

# GAUTAMĪ-MĀHĀTMYA [THE GLORIFICATION OF GAUTAMĪ]

## CHAPTER ONE *Holy Centres*

*The sages said :*

1. Listening to the description of holy centres in detail, we never feel satiated. We ask you to narrate the great secret once again, the great grandeur of the holy centre, the most excellent of all excellent holy centres.

*Brahmā said :*

2. Formerly, O excellent brahmins, I was asked this very same question by Nārada. Then I told him that with great effort.

*Nārada said :*

3. This has been heard by me from you, O lord of the universe, O source of origin of the Universe, viz. that the resorting to the holy centres is better than austerities, sacrifices and charitable gifts.

4. O lord of the Devas, how many varieties of holy centres are there? What are their benefits? Which is more excellent than all the other holy centres for ever?

*Brahmā said :*

5-7. There are four varieties of holy centres, O most venerable sage, viz. Daiva, Āsura, Ārṣa and Mānuṣa. They are well-known in heaven, on Earth, nether regions—nay, in all the three worlds and resorted to by gods etc. The holy centre Ārṣa is more desirable than the holy centres pertaining to human beings. The holy centre belonging to Asuras bestows more benefit than the holy centres belonging to sages. O son, the holy centre belonging to gods is more desirable than the holy centres belonging to Asuras.

8. The holy centre created by Brahmā, Viṣṇu, Maheśa and others is called Daiva (Divine). They do not know anything greater than this because one is produced from the three.

9. The holy centre of the three worlds is cited as human. There also, the holy centre in the Jambū island is highly excellent with many qualities.

10. Among the holy centres of Jambū<sup>1</sup> island Bhārata Varsa is the holy centre well known in the Vedas. Among the holy centres of Bhārata Daṇḍaka<sup>2</sup> forest is the most excellent of all holy centres. O son, it is called a holy centre because it is a sphere of holy rites.

11. The holy centres mentioned by me to you are there itself. Listen to their names mentioned by me briefly.

12-13. The different types of holy centres are Daiva, Āsura, Ārṣa and Mānuṣa i.e. divine, demoniac, saintly and human.

Between Himavān and Vindhya there are six rivers of divine origin. Similarly, O brahmin, there are six rivers of divine origin between Vindhya and the Southern Sea. These twelve rivers are glorified as the most important of all.

14. Since Bhārata bestows much merit it is highly honoured. Hence that sub-continent is called the sphere of holy rites by Devas.

15-19. In some places the holy centres of mountains are Divine ones.

That which is surrounded by demons is called Āsura.

In the divine regions great sages perform penances and create holy centres due to the divine power or the power of their penance. They create these centres for their own welfare, prosperity, worship and salvation. They are called Ārṣa (Saintly holy centres).

O Nārada, they call the holy centres created by men as the human holy centres. These centres are created by men for their own benefit and prosperity or for the acquisition of fame.

1. One of the seven continents of the earth having nine divisions or *varṣas* including Bhārata or India, the remaining six being Plakṣa, Śālmali, Kuśa, Krauñca, Śāka and Puṣkara (Vide *Agni P.* 108. 1-3)

2. A forest tract lying between the Godāvari and Narmadā rivers in the South and a scene of many episodes in the Rāmāyaṇa.

Thus O excellent sage, there are four different types of holy centres.

No one, even the Yogin, knows the different types. O Nārada, it behoves you to hear about them attentively.

Many persons who profess to be scholars hear and recount. But some meritorious person knows how to speak and hear by virtue of his own good qualities.

*Nārada said :*

20-22. I wish to hear factually their difference and features, on hearing which one attains perpetual liberation from all sins. O Brahmā, in the beginning of the Kṛta age<sup>1</sup> there is no other means except resorting to holy centres which bestows the desired results with least amount of strain. O Creator, there is no other speaker or knower equal to you. You are born in the navel lotus of Viṣṇu. You are born ahead of all.

*Brahmā said :*

23. These six rivers in the south of the Vindhya are glorified, viz. Godāvarī, Bhīmarathī, Tuṅgabhadrā, Venikā, Tāpī and Payoṣṇī.

24. Bhāgīrathī, Narmadā, Yamunā, Sarasvatī, Viśokā and Vitastā are dependent on the Himālayan ridges.

25-33. These are the holiest rivers. They are cited as the holy centres.

The holy centres surrounded by the following Asuras are the Āsura holy centres: Gaya, Kolāsura, Vṛtra, Tripura, Andhaka, Hayamūrdhan, Lavaṇa, Namuci, Śṛṅgaka, Yama, Pātālaketu, Madhu and Puṣkara. They are auspicious.

O Nārada, the saintly holy centres are those holy centres frequented by the following sages: Prabhāsa, Bhārgava, Agastī, Nara, Nārāyaṇa, Vasiṣṭha, Bharadvāja, Gautama, Kaśyapa, Manu and others.

The human holy centres are those created by the following human beings: Ambarīṣa, Hariścandra, Nahuṣa, Rāma, Kuru, Kanakhala, Bharata, Sagara, Aśvayūpa, Nāciketā and

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1. The first of the four ages of the world during which righteousness has a complete sway.

Vṛṣākapi the suppressor of foes. O brahmin, they are holy centres created by them for their own fame, benefit, prosperity etc.

Wherever there are holy centres that have sprung up themselves anywhere in the three worlds they are called Daiva holy centres. They call them Puṇyatīrthas.

The different holy centres have been mentioned by me.

What is not dug up by anyone is called Devakhāta (dug up by gods). O sage, the different holy centres have been briefly recounted by me to you. Merely by knowing them man is released from all sins.

## CHAPTER TWO

### *Śiva's Marriage*

*Nārada said :*

1. The holy centre that is presided over by three deities is the most excellent of all holy centres. Kindly recount to me its form and different types in detail.

*Brahmā said :*

2. The other holy centres or sacred regions and sacrifice or other holy rites are effective only as long as the holy centre presided over by three deities, is not visited.

3-5. Resorting to Gaṅgā yields greater benefit than holy rites, fasts and Kṛcchra rites. Kṛcchra<sup>1</sup> rites should be performed in holy centres. O sage, holy centres purify all objects, oneself, mother, father etc. Except in holy centre presided over by the three deities there cannot be any remission in sins. Remembered, seen or touched it yields all desired objects. This Gaṅgā is the most excellent of all rivers. It bestows all desired things. It is presided over by three deities, O excellent sage. Listen to its origin.

1. A common word for several types of austerities involving bathing, fasting, worship and other prescribed religious observances.

6. Ten thousand years before, when Devas were ascendant Tāraka<sup>1</sup> became very powerful. He became very arrogant due to the boons granted by me.

7-8. The great glory as well as wealth of Devas was taken away by that powerful demon. Thereafter, Devas along with their leader Indra sought shelter in the lord of the worlds, the great grandfather of the Universe, who was lying in the milk-ocean. With their palms joined in reverence Devas who had none else to approach said to Viṣṇu:

*Devas said :*

9. O lord, you are the saviour of the worlds. You increase the fame of Devas. O lord of all, O source of origin of the Universe, O lord with the three Vedas for your form, obeisance to you.

10. You alone are the creator of the world, destroyer of Asuras and lord of the worlds. O Jaganmaya (who are identical with the Universe), you are the cause of creation, sustenance, and destruction.

11. In the whole of the three worlds, there is no other saviour to the embodied beings under the storm and stress of adversities. O lotus-eyed one, excepting you there is none to quell the three kinds of distress.<sup>2</sup>

12. You are the father and mother of the universe. O lord, you are easily accessible through service. Be pleased, O lord, save us from great dangers. Say, who is the destroyer of our distress excepting you ?

13. You are the primordial maker. You are the Boar, Fish and Tortoise.<sup>3</sup> When fear overwhelms us you protect us by assuming different forms.

14. O lord Hari, we have no other refuge. Our lordship has been taken away. Our women have been disgraced. We have been rendered homeless. O lord, why don't you protect us?

1. A demon who after propitiating Śiva by his penance became a great terror to the world and was ultimately killed by Skanda.

2. The three kinds are ādhyātmika, ādhidaivika and ādhibhautika or those due to diseases and other bodily causes, those due to super-natural agencies and those caused by natural calamities.

3. Three well known incarnations of god Viṣṇu.

*Brahmā said :*

15. Then the lord of Lakṣmī, who lies on the serpent Śeṣa, said to them: "Whence has this danger and fear come over to you? Please speak out without any tension." Then they said to the lord of Lakṣmī in regard to the Asura Tāraka.

*Devas said :*

16-17. A terrible danger from Tāraka has overwhelmed us. It causes hairs to stand on end. We are not capable of killing him in battles or by curses or austerities. He will meet death from a child who is not yet ten days old. Hence, O lord, let action be taken with regard to him.

*Brahmā said :*

18-20. Again Nārāyaṇa said : "O Devas, I am not very powerful. He cannot be killed by me or by my child or by Devas. Tāraka, the scorcher of the worlds, will meet death from that extremely powerful child who may be born of lord Śiva. Hence, let us all go, O Devas, along with sages in order to strive for the marriage of lord Śiva. This is the first attempt that should be made by us who are powerful enough for that."

21-22. After saying "So be it" Devas went to the excellent mountain Himavān full of jewels and to Menā the beloved wife of Himavān. All of them said this to Himavān and his wife:

23-25. "Dakṣa's daughter who is the mother of the worlds, who is Śiva stationed as Śakti, who has various forms in the world such as Buddhi (intellect), Prajñā (intelligence), Dhṛti (courage), Medhā (faculty of comprehension), Lajjā (bashfulness), Puṣṭi (nourishment) and Sarasvatī (Speech) and who sanctifies the worlds shall enter Menā's womb in order to achieve success in the affairs of Devas. On being born that mother of the Universe will become Śiva's wife. She will protect all of us as well as you."

*Brahmā said :*

26. Himavān approved of the scheme of Devas. Menā became extremely enthusiastic and said "Let it be so".

27. Then the mother of the Universe was born as Gaurī in the abode of Himavān. She was engaged in meditation of

Śiva. She was his beloved. She considered him as her ultimate resort.

28. Devas said to her: "Enter penance for Īśa". Then Gaurī performed penance on the ridge of the mountain Himālaya.

29-30. Again Devas took counsel with one another. They said: "How can Īśa meditate on her? Does he meditate on the Ātman or anything else? We do not know. How can the lord of Devas be made to fix his mind on the daughter of Menā? Some means should be employed in regard to this. Thence you will derive excellence."

Then the highly intelligent Brhaspati of liberal intellect said:

*Brhaspati said :*

31. The intelligent Cupid who wields the flowery bow and excites people must hit the quiescent Śiva by means of splendid flowery arrows.

32. Pierced by the arrows the three-eyed lord may fix his mind on her. Then the lord will certainly marry her.

33. The arrows of the victorious Cupid have never been ineffective anywhere. So when the mother of the Universe gets married a son will be born to her.

34-35. That son born to the three-eyed lord will kill Tāraka. Give unto Kāma, Vasanta the storehouse of flowers as an assistant. He delights the minds of everyone.

*Brahmā said :*

36. Saying "So be it" Devas, the suppressors of their enemies felt relieved. They sent Cupid and Spring to Śiva.

37. Holding his bow and accompanied by Spring and his consort Rati, Cupid hurried to perform that very difficult task.

38-39. Holding the bow and arrows he stood in front of Śiva and began to think "Shall the lord Śiva, the preceptor of the worlds, be pierced? I am the conqueror of universe. But are my arrows firm in regard to him?"

He was reduced to ashes by Śiva by his fiery eyes.

40-44. In order to watch the same activity steadily Devas came there. Listen to the surprising event that happened then. Devas looked at Śiva. Even as they glanced at Cupid, they saw him reduced to ashes and they were frightened. With the palms joined together Devas eulogised the lord.

*Devas said :*

Great fear of Tāraka has overwhelmed us. Make the daughter of Himavān your wife.

*Brahmā said :*

Lord Śiva whose mind had been pierced, immediately acted according to the entreaties of Devas. It is the nature of noble souls that they do not consider their own welfare while they make sacrifices for the sake of others.

Devas sent Arundhatī, Vasiṣṭha, the discus-bearing Viṣṇu and me for the arrangement of the wedding.

In this manner the alliance between Himavān and Śiva, the lord of the Universe, was effected.

### CHAPTER THREE

#### *Gift of a Water Vessel to Brahmā*

*Brahmā said :*

1-4. The wedding took place on the excellent Himālaya mountain which is wonderfully bedecked in different kinds of jewels, which is full of various sorts of trees and creepers, which is frequented by different birds, which is encompassed by rivers, lakes, tanks, wells, which is frequented by Devas, Gandharvas,<sup>1</sup> Siddhas,<sup>2</sup> Cāraṇas,<sup>3</sup> Yakṣas<sup>4</sup> and others, which is richly endowed with splendid wind, which was the sole cause of excessive merriment, which is surrounded by Meru,<sup>5</sup> Mandara,<sup>6</sup> Kailāsa,<sup>7</sup> Maināka<sup>8</sup> and other mountains and which is

1. Semi-divine beings skilled in singing and music.

2. A group of semi-divine beings of great purity and holiness.

3. The panegyrists of gods.

4. A class of semi-divine beings who attend on Kubera, the god of wealth.

5. A mythical mountain and abode of celestial beings.

6. Another mythical mountain used by gods and demous as a rod for churning the ocean.

7. A Himālayan peak on which resides god Śiva.

8. Another mountain which escaped when Indra planned to cut off wings which all mountains are supposed to have previously.



encircled by Vasiṣṭha,<sup>1</sup> Agastya,<sup>2</sup> Paulastya<sup>3</sup>, Lomaśa<sup>4</sup> and other sages while great festivities were being celebrated.

5. There on a raised divine platform was an altar beautifully studded with jewels and bedecked in gold well arranged by Viśvakarman.<sup>5</sup> It was rendered beautiful by a row of columns of diamonds, rubies and sapphires.

6. It was surrounded by the deities Jayā,<sup>6</sup> Lakṣmī,<sup>7</sup> Śubhā,<sup>8</sup> Kṣānti,<sup>9</sup> Kīrti,<sup>10</sup> Puṣṭi<sup>11</sup> etc. It was also surrounded by the splendid mountains Meru, Mandara, Kailāsa and Raivata.<sup>12</sup>

7. It was honoured by the powerful Viṣṇu, the lord of the universe. Golden coloured Maināka, the most excellent among mountains, shone there.

8. The sages, the guardians of the quarters and the Ādityas<sup>13</sup> accompanied by Maruts<sup>14</sup> constructed the altar for the wedding ceremony of the trident-bearing lord, the chief of Devas.

9-12. Viśvakarman, Tvaṣṭṛ<sup>15</sup> himself made the altar with festoons. The wedding ceremony took place when the place was rendered beautiful by the divine cows such as Surabhi,<sup>16</sup> Nandīnī<sup>17</sup>, Nandā<sup>18</sup> and Sunandā<sup>19</sup> that yield everything desired.

1. An ancient sage and priest of Ikṣvāku kings.

2. Another sage said to have been born out of a waterjar and to have drunk up the ocean.

3. Probably the sage Pulastya is meant who was a mind-born son of Brahmā and the father of Viśravas and grandfather of Kubera and Rāvaṇa.

