This incident took place, long, long ago, about 2300 years ago.

Kalinga and Magadha were two powerful states. These neighboring states were at constant war with each other for nearly a century. Kalinga had suffered defeat and was waiting for the right time to teach Magadha a lesson. War had broken out again between them.

Just at that time the King of Kalinga learnt disturbing news, a Greek King had come from beyond India and was marching towards Magadha.

The Magadha had defeated and humiliated the Kalingas a hundred years before. Suppose the King of Kalinga had welcomed this attack; suppose he had thought - 'Let this new enemy defeat the King of Magadha, my desire for revenge will be satisfied' – that would have been natural. He could have thought: 'These people of Magadha insulted us a hundred years ago; let them suffer now.'

But the King of Kalinga thought differently. 'This enemy who is now attacking Magadha is an outsider; he comes here to loot. He is as much my enemy as of Magadha.'
Those who had been at war for over a century joined hands in this hour of great danger. The outsider who had come to plunder was driven away.

If only the later kings of India had shown the foresight and wisdom which the King of Kalinga showed twenty-three centuries ago; if only they had sunk their differences when the Muslims and the British attacked India; if only they had fought unitedly shoulder to shoulder, considering themselves as sons of the same soil; India need not have suffered in slavery.

The king who had acted with such farsightedness and wisdom even in those early days was King Kharavela.

During this period in the history of India there were many independent states - Anga, Magadha, Kalinga, Shatavahana, Chola, Pandya, Uttarapatha and many others. They were even at war with one another. Any king who became powerful attacked other states and became their master. When a second king became powerful, he conquered the first state. A weak state was attacked again and again.

Magadha was then being ruled by kings of the Nanda dynasty. The Nandas were very strong and powerful. They attacked Kalinga, south of Magadha, and defeated it. The King of Kalinga paid huge tributes and subsidies to the king of Magadha.

But that did not satisfy the king of Magadha.

There was in the state of Kalinga, the idol of Sheethalanatha Jina. It was considered very sacred by the people of Kalinga. The Jains worshipped it. The king of Magadha invaded the capital and
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carried away this holy idol. This hurt the feelings of the Kalingas. They felt it a great humiliation.

But what could they do? Weak and helpless, they had to keep quiet, swallowing the insult.

Later there was a great change in the conditions of Magadha. The rule of the Nandas ended; the reign of Chandragupta Maurya started. During this period Kalinga had become free. Kalinga now took every opportunity to make Magadha feel her strength. Bindusara, son of Chandragupta Maurya, became the king of the state after his father's death. After Bindusara's death, Ashoka, his son, ascended the throne. (It was this Ashoka, who later came to be called 'Ashoka the great' and who has won a great place in history.)

Ashoka was already the ruler of a vast empire. But Kalinga, his southern neighbor, was still free, and he could not bear. Eight years after he became king, he decided to attack this state. And he was determined to cripple Kalinga forever.

Compared to Magadha, Kalinga was a small state. But the Kalingas were a freedom-loving people, with a great sense of self-respect. They fought fearlessly for their freedom. But before Ashoka's mighty army it all proved useless. Kalinga became subordinate to Ashoka.

One of the stone edicts of Ashoka describes this terrible war as follow, "Eight years after he became king, Ashoka, known as 'Devanampriya' (the favorite of the Gods) conquer Kalinga. He took
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one hundred and fifty thousand persons as prisoners; another
hundred thousand were killed; the injured were countless."

Ashoka saw with his own eyes the horror of the war. He could
not bear the sight of the death, destruction and suffering that the war
had wrought.

Blood flowed like a stream. The battlefield was full of the dead
bodies of men and animals. The cry of the wounded and the dying
was unbearable. His heart melted. I shall not fight again," he decided.
He embraced Buddhism, which lays stress on non-violence.

But Kalinga had lost her freedom.

With the death of Ashoka, total disorder set in his kingdom. His
sons and grand sons began to quarrel among themselves. Gradually,
the power and influence of Magadha grew less. Ashoka had
appointed Sardars to be in charge of different parts of the empire.
They took advantage of the weakness of the ruler and declared
themselves independent. They established petty states of their own.

