

## THE PHRALAK PHRALAM or THE LAO RAMAYANA

### EPISODE 1

#### “Mount Meru and the Palace of Phra In”

**Characters:** Phra In (Indra); Virayou (a giant); Nang Uma (one of his wives, renowned for her great beauty); Chittabouth (a high official subordinate to Phra In); Thotsakan; and a group of Apsaras.

Virayou makes a pilgrimage to show his respect to Phra In, whose temple is on the summit of Mount Meru. Overwhelmed by the beauty of the place, he begins to offer his praises and prays to the four cardinal directions. Misunderstanding, a lizard thinks that it is he who is praised; feeling great pride, he interrupts just before Virayou is finished with his prayers.

Virayou, judging the behavior of this lizard disrespectful and arrogant, becomes incensed and threatens to kill it. He then throws his magic necklace at it. But in this act of rage, he misses the lizard and by mistake destroys both temple and summit. Seeing his blunder, he chooses to flee for fear of facing the anger of Phra In.

Phra In, shaken by this disaster summons Chitabouth, his faithful official, and directs him to let the whole world know that he will offer whoever succeeds in rebuilding Mount Meru and his home, the reward of his own choosing. Chittabouth then starts out on his way.

Thotsakan, receiving this information, presents himself before Phra In to declare his intention and his determination to rebuild the temple and mountain. Phra In then reiterates the promise he made, to award to whoever succeeds in this task the reward of his choice.

Thotsakan applies his strength to the rebuilding, but fails many times. He returns to Phra In to admit his failure. Phra In then advises him to appeal to the deities representing the four cardinal directions in his next attempt. Thotsakan thanks him for this advice.

After kneeling facing each of the four directions as a sign of submission, he finally manages to rebuild everything. And now Phra In, delighted with this result, must fulfill his promise. Thotsakan asks him if he could take Nang Uma, Phra In's wife, with him to make her his companion. Phra In, troubled by this request, offers him four of his most beautiful Apsaras, but Thotsakan wants, it is understood, only the one which Phra In holds most dear. Phra In is forced to comply despite the great sadness of Nang Uma. She then submits to her husband's commands to join Thotsakan.