4. A sage and great story-teller.

5. A great architect and artificer of gods.

6. 7, 10, 11. Daughters of Dakṣa Prajāpati.

8. Two Śubhās are known, one being Dhruva's mother and the other wife of Aṅgiras.

9. Probably Śānti or Kṣamā both also daughters of Dakṣa Prajāpati.

12. A mountain Raivata or Raivataka, is known to exist in Gujarat.

13. A group of Vedic gods originally numbering six which later increased to twelve.

14. Another group of Vedic gods associated with storms, lightning, thunder etc.

15. A Ṛgvedic deity said to be the ideal artist, divine artisan; mentioned in Viṣṇupurāṇa as a son of Viśvakarmā.

16. Another name of Kāmadhenu the divine cow; also a cow born from the huṅkāra of Brahmā.

17. The cow of plenty belonging to sage Vasiṣṭha, said to be born of Surabhi.

18. & 19. Names not traceable elsewhere.

All these were present there, viz. the oceans, rivers, serpents, mothers of the worlds etc. along with vegetable kingdom and seeds.

Ilā [Earth] carried out the function of productivity, the herbs performed the work of growth, Varuṇa performed the work of drink, Kubera performed the work of charitable gifts; Agni performed whatever was desired by the lord of worlds.

13. The eternal Viṣṇu performed worship separately in different places. The Vedas accompanied by their secret principles gave charming instructions.

14. The celestial damsels danced. The Gandharvas and Kinnaras<sup>1</sup> sang. O excellent sage, Maināka held fried grains (for the sacrifice).

15. The invocation of holy water was performed inside the house, O Nārada. The couple, the most excellent among Devas sat on the altar.

16. After setting the holy fire ablaze duly and performing the sacrifice with fried grains, O son, the couple went round the rocky slab duly.

17. During the course of touching the slab, Śiva urged by Viṣṇu, touched the toe of the right foot of the goddess with his hand.

18. Performing the sacrifice there near Śiva, I saw her. My semen got ejaculated due to my evil mind on seeing the toe.

19. In the entire three worlds, who is not deceived by Cupid? Defiled and ashamed, I scattered the ejaculated semen in small droplets.

20. From the minute particles of my semen the Vālakhilyas<sup>2</sup> were born. Then there was a great commotion caused by Devas. Overwhelmed by shame, I stood up from my seat and started.

21. Even as Devas watched silently, O Nārada, I went ahead. On seeing me go, Mahādeva spoke to Nandin:

*Śiva said :*

22. Call Brahmā here. I shall make him free from sin.

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1. Horse-headed celestial musicians dwelling in Kubera's city.

2. Pigmy sages no bigger than half a thumb, numbering 6000 and residing in the solar region.

Even if other people commit offences good people take pity on them. They have sympathy for them in their minds. This is the nature of worldly objects. They delude even great scholars.

*Brahmā said :*

23-25. After saying this, Lord Śiva accompanied by Umā began operations. The lord of the worlds did this due to his sympathy for me and desire for the welfare of the worlds. Listen to it attentively, O Nārada.

“The Earth and Waters shall become the means of redemption of sinners from their sins. I shall extract their ultimate essence that is holy.” After declaring this the lord extracted their essence.

26-27. He made the Earth into a water-jar and poured water into it. With great effort he chanted *Pāvamānya*<sup>1</sup> and other hymns and consecrated them. The lord who dispels sins remembered Śakti who sanctifies the universe and invoked her there. Then the lord of the worlds said to me, “Take this water-jar.

28. Indeed the waters are goddesses and mothers. The Earth is another mother. So both of them are the causes of existence, creation and destruction.

29. It is here that Dharma is established. It is here that the eternal sacrifice is established. It is here that enjoyment and salvation, mobile and immobile beings are established.

30. By remembering it the mental sin perishes. By bowing to it the verbal sin perishes. By bathing, drinking and performing the holy ablution, the physical sin perishes.

31. This alone is nectar in the world. There is nothing greater in sanctity than this. O Brahmā, take this water-jar consecrated by me with holy Mantras.

32. Whoever remembers or drinks the water herein attains all desired things. Take this water-jar.

33. Of all the five elements, water is the element of great effect. This water is the best among all those waters. Take this water-jar.

34. O Brahmā, by touching, remembering and seeing the

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1. The verses in the ninth *Maṇḍala* of the *R̥gveda* relating to Soma Pavamāna; also known as ‘Pāvamāni’.

water herein, which is very splendid, holy and sacred, one is liberated from sin."

35-36. After saying this the supreme lord gave me the water-jar. Then Devas joyously spoke to their lord. There was great exhilaration there. Cries of victory rang the sky.

During the wedding festival of the lord I saw the tip of the foot of the mother. Due to this sin I attained the state of a fallen fellow. The merciful father gave me Gaṅgā water kept in the holy jar. It is holy and sanctifying even by remembering.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### *How Gaṅgā Entered the Matted Hair of Śiva*

*Nārada said :*

1. Goddess Gaṅgā stationed in your water-jar increased your merit. O lord, tell me in detail how it came to the mortal world.

*Brahmā said :*

2-3. There was a great asura named Bali. This enemy of gods was invincible. He was incomparable in regard to virtue, fame, protection of subjects, devotion to elders and preceptors, truthfulness, virility, power, renunciation and forbearance in the three worlds.

4. On seeing his prosperity increased Devas became worried. They spoke to one another, "How will we conquer Bali?"

5. While he was ruling over the kingdom of the three worlds dispelling thorns, there were no enemies, no ailments, no anxieties in any way.

6. While Bali was ruling over the kingdom, none of these was seen even in dream, viz., famine, evil, denial of God, wickedness.

7. Devas did not have place or happiness because they were pierced by the arrows of his prosperity; they were severed by the sword of his renown, their limbs were cut by the spear of his command.

8. Keeping their jealousy in front they talked to one another. With their body set ablaze by the fire of his fame they were agitated. They approached Viṣṇu.

*Devas said :*

9. O lord of the worlds, O lord holding conch, discus and club, we are distressed. Your lordship always holds weapons for our sake.

10-17. Our misery is this much even when you are our lord, O lord of the Universe. How can the head of those who bow down to you, bow down to asuras ?

Mentally, physically and verbally, we have sought refuge in you alone. Having your feet alone as our shelter how can we bow down to Asura?

We worship you by means of great sacrifices. We eulogise you, O Acyuta, by means of words of praise. Having you alone as our shelter, how can we bow down to Asura?

Devas with Indra as their leader always depend upon your vigour and power. Having acquired our status bestowed by you, how can we bow down to Asura ?

Through the form of Brahmā you are the creator. You protect us as Viṣṇu. You are the annihilator through your power of Rudra. How can we bow down to Asura ?

Lordship and glory is the cause of everything in the world. Without it (life) is useless. O lord of Devas, with our prosperity dispelled how can we bow down to Asura ?

You are one without a beginning. You are the creator of the universe. You are one without an end. You are the preceptor of the universe. How can we bow down to this Asura ?

Our limbs have been nourished by your lordship and glory. After conquering the three worlds with our strength we shall become stable, O lord of Devas. How can we bow down to Asura ?

*Brahmā said :*

18. On hearing these words, the slayer of the asuras spoke with reference to the tasks of the Devas.

*Vāsudeva said :*

19-20. This asura Bali is my devotee. He cannot be conquered by Devas or Asuras. Just as you all are persons to be

nourished by me so also Bali is to be nourished by me. Without a battle, O Devas, I shall take away his kingdom which extends to the three worlds. I shall bind him by means of words with miraculous power and give the kingdom unto you all.

*Brahmā said :*

21. After saying "so be it" Devas went to heaven. The holy lord, the lord of Devas entered the womb of Aditi.<sup>1</sup>

22. When he was born there were great festivities. The lord of sacrifices was born, O brahmin, as Vāmana.<sup>2</sup>

23-27. In the meantime, O brahmin, Bali the most excellent of all strong men made preparations for the horse sacrifice. He was accompanied by his priest Śukra who was conversant with the Vedas and Vedāṅgas.<sup>3</sup> He was sanctified by important sages. While the sacrifice was going on, while Bali went on with the performance of sacrifice, while chief of the sages performed the duties of a Ṛtvij,<sup>4</sup> while Śukra functioned as the chief priest, while Devas, Gandharvas and Nāgas were seated in order to receive their respective share in the sacrificial offerings, while these words were being exchanged, viz. "Let it be given", "Let it be partaken of", "Let the worship be performed separately", "It is complete", "Again it is filled up" etc., Vāmana who was singing Sāman verses came slowly to that place. Vāmana who was wearing ear-rings and holding an umbrella came to the sacrificial hall.

28-31. He began to praise the sacrifice. Vāmana had assumed the form of a brahmin. He was the lord Daitya-sūdana (the slayer of Daityas). He was the bestower of benefits of sacrifice and austerities. He was the slayer of asuras. Bhārgava (a descendant of Bhṛgu, i.e. Śukra) recognised him and then in a hurry spoke to the king, the king who had great splendour, who was a conqueror with the duties of Kṣatriya, who was a donor of riches with devotion, who was the most excellent of all powerful men, who was initiated in the sacrifice

1. The mother of gods.

2. The dwarf incarnation of Viṣṇu.

3. Subjects necessary for the study and proper understanding of the Vedas, eg. Śikṣā (Phonetics), Nirukta (Etymology) etc.

4. A priest officiating at a Vedic sacrifice. There are usually four such priests, viz. Hotṛ, Adhvaryu, Brahman and Udgātṛ.

along with his wife, who was meditating on Viṣṇu, and who was pouring oblations separately. Śukra who was the most powerful in the family of Bhṛgu and who was extremely intelligent spoke to the king:

*Śukra said :*

32-33. This brahmin who has the size of a dwarf and who has come to your sacrifice, O Bali, is not really a brahmin. It is true that he is the lord of sacrifices, the sanctifier of sacrifices. He who is greater than the greatest, who is the great Man, has come here to request you. Only after taking counsel from me should it be given by you, O lord.

*Brahmā said :*

34-35. Bali the suppressor of enemies said to his preceptor, Bhārgava thus.

*Bali said :*

Blessed am I because the lord of sacrifices is coming to my house so unexpectedly. If he requests me anything after coming here, of what avail is my cogitation ?

*Brahmā said :*

36. So addressed by Śukra, his priest, Bali, accompanied by his wife, went to that place where the leading brahmin Vāmana, the son of Aditi, was present.

37-40. With palms joined in reverence he said, "Why have you come ? Tell me that". Then Vāmana said : "A piece of ground measured by three steps should be given to me for staying. I do not wish for anything else."

After saying "So be it" he poured a stream of water from the pot embellished with different jewels. Thereafter, he gave the Earth to Vāmana even as the chief sages were watching, even as the priest Śukra was watching. While the illustrious Devas were watching he gave the Earth to Vāmana. While the asuras were watching cries of "Victory" rose up, in the sky.

41. Vāmana said slowly : "Hail to you, O king, Be happy. Grant me the measured ground, the three steps that have been promised."

42-44. "So be it", said the lord of asuras, "Let it be taken". Even as these words were uttered, even as he was watching

Vāmana, something wonderful happened. The lord of sacrifices increased in size so much that the moon and the sun came up to the breast and the Devas over the head. In exploit and size he increased, lord Acyuta, who has no end, who is the maker of the worlds and who identifies himself with the universe. On seeing him, the king of asuras who was humble and who was accompanied by his wife, said to the lord:

*Bali said :*

45. O Viṣṇu, O lord of worlds identifying with the Universe, take the steps as many as you can. O lord of Devas, O creator of the Universe, it is I who have conquered in every respect.

46. At the very same time when he was saying this Śukra too said this very earnestly: "O lord of kings, due to my intelligence you have already been propitiated before." As he spoke thus, Viṣṇu of great sacrifice said:

*Viṣṇu said :*

47. O lord of Daityas, of great arms, O king of Daityas, I shall take steps. See.

As he said so, he (ie. Bali) said again and again, "O Viṣṇu, take the steps."

*Brahmā said :*

48. After standing firmly on the back of the tortoise he placed a step in the sacrificial hall of Bali. He, the eternal lord, placed the second step over the whole world.

49. Then he said to Bali: "O lord of Asuras, there is no place for the third step. Where shall I place the third step? Give me the ground."

Laughingly Bali said with palms joined in reverence. He was accompanied by his wife.

*Bali said :*

50-52. The entire universe has been created by you, O lord of Devas. I am not a creator. Due to your fault it has become too small, O lord of cosmic identity.

Still, I have never uttered a lie, nor will I ever utter a lie proving me to be a man of truthful, statement. Step on my back.



Then, the lord who is worshipped by Devas, whose form is evolved by the three Vedas, became pleased.

He said, "Choose a boon. Welfare unto you, O lord of Daityas, I am pleased with your devotion."

*Brahmā said :*

53-54. He said to the lord of the Universe—"O Trivikrama (one who took three steps), I do not beg anything of you."

Viṣṇu who was pleased granted him whatever was desired by his pure mind viz., the lordship of the nether worlds, the future status of Indra, the overlordship of Indra and a great deal of imperishable fame.

55-57. After granting all this to Bali, Lord Vāmana placed Bali, the enemy of Devas in nether worlds along with his son and wife. He gave the kingdom of Devas to Indra as at the time of its origin.

In the meantime he went back to his region honoured by Devas.

O highly intelligent one, that second step of Viṣṇu, my father, became my abode. On seeing my abode I thought:

58. "What is that work which shall be auspicious in this second step of Viṣṇu whereby my water-jar shall become excellent?"

59-63. The water bestowed by the enemy of Tripuras is highly meritorious. It is excellent. It bestows boons. It is calm. It is highly conducive to tranquillity. It is splendid. It bestows splendour. It is eternal. It yields worldly enjoyment and salvation. It is in the form of the mother of the worlds. It is nectar. It is pure panacea (for all ills). It is holy. It is sacred. It is worthy of worship. It is the greatest and the most excellent. It is conducive to splendour. By remembering it sanctifies the worlds. What if it is seen? Remaining pure, I shall utilize that water as the libation to my father.

Thinking that, I took that water and used it for *argha* (offering).

The water for *Argha*, that was consecrated by the recitation of *Mantras* fell on Viṣṇu's foot. That water fell on the Meru and flowed to the Earth in four ways.

64-68. The waters flowed in four directions, viz. East, South, West and North.

By means of his matted hair, Śaṅkara caught hold of the water that flowed towards the South.

The water that flowed towards the West went back to the water-jar.

Viṣṇu caught hold of the water that flowed towards the North.

The sages, Devas, manes and the guardians of quarters caught hold of the auspicious water that flowed towards the East. Hence it is called the most excellent.

The waters that reached the Southern quarter are the mothers of the worlds. The waters that flowed from the foot of Viṣṇu are conducive to the welfare of brahmins and the mothers of worlds. Thus they became cause of prosperity by remaining within the matted hair of Maheśvara. By remembering their power one would attain all desired things.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### *Vināyaka and Gautama*

*Nārada said :*

1. How the River Gaṅgā stationed in the water-jar reached the matted hair of Lord Śiva, has been heard. Kindly tell me how it reached the mortal world.

*Brahmā said :*

2. O highly intelligent one, there are two divisions in the waters stationed in the matted hair of Maheśvara, because of two persons who took them away.