After the conquest of Kalinga, Ashoka had appointed a Sardar
of Chedi as its administrator. This Sardar declared 'himself
independent; so the rule of the Chedi Dynasty started in Kalinga. This
ruler's son was Mahameghavahana. After his death,
Mahameghavahana came to the throne. It was during his time that
the people of Kalinga suffered very badly. This was not because of
the King's misrule, but because of Nature's fury. A severe storm
raged for long bringing about death and destruction. Houses were
razed to the ground. The formidable walls of the royal fort were
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destroyed. Its main gate crumbled. Water flowed into the city from
tanks and lakes. Huge cracks appeared at several places in the canal
which supplied water to the capital. People grew panicky.

How to get over this misery was the one question that worried
the mind of one and all. The Dravidian Kings of the South had joined
hands to defend themselves from Magadha when that state was
powerful. Now they started troubling the Kalingas. So the people of
Kalinga were miserable. Their cup of misery was full. It was not
surprising if they had preferred death to this misery and dishonor.

It was 209 BC news spread in the capital that a son was born to
the king, Mahameghavahana. The Prince was born at an auspicious
moment. This brought some comfort to the people. It was the practice
in those days to consult eminent astrologers when a child was born in
the palace, to prepare his horoscope and give their opinion about the
child's future. So King Mahameghavahana invited the most famous
astrologers. They looked at the bright features of the baby, read his
horoscope and were delighted. Their eyes gleamed with joy. They
said, "This new born baby brings fame to his dynasty. He will become
as great as the famous and just ancestor, the saintly king, Vasu. He
will become a great hero and extend his kingdom by his mighty
conquests. Bright days will soon dawn for Kalinga."

The subjects were overjoyed. 'May he live long' they all prayed.

The Prince was named Kharavela. He had a well-built sturdy
body with a bright brown complexion and an attractive personality.
Even as a boy, he exhibited great skill and ability in every game, all
Kharvela

was always the first. His fame spread over the state. Everyone praised his virtues and ability.

Mahameghavahana rejoiced at the lively activities of the young Prince during his reign the state had regained its freedom. But the king was not quite happy because he had not been able to improve the lot of the people. The storm had caused terrible destruction. The utter defeat suffered by Kalinga, the hands of Ashoka had sapped all their courage and confidence. They looked lifeless. They had lost the confidence to face enemies. The miserable plight of the people had made the king sad and depressed. He naturally believed that the birth of the bright and promising son was a God-sent boon. He believed that the boy would raise the country from its misery and bring back its prosperity. He wanted to train the young boy for his later responsibilities. So eminent scholars were appointed to teach the boy the art of administration as well as economics and other subjects. At the same time expert teachers were appointed to teach him the use of different weapons. As he grew older the use of different weapons became his study, his hobby and his recreation. Healthy, strong and sturdy, quick and active by nature, and greatly interested in the practice of arms, he soon came to be known as a great soldier. His teachers were also proud and happy that the Prince who was given to their care had shaped so well.

As Kharavela grew up to be manly and strong, the peoples' faces grew brighter. A new hope kindled in them.

They decided to work for the progress of the country under his able leadership.
One auspicious day Kharavela was made the Crown Prince (Yuvaraja). He began to take active part in the administration. He was just fifteen or sixteen then. He continued as Yuvaraja for about nine years. After the death of his father, Mahameghavahana, he became the king of his country.

There was much to do for the young king, soon after he ascended the throne. The storm had razed the fort to the ground; this had to be rebuilt. Courage and confidence had to be infused in his subjects and a strong army had to be built up, so that he could prove his strength. The much adored and sacred idol of Sheethalanatha Jina, which the Magadhas still retained, had to be recovered at any cost. It was a question of prestige. The king and many of his subjects were Jains- but Jainism Was growing weaker. It had to be made strong again.

