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THE KING OF  
THE DARK CHAMBER



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TORONTO



THE KING  
OF  
THE DARK CHAMBER

BY  
Sir RABINDRANATH TAGORE

TRANSLATED INTO ENGLISH  
BY THE AUTHOR

New York  
THE MACMILLAN COMPANY  
1914

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THE KING OF  
THE DARK CHAMBER



# THE KING OF THE DARK CHAMBER

## I

*A street. A few wayfarers, and a CITY GUARD*

*First Man*

Ho, Sir!

*City Guard*

What do you want?

*Second Man*

Which way should we go? We are strangers here. Please tell us which street we should take.

*City Guard*

Where do you want to go?

*Third Man*

To where those big festivities are going to be held, you know. Which way do we go?

*City Guard*

One street is quite as good as another here. Any street will lead you there. Go straight ahead, and you cannot miss the place.

[*Exit.*

*First Man*

Just hear what the fool says: "Any street will lead you there!" Where, then, would be the sense of having so many streets?

*Second Man*

You needn't be so awfully put out at that, my man. A country is free to arrange its affairs in its own way.

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As for roads in our country—well, they are as good as non-existent; narrow and crooked lanes, a labyrinth of ruts and tracks. Our King does not believe in open thoroughfares; he thinks that streets are just so many openings for his subjects to fly away from his kingdom. It is quite the contrary here; nobody stands in your way, nobody objects to your going elsewhere if you like to; and yet the people are far from deserting this kingdom. With such streets our country would certainly have been depopulated in no time.

### *First Man*

My dear Janardan, I have always noticed that this is a great fault in your character.

### *Janardan*

What is?

*First Man*

That you are always having a fling at your country. How can you think that open highways may be good for a country? Look here, Kaundilya; here is a man who actually believes that open highways are the salvation of a country.

*Kaundilya*

There is no need, Bhavadatta, of my pointing out afresh that Janardan is blessed with an intelligence which is remarkably crooked, which is sure to land him in danger some day. If the King comes to hear of our worthy friend, he will make it a pretty hard job for him to find any one to do him his funeral rites when he is dead.

*Bhavadatta*

One can't help feeling that life becomes a burden in this country; one



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misses the joys of privacy in these streets — this jostling and brushing shoulders with strange people day and night makes one long for a bath. And nobody can tell exactly *what* kind of people you are meeting with in these public roads—ugh!

### *Kaundilya*

And it is Janardan who persuaded us to come to this precious country! We never had any second person like him in our family. You knew my father, of course; he was a great man, a pious man if ever there was one. He spent his whole life within a circle of a radius of 49 cubits drawn with a rigid adherence to the injunctions of the scriptures, and never for a single day did he cross this circle. After his death a serious difficulty arose—how cremate him within the limits of the 49 cubits and yet outside

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