3. One part that is well known in the world was brought by the brahmin Gautama who used to perform holy rites, donate charitable gifts and practise meditation after worshipping Śiva.

4-5. The other part was taken away, O extremely intelligent one, by the powerful Kṣatriya monarch Bhagīratha after propitiating Śaṅkara by means of penances and holy rites. Thus O excellent sage, the Gaṅgā had two different forms.

*Nārada said :*

6. For what reason was Gautama the conveyor of the water stationed in the matted hair of Maheśvara? Tell me, by which Kṣatriya was it brought.

*Brahmā said :*

7. For your pleasure, O dear one, I shall recount in detail how the river was brought by the brahmin or the other one.

8. O sage of great lustre, Gaṅgā became the beloved of Śambhu at the very time when Umā became the beloved of the lord of Devas.

9-10. Śiva was thinking about the means of dispelling my sin. Accompanied by Umā the glorious lord observed the goddess particularly. Since he was indulgent in pleasant activities he created the excellent juice. It was excellent because he was fond of its beauty and sweetness, feminine qualities as well as holy nature, and

11. Gaṅgā was the most beloved of all, O excellent brahmin. He kept her on his head (as a token of honour). Since Umā knew this, Maheśvara was always worried over it.

12. Gaṅgā alone came out of the matted hair for some other reason. Śiva had concealed Gaṅgā in his matted hair.

13-14. On knowing that she (Gaṅgā) was held by him in his head, Umā was not able to bear it. On seeing her stationed in the matted hair, again and again Gaurī spoke to her lord in anger thus: "Send her away, O lord of aesthetic taste." However, the lord declined to send her away.

15. On account of that misery Umā said "Oh, I am helpless."

On reflecting that the lord was concealing Gaṅgā in his matted hair, she spoke these words in secret to Vināyaka, Skanda and Jayā.<sup>1</sup>

16-17. "This lover, the lord of Devas will never forsake Gaṅgā. Now she too is the beloved of my lord. How will my lord abandon her, his beloved?" After reflecting thus many times, Umā spoke to Vināyaka.

*Pārvatī said :*

18. The lord will never abandon Gaṅgā even if attempted

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1. Wife of Puṣpadanta, a gaṇa (attendant of Śiva).

by Devas, Asuras, Yakṣas, Siddhas, including yourself, kings or others.

19-20. Either I shall go to Himavān and perform penance once again or I shall entrust the job to holy brahmins who have dispelled their sins by practising austerities. Requested by them Gaṅgā may go to the Earth.

*Brahmā said :*

21-23. On hearing these words of his mother Gaṇeśa, the lord of obstacles said to his mother:

“It is proper to consult my brother Skanda and Jayā (and do everything). We shall do that whereby my father will cast off Gaṅgā from his head.”

O brahmin, in the meantime there was a drought lasting for twenty four years. It caused great fright to all living beings in the mortal world. Then the whole universe consisting of mobile and immobile beings perished.

24-27. (There was great disaster everywhere) except the sacred hermitage of Gautama that bestowed all desired things.

Formerly, I desired to create the mobile and immobile beings, O dear son. A sacrifice was performed by me on the mountain Devayajana. Thereafter that mountain became well known as Brahmagiri associated with my name.

That Gautama has resorted to that excellent mountain and is staying there ever since. Neither mental worries nor physical ailments, neither famine nor absence of rain, neither fear nor grief, neither poverty nor misfortune are ever heard of in his excellent and highly meritorious hermitage on the auspicious Brahmagiri.

28. Excepting his hermitage in no other place the offering was made to Devas or manes. O dear son, there was neither a donor nor a Hotṛ<sup>1</sup> nor a person performing sacrifices.

29. The propitiation of Devas in heaven was accomplished only when the brahmin Gautama made offering or performed a sacrifice.

30. Sage Gautama became well known in the world of Devas and in the mortal world. People knew that he alone was the donor and the enjoyer of pleasant things.

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1. An officiating priest reciting Ṛgvedic hymns during a sacrifice.

31. On hearing about this the sages of different hermitages enquired about the hermitage of Gautama and went there.

32. Sage Gautama devoutly nourished all those sages as if they were his disciples, sons or fathers.

33. Whatever was desired by them was provided by him. The sage rendered service to all of them in the proper order, in accordance with their ability and in a manner befitting them.

34-35. At the bidding of Gautama, the herbs and other vegetables became the mothers of worlds. Again Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Maheśvara were propitiated by him. Then the herbs and other vegetables grew up and were used by the people then and there. They were thought of and sowed by the power of penance of Gautama.

36-38. Whatever was thought of by Gautama was realised. All prosperities were achieved. Everyday Gautama addressed the sages like sons, disciples or fathers. He asked them, "What shall I do for you?". He nurtured them for many years as a father would do his sons. Thus, O dear son, Gautama acquired great renown.

Then Vināyaka spoke to his mother, brother and Jayā.

*Vināyaka said :*

39-42. Mother, the brahmin Gautama is being sung about in the abode of Devas: "Gautama has done that which can be achieved by Devas only with effort." O goddess, thus the power of penance of the brahmin has been heard by me. Dear mother, that brahmin may be able to dislodge Gaṅgā stationed in the matted hair after worshipping the three-eyed lord by means of penance. He alone can plead to the beloved of my father, who is stationed in the matted hair of my father. Some means should be employed so that the brahmin may plead to her. Due to his power the excellent Gaṅgā will descend from his head.

*Brahmā said :*

43. After saying this to his mother, the lord of obstacles<sup>1</sup> went to the place where the lean Gautama who was wearing

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1. Lord Gaṇeśa who is supposed to be the creator as well as the remover of obstacles is propitiated at the commencement of all important undertakings.

the holy thread was present. He was accompanied by his brother and Jayā.

44-46. After staying for a few days within the precincts of Gautama's hermitage, the lord of obstacles said to the brahmins: "We must not stay there. Let us go to our own abodes, clean and pure hermitages. We have been nourished by Gautama's food. Let us ask sage Gautama". After discussing among themselves thus the excellent sages took leave of the sage. Due to his fond feelings he prevented the sages severally.

*Gautama said :*

47. Gautama said humbly with palms joined in reverence: Stay here alone ye all. O leading sages, I shall serve your feet.

48. While I stand by here, ready to serve you all, it is not proper for you, Devas on the Earth to resort to another hermitage.

49. In my opinion this hermitage alone is the holy penance grove for all. O sages, please do not go to any other hermitage.

*Brahmā said :*

50. On hearing these words of the sage, Vināyaka remembered his duty of causing obstacles (in secret). With palms joined in reverence he said to the brahmins.

*Gaṇādhipa said :*

51. We have all been bought over by the food offered to us. Why then should Gautama not forbid us? We are not allowed to go to our own abodes by peaceful means.

52. Nor does this excellent brahmin who has helped us deserve any punishment. Hence I shall endeavour in an intelligent manner. Let that be approved of by you all.

*Brahmā said :*

53-56. Then the brahmins replied: "Let it be done for helping this brahmin with a desire for the welfare of the world. Do anything which will do good to all the brahmins."

On hearing the words of the brahmins Gaṇādhipa (Lord of gaṇas or attendants of Śiva) approved of them and said.

*Vināyaka said :*

What is particularly good for Gautama is being done.

*Brahmā said :*

Vināyaka of liberal mind coaxed and cajoled the brahmins again and again. He bowed unto them. He took the guise of a brahmin himself. Gaṇeśvara who sided with his mother habitually, said to Jayā.

*Vināyaka said :*

57. O Lady of splendid face, do everything in such a manner as no one else comes to know. Assume the form of a cow and go to the place where Gautama is present.

58. Consume the paddy. O beautiful lady, destroy them and distort them. If you are beaten, or shouted at or even looked at do something (by way of retaliation). Bellowing loudly remain in a struggle between life and death.

*Brahmā said :*

59-60. Vijayā (Jayā) who sided with Vighneśvara did so. Jayā assumed the form of a cow and went to the place where Gautama was present, eating the paddy plants (on the way). Gautama saw her. On seeing the cow in a state of aberration, the brahmin prevented her by a blade of grass.

61. On being forbidden by him, the cow cried aloud and fell down. When the cow fell down there was a great hue and cry.

62. On hearing the cry and on seeing the action of Gautama the brahmins became distressed. Keeping Vighnarāja at the head the brahmins said.

*The Brahmins said :*

63. All of us are going away from here. We should not stay in your hermitage. We all had been nurtured by you like a son. O leading sage, we are taking leave of you.

*Brahmā said :*

64. On hearing these words of the brahmins who were determined to go from there, he was as though struck down by the thunderbolt. He fell down in front of the brahmins.

65. The brahmins said to him: "See this goddess mother of the Rudras, the beloved deity of the worlds sanctifying them, fallen on the ground.

66. When due to the power of fate, this cow whose form and features are like those of gods and holy centres has fallen down O excellent sage, what remains for us to do is to go away.

67. If we continue to reside in your hermitage (the merit of) the holy rites performed by us will dwindle down and waste away. O brahmin, we do not have any other asset. We are only ascetics whose only assets are their penance.

*Brahmā said :*

68-72. Standing humbly in front of the brahmins, Gautama said.

*Gautama said :*

Your holinesses alone are my refuge. It behoves you to make me pure.

*Brahmā said :*

Then Lord Vighnakṛt (Gaṇeśa, the creator of obstacles) surrounded by the brahmins, said.

*Vighnarāja said :*

This cow neither dies nor lives. In this extremely doubtful situation we shall mention the expiation and the goal.

*Gautama said :*

This cow will never gain sense. She will certainly die. How will this cow get up? It behoves you to tell me the way of expiation. Undoubtedly I shall do everything.

*The Brahmins said :*

73. This intelligent (brahmin) will speak in accordance with the opinion of all of us. His statement is (as good as) our statement. It should be considered authoritative by you, O Gautama.

*Brahmā said :*

74. Induced by the brahmins as well as the powerful Gautama, Vighnakṛt (i.e. Lord Gaṇeśa) in the guise of a brahmin spoke these words to all.

*Vighnarāja said :*

75. I shall speak truthfully on behalf of all. Let the sages as well as Gautama accept my suggestion.



76. We have heard that the water that had been in the jar of Brahmā born of the unmanifest one, is now staying within the matted hair of Lord Śiva.

77. Bring it quickly by means of austerities and holy rites. O holy sage, pour that water over this cow that has fallen on the ground. After that all of us shall stay in your house as before.

*Brahmā said :*

78. When that leading brahmin said thus in the assembly of the brahmins, there was a shower of flowers there. Cries of "Victory" rose up. Then the humble Gautama spoke these words with palms joined in reverence.

*Gautama said :*

79. Let the desire in my mind be fulfilled due to my power of penance, by the grace of Fire god, by the grace of gods and Brahmā as well as by your grace.

*Brahmā said :*

80. After saying "Let it be so," the brahmins took leave of the leading sage and went to their abodes that were now rich in food and water.

81. When those brahmins had gone, Gaṇeśvara returned accompanied by his brother and Jayā. After fulfilling his task he was extremely delighted.

82-83. After the brahmins had returned, after Gaṇeśa had gone, the excellent sage Gautama whose sins had been dispelled by his penance, began to ponder over the same incident. "What is this that has befallen me?" After a great deal of reflection the brahmin understood it by his powerful intuition.

84-88. He came to the firm conclusion that the affair was made-up for the task of the gods. "I consider everything conducive to welfare. It is a help unto the worlds. It is (a task) most pleasing to Śambhu and Pārvatī. It is the task of bringing, Gaṅgā on the Earth. There is no sin in me at all". Thinking thus in his mind, the excellent brahmin became extremely delighted. After consulting his wife the excellent brahmin said: "After propitiating the bull-bannered three-eyed lord of the worlds, I shall bring the excellent river. I shall delight Pārvatī,

the consort of Śiva. The co-wife of the mother of the Universe is stationed within the matted hair of Maheśvara.” After determining thus in his mind the excellent sage Gautama departed from Brahmagiri with a desire to please Śambhu who was staying in Kailāsa, who is worshipped by the mighty Devas and whose power is most terrible.

## CHAPTER SIX

### *Descent of Gautami*

*Nārada said :*

1. After going to the peak of Kailāsa what did the holy lord, Sage Gautama do? Did he perform any penance? What excellent method did he adopt for attaining the goal?

*Brahmā said :*

2-3. After going to that mountain, O dear son, Sage Gautama controlled his speech. On the excellent mountain Kailāsa he spread Kuśa grass and sat thereon with purity of mind and body. Then he sang this hymn. While Maheśvara was being eulogized there was a shower of flowers.

*Gautama said :*

4. (Lord Śiva) accompanied by Umā assumes eight cosmic bodies that are always beneficial to the people. It is to bestow the desired enjoyment of worldly pleasures to those who seek it that the lord assumes these bodies. Hence the people eulogize the lord as the Great God.

5. Īśvara assumes the body of the Earth for this purpose viz. in order to create happiness by means of its own objects of pleasure and to sustain the entire (universe consisting of) mobile and immobile beings. It is conducive to the prosperity of the universe and its increase.

6. The form of waters (of Śiva with eight cosmic bodies) is for creation, sustenance and annihilation of the Earth and also in order to provide for support to the Earth. For granting happiness and piety to the people, Śiva of tranquil body assumed the form of waters that is well established in the universe.

7. Śiva's cosmic bodies of Sun, Moon and Fire caused the following viz., the demarcation of the units of time, the oozing current of nectar, sustenance, creation and destruction of living beings and joy, happiness and progress of the subjects.

8. The form of Īśa viz. Vāyu is evolved for the following purpose. It is for creating prosperity, movement, power, imperishable things, the proper arrangement of the living beings and for the accomplishment of their joys. Certainly, O holy lord, you alone are responsible for this.

9. Without mutual differences there cannot be action and piety, a thing that is one's own and not one's own, neither directions nor atmosphere, neither heaven nor Earth, neither worldly pleasures nor salvation. Hence, O Īśa, this ethereal body of yours.

10. (This ethereal body) assumes the form of word. In order to establish virtue the Vedas are divided into Ṛk, Yajus and Sāman. In the world (i.e. among non-Vedic sacred literature) the Gāthās (songs), Smṛtis, Purāṇas etc. (also flourish).

11. The various ancillary objects pertaining to sacrifice constitute the sacrificial body of Śiva. The sacrifice and the instruments of sacrifice, the form of the Ṛtvik, time, space and result, O Śambhu, you are all these things. They say that your sacrificial body is the ultimately real entity.

12. You are everything. You are the maker, donor, surety, charitable offering, the omniscient witness, the great Puruṣa, the supreme soul and the ultimate reality. You are everything. Of what avail are the verbal outpourings?

13. You are not pointed out by the Vedas and other sacred literature or preceptors. Nor are you accessible by means of intellect etc. You alone are unborn, unmeasurable and the lord expressed by the word Śiva. You alone are the Truth. O holy lord, obeisance unto you.

14. (Defective Text) Once Śiva saw his Prakṛti in unison with the Ātman as "This is my asset." At that same time, the Prakṛti that cannot be imagined or argued upon stood separate. The lord of cosmic form is one of unimaginable power.

15. The eternal Śiva whether possessed of all excellent virtues or devoid of any trait is the power of the creator of the

Universe. At every creation she becomes increased in purity. It has occupied the reason, its own reason.