During the very first year of his rule, Kharavela took up the work of rebuilding the fort. It was his firm belief that the capital should first be strong, Prosperous, beautiful and attractive achieved this object within a few months of his becoming king. The task that was before him was stupendous. He had to rebuild the city where most of the houses had collapsed; he had to see that the tanks and wells were repaired; he had to bring back loveliness to the parks and gardens that had been destroyed.

All these were difficult tasks. They also cost much money. There were not one or two but ever so many things to be done because the state had suffered for years. It had to recover from the terrible suffering caused by the enemies and by Nature.
Huge sums of money were spent on this reconstruction. The fort became strong again. The tanks and lakes were full. Green grass and colorful flowers and trees and fruits of many kinds made the parks bright and attractive once again.

All these improvements cost much money. But Kharavela did not collect a single pie for them from his subjects. It would not have been wrong if he had imposed taxes on them. Nor would they have grudged paying the taxes. Yet he paid for all these works from his treasury, without imposing any taxes.

What a joy and surprise to the people! Within a year of his coming to the throne, Kharavela had captured the hearts of his people.

In the second year of his rule he desired to extend his power and show his might beyond the borders of his kingdom. There was, towards the west of Kalinga, a king named Shathakarni.

He had earned a name as a very great warrior. Already his kingdom had extended upto the eastern borders of Kalinga. How much had Kalinga suffered from one powerful neighbor, Magadha!

How could Kharavela forget it? So he decided to impress on others the might of Kalinga. He marched against Shathakarni. The army reached the banks of the river Krishnaveni (Vynaganga). Kharavela attacked Rishikanagar, a city situated where the river Krishna joins the river Moosi, and captured it. This attack brought Kharavela not only much fame but also sufficient wealth.
Returning home, Kharavela celebrated this victory in a grand way. The people of Kalinga were overjoyed at this victory. Wrestling contests, dance, music and drama delighted the people.

The celebrations went on for a year. All these years they had tasted only unhappiness. They had become meek and timid; they had lost confidence in themselves. They always feared defeat and their heads were bowed in shame. In short, they appeared lifeless. Now their courage had revived. "We are in no way inferior to others; we have defeated the famous warrior Shathakarni" - so they thought. They were proud of their valor and this pride was quite justified, for Shathakarni was no ordinary king. He had earned a name as a great hero. He had performed the great Rajasuya and Ashwamedha sacrifices. These had spread his fame far and wide. Kalinga had subdued such a warrior. So now the people could hold their heads high and live in self-respect. Many of them willingly came forward to join the army. They considered it their good fortune to be soldiers in Kharavela's army and to fight for him.

While the king was engaged in the victory celebrations momentous news reached him.

Vidyadharadhivasa was a holy place in Kalinga. Kharavela's ancestors had bestowed much care on it. Two petty Sardars, Rathika and Bhojaka by name ruled over two small provinces on the western borders of Kalinga. They made bold to attack Vidyadharadhivasa and desecrate it.

This news enraged the king. At once he decided to teach the petty chieftains a lesson. He went with his army and attacked them
suddenly. Poor fellows, they must have been under the false impression that the Kalinga soldiers weak and easily defeated, as in the olden days. They had not felt the heat of Kharavela's anger. Now they felt it.' They were routed completely by the mighty Kalinga army. The Sardars fell at Kharavela's feet and meekly surrendered to him all the emblems of their kingship including the crown. They begged for mercy. Kharavela was not only strong, but he was also generous enough to pardon those who surrendered to him and to treat them with honor. The Sardars were, pardoned. Never again did they make bold even to glance at Kalinga.

Having taught a lesson to Rathika and Bhojaka, Kharavela returned home and turned his attention to the welfare of his subjects. The capital was near the sea; yet it suffered periodically from want of drinking water. During the reign of the Nandas, the problem of drinking water had been solved by means of a canal, named Thanasuliavata. But that was two hundred and fifty years before; and both time and the terrible storm that raged for long during Mahamegavahana's rule had damaged the canal. It had fallen into disuse. The canal had to be repaired; otherwise there could be no certainty of supply of drinking water. Therefore much money was spent to repair the canal. And once again, Kharavela did not collect any money from the people. The expenditure was met out of his own funds. To relieve the people of their poverty, he, on the other hand, waived all the taxes. The precious gems and wealth offered by the vanquished Rathika and Bhojaka as tributes had filled the state treasury.
If there is to be a king, he must be one like Kharavela; we are indeed very fortunate' - so praised the happy subjects of Kalinga. His fame spread to the neighboring states too.

