you, Harata Kunwar, in what way will you furnish me with rice?" "As for me, I will marry a daughter of the Sun and having become a great king, I will seat you on a throne, on a fine couch, I will cause slaves, male and female, to bathe your arms and legs and I will give you beer, rice and spirits." 

So, they finished their talk. Next day, in the place where they worked at their field, Harata Kunwar not being with them, those five brothers consulted together again with their father." This Harata Kunwar says that he will take as wife the daughter of the Sun God and become a king. forsooth! Where will he get his kingship? Let us kill him and let us talk about it again tonight." That night, after they had eaten and drunk, they consulted together about the way in which the killing was to be done. "Let us build a field watcher's hut for Harata Kunwar on the border of the jungle. Let us build it and make him watch there, then at night let us go and thrust him through with a spear," Harata Kunwar's sister-in-law overheard as they were conspiring together.

Next morning, after they had eaten and drunk and gone away to their work in the fields, Harata Kunwar came home from his hunting. His sister-in-law gave him his rice and after he had eaten and drunk, she said, "Let me kill that insect on you, Harata Kunwar." Then she killed a louse, and as she killed it, a tear fell upon Harata Kunwar's leg. He asked her, "Sister-in-law, are you crying?" And his sister-in-law said, "I am not crying, a raindrop fell upon you." Again, as she killed a louse, a tear fell the second time. "You really are crying, sister-in-law. Tell me why you are weeping." So she told him: "My father-in-law and your elder brothers have plotted together to make you watch by night in a jungle hut, and then they will thrust you through with a spear, they say: that is why I am weeping." Harata Kunwar said, "You need not be afraid; you have told me, it is well. Tomorrow morning, you will see what happens. If I am not dead, I will come home to you after they have gone and I will throw six clods, taken from the worm casting on the roof of this house. If you don't hear the noise of them on the roof, you will know that I am dead.

So, in the evening his brothers came home from the field, and his father said "This night, Harata Kunwar must go and watch for us in the jungle hut. Wild pigs are eating up our paddy. There, by the side of the jungle clearing, we have built for you a watcher's hut." So, having eaten and drunk, Harata Kunwar took with him his bow and went. Then, having gathered the fruit of the puri sak, he put the juice of it into the sheath of a plantain stalk, and having made it like the form of a sleeping man, he put some
clothes on it and laid it as though sleeping in the hut. He himself hid quietly under the shelter of the rice plants. Then after their first sleep, his father and brothers awoke one another: “Come, let us go and kill Harata Kunwar.” Then, each one taking with him a spear, they went to Harata Kunwar’s jungle hut.

Then the father said, “Go thou, eldest, climb up and thrust him through.” The eldest said, “How should I dare to put my spear through him? I am your brother, our youngest brother. We have one mother and father. Since we are brothers, how should I dare to kill him?” The father asked each of the brothers in turn to kill Harata Kunwar, but each refused on the same grounds.

Then their father became angry. “Then why did you dare to say we must kill Harata Kunwar? If you bring yourselves to do it, you will never become men.” So saying, he climbed up the posts of the hut and thrust his spear through the plantain sheath and the juice of the purol sak came dropping out from it. Then he called out, “Harata Kunwar, strong though he be, he has got his bastis now at last! Let him marry the Sun God’s daughter and make himself a king now!”

Harata Kunwar overheard all this. “What, what are saying, my brothers?” he called out. Then saying, “Harata Kunwar has his bow with him!” they ran away in fear, stumbling and falling as they ran. Then Harata Kunwar himself went and took six clubs from the worm casts and threw them on the roof. So, after they had eaten and drunk, his brothers went away to their field. Then Harata Kunwar came in and his sister-in-law gave him his rice.

After eating and drinking, he said “Sister! I cannot remain here with you. My own brothers, nay even my own father, aim at my life and are plotting to kill me. I must therefore, go wandering. Get ready to give me a store of rice to take with me, bread and parched grain.” So his sister-in-law prepared food for him, bread and parched rice. And he said to her when he parted, “If I do not come by my death, then when I come here again, I will throw six clubs from the worm casts on the roof; then when you hear them, wash and make ready the stools and benches.” So they wept together and parted. Then Harata Kunwar, taking his bow with him went on his way.

At last, he arrived at his grandmother’s house. “Oh Granny are you there?” The old woman answered, “Who is there?” Harata Kunwar answered, “It is I, Granny.” Then the old woman said, “Why are you come, dear? I am a poor widow. I have neither house nor field. I live only by begging my food. Why have you come?” Harata Kunwar answered “I will stay here with you and be your companion.” The old woman said, “You, who are fit to be a king, a great man, how will you be able to live with me here?” Harata Kunwar answered, “Very good, Granny. Here I will stay.”

So he became her companion there. Then his Granny, the widow told him to spread the paddy out in the sun to dry. However, she warned him not to go upstream in the river. Harata then thought, “For what reason did my Granny, when she went away, tell me not to go upstream to bathe? I will go upstream and see myself.” There, he saw sherds of gold and silver lying.

So, at night, Harata Kunwar asked her, “Whose ghath is that upstream?” “So, his Granny told him “It is the ghath of the king of the Great Palace. His daughters, six sisters, come to that place to bathe; don’t go there any more.”