16. Production, sustenance, increase and destruction of food—these are the eternal laws of nature. There is nothing which the beloved of Śiva cannot accomplish.

17. It is the Mother, the mother of the universe, the beloved of Śiva accompanied by Umā of grand and excellent renown for whose sake the living beings give food and wealth and perform penances and virtuous rites.

18. Even Indra yearns for her benign glance. One shall acquire auspiciousness from her names. Pervading the Universe she makes it free from impurities. That Umā has always a form similar to the form of the Moon.

19. It is due to her grace that the pleasures of intellect, eyes, consciousness and mind of all living beings beginning with Brahmā, whether mobile or immobile, become fruitful. The beautiful wife of the preceptor of the world is the goddess of speech.

20. “The mind of even the four-faced lord (Brahmā) has become defiled. Why not that of other creatures.” Thinking thus, the goddess should perform the descent of Gaṅgā by means of different methods in order to sanctify the universe.

21. By means of all testimonies and by going through the Vedic passages, people came to believe in the lordship of Śiva. They performed all pious rites and enjoyed all worldly pleasures. This is the perpetual power and glory of Śiva.

22. The things to be accomplished, the most excellent and pleasing to be evolved, the rite, the performer of the rite and the instruments of the rite are expressed in the Vedas and found in the world—those are said to be the achievements of the primordial lord.

23. It is the Lord of Umā who must be meditated upon. After attaining him the good Yogins are not reborn. They are liberated. After meditating upon the excellent Brahman and the great Pradhāna<sup>1</sup> it is lord Śiva who is the essence.

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1. The primordial matter, the inert stuff of the universe as opposed to spirit, more usually known as Prakṛti.

24. As and when Śambhu assumes the forms of the immeasurable Māyā<sup>1</sup> for the welfare of the universe, you too assume forms befitting contact with him. O Mother, that is your chastity.

*Brahmā said :*

25-26. As he was eulogising thus the bull-bannered lord, accompanied by Umā, appeared in front of him. The glorious lord Śambhu accompanied by Gaṇesa and his retinue went in front of him and spoke these words in delight.

*Śiva said :*

27. What shall I give you, O Gautama? I am delighted at your devotion, eulogy and splendid holy rites. You may ask anything, even for those things that are not easily accessible to the gods.

*Brahmā said :*

28. On hearing these words of Śiva having the universe for his body, Gautama was overwhelmed by the tears of delight. Expert in making statements, Gautama thought thus.

29. O fate ! O piety ! O the worship of brahmins, O the wonderful way of the world ! O creator, obeisance to you.

*Gautama said :*

30. O lord of Devas honoured by the gods, if you are pleased with me give me the splendid Gaṅgā stationed within your matted hair. O lord with the Vedas for abode, obeisance be to you.

*The Lord said :*

31. What has been requested for by you is for helping the three worlds. Rid of fear from every quarter you may request for something that will be helpful to yourself.

*Gautama said :*

32. Indeed it is this that I choose. Let those devotees who eulogise you and the goddess by means of this hymn be prosperously endowed with all desired things.

*Brahmā said :*

33. "So, be it", said the lord of Devas who was delighted, "Free from all ailments you may request for other boons from me."

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1. The cosmic power which creates illusory appearances.

34-45. Thus urged by the lord, Gautama said to Śaṅkara with joy:

“O Śaṅkara, let brahmin slaughter and other sins perpetrated mentally, verbally or physically be destroyed the by mere ablution in this river in any place upto the sea where it flows. It shall be the holiest of all holy rivers.

“O Hara, merely by remembering thus let there be that merit which is acquired in other holy rivers during the lunar and solar eclipses, during vernal and equinotical transit of the sun or during his northern and southern transit or during the holy occasion of Vaidhṛti.<sup>1</sup>

“In Kṛta<sup>2</sup> Yuga penance was praiseworthy, in Tretā it was the sacrificial rite, in Dvāpara, sacrifice and charitable gifts, and charitable gifts alone in Kali age.

“Yugadharmas (the virtues peculiar to certain Yugas or eras) and Deśadharmas (the virtues peculiar to certain countries) are honoured in accordance with the contact of the particular country or time unit.

“O Hara, merely by remembering this, let there be that merit which is acquired elsewhere by means of ablutions, charitable gifts and other observances.

“Wherever this river flows till the time it reaches the sea you must also be there. Let this be my most excellent boon.

“O Śiva, let these persons realize salvation, viz. those who come within ten Yojanas (i.e. 120 Kms) of this river even if they are great sinners, the manes who come here for bathing and other people who take bath.

“On one side stand all holy rivers whether in heaven or mortal world or nether world and on the other side stands this river. Still this river shall be the better one.

“Enough of this, O Śambhu, obeisance to you.”

*Brahmā said :*

46-47. On hearing those words of Gautama Śiva said: “So be it. A holy centre greater than this has never been, nor will there ever be. It is truth. It is truth. It is truth. It is well

1. A particular position of the sun and moon.

2. The first of the four cosmic ages having a duration of 1728000, 1296000, 864000 and 432000 human years equivalent respectively to 4800, 3600, 2400 and 1200 divine years.

established in the Veda. Gautamī is the holiest of all rivers.” After saying this the lord vanished there itself.

48. Then after the lord who is honoured by the worlds, had gone, Gautama became full of power. He grew matted hair. Leading the Gaṅgā, the most excellent of all rivers, he entered Brahmagiri surrounded by Devas.

49-50. Then, when Gautama came there, O Nārada, with matted hair, there was a shower of flowers. The leading Devas, the highly fortunate sages, brahmins and kṣatriyas came there, honouring that brahmin with cries of “Victory”. They were joyous.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### *Glory of the Holy River*

*Nārada said :*

1. After leading the Gaṅgā from the matted hair of Maheśvara and coming to the holy mountain Brahmagiri, what did Gautama do?

*Brahmā said :*

2-3. The pure Gautama of wholly controlled mind, led Gaṅgā. He was honoured by Devas and Gandharvas, the residents of the mountains. He placed his matted hair on the top of the mountain. Remembering the three-eyed lord, that excellent brahmin said to Gaṅgā with palms joined in reverence.

*Gautama said :*

4. O mother born of the matted hair of the three-eyed lord, O goddess bestowing all desired things, forgive. You are calm. Go happily, carry out what is conducive to the welfare of all.

*Brahmā said :*

5. On being spoken to thus by Gautama, the Gaṅgā who assumed a divine form and wore a divine garland and unguent, said to Gautama.

*Gaṅgā said :*

6. Where shall I go? To the abode of Devas, or to the water-jar or to the nether worlds? It is known that you are truthful of speech.

*Gautama said :*

7. O goddess, you have been requested by me for helping the three worlds. You have been given to me by Śambhu. O goddess, let it not be otherwise.

*Brahmā said :*

8-9. On hearing the words of Gautama, Gaṅgā accepted the suggestion offered by the brahmin. It divided itself into three for flowing in heaven, Earth and the nether worlds. In heaven it flowed in four channels, in the mortal world it flowed in seven channels and in the nether worlds it flowed in four channels. Thus it had fifteen different channels.

10. Everywhere it has the power of everyone of the channels. It destroys all sins. It bestows all desired things always. It is thus alone that she is sung about in the Vedas.

11. Human beings see only the part of Gaṅgā that flows over the mortal world and not that which flows over the nether worlds. Nor do the human beings of ignorant intellect see Gaṅgā flowing in heaven.

12. Till Gaṅgā reaches the Sea, it is one of divine nature. On being bid farewell by Gautama, it went towards the Eastern Sea.

13. Then Gautama the great among the sages circumambulated Gaṅgā, the splendid mother of the Universe frequented by Devas and Sages.

14-16. At the outset Gautama worshipped the three-eyed lord of Devas and then determined in his mind, "I shall take bath near the banks" Immediately after being remembered, the lord who is an ocean of mercy appeared in front of him. With palms joined in reverence and being humble due to devotion he asked the three-eyed lord Śiva how the holy ablution should be performed.

*Gautama said :*

17. O Maheśāna, lord of Devas, with a desire for the



welfare of the worlds tell me about the rules and injunctions regarding ablution in the holy centres.

*Śiva said :*

18-20. O great sage, listen to all injunctions regarding Godāvarī. At the outset, Nandi (a holy rite) and other rites should be performed after cleaning the body. The brahmins should be fed and their permission obtained. Maintaining celibacy they should go to the river, avoiding conversation with fallen persons.

He whose hands and feet and mind are well controlled, he who has learning, penance and renown enjoys the benefit of holy centre (and ablution therein).

21. The devotee should abandon vicious nature. He should closely abide by his own duty. He should massage the limbs of the tired people. He should give them food in the proper manner.

22-23. He should give garments and blankets to good people who may happen to be poor. He should be listening to divine stories of Hari as well as those connected with Gaṅgā. A person who goes on pilgrimage abiding by these injunctions, will obtain the benefit of holy centre duly.

The three-eyed lord said another thing to Gautama surrounded by the sages.

24. The holy centres are within distances of two hands of one another. O Gautama, I am present everywhere and I am the bestower of all desired things.

25. Gaṅgā is the bestower of merits and salvation of men at Gaṅgādvāra, the place where Gaṅgā rises, Prayāga and at the place where it falls into the ocean.

26-29. Narmadā, the excellent river, is in the mountain Amarakaṇṭaka. Yamunā joins Gaṅgā at Prayāga and Sarasvatī joins it at Prabhāsa.

O Nārada, the following holy centre is the bestower of salvation. It is the place of meeting of three rivers viz., Kṛṣṇā, Bhīmarathī and Tuṅgabhadṛā.

The river is the bestower of liberation at the place where Payoṣṇī joins it. But this Gautamī, O dear one, is the bestower

of liberation everywhere at my bidding. It will give salvation to all men always through the holy ablution.

Some holy centres are extremely meritorious on certain occasions when there is the advent of Devas. But Gautamī is a holy centre unto everyone on every occasion.

30. Plunging into and performing ablution in the Gaṅgā for sixty thousand years is on a par with taking bath once when Bṛhaspati (Jupiter) is in the Leo (zodiac).

31. It is rare that men are able to take bath in Gautamī when the Jupiter is in the zodiac Leo (i.e. it is highly meritorious then). (It is holy because) Rāma stepped into it and particularly so because he resorted to this holy centre.

32. When the sun is in the Leo zodiac the rivers Gaṅgā, Narmadā, Yamunā, Sarasvatī, Bhīmarathī and others come (to the river Gautamī) for taking bath.

33. When the sun is in the Leo zodiac if foolish persons avoid Gautamī Gaṅgā and go to other rivers for ablution they are sure to fall into hell.

34-36. Within a distance of two hundred Yojanas, O most venerable among sages, there will be three and a half crores of holy centres. O Gautama, this Gaṅgā belonging to Maheśvara, is called Gautamī, Vaiṣṇavī, Brāhmī, Godāvarī, Nandā and Sunandā. It is the bestower of desired objects. It is brought by the force of splendour of a brahmin. By mere remembrance it destroys all sins. It is always dear to me. Of all the five elements it is the water that has attained most excellence.

37-38. The waters in the holy centres are said to be the holiest. Among those holy rivers Bhāgīrathī is the most excellent. Among different channels of Bhāgīrathī, Gautamī Gaṅgā accompanied by matted hair which was brought by you is the most excellent. There is no holy centre which is more auspicious than this either in heaven or on Earth or in the nether worlds. O sage, this holy centre is the bestower of all riches.

*Brahmā said :*

39-40. O dear son, what has been recounted thus to the noble Gautama, by the delighted lord himself has been narrated to you.

Thus that Gautamī Gaṅgā is considered greater than the other rivers. The form of that river has been mentioned to you. Have you any desire to hear about anything else?

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### *The Descent of Bhāgirathi*

*Nārada said :*

1-2. O lord, most excellent one among Devas, two types of channels of Gaṅgā have been mentioned. One of them that has been brought by the brahmin has been narrated. The other type is stationed in the matted hair itself, of the lord of Devas. Tell me how it was brought down to the earth.

*Brahmā said :*

3. There was a king born of the family of Vaivasvata Manu<sup>1</sup> and in the family of Ikṣvāku. O sage, his name was Sagara and the ocean takes its name Sāgara from him.

4. He was a performer of sacrifices. He was devoted to distribution of charitable gifts. He always thought about piety and good conduct. He had two wives devoutly attached to their husband.

5-6. He had no progeny. So he was anxious. He invited Vasiṣṭha (the family priest) to his abode and worshipped him. The king asked him as to how he could have progeny. On hearing his words, Vasiṣṭha meditated and spoke to the king.

*Vasiṣṭha said :*

7-9. O king, be devoted to the worship of sages together with your wives.

*Brahmā said :*

After saying this, O brahmin, the sage went back to his abode.

Once a great ascetic came to the abode of that saintly king. He worshipped that sage. The sage who was extremely pleased

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1. The seventh Manu who was the son of Sūrya and father of Ikṣvāku, the founder of the Solar Race of Kings.

said to him. "O extremely fortunate one, tell me the boon you wish to have." On being told thus he chose sons.

10. That sage said to the king, "To one of your wives a son will be born and he will sustain the family. To the other wife there will be born sixty thousand sons."

11. When the sage went away after bestowing the boon, thousands of sons were born. The king performed horse and other sacrifices and distributed plenty of gifts to the deserving.

12. In one horse sacrifice the king got himself duly initiated. He employed his sons along with their armies in the work of protecting the horse.

13. Getting a loophole somewhere Indra took away the horse. Those sons searched for the horse but could not find it.

14-15. The sons of Sagara were sixty thousand and they were experts in different tactics of warfare. Even as they were watching, the asuras took away the anointed horse and went to the nether region. The sons of Sagara could not see the asura who had employed black magic.

16. Not being able to see the horse, the powerful sons of Sagara wandered here and there. Even then they did not find the horse.

17. They went to the world of gods then. Searching the mountains, lakes and forests, they did not see the horse then.

18. The holy rite for the safe journey and other similar auspicious rites were performed by the officiating priests on behalf of the king. Unable to see that beautiful creature, the king became worried.

19. Wandering (here and there) the sons of Sagara went to the world of Devas in their search for the horse. The horse was not there.

20. Thereafter the sons of the king came to the Earth and searched the mountains and forests. There also they did not see the horse then.

21. In the meantime a divine voice was heard there saying, "O sons of Sagara, the horse is kept bound in the nether world and not anywhere else."

22. On hearing this the sons of Sagara became desirous of going to the nether world. They dug up the Earth all round.

23. Distressed by hunger they went on eating dry soil day and night. They dug up hurriedly and rushed to the nether world.

24. On hearing that the powerful princes, the sons of Sagara who had accomplished their tasks had come (to the nether world) the asuras became frightened and they went near Kapila.<sup>1</sup>

25. Kapila the extremely intelligent sage was sleeping in the nether world. Formerly, a most important task of Devas had been accomplished by him.

26. He had achieved that success by continuous work without any sleep. Therefore he was tired. When the task had been accomplished the glorious Kapila said to Devas, "Give me a place for sleeping."

27-29. They gave him the nether world. Again, the sage said to Devas : "If a fool wakes me up he will be immediately reduced to ashes; then only, will I lie down in the nether world; if not I won't sleep at all."