Seven years had by now passed since Kharavela became the king. His achievements during this period were by no means small. He had brought the kingdom power and plenty. His subjects had regained their happiness, peace and self-respect. Other states had come to look upon Kalinga with fear and respect. And yet he was not satisfied. That very year the younger queen Vajiragharavathi gave birth to a son. Even the birth of a son did not make Kharavela quite happy. Of course, he was glad his dynasty would continue but one sorrow haunted him. 'Should I not wipe off the shame and humiliation inflicted on Kalinga by the Magadhas? And what a humiliation! The much adored and holy idol of Sheethalanatha Jina is still retained by them. How can I have peace until it is recovered? So he pined. This task of getting back this idol was a very very difficult one. It was not an easy task to attack and defeat Magadha. It was not possible to lay siege to the capital of Magadha, Rajagriha, straight away. It was well protected by a fort to the south of it called Gorathagiri. This was a natural hill fortress. (This hill is in the Gaya District of Bihar now.) This had to be seized before the capital could be attacked. That was indeed both difficult and dangerous. But Kharavela was a mighty hero his soldiers were prepared to fight till their last breath, if necessary. For, they all considered it their sacred duty to defeat the Magadhas and bring back the idol of Sheethalanatha Jina. It was also their life's
mission. With this grim determination they captured Gorathagiri, reached the capital Rajagriha and laid siege to it.

When Kharavela was engaged in this attack, spies came to him and made a report: "Your Highness, Demetrius, a King of Greece, is also marching with a huge army to attack Magadha."

It was a very serious and disturbing piece of news. The defeat of Magadha was, of course, absolutely necessary, if the Kalingas were to get back their sacred idol. Otherwise would the Magadhas return it? No. True, Kalinga was now stronger than Magadha, but it was not easy to inflict a total defeat on Magadha. That would mean a great strain on Kharavela's army and a heavy loss.

'What should be done now? Thought Kharavela to himself. 'Alone, I can defeat Magadha; if Demetrius joins me, there is no doubt that the task becomes doubly easy. But who is this Demetrius? Is he one of us, my countryman? No, never! He is after all a robber who has come to loot our country. A dacoit. Shall I join hands with him? The King of Magadha is one of us. It is my duty now to drive out this Demetrius, a foreigner. Let me deal with Magadha later.' Taking the decision after deep deliberation, he withdrew his attack on Rajagriha and sent his army westwards to check Demetrius.

As soon as Demetrius heard that Kharavela's army was marching against him, he ordered his army to withdraw. He had already come to know of Kharavela's prowess. He had miscalculated and misjudged Kharavela. Earlier when he heard that Kharavela was about to attack on Magadha he had thought, 'if Kharavela attacks Magadha from the south and I attack from the west at the same time,
victory is easy. We may share the spoils.' But he did not understand that Kharavela was as patriotic as he was heroic; and that he could distinguish between a brother and a stranger. Alarmed at the turn of events, Demeritus ran away. And thereafter no Greek King dared look at India. That was the first and last time that they crossed the Ganga and reached the East.

When Kharavela returned home from this conquest, he celebrated this event with generous gifts of money, precious gems, elephants and horses to Brahmins. He got houses built for them. Though he was a Jain he did not hate other religions. He made all his subjects, irrespective of caste or creed, happy.