Then, Harata Kunwar considered again by himself: “My Granny tells me not to go again, but I will go and see for myself. So upstream he went again and hid himself under the river bank. At mid-day, the six daughters of the king of the Great Palace came to bathe there in the river. Descending beautifully, each one laid aside her clothes, and jumped into the water. Then, when the day became cool, the eldest daughter admonished the rest, “O, my dears, it is cooking time; time to house for the night our fowls and our pigs. Our mother will scold us, our father will scold us, if we stay any longer. Let us go.” So they ended their bathing and playing in the water. One after another they shook out their clothes in the breeze and put them on and beautifully flew away; but the youngest of them flew away last of all, lovely like the brightness of the moon or the sun.

Harata Kunwar returned to his house thinking, “How fair, how lovely! I will not rest until I get one of them to be my wife! Tonight, I will ask Granny about it.” So he asked his Granny, “Oh, Granny, such beautiful, such lovely ones I never saw. How shall I got one to be my wife?” His Granny said “Oh, Harata Kunwar, these are children of the Sun God; children of a great king. How should you who are a man’s son, succeed in getting one to be your wife? Since he continued to press her, at last she said to him, “If you must and will get one for your wife, then clear a field in the river bank.” When the sun fully rose, he cut and hacked down the jungle there till in a single day, he had finished the cleaning. Then he dabbled in maize, small millet, sugarcane, plantains: besides these, he planted flowers -- marvel of Peru, white lilies, marigolds, many kinds of flowers.

Then, the daughters of the king of the Great Palace came down to bathe in the river and spied Harata Kunwar’s garden plot. They said it was very pretty and then flew away to heaven together.

Harata Kunwar then pondered in his mind: “Shall I ever succeed in getting her to be my wife?” So, he asked his grandmother again. His Granny answered, “Not in that way, son. Build for yourself a jungle hut.” He then built a jungle hut. His Granny then advised him to cut himself a flute. Then, he cut several flutes for himself. Then, his Granny advised him to play his flute and and watch in the jungle. The flowers in his field bloomed as never before. As the daughters of the kings of the Great Palace arrived, they heard the sound of the flute and decided to ask Harata Kunwar for some flowers. They each plucked some flowers.
and flew away.

When he returned home, his Granary explained a plan. "The oldest sisters, all five have got their husbands already. As for the youngest, the king of Wind is asking for her to marry her to her son; Nevertheless, having singled out her petticoat from among the others, while they are all bathing, bring it here to me. I will weave a petticoat just like it in exchange for it. Then, when she wears it, she will not be able to fly away. If she asks for her petticoat, say -- one or others of you must marry me."

Harata Kunwar did as he was told. So, when the youngest tried to fly away, she found that she could not. If she flew she fell back a second time. Then the eldest said "Oh, what in the world is the matter?" The elder sister said, "O Harata Kunwar, without doubt it is you who have changed our youngest sister's petticoat; therefore, bring it back. So they called out and Harata Kunwar answered, "One or other of you must be my wife." Then each asked the other whether they would be his wife. Each one refused as they were married already.

The youngest answered that she is already betrothed to the son of the king of the Wind. Her eldest sister said, "You must marry him, dear. We will visit you from time to time." So, the sisters bade goodbye and and flew away to heaven together. Harata Kunwar and the youngest daughter stayed back and were happy and joyful.

So, one year came to an end. Harata Kunwar desired to go home and expressed this desire to his Granary. His Granary told him that his wife was not entirely with him here. So, Iharata stayed back and God gave Harata Kunwar a child, one son. Again he expressed his desire to go home and so he and his family set out one day. He shot a jungle cock, cock pheasant and a boar on the way.

When he reached his home, he collected six clods from the worm casts and threw them on the roof. Then, his sister-in-law said "Harata Kunwar has come home! Wash the stools and the benches." And then they roasted the boar and cooked it and fervent it up and with joyful and noisy laughing and jesting, they ate and drank.

Everyone was enthralled by the beauty of Harata’s wife and came to see her. She then managed to procure her old petticoat and clothes, and wearing them, flew away to her house. Sick with grief, Harata came to his Granary’s house who told him of a plan. She told him to go to the river bank and hold on to his father-in-law’s elephant’s tail. On reaching his wife’s house, he should ask for water and then drop a ring into the water pot.

Harata did as he was told and when his wife saw the gold ring, he asked whose it was. Harata was brought before her and his child began to suck her breast. On seeing this, the king of the Wind and his entourage returned home and the wedding of Harata Kunwar and the daughter of the king of the Great Palace was celebrated. So Harata Kunwar returned home, became a king and lived in happiness and greatness. (Courtesy: Shri Kishore Bhattacharya. Head, Department of Folklore, Gauhati University)

### A ZEST FOR LIVING

I have a zest for living
As I greet each day with song.
For I have His hand to guide me
And feel His love all day long.

Life has so many challenges
That come to us each day,
So face each one squarely
And do not turn away.

God has given us so many gifts,
But sometimes deep they lie.
They always can be found
If only we will try.

There are so many countless things
That you can find to do
With this wonderful life
That God has given to you.

So don’t waste your time
On little worthless things
And soon you too will find
The zest that living brings.

Olive R. Elvin

23

ISHANI