When Devas said "So be it" he began to lie down there.

The asuras who knew his power and who were endowed with Mâyâ (witchcraft) planned to slay Sagara.

30-31. The asuras were afraid even without being fought. They hurried to the place where the extremely furious sage Kapila was lying. They hurriedly tethered the horse near his head. They stood watching silently a little away from the place eager to see what would happen.

32. Then the sons of Sagara entered the nether regions. They saw the tethered horse and the man lying down.

33-35. They considered him the person who took the horse by force and spoiled the sacrifice.

Some of them said then, "Let us kill this fellow and take the horse back".

Some said, "Let us take away this tethered sacrificial animal. Of what avail is this fellow !"

Then other heroic persons said—"We are kings. We are administrators. Let us waken this fellow who has committed the crime and kill him with our heroic power."

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1. A celebrated sage and propounder of the Sāṃkhya system of philosophy. He is said to be the son of Karandama-Prajāpati and Devahūti. The Brah-māṇḍapurāṇa (ch. 93) mentions him as an incarnation of Viṣṇu.

Uttering these harsh words they kicked the sage with their feet.

36. Then Kapila the excellent sage stared at the sons of Sagara with great fury. With his anger he reduced them to ashes.

37. Then all the sons of Sagara were burnt up. But the king Sagara who was initiated to the sacrifice did not know these things.

38-39. It was Nārada who informed noble Sagara about the abode of Kapila, the situation of the horse, the aberration of asuras and the annihilation of the sons of Sagara. But the anxious king did not know what he should do in the circumstances.

40-42. This king had another son who was well known as Asamañjas. Due to his foolishness, he used to hurl down boys and citizens into water. Having been informed by the citizens collectively the king understood his wickedness. He became furious and told his ministers, "Let this Asamañjas, who has forsaken the duty of a Kṣatriya and killed children be banished from the kingdom."

43. On hearing those words of Sagara, the ministers hurriedly abandoned the son of the king. Asamañjas went to the forest.

44-45. (The King thought thus) "All my sixty thousand sons are destroyed by the curse of the brahmin in the nether world. One (who remained) has gone to the forest. Now what shall I do?"

Asamañjas had a son who was well known as Amśumān. The king called that boy and told him the task on hand.

46. Propitiating Kapila, the boy Amśumān gave the horse to Sagara. Thus was the sacrifice completed.

47. His son was a brilliant and virtuous king named Dilipa. His intelligent son was well known as Bhagīratha.

48. On hearing about the sad end of all of his grandfathers he became very distressed. The humble prince asked the great king,

49. "How shall I accomplish the expiation of the Sagaras?" The king said to Bhagīratha, "Dear son, Kapila knows it".

50. On hearing his words the boy went to the nether world. After bowing down to the sage, he intimated everything to him.

51-52. That sage meditated for a long time and said to Bhagīratha, "Propitiate Śaṅkara by penance, O excellent king, and splash your ancestors with the water stationed in the matted hair of Śiva. Then you as well as your ancestors will become satisfied."

"I shall do so", said he to the sage. After bowing down to him he said again.

53-54. "Where shall I go ? O excellent sage, tell me everything what I should do".

*Kapila said :*

Go to the excellent mountain Kailāsa and eulogize Maheśvara. Perform penance according to your capacity. Then you will attain your desired object.

*Brahmā said :*

55. On hearing the words of the sage that boy whose activities were those of children bowed down to the sage and went to the mountain Kailāsa. Becoming pure (in mind and body) he decided to perform penance. (Then) Bhagīratha said :

*Bhagīratha said :*

56. O lord, wearing crescent moon, I am a boy and my intellect too is puerile. I do not know anything. Even then, be pleased, O lord.

57. I bow down to Śiva who is worthy of being worshipped, O lord of the immortals, for the welfare of those who are devoted to my welfare and who help me mentally, physically and verbally (even for) once.

58. May Śiva bring about things desired by those by whom I have been begot and nurtured, those whose Gotra (lineage) is the same as mine and those whose duties are also the same. I bow down to lord Śiva with the crescent moon on his head.

*Brahmā said :*

59. Even as he was eulogising thus Śiva appeared in front of him. Urging him to choose a boon as he pleased, he said to Bhagīratha.

*Śiva said :*

60. O Bhagīratha of great intellect, what cannot be given by

Sādhyas<sup>1</sup> and Devas will certainly be given by me to you. Tell me without fear.

*Brahmā said :*

61-63. The delighted Bhagīratha bowed down to lord Śiva and said.

*Bhagīratha said :*

In order to sanctify my ancestors, O lord of Devas, give me the excellent river stationed within your matted hair. Everything will be complete thereby.

*Brahmā said :*

Maheśa smiled and said to Bhagīratha.

*Śiva said :*

64-68. O son, she is given unto you by me. O dear, of good vow, eulogize her once more.

*Brahmā said :*

On hearing the words of the lord, Bhagīratha of pure mind performed penance for that purpose. With devotion he eulogized Gaṅgā.

He attained her grace too, like a mature man although he was only a boy. Leading Gaṅgā derived from Maheśvara he went to the nether world. He intimated everything to the noble sage Kapila.

After establishing Gaṅgā in the manner mentioned before and strenuously circumambulating her he spoke with palms joined in reverence.

*Bhagīratha said :*

69. O goddess, my ancestors have fallen as a result of the curse of sage Kapila. O mother, it behoves you to save them therefrom.

*Brahmā said :*

70-73. "So be it", said the divine river who helps everyone. In order to help the worlds and to sanctify the ancestors, parti-

1. A class of inferior deities who, according to Viṣṇupurāṇa, were the grandchildren of Dakṣa-Prajāpati.



cularly in order to fill up the sea drunk up by Agastya<sup>1</sup>, in order to destroy sins merely by being remembered, the divine river did what she was told by Bhagīratha. She splashed the princes, the sons of Sagara who had been reduced to ashes by the curse of brahmin, in the nether region. She filled up the holes dug up by the Sagaras, the river flooded the mountain Meru and stopped. The young king spoke to her thus:

74-77. "You must remain in the land of holy rites."

Saying "So be it" she came to Himālaya. From that holy mountain, she came to the subcontinent Bhārata. From its middle the holy river flowed towards the eastern sea. Thus this river Gaṅgā brought by a Kṣatriya, O great sage, has been mentioned to you.

This same river belongs to Maheśvara, Viṣṇu and Brahmā. It is sacred. Bhāgīrathī the divine river is stationed on the peak of Himavān.

Thus, the water stationed within the matted hair of Maheśvara attained two forms. To the south of the Vindhya, Gaṅgā is called Gautamī. In the north of the Vindhya, she is called Bhāgīrathī.

## CHAPTER NINE

### *The Holy Centre Varāha*

*Nārada said :*

1. My mind is not satiated by listening to the stories mentioned by you. The predilection of my mind is to listen to the benefit of the holy centres separately.

2. At the outset recount to me in proper sequence how Gaṅgā was brought by the brahmin. Tell me the holy benefit of the holy centres separately in the proper sequence together with its legends.

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1. The sage Agastya drank up the ocean because, according to Mahābhārata, the latter was hiding demons who could be killed by the gods only after this act of Agastya.

*Brahmā said :*

3. I am not able to recount entirely the benefit, greatness and the individual importance of the holy centres. Nor are you capable of listening to it.

4-6. Still I shall recount something. Listen to it attentively, O Nārada.

After bowing down to the three-eyed lord, I shall briefly speak about the holy centres mentioned by sages and the words of the Vedas.

O sage, the place where the three-eyed lord revealed himself is the holy centre named Tryambaka. It is the bestower of worldly pleasures and salvation. Another holy centre is “Varāha” which is well known in the three worlds.

7-8. I shall describe its features as well as how Viṣṇu’s name came to be associated with it.

Formerly a Rākṣasa well known by the name of Sindhusena, harassed and defeated Devas. Taking away sacrifice he reached the nether region.

When sacrifice went over to the nether world the Earth became devoid of sacrifice.

9. When sacrifice perishes one shall have neither this world nor the other. At that time, the situation was thus.

Following the enemy Devas entered the nether region.

10-12. With Indra as their leader they were not able to conquer him. Approaching Viṣṇu the Purāṇa Puruṣa (lit. the primeval male) they intimated to him the evil action of the Rākṣasa viz., the entire destruction of sacrifice.

*The Lord said :*

Assuming the physical body of a Boar along with the conch, discus and mace in hands I shall go to the nether region and bring the holy sacrifice after killing the leading demons.

13-16. May Devas go to heaven. May your mental fever disappear.

*Brahmā said :*

It was by that path whereby Gaṅgā reached the nether regions, O dear son, that the discus-bearing lord hurried to Rasātala (nether world) after breaking through the Earth.

The glorious lord in the guise of a Boar killed the Rākṣasas

and Dānavas residing in Rasātala. He held the great sacrifice in his mouth. The lord in the form of a Boar, the enjoyer of sacrifices, the conqueror of enemies, came out of Rasātala by the same path whereby Viṣṇu had entered it.

17-18. There, on the mountain Brahmagiri, Devas waited for Hari. Coming out by that path he came to the Gaṅgā-sravaṇa (the current of the river Gaṅgā). He washed his blood-stained limbs, O Nārada, with the water of Gaṅgā. Therefore it became (well known as) Varāhakuṇḍa.

19-22. Hari, the most excellent one among Devas, placed in front of Devas the sacrifice he had kept in his mouth. It was thus that the sacrifice was born of his mouth.

Thereafter the sacred ladle is called the most important part of sacrifice. Its form became that of a Boar for another reason.

Hence the holy centre Varāha is the holiest Tīrtha. It bestows all desired things. Performing the holy ablution and charity at that place bestows the benefits of all sacrifices.

If anyone stands there and remembers his ancestors or does any meritorious deed, his manes will be free from all sins. They shall attain Heaven.

## CHAPTER TEN

### *Kapotatīrtha*

1. I am not competent to recount to you the greatness of Kuśāvarta. Merely by remembering it one's purpose is accomplished.

2. The holy centre well known as Kuśāvarta is the bestower of all desired things unto men. It has been stirred up by Kuśa<sup>1</sup> by the noble Gautama.

3. The sage brought the river after stirring it with Kuśa. Performing ablution and offering charitable gifts there bestows satisfaction to the manes.

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1. A sacred grass used in religious rites; also known as darbha in older texts.

4-7. Nīlagaṅgā which is the most excellent of all rivers comes out of the Nīlaparvata (Blue mountain).

If a man of mental and physical purity performs ablution etc., whatever holy rite he performs, know that all those are everlasting. They bestow satisfaction to the ancestors.

The excellent holy centre Kapotatīrtha is well known in the three worlds.

O sage, listen. I shall tell you about its form and features, which will do you great good.

On Brahmagiri there was an extremely terrible hunter.

He used to harass brahmins, ascetics and other decent men as well as cows, birds and animals. That sinning soul of this nature was inclined to become furious and was a speaker of untruth.

8-10. He was of a terrible shape and size. He was very fierce. His eyes were blue. His arms were short. He had deformed teeth. He had lost his nose and ears. His legs were short but his belly was huge in girth and he was short in height. His arms were small. He was utterly deformed and his voice resembled the braying of a donkey. He had a noose in his hand. He was evil-minded and sinful. He wielded the bow ever and anon.

O Nārada, his wife and children too were like him. Urged by his wife, he entered the dense forest.

11. That sinner killed animals and birds of many forms. Some of them, both living and dead, he put inside a cage.

12. He returned home scorched and distressed due to hunger and thirst after wandering through many places.

13-14. After the months of spring season on an afternoon, the sky was suddenly overcast with clouds. There was a rumbling sound of thunder. A violent gust of wind blew, showering hailstones. It was extremely terrible due to heavy downpour. As he went ahead, the tired hunter could not even know his path.

15. As the sinful fellow was too tired, he could not know, where it was water and where it was land, where was a deep pit and where the path was right, where to take shelter and in which direction he should move.

16-17. He thought thus: "Where am I going? Where should I stay? What shall I do? Like the god of death I am the extractor of vital airs of all living beings. The spirit that causes even my

death has come, viz. the shower of hailstones. I do not see anyone who can save me. No rock, no tree nearby."

18-20. After thinking thus in diverse ways the hunter saw a tree nearby in the forest. It was like the lord of the forest, like the moon among the stars, like a lion among animals, like a householder among the persons of various stages and like mind among sense-organs. It was the saviour of living beings. The tree was splendid and excellent, embellished with branches and tender sprouts and leaves. With his clothes drenched in water, that hunter resorted to that tree and sat beneath it.

21. He thought of his wife and children wondering whether they were alive or not. In the meantime the sun also set.

22. There was a pigeon on that excellent tree. He was surrounded by his wife, sons and grandsons. He had resorted to the same tree.

23. He lived there happily well-contented, delighted and free from fear. Many years passed by since that bird began to live there.

24-28. His wife who was chaste was highly pleased with him. His hollow cavity in that excellent tree was not at all affected by water or wind. That pigeon lived there along with his wife and children. On that particular day both of them, the he-pigeon and the she-pigeon had, by chance gone out in search of prey. The he-pigeon returned to the tree. As ill luck would have it, dear son, the she-pigeon was caught alive by the hunter. The he-pigeon looked at the children separated from their mother. On observing that a terrible downpour was going on, that the sun had set and that his hollow was a void he began to lament.

29. The king of pigeons was not aware that the she-pigeon was bound and kept in the cage. The he-pigeon began to sing in praise of his beloved.

30. "Even now my beloved wife, the source of my welfare, who increases my joy, the mother of my virtue and the controlling mistress of my body, has not come back.

31. It is she alone who assists me in the acquisition of virtue, wealth, love and liberation. When I am pleased she laughs; when I am angry she tries to wipe off my misery.

32. „She is a comrade unto me; she helps me by her counsels. She abides by my words and suggestions. Even after the sun has

set, my beloved wife, the source of my welfare, has not come back.

33. She does not know any holy rite, mantra, god, virtue or asset other than me, her husband. Her husband is her holy rite; her husband is her life; her husband is her Mantra. She is fond of her husband.

34. Even now my beloved, the source of my welfare has not come back. What shall I do? Where shall I go? Is this my house? Without her it appears to be a forest.

35. In her company my house is full of splendour and glory. Even if it is terrible, it is splendid. Even now she does not come back. By her presence alone this place is a home.

36-37. Without her I cannot remain alive. For her I shall even forsake my body. But what will my children do? I will be deprived of my religious rites now."

Even as he was lamenting thus, the she-pigeon who was in the cage heard his lamentation. On hearing it she spoke thus to her husband from within the cage.

*The she-pigeon said :*

38. O bird of great intellect, I am here imprisoned (and) helpless. I have been brought here by the hunter bound by ropes and nooses.

39-40. I am gratified and blessed. My husband recounts my qualities. Undoubtedly I am contented.

When my husband is satisfied the deities are pleased with me. They are extremely pleased. Otherwise I would perish.

41. You are my deity. You are my lord. You are my friend. You are my ultimate resort. You are my holy rite. You are the great Brahman. You are my heaven. You are my salvation.

42. O my beloved husband, the cause of my welfare, do not be worried. Make your intellect steady and stable in virtue and piety. It is by your favour that different kinds of worldly pleasures have been enjoyed by me.