Kharavela had done much to improve the lot of his subjects. He now turned his attention towards his palace. It had suffered serious damage, having been long exposed to the storm. A river, Prachee, flowed across the capital. Kharavela began the construction of a new capital on the two banks of the river. It cost thirty-eight lakh coins of the day. We can well imagine the splendor of the palace. As a result of his mighty conquests, the king had earned the title 'Mahavijaya' (the great conqueror) and so as a symbol of this great victory the new palace was named 'Mahavijaya'. By his own personal example he had shown that a ruler's first concern was the welfare of his subjects and that his own comfort and happiness should come next. He became famous and began to shine not only as a powerful ruler but also as an ideal king.

The tenth year of his reign commenced. He started with his very huge army on mighty conquests. First, he proceeded
Kharavela

Kharavela northwards, defeated one prince after another and collected from them huge tributes.

The Dravidian Kings had often disturbed Kalinga in the south. They often joined hands to inflict pinpricks on Kalinga. On hearing the news that the King of Kalinga had gone northwards on his conquests, they considered it the most favorable moment to attack Kalinga and started the attack.

This news reached Kharavela. Kharavela, who had for a long time been thinking of teaching these Dravida Kings a good lesson, returned to the south with lightning speed. The Dravidian forces used a seaport, Pithunda, as their headquarters. Kharavela made a sudden attack on this port. This was most unexpected. The Dravidian army had assumed that Kharavela was far away and therefore it was quite safe.

The counter attack was as severe as it was sudden. The Dravidan Kings were utterly defeated- Pithunda was totally destroyed. The King’s anger was so great that he got the whole port town ploughed by donkeys. Not satisfied with this he attacked the Kings of Dravida themselves and shattered their confederation. They fled to their capitals to save their lives.

Again Kharavela moved to the north to continue and complete the unfinished task. He marched on Uttarapatha, the capital of Takshashila and annexed it. His army then marched towards Magadha.
This news reached Brihaspathimitra, the king of Magadha. He knew Kharavela’s valor and rage, and began to tremble with fear. The news spread among the people of Magadha, too. They knew Kharavela well as a man of extraordinary prowess; a warrior who had not been frightened by the fame of Shathakarni and had, in fact, humbled him; they knew Kharavela as the great hero who had driven back Demetrius, the Greek King who had dreamt of conquering the world and who had entered India and looted several parts of this country as he pleased. Moreover, they had heard not only of his prowess but also of his terrible rage. They trembled as they remembered the fate of Pithunda, which had been razed to the ground.

So the news of his invasion created panic among the people of Magadha. They realized that they had no choice and had to surrender. The king and his subjects unanimously decided this was the right course. There could be now two opinions at all on this question.

They knew full well why Kharavela was so angry with Magadha. Their ancestors had brought the idol of Sheethalanatha Jina from Kalinga. Kharavela and his people considered this as a great humiliation. It was evident to the people of Magadha that unless this humiliation was wiped out, Kharavela’s anger would not subside. Therefore it was decided to hand over the idol to the king, Kharavela, with all honors. They rightly thought that such a course of action would satisfy him and besides, earn his friendship.
Brihaspathimitra sent word to Kharavela that he wished to meet him. Kharavela agreed to this. Brihaspathimitra went to Kharavela with all his ministers and generals. He said to Kharavela, "Kalinga and Magadha have been opposed to each other for quite a long time. As a result, the people of both the states have suffered seriously. Soldiers have died in large numbers. Let us stop this human sacrifice and the destruction of crops and cattle. We, of Magadha, know the fault of ours. Our forefathers brought the holy idol from Kalinga. What we did is wrong. You and your subjects have naturally been displeased and unhappy. Please be magnanimous and forgive us. Forget the past errors. Let us live in friendship and peace."

Kharavela was a terror to his enemies on the battlefield. But he was also generous. It was not his desire to wage war unnecessarily. He did not love to make war. So he was happy at the suggestion of Brihaspathimitra, and accepted the holy idol.

The fire that had been burning in the hearts of the Kalingas, ever since the Nandas carried their idol away was now put out.

At the same time, the King of Anga, situated to the east of Magadha, also wished to avoid war with Kalinga. He, too, surrendered to Kharavela and offered him tributes and gifts.