43. Do not have any grief or worry due to me. Keep your intellect steady and stable in virtue and piety.

*Brahmā said :*

44. On hearing these words of his beloved the he-pigeon got

down from the tree and went hurriedly to the place where the she-pigeon was in her cage.

45. On approaching, he saw his beloved, and the hunter as though dead. He said, "Now the hunter is motionless. I shall release you."

*The she-pigeon said :*

46-49. O extremely fortunate one, do not release me. Know that (the worldly) relationship is unstable. (The birds) that move about constitute the food of the hunters. One living being is the prey of another. I do not think that this hunter is guilty in any manner. Keep your consciousness of virtue steady.

To the twice-born, the fire-god is a preceptor. The brahmin is a preceptor unto all castes. Husband alone is the preceptor of women. The guest is a preceptor unto all. Certainly the goddess of speech becomes pleased with the people who propitiate the guest by means of delightful words. If food is given to him Indra will be pleased.

50. If his feet are washed the manes are pleased. If he is given food to eat, Prajāpati is pleased. By rendering service to him Lakṣmī can be propitiated along with Viṣṇu.

51-55. If he is offered a bed, the gods are pleased. Hence, let my guest be worshipped. If a guest is scorched by the glare of the sun and is tired and if he comes to one's house one should view him like a god. Indeed he is the bestower of benefits of all sacrifices.

Gods, manes and fires follow the exhausted guest. If he is pleased they also rejoice. If he is disappointed they are also disappointed.

Hence, O beloved husband, forsake misery in every respect and attain calmness. Keep your intellect auspicious and practise virtuous activities.

It is considered by all that rendering help or harassing persons is of great consequence. People render help to those who help them. But he who befriends those who harass him is a virtuous person.

*The he-pigeon said :*

56. O lady of excellent face, what has been said by you is

befitting us both. What you think is excellent. But I have something to be said. Listen to it.

57. There are some who fill their belly with thousands; others with hundreds and still others with tens. Some fill themselves with happiness. But we fill our belly with great difficulty.

58. Some hoard their wealth and grain in deep pits. Others hoard their wealth in big barns. Some keep their wealth in pots. But we keep our wealth in our beaks.

59. O splendid lady, how shall I honour and propitiate this exhausted guest?

*The she-pigeon said :*

60. Fire, water, splendid speech etc., can be offered to the guest. Grass, wood etc. should also be given to the suppliant. This hunter is distressed due to chillness.

*Brahmā said :*

61. On hearing these words of his beloved the king of birds ascended the tree and saw a fire burning far off.

62. He went to the place where the fire was burning and brought a burning splinter in his beak. He lit a fire in front of the hunter.

63. During the mid-night he dropped dry twigs, leaves and grass into that fire.

64. On seeing the fire blazing, that hunter who was distressed by cold warmed his exhausted limbs and attained happiness.

65. On seeing the hunter consumed by the fire of hunger, the she-pigeon said to her husband, "O highly fortunate one, release me.

66. I shall propitiate the distressed hunter with my own body. O dear one of good holy rites, attain the worlds belonging to those who have worshipped their guests".

*The he-pigeon said :*

67. O splendid lady, when I stand (i.e. when I am alive) this duty is not laid down for you. I shall be the one who propitiates the guest. permit me to be so.

*Brahmā said :*

68-69. After saying these words he circumambulated the fire three times remembering the four-armed lord Mahāviṣṇu



who is the soul of the Universe, who is worthy of being sought refuge in and who is favourably disposed to his devotees. Saying "Eat as you please" he entered the fire. On seeing him cast off his life in the fire the hunter spoke these words.

*The hunter said :*

70. Fie upon this life of mine with a human body, for, this daring act has been undertaken for my sake by this king of birds.

*Brahmā said :*

71-72. The she-bird spoke to the hunter who said thus.

*The she-pigeon said :*

O highly fortunate one, release me. This, my husband is going far off.

*Brahmā said :*

73. On hearing her words the hunter released the she-pigeon from the cage hurriedly as though he was afraid.

74-78. After circumambulating the fire she sang to her dead husband.

*The she-pigeon said :*

Dying immediately after the husband is the greatest duty of women. This is the path laid down in the Vedas. It is honoured in the world.

Just as the snake-charmer forcibly takes out the snake from its hole, so also the woman who is accompanied by her husband shall go to heaven.

The woman who follows her husband shall stay in heaven for as many years as there are hairs in a man's body, viz. three and a half crores of years.

After bowing down to the Earth, gods, Gaṅgā, and trees and after consoling her children, she said to the hunter:

*The she-pigeon said :*

79. The woman who follows her husband shall stay in heaven for as many years as there are hairs on a man's body, viz. three and a half crores of years.

80. O highly fortunate one, it is due to your grace that such a thing has happened to me. Pardon my guilt for leaving my children. I shall go to heaven along with my husband.

*Brahmā said :*

81. After saying thus, the good mannered she-bird entered the fire. As soon as she entered the fire there was a cry of victory.

82. Then the pair were seen in the sky seated on an aerial chariot resembling the sun and extremely splendid. They were like gods themselves.

83-85. With great delight both of them spoke to the hunter who was surprised much.

*The Couple said :*

We are going to the abode of gods. We are taking leave of you, O highly intelligent one. The staircase leading to heaven for both of us is the guest in you. Obeisance to you.

*Brahmā said :*

On seeing them seated on the excellent aerial chariot, the hunter cast away his cage along with his bow. With palms joined in reverence he spoke.

*The hunter said :*

86. O highly fortunate ones, I am not to be abandoned by you. Something should be given to me who do not know anything. I am your guest here and thus should be honoured. It behoves you to recount to me the manner of my expiation.

*The Couple said :*

87. Go to Gautamī river, welfare be to you. Taking bath there for a fortnight you will be liberated from your sins.

88. After being liberated from your sins if you plunge into Gaṅgā again you will acquire the merit of a horse-sacrifice. You will become sanctified.

89-90. If you take a holy ablution in the excellent river Gautamī, you will abandon this defiled body. Mounting on an excellent aerial chariot, you will go to heaven.

*Brahmā said :*

91-94. On hearing their words the hunter did so. He became seated on an excellent aerial chariot. He assumed a divine form. He wore divine garlands and garments. He was eulogized by celestial damsels. The he-pigeon, the she-pigeon and the hunter proceeded to heaven. Such is the power of Gaṅgā.

Thenceforward that holy centre is well known by the name *Kapota* (pigeon). All the holy rites performed there, viz. bathing, distributing charitable gifts, worshipping the manes and all other holy rites such as Japa, Yajña, etc. are capable of giving everlasting benefit.

## CHAPTER ELEVEN

### *Kumāratīrtha*

*Brahmā said :*

1. Another holy centre is Kārttikeya pertaining to Lord Subrahmaṇya, well known as Kaumāra. Merely by listening to its name one shall attain nobility of birth and exquisite beauty.

2. When the asura Tāraka was killed and the three worlds became quiet and normal, Pārvatī spoke to her eldest son Kārttikeya with great pleasure:

3. “By my consent and the grace of your father, be delighted in your mind. Enjoy as you please the worldly pleasures in the three worlds, which are dear to your mind.”

4. Thus addressed by his mother, Viśākha (Kārttikeya) the beloved of gods, sported about as he pleased with the wives of gods. The wives of gods also sported about.

5. While the wives of gods were being enjoyed, O Nārada, the heaven-dwellers were not able to prevent Kārttikeya.

6-7. Then Devas intimated to Pārvatī that act of her son. Though he was frequently prevented by his mother and Devas, the spear-bearing lord did not act according to their suggestions. The six-faced lord was so much attached to the women. Afraid of his curse, Pārvatī thought over the matter.

8-10. Again and again the goddess thought about this due to her affection for her son. In order to achieve the task of Devas she decided that the wives of Devas should be protected. If Skanda (Kārttikeya) attempted to sport with any lady Pārvatī made her look like herself. When the six-faced lord called the

wife of Indra or Varuṇa and stared at her he saw the form of his mother in her.

11. He set her aside after a bow. Again he called another lady. Seeing his mother's form in her too he became ashamed.

12. Thus he saw in all women the form of his own mother. He saw the entire universe full of the forms of his mother. Thinking thus, he became free from all attachments.

13-14. He knew that it was his mother who started dissuading him from his actions. He thought thus: "If I am to be dissuaded from enjoyment of pleasures why was I persuaded to act so at the first instance? Whatever my mother did was only to make me a laughing stock." Hence, he was extremely ashamed and went to Gautamī.

15. (He then said) "Let this river whose form is also like that of my mother, hear my statement. Hereafter whatever has a feminine name will be considered by me like my mother."

16-17. On coming to know of this, Śaṅkara, the lord of the worlds, accompanied by Pārvatī stopped him. Then Subrahmaṇya said, "It has already taken place." Then the delighted lord began to think: "What shall I give?"

With palms joined in reverence Skanda said to his father again.

18-22. "I am commander-in-chief and the leader of gods and I am your son. O lord of Devas and the one who is worshipped by Devas, this much is enough. Why should there be other boons?

Or, if you are desirous of granting me a boon, I shall ask for the welfare of worlds and not of myself. O lord, it behoves you to permit me. Let the great sinners such as the defilers of preceptors' bed, be rid of their sins merely by plunging into this river. O lord of Devas, let even the low creatures attain excellent birth; let the ugly and the deformed be richly endowed with beauty by taking their bath here."

*Brahmā said :*

Saying "Let it be so" Śaṁbhū approved of what was suggested by his son. Thenceforward that holy centre became known as "Kārttikeya". Taking bath and distributing charitable gifts there yields the benefit of all sacrifices.

## CHAPTER TWELVE

*The Kṛttikā Tirtha*

*Brahmā said :*

1. The holy centre next to Kārttikeya is known as Kṛttikā-Tirtha. Merely by hearing about it one will acquire the benefit of drinking Soma juice.

2-3. Formerly, for quelling Tāraka, Fire god drank the semen of Śiva. On seeing him with the Semen within, O sage, the wives of sages desired for the same. Of the seven sages Vasiṣṭha's wife Arundhatī had her menstrual bath. Excepting her, the other six women became pregnant through the Fire god.

4-6. They had scorching experience in their menstrual bath. They shone splendidly. They consulted mutually: "What shall we do? Where shall we go? How can we attain merit?" After saying thus mutually they went to Gaṅgā and pressed themselves hard. The foetuses coming out of them floated in the water in the form of foam. Through water and wind they joined together. Thus the six-faced lord with a single body was born.

7. After causing the abortion of the foetuses the wives of sages went home. On seeing their deformed bodies the sages said :

8. "You may go. You may go quickly. It is not proper for women to be licentious." After saying this their husbands cast them off.

9-10. On being forsaken by their husbands, those six women became very miserable. On seeing them thus Nārada said: "By the names of Kārttikeya, Gāṅgeya (son of Gaṅgā), Agni-bhava (born of Fire god) and Tārakāntaka (slayer of Tāraka) Śiva's son is well known. Go to him. Ere long he will become pleased and grant you worldly pleasures."

11. At the instance of the divine sage the Kṛttikās approached the six-faced lord and themselves intimated to him everything in the manner it had taken place.

12-16. Kārttikeya approved of them and said to them "All of you go to Gautamī. Take your bath and worship Maheśvara. I shall come there itself, and lead you to the abode of Devas". Saying "So be it" the Kṛttikās took their bath in Gaṅgā and

Gautamī. They worshipped the lord of Devas at the bidding of Kārttikeya. By the grace of the lord they went to their abode and were accepted by the sages.

Thenceforward that holy centre is called Kṛttikātīrtha. He who takes bath on the full moon day in the month of Kārttika, in conjunction with the Kṛttikā stars, acquires the benefit of all sacrifices. He becomes a virtuous king. He who remembers that holy centre or hears about it becomes rid of all sins and acquires long life.

## CHAPTER THIRTEEN

### *Daśāśvamedha Tīrtha*

*Brahmā said :*

1. O great sage, listen to the description of the holy centre of Daśāśvamedha<sup>1</sup>. Merely by listening to its name one shall acquire the merit of a horse-sacrifice.

2. The glorious Viśvarūpa of great strength was the son of Viśvakarman. Pramati was his son. His son was lordly Bhauvana.

3. His chief priest was Kaśyapa who was an expert in all wise lores. The brawny-armed Bhauvana, the ruler of the whole world asked him:

4. "O sage, I wish to perform a horse sacrifice simultaneously with ten horses."

He then asked his preceptor the brahmin: "Where shall I perform the sacrifice?"

5. He said : "O excellent king, there are Devayajanas (places for the worship of Devas) at different places where excellent brahmins performed great sacrifices."

6. Ten sacrifices were simultaneously performed by the priest. In that sacrifice in a group, a number of sages were employed as Ṛtviks.

7-8. Avoiding Devayajana, the priest had initiated the sacrifices in another place. Hence defects and obstacles over-

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1. A sacred place in Kurukṣetra (MBh, Vanaparva, 9.14)

whelmed him. The sacrifices could not be completed. On seeing them the king was extremely worried. On observing the sacrifice incomplete the king spoke to the preceptor.

*The king said :*

9. Is it because of the defect of place, or of the defect of time, or my defect or your defect that the ten horse sacrifices have not become complete?

*rahmā said :*

10. The grief-stricken king accompanied by his preceptor Kaśyapa went to Saṁvarta the elder brother of Bṛhaspati. They spoke to him.

*Kaśyapa and Bhauvana said :*

11. O holy sage, the bestower of honour, ten horse-sacrifices have to be performed simultaneously. Tell us about the place and the preceptor thereof so that all the ten will be completed.

*Brahmā said :*

12. The excellent sage Saṁvarta meditated for a while and spoke to Bhauvana: "Go to Brahmā. He will tell you about the preceptor and the place of sacrifice."

13. Bhauvana of great intellect came to me accompanied by the noble Kaśyapa. They asked me about the preceptor, place of sacrifice and other things.

14. Then O dear son, I spoke to Bhauvana and Kaśyapa: "O leading king, go to Gautamī. That place is highly meritorious for sacrifices.

15-16. This Kaśyapa alone is your excellent preceptor. He is a master of Vedas. By the grace of this preceptor as well as of Gautamī, with a single horse sacrifice and the holy ablution therein, O king, you will achieve the benefit of ten horse sacrifices."

17. On hearing it the king Bhauvana went to the banks of Gautamī with Kaśyapa to assist him. He got himself initiated for the horse sacrifice.

18-19. Then the horse sacrifice, the lord of Yajñas was begun. When it was completed, the king became ready to offer the

whole of the Earth. Then an ethereal voice addressed the excellent king who was standing by after worshipping the brahmins, the Ṛtviks and Sadaspatis<sup>1</sup> (types of priests).

*The Ethereal Voice said :*

20-22. O king, everything has been given by you who are desirous of giving the whole Earth with mountains, forests and parks to Kaśyapa, your priest.

Eschew your desire to give the Earth as gift. Offer food that yields great results. There is no meritorious thing like the gift of food in all the three worlds particularly on the bank of Gaṅgā if it is given with great faith, O sage.

This horse sacrifice with many monetary gifts has been performed by you. You are satisfied, welfare unto thee. No worry need be felt.

*Brahmā said :*

23-25. Still Bhauvana wanted to give the Earth away as gift. The Earth said to him then again and again:

*The Earth said :*

O son of Viśvakarman, do not give me away. If a person goes to the banks of Gautamī and gives a morsel of food it is as good as though I have been given wholly. Why do you give me then, O Bhauvana? I shall sink into water. It behoves you not to give me.

*Brahmā said :*

26. Then Bhauvana became afraid. He asked, "What then, should be given?" Again the Earth addressed Bhauvana surrounded by the brahmins.

*The Earth said :*

27-28. Gingelly seeds, cows, money, grains—whatever is given on the banks of Gautamī is everlasting in its benefit. Why then, do you give me, Bhauvana? If a person goes to the banks of Gaṅgā and gives a morsel of food, it is as good as though I have been given wholly. Why do you give me then, O Bhauvana?

*Brahmā said :*

29-30. On hearing the words of the Earth Bhauvana, the ruler of the whole world, considered that it should be so. He

1. Lit. lord of the seat or sacrificial assembly.



then gave food to the brahmins on a big scale. Ever since then, people know it to be Daśāśvamedhika Tīrtha. By taking bath there, the fruit of ten horse sacrifices is acquired.

## CHAPTER FOURTEEN

### *Paiśāca Tīrtha*

*Brahmā said :*

1-4 Another holy centre is the Paiśāca Tīrtha. It is honoured by persons who expound the doctrine of Brahman. I shall recount to you its form and features. On the southern bank of Gautamī, at the side of Brahmagiri, O Nārada, there is a mountain Añjana. On that mountain, O excellent sage, there was an excellent celestial damsel Añjanā. She had a downfall due to a curse. Her face resembled that of a monkey. Her husband's name was Kesarī. Adrikā was another wife of Kesarī. She too was a celestial damsel who had a downfall due to a curse. Her face and head resembled those of a cat. She too stayed on the Añjana mountain.

5. Once Kesarī who was well known in the world went to the southern sea. In the meantime sage Agastya came to that Añjana mountain.

6. Both of them, viz. Añjanā and Adrikā worshipped the excellent sage Agastya duly and pleasingly.

7. Then the delighted holy sage said to them, "Let a boon be chosen". They said to Agastya, "O lord of sages, give us two sons.

8. They should be stronger than all others and more excellent too. They should be persons who render help to the whole world".

Saying "So be it", that sage went to the southern quarter.

9-12. Once Añjanā and Adrikā were singing, dancing and laughing on the top of the mountain.

The two Devas, Vāyu and Nirṛti saw them and smiled. They were overwhelmed by lust and they rushed to those ladies. They said, "We are Devas, the bestowers of boons. Be our wives".

They too replied, "Let it be so". They then sported about on the top of the mountain. Hanūmān was born of Añjanā and Vāyu. The king of Piśācas (evil spirits) named Adri was born of Adrikā and Nirṛti.

13-14. Then the ladies said, "Due to the boon of the sage sons are born to us. Our form is ugly and distorted. It is defiled at the head and face due to the curse of Indra. It behoves you to know about this." Then Lord Vāyu and Nirṛti spoke:

15. "By taking bath in Gautamī you will be released from the curse". After saying this the two delighted Devas vanished there itself.

16. Then, for the sake of pleasing his brother Hanūmān, Adri who had the form and features of a Piśāca took Añjanā, his mother and made her take her bath.

17-20. In the same manner Hanūmān took Adri whose form was that of a cat, to Gaṅgā and rushed to the banks of Gautamī.

Thenceforward that holy centre was well known as Paiśāca and Añjana. (Being) near the mountain of Brahmā that is auspicious. It yields all desired things. The holy centre Mārjāra extended to fiftythree Yojanas to the east. Away from the holy centre Mārjāra is the holy centre Hanūmanta and Vṛṣākapi. The confluence of Phenā is the bestower of all desired things. Its form, nature and situation is recounted there itself.

## CHAPTER FIFTEEN

### *Kṣudhā Tīrtha*

*Brahmā said :*

1. Listen attentively, O Nārada. The holy centre well known as Kṣudhā Tīrtha is being recounted. It is highly meritorious and it bestows all desired things to men.

2. Formerly, there was a sage Kaṇva. He performed penance and he was the most excellent among those who were conversant with the Vedas. Once wandering among penance-groves he was afflicted by hunger.

3-7 Gautama's holy hermitage was richly endowed with food and water. He saw himself hungry and Gautama prosperous. He noticed this incongruity and became detached. He thought, "Gautama is an excellent brahmin. I too am a person well-established in penance. Begging of a person equal to one in status is not proper. Even though I am overcome by hunger, even when my body is afflicted, I am not going to take food in the abode of Gautama. I shall go to Gautamī Gaṅgā and earn wealth". After deciding like this the intelligent sage went to the sacred Gaṅgā. After taking bath he sat on the Kuśa grass with controlled mind. He eulogized Gautamī Gaṅgā and Kṣudhā (hunger), the greatest distressing thing.

*Kaṇva said :*

8. Gaṅgā, obeisance be to you, the destroyer of agony and distress, and to you, O Hunger, the cause of agony and distress to all the people.

Obeisance O splendid one, born of the matted hair of Maheśāna.

Obeisance O Kṣudhā coming out of the mouth of great Death.

9. O Gautamī assuming a calm form in regard to meritorious souls and furious form in regard to the wicked souls ! O destroyer of the distress and sins of all, in the form of a river !

10. Obeisance be to you, the bestower of agony, distress and sin, to all in the form of hunger.

Obeisance O goddess, the cause of welfare and the suppressor of sins.

Obeisance O goddess, the cause of peace. Obeisance, O destroyer of poverty.

*Brahmā said :*

11. As he eulogized thus two forms appeared in front of him, one the charming form of Gaṅgā and the other the terrible form of Kṣudhā. After bowing down with palms joined in reverence, the excellent brahmin said.

*Kaṇva said :*

12. Obeisance be to you O Godāvarī, the cause of all auspicious things, O Brāhmī (belonging to Brahma), O Māheś-

varī (belonging to Maheśvara), O splendid Vaiṣṇavī (belonging to Viṣṇu), O three-eyed goddess !

13. Obeisance be to you, O Godāvarī, born of the matted hair of the three-eyed lord, the destroyer of sins of Gautama, O river that flows into the sea in seven channels !

14. O goddess Hunger obeisance, obeisance to you, O sinner unto all sinful persons, O destroyer of virtue, love and wealth, full of misery and greed !

*Brahmā said :*

15-17 On hearing the words of Kaṇva both of them were delighted and they spoke to the brahmin.

*Gaṅgā & Kṣudhā said :*

O (sage) of good holy rites, O cause of welfare, mention your desire. Choose boons.

*Brahmā said :*

Kaṇva bowed down to Gaṅgā and Kṣudhā in due order and said:

*Kaṇva said :*

18. O Gaṅgā, O goddess, give unto me wealth and all charming and cherished desires, long life, enjoyment of worldly pleasures and salvation.

*Brahmā said :*

19-23 After saying this to Gautamī Gaṅgā, the excellent brahmin said to Hunger.

*Kaṇva said :*

O hunger, O thirst, O wretched one, never be in me or in anyone born of my family. O extremely sinful and harsh one, go away.

This is another boon I wish for. If persons afflicted by hunger were to eulogize you with this hymn let them not have miseries of poverty.

Let those men who devoutly perform such sacred rites as holy ablution, charitable gifts, chanting of Japas etc. in this holy centre of great merit become rich. Another boon I wish for is this—If a person reads this hymn whether in the holy centre

or in the house, let him not have the fear from poverty and miseries.

*Brahmā said :*

24. After saying “So be it” to Kaṇva both of them went to their respective abodes. Thenceforward that holy centre was called Kaṇva, Gaṅgā and Kṣudhā. O dear one, it dispels all sins and increases the delight of manes.

## CHAPTER SIXTEEN

*Indra-Tirtha: Ahalyāsaṅgama-Tirtha*

*Brahmā said :*

1. The holy centre named Ahalyā-Saṅgama is one that sanctifies the three worlds. O excellent sage, listen to what happened and how it happened.

2. Out of great curiosity, O lord of sages, many types of beautiful girls possessing good qualities had been formerly created by me.

3-6. Among them I created a girl of exquisitely splendid features. On seeing that most excellent girl of great beauty in every limb, I thought thus, “Who is capable of nurturing this girl? Neither among the Asuras nor Devas is there anyone who has the ability to nurture her”. This was my thought. Then I gave that highly intelligent girl to Gautama for bringing her up—to Gautama who was an intelligent brahmin superior to all in good qualities, who possessed the power of penance, who had all characteristics and who was conversant with the Vedas and Vedāṅgas.<sup>1</sup>

7-9. “Protect and bring up (this girl), O excellent sage, till she attains the age of youth. When she attains youth, bring her back to me”. After saying this I gave that girl of slender waist to Gautama. The excellent sage whose sins had been dispelled by penance took her and nurtured her duly. The ex-

1. Disciplines auxiliary to the study of the Vedas.

cellent sage without any aberration brought Ahalyā near me after bedecking her duly.

10. On seeing her, Indra, Agni, Varuṇa and other Devas told me severally, "O lord of Devas, she should be given to me."

11-15. In the same manner the sages, Sādhyas, Dānavas, Yakṣas and Rākṣasas also approached me. On seeing all of them gathered together for the sake of that girl Indra became all the more enamoured in particular.

I remembered the greatness, majesty, and courage of Gautama and was surprised. Then this good thought occurred to me, "This lady of splendid face should be given to Gautama alone. She is not suitable for anyone. I shall give her to him alone." I thought in this way also, "The mind and courage of everyone has been stirred up by this girl."

Then Devas and sages uttered "Ahalyā". I too said so. Looking at Devas and sages I said loudly again and again:

16. This lady of beautiful eyebrows will be given to that person who circumambulates the Earth and thereafter approaches me sooner than others and not to anyone else.

17. On hearing the words uttered by me, Devas proceeded ahead in their circumambulation of the Earth.

18. After Devas had gone Gautama, the lord of sages, too made some effort like this for the sake of Ahalyā.

19. In the meantime, O brahmin, the divine cow Kāmadhenu<sup>1</sup> had partially delivered her calf. Gautama saw her thus.

20. Remembering "This is the Earth" he circumambulated her. Then he circumambulated the Liṅga<sup>2</sup> of the lord of Devas.

21-22. After circumambulating both of them Gautama the excellent sage decided thus—"Devas have not completed even one round of the Earth. I have completed two rounds." After deciding thus, that sage came near me.

23. After bowing down to me Gautama of great intelligence said to me, "O lotus-seated lord, the soul of the universe, obeisance be to you again and again.

1. The wish-fulfilling cow born at the churning of the ocean by the gods and antigods.

2. The phallic symbol of Lord Śiva worshipped in the form of a stone column.

24. O Brahmā, the entire Earth has been circumambulated by me. What is proper in this connection? O lord of Devas, you know it better yourself”.

25. By meditation I understood it and said to Gautama: “The lady of beautiful eyebrows will be given to you alone. The circumambulation has been completed.

26-29. O brahminical sage, Dharma (Virtue) is inscrutable even to the Vedas. The divine cow having partially delivered her calf is (identical with) the Earth consisting of seven continents. If that divine cow is circumambulated, the Earth too has been circumambulated. By circumambulating the Liṅga one shall obtain the same benefit. Hence, O sage Gautama of good holy rites, I am pleased with your effort, courage, knowledge and penance. O great sage, this girl, the most excellent one in the world is given to you.” After saying this, O sage, I gave Ahalyā to Gautama.

30-31. After the wedding had been celebrated, Devas came there slowly. They had completed their circumambulation of the Earth. They saw Gautama, Ahalyā and their union that increased their pleasure. On seeing this after their arrival, Devas were surprised.

32. When the rites connected with the wedding were over Devas returned to heaven. The jealous husband of Śacī (wife of Indra) glanced at her (longingly) and went to heaven.

33. Delighted in my mind, I gave the sacred Brahmagiri which is splendored and which bestows all cherished desires, to the noble Gautama.

34-35. The excellent sage Gautama indulged in dalliance there along with Ahalyā. Indra heard about this gift of Brahmā to Gautama in the heaven itself. In order to see that hermitage, sage Gautama and his uncensured wife, Indra assumed the guise of a brahmin and came there.

36. On seeing the sage’s splendid beautiful wife and wealth Indra felt jealous and an evil thought entered his mind.

37. O dear one, Indra who was full of lust did not realize the risk; he was not aware of the time and place or even the danger of curse from sage Gautama.

38-41. Arrogant due to his overlordship of the kingdom of the Devas, he was meditating upon her alone continuously. He

felt his limbs scorched by the pangs of passion. He was always thinking thus, "How shall I make myself content? How shall I enter this hermitage?"

Though he stayed there in the guise of a brahmin he did not succeed in getting an opportunity to go inside.

Once the highly intelligent sage Gautama performed his morning rituals and went out of the hermitage along with his disciples. The excellent sage went out to visit the penance grove on the Gautamī river, the brahmins and different kinds of cultivated grains. Indra saw him going out saying (to himself) "This is the opportunity". He did what was pleasing to his mind.

42. Indra who was desirous of attaining pleasures assumed the form of Gautama. Looking at Ahalyā who was beautiful in every respect he spoke to her.

*Indra said :*

43. "I am attracted by your good qualities. Remembering your beauty I have begun to falter in my steps." Saying this and grasping her hand he went inside the hermitage.

44. Ahalyā did not know that he was a paramour. She believed him to be Gautama and indulged in sexual dalliance with him as she pleased. Meanwhile Gautama came there along with his disciples.

45. Everyday it was the custom of Ahalyā to welcome him as he returned speaking pleasing words to him and satisfying him by her graceful qualities.

46. On this occasion he was unable to see her. The highly intelligent sage Gautama considered it a highly surprising mystery. O Nārada, the people looked at the excellent sage standing at the door.

47. The watchman and the domestic servants at the hall of Agnihotra sacrifice were awestruck and surprised. They spoke to the excellent sage Gautama.

*The Watchman said :*

48. "What a mystery is this, O holy sage, you are seen both inside and outside. You entered the house accompanied by your beloved. You are outside also. Oh the power of your penance is wonderful ! You can assume different forms at your will."



*Brahmā said :*

49-50. On hearing it, the sage was surprised. "Who has entered inside? Who is standing there? O dear Ahalyā, why don't you reply?" On hearing these words of the sage Ahalyā spoke to the paramour.

*Ahalyā said :*

51-53. "Who are you ? In the guise of the sage you have committed a sin". Saying this she hurriedly got up from her bed in great fear. Indra the sinner became a cat due to the fear of the sage.

On seeing his beloved Ahalyā outraged and defiled the sage said furiously, "What is this rash act? Why has it been committed?"

Although her husband said this, she did not say anything in reply because she was too much ashamed.

54. The sage saw a cat distressed by fear and moving about surreptitiously. He said to him, "Who are you? If you utter a lie I will reduce you to ashes."

55-58. With palms joined together in reverence, Indra said thus.

*Indra said :*

"O ascetic, I am the husband of Śacī, the breaker of towns, one who has been eulogized much. This sin has been committed by me. O sinless one, I have spoken the truth. O sage, I have committed an excessively despicable act. What is it that those whose hearts are pierced by the arrows of cupid do not do? O brahmin, O storehouse of compassion, forgive me, a great sinner. Good men are never harsh towards a person even if he has committed a guilt."