Kharavela returned to his country with the idol of Sheethalanatha. Hundreds of sculptors started building a splendid temple for their deity. The deity was duly installed. All over the land there was great rejoicing. Kharavela's praise was on everyone's lips. He had wiped out the disgrace that had for long stuck to them. The banner of his fame flew high. His ancestors had not been able to
Kharavela

achieve all this. He had not used his power only to extend his kingdom or to extract huge subsidies from the defeated. He had dedicated all his might to the welfare and happiness of his people. He had used it to uphold the honor of Kalinga and to end the disgrace inflicted on his people. The people, who had the good fortune of having Kharavela as their king, were in every way happy.

Again Kharavela turned his attention to the South. Unless the King of Pandya, a state situated at the southernmost part of India, was defeated, the power of the Kings of Dravida would not diminish. Kharavela defeated the Pandya King in a battle. The defeated king offered the victor countless gems and ornaments as tributes. Kharavela now became an emperor.

The Kalingas, who had Kharavela for their rulers were indeed blessed. What was once a small, humble, poor and disgraced state had now become a strong, powerful and vast empire. It now extended from Takshashila and Nepal in the North to Kanyakumari in the South. Kharavela's fame spread across the length and breadth of India. This was indeed a golden age in the history of Kalinga.

Kharavela's mighty conquests spread his fame far and wide. What the astrologers had foretold when he was but a tender baby had literally come true.

The name his parents had chosen for him was fully justified. 'Kharavela' means 'the swift moving wind', 'the storm incarnate'. Soon after coming to the throne, he moved with his mighty army with astonishing swiftness. And his enemies who had witnessed this must have felt that he was the God of Wind himself.
Kharavela

Kharavela who had now earned the status of an emperor thought of strengthening Jainism. It was about to disappear. From the time Emperor Ashoka had embraced Buddhism, the power and influence of Buddhism rose everywhere in India.

Kharavela convened a great conference of all Jain Sanyasis (hermits) of Kumariparvatha; this place had been made sacred by the touch of the holy feet of Mahavira Jina. Over three thousand and five hundred Jain Sanyasis attended the conference. They were all treated with great hospitality befitting the king. Huts (Ashramas) were put up on the hills for them. The Agamas were sacred to the Jains; but these holy books had been lost. These learned sanyasis were requested to reconstruct those volumes, and they were given all the facilities they needed. Once again bright days dawned for Jainism. But Kharavela respected the other religions. He did not trouble the followers of other religions in any way.

Such was Kharavela! A great hero, one who looked upon all religions alike, one who kept his subject perfectly happy, one who lifted his kingdom from the depths of hellish misery to the heights of sublime glory and happiness; one who had the wisdom to distinguish between his own countryman and a foreigner; a great conqueror, an emperor and champion of Jainism.

What a misfortune not many details about him are available. It is not known how this mighty monarch spent his last days. Nor do we know who the great lady was, who gave birth to so great a son.

At least it is our good fortune that something is known about his wives and children. His first queen was Sindhula, a princess of
Simhapatha. She was a generous as Kharavela. She worked hard to re-establish Jainism. She took interest to get monasteries built for Jain Sanyasis. She got cave dwellings specially constructed for the use of Jain hermits. Under her patronage, many Jain Sanyasis become missionaries to spread Jainism.

Mention has been already made of his other queen; named Vajiragharavathi who in the seventh year of Kharavela's reign gave birth to the heir apparent to his throne. His name was Koodepa. He was also strong and virtuous.

Near Bhuvaneshwar there is a cave known as 'Hathigumpha' (the Elephant Cave). There is a stone edict in this cave. This is the only stone edict, which reveals some facts about Kharavela. The writing is in Prakrit. The last sentence may be translated into English as follows:

'The very wealthy king, Kharavela, does good; he is a prosperous king, a king of the Sanyasis, a just king; one with extraordinary virtues and one who respects all religions; he revived all temples and places of worship; he is the master of an army which cannot be defeated; he is a king who protected the wheel of justice (Dharma) and prospered, one who was born in the family of Rajarshi Vasu and was a great conqueror.'

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