On hearing his words the brahmin said to Indra in great anger.

*Gautama said :*

59. "Sin has been committed by you due to your passion for the vagina. Hence become a person with a thousand vaginas in your body".

He said to Ahalyā also in anger, "Be a dry river".

60-63. . (Defective text). Narrating her wrong action she tried to pacify him.

*Ahalyā said :*

“If women were to love other men even mentally they will be eternally doomed. They should treat all persons as their brothers. Be pleased, O holy sage, and listen to my words. He approached me assuming your form. These persons are my witnesses.”

“It is so”, said the watchmen, “Ahalyā speaks the truth”.

The sage knew the truth by means of meditation too. Becoming calm he said to the chaste lady:

*Gautama said :*

64. “O fair lady, when you come into contact with the Gautamī, the chief of rivers, you will become a river and thereafter will regain your own form that is pleasing to me”.

65-66. On hearing these words of the sage the chaste lady did so. Ahalyā the beloved wife of Gautama came into contact with the divine river. Thereafter she attained that form which had been created by me formerly.

Then, with his palms joined in reverence the king of Devas said to Gautama.

*Indra said :*

67-68. “O mighty among the sages, save me. Save me. A sinner (no doubt) but I have come to your house as a guest.”

On seeing him fallen at his feet Gautama said mercifully: “I have been pacified by Devas, wishing to free you from my curse.” Gautama the most excellent sage said:

*Gautama said :*

69-71. “By taking bath in the sacred holy centre Ahalyā Saṅgama, O husband of Śacī, you will be rid of your sins instantly and will become one with a thousand eyes”.

I have witnessed both these surprising events, O Nārada, viz., the resurgence of Ahalyā and the transformation of Indra into a person with a thousand eyes.

Thenceforward that pure holy centre became well known as Ahalyā-Saṅgama and Indra-Tīrtha. It bestows all cherished desires on men.

## CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

*Janasthāna Tirtha*

*Brahmā said :*

1-4. There is still another holy centre well known as Janasthāna. It extends to four Yojanas. It bestows salvation on men even by remembering it.

Formerly, there was a king Janaka born in the solar dynasty. He married Guṇārṇavā (ocean of virtue), the daughter of the lord of waters (i.e. Varuṇa).

King Janaka married Guṇārṇavā, the generator of virtue, wealth, love and liberation. In view of her befitting good qualities she was really Guṇārṇavā (ocean of virtue).

Yājñavalkya the leading brahmin was the priest of that king. The excellent king asked his priest Yājñavalkya:

*Janaka said :*

5-7. Enjoyment of worldly pleasures as well as salvation—these two are the most excellent as declared by the greatest of sages. Enjoyment of worldly pleasures is excellent through men, maidservants, elephants, horses, chariots etc. But in the end all is sapless. It is salvation alone that bestows immortality and therefore salvation is more excellent than enjoyment. How can one attain salvation through enjoyment?

The attainment of salvation by eschewal of attachment is a strenuous task. Hence, tell me, O greatest of sages, how can salvation be easily achieved?

*Yājñavalkya said :*

8-9. O king, the lord of waters (Varuṇa) is your father-in-law and well-wisher. Hence, he can be your preceptor. Go to him and ask. He will instruct you in what is conducive to your welfare.

Yājñavalkya and Janaka went to king Varuṇa and unperturbed they asked him about the path of liberation in the proper order.

*Varuṇa said :*

10. Salvation is effected in two ways: (i) through Karmans (holy rites) and (ii) through Akarman (refraining from work).

The path decided in the Veda is this. Karman is more conducive to welfare than Akarman.

11. Everything including the four aims of life, is bound with Karman. It is not true that the path of salvation is obtained by Akarman alone.

12. All grains are obtained, O excellent king, through Karman. Hence Vaidic Karmans should be wholeheartedly performed by men.

13-15. Men obtain (enjoyment of pleasures) and salvation through that Karman. Karman is based on birth in the various stages in life.

O leading king, conversant with piety and bestower of honour, the four stages are realized through Karmans.

Among the four stages that of the householder is remembered as the bestower of merit. It is my opinion that enjoyment and salvation are possible in the householder's life.

*Brahmā said :*

16. On hearing this, King Janaka and Sage Yājñavalkya honoured Varuṇa and spoke these words again:

17. "What is that place, what is that holy centre, which bestows worldly pleasures and liberation? Tell us, O excellent Deva, you are omniscient. Obeisance be to you."

*Varuṇa said :*

18. In the whole of the Earth the sub-continent of Bhārata is the most meritorious. In the continent of Bhārata, Daṇḍaka is the most meritorious. Karman performed in that region is the bestower of worldly pleasures and salvation to men.

19. Among holy centres, Gautamī Gaṅgā is the most excellent. It bestows salvation. By means of sacrifice and charitable gifts performed there, one shall obtain worldly pleasures and salvation.

*Brahmā said :*

20. On hearing the words of the lord of waters, Yājñavalkya and Janaka went to their city after being permitted by Varuṇa.

21. King Janaka performed horse sacrifice and other holy rites. Yājñavalkya the leading brahmin made that king perform the sacrifice.

22-26. Resorting to the bank of Gaṅgā, king Janaka attained liberation through sacrifice. So also, many kings attained liberation by the grace of Gautamī. Thenceforward that holy centre is known as Janasthāna. Since it was the seat of many sacrifices, it is glorified as Janasthāna. It extends to four Yojanas. On being remembered, it dispels all sins.

One shall obtain all cherished desires. One shall even obtain salvation by taking bath or offering charitable gifts or by performing oblations to the manes or by remembering the holy centre or by approaching it or by resorting to it devoutly.

## CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

### *Cakratīrtha*

*Brahmā said :*

1. O Brahmin, there is a great holy centre well known as Cakratīrtha. By taking holy ablution there with devotion a man shall obtain the world of Viṣṇu.

2. O King, if one fasts on the eleventh day of the bright lunar fortnight and takes bath in the Gaṇikā Saṅgama one shall attain the everlasting region.

3. Even as I recount what had happened there formerly, listen to it.

There was a Vaiśya of plenty of wealth. His name was Viśvadhara.

4. When he was much advanced in age, O sage, an excellent son was born to him. He possessed all good qualities. He was very handsome. He was indulgent in sports. He was splendid in appearance.

5. The son who was dear to them more than their life passed away untimely. On seeing him dead the parents were afflicted by misery.

6-7. They became inclined to die along with him. They lamented: "O son, you were in the prime of youth. You were an ocean of virtue. Still you have been taken away by the sinful and

evil-minded god of death. You are dearer to us than even our life breath”.

8-10. On hearing their lamentation thus Yama's mind became overwhelmed by sympathy. On hearing the piteous cry of the couple, Yama abandoned his city and went to Godāvari. Seated on its banks he began to meditate on Janārdana. Within a short while everywhere, all round, the subjects became old, very old. The whole Earth was filled with old people so much so that they began to say: “My ground extends this much. Let it be said. By whom was it filled?” No living creature died. The Earth was over-burdened.

11. Thereupon, O excellent sage, the goddess of Earth went to the place where Indra, the conqueror of enemies' cities, was seated along with the Devas. On seeing the Earth Indra bowed to her and said this.

*Indra said :*

12. O Earth, What is the purpose of your arrival here? May it be said.

*Earth said :*

13. O Indra, I am afflicted by a heavy burden, in the absence of death. I have come here to enquire about the cause thereof. May it be mentioned to me.

*Brahmā said :*

14-18. On hearing these words of the Earth Indra spoke these words.

*Indra said :*

If there is any cause, O Earth, it will be known by me. I am the lord of all Devas.

*Brahmā said :*

Then, on hearing his words the Earth said to Indra:

Then, let Yama be ordered so that he would annihilate the subjects.

On hearing these words of the Earth Siddhas and Kinnaras were ordered to bring Yama quickly, O great sage, by Mahendra. Thereafter all of them, Siddhas along with Kinnaras, immediately

went to the city of Yama. There they did not see Yama. After returning hurriedly they made a report to Indra.

*Siddhas and Kinnaras said :*

19. O lord, although he was searched for all round strenuously, Yama was not seen by us in the city of Yama.

*Brahmā said :*

20. On hearing these words of Siddhas and Kinnaras, Savitr (the sun) who was his father was asked by Indra, "Where is Yama?"

*The Sun said :*

21. O Indra, Yama is now on the banks of Godāvari performing a very severe penance. I do not know what the reason is.

*Brahmā said :*

22-23. On hearing these words of the Sun Indra became suspicious.

*Indra said :*

Alas ! Woeful ! O woeful ! My lordship of Devas has come to an end. Yama of evil activities performing penance at Godāvari ! It is my opinion that he is surely desirous of seizing my position, O Devas.

*Brahmā said :*

24-25. After saying this, the celestial damsels were immediately summoned by Indra.

*Indra said :*

May this be quickly mentioned to me, who among you is capable of spoiling the penance of my enemy Yama who is performing austerities on the banks of the Gautamī river?

*Brahmā said :*

26. Even on hearing these words of Indra, O great sage, no one said anything. Then in great rage Indra said to celestial damsels.

*Indra said :*

27. No one has replied to me. Therefore we ourselves shall go. Let all Devas be ready. Let them, without any delay, come with their armies. We shall slay our enemy who is desirous of ruling over heaven by means of his penance.

*Brahmā said :*

28-30. When this was said, the army of Devas appeared there.

On coming to know about the motive of Indra, the discus-bearing lord Hari, the preserver of worlds, sent his discus for the protection of Yama. Where the discus appeared is the excellent holy centre Cakratīrtha.

Then Menakā who was suspicious about the outcome said to Indra :

31-32. "O lord of Devas, no one among us is capable of even looking at Yama. It is better to die at your hands than at Yama's. Amongst us, that harlot Kṣamā is proud of her beauty and youth. Request her and send her to dissuade Yama, if you, O lord, consider it necessary."

*Brahmā said :*

33. On hearing her words, Indra the lord of Devas, ordered Kṣamā after duly honouring her.

*Indra said :*

34. O harlot, go. Carry out my task, beautiful woman. If you fulfil it and return, you shall be as dear to me as Śacī.

*Brahmā said :*

35. On hearing the words of Indra, Kṣamā flew over the quarters. The beautiful lady came near Yama in a moment.

36. Brightening the ten quarters the lady came near Yama. She sang the sweet Hindolaka song in an exquisitely graceful style.

37-40. Then the delicate tremulous mind of Yama was moved. He opened his eyes filled (as though) with the fire of passion, O great sage, and stared at her although she was a hindrance to his welfare. Thereafter the lady immediately became melted and attained the state of a river. This harlot joined the river Gautamī. Her songs of praise were sung by the Gaṇas



and Kinkaras. Due to the power of the holy centre she ascended to heaven. On seeing the harlot going to heaven seated in an aerial chariot, Yama of tremulous eyes was surprised very much.

Then the Sun came there and said to Yama:

*The Sun said :*

41. Carry out, dear Son, your duty of annihilating the subjects. See the wind that blows always, Brahmā who creates subjects, Earth that carries them and me who wander over the three worlds.

*Brahmā said :*

42-43. On hearing the words of his father, Yama said:

*Yama said :*

Surely I shall not carry on this despicable work. It does not behove you to command me to do this extremely cruel task.

44-46. On hearing the words of Yama the Sun spoke thus: "O Yama, how is your duty despicable? It is proper for you to do (this work). Did you not see that that harlot on having plunged into the waters of Gautamī went to heaven immediately, even as the Gaṇas and Kinkaras were singing songs of her praise.

Oh son, severe penance has been performed by you. It is very difficult to do. I do not see its end. Hence go to your city."

47-49. On saying these words lord Sun took his bath and went to heaven. Yama too had his bath at the confluence and went to his city.

The slayer of the living beings cast off his doubts, O great sage. On seeing Yama go, the discus too went away to the place where Govinda embellished with the garlands of sylvan flowers, was present. The man who reads this or listens to this narrative shall obtain long life. All his adversities shall perish.

## CHAPTER NINETEEN

*Aśvabhānu Tīrtha*

*Brahmā said :*

1-3. The two rivers Aruṇā and Varuṇā are very auspicious. Their confluence with Gaṅgā is also very holy, O excellent sage.

They bestow merit more than the lake Mānasa, the holy centre Prayāga and the river Mandākinī. Listen now to its origin which destroys all sins.

The eldest son of Kaśyapa, Āditya, is well known in the worlds. He is the eye of the three worlds. He has hot and powerful rays. He has seven horses to draw his chariot. He is honoured by the people of the world. Uṣā, the daughter of Tvaṣṭṛ, was well known as the most beautiful woman in the three worlds.

4. Unable to endure the severity of the heat of her husband, the beautiful woman of good waistline thought, "What should be done by me?"

5. The extremely intelligent Manu and Yama were her sons born of Vivasvān (Sun). The holy river Yamunā (too was her daughter). Listen to that incident which caused surprise.

6-8. She created her own shadow strenuously in the form of herself. Uṣā then said to her:

"Be like me. At my bidding, look after my husband and children. Till I come back, be the beloved of my husband. Neither to my children nor to my husband should you reveal this fact".

"So be it", said the shadow.

Uṣā went out of her abode.

9. After saying this she went ahead, desirous of peaceful form. After going home Uṣā mentioned everything to her father. Tvaṣṭṛ was surprised. Being fond of his daughter he said to her:

*Tvaṣṭṛ said :*

10. It is not proper on the part of a married woman to do as she pleases. How do your children and husband do? O gentle lady, I am afraid I may be considered uncultured. Go back to your husband's abode once again.

*Brahmā said :*

11. Thus urged by her father she said “No, No” again and again. She went to the Northern Kuru country for performing penance.

12. There she assumed the form of a mare and performed a severe penance. Uṣā steadily meditated upon her husband who was too fierce to be looked at.

13. In the meantime, O dear one, the shadow Chāyā who had assumed the form of Uṣā, cohabited with her husband. Children were born to her.

14-17. (The sons were) Manu Sāvarṇi and Śani. Viṣṭi, a wicked daughter, was also born. Chāyā behaved differently to her own children and the children of Uṣā. Yama therefore became angry. Yama the lord of southern quarter kicked his step-mother Chāyā who was behaving differently. In her excitement due to the wickedness of her step-son Chāyā cursed Yama, son of the Sun god.

“O sinner, may your foot become putrefied at my bidding.” With his foot putrefied he went to his father crying. He informed Savitr of the entire episode.

*Yama said :*

18-21. O excellent Deva, she is not my mother because I have been cursed by her thus. A (true) mother never gets angry even if children act against her wish. I might have uttered something due to my stupidity. I might have done something mischievous. If she had been my mother she would not have become angry. Hence she is not my mother.

Mother is so called because everything child does, whether good or bad, becomes measured in her. O dear father, she stares at me everyday as though she would burn me. She speaks to me with words as ferocious as black fire. She is not my mother.

*Brahmā said :*

22-24. On hearing this from his son Sun began to think (and understood). “This is Chāyā and not Uṣā. Desirous of quietening me she is engaged in penance. The daughter of Tvaṣṭṛ is in the northern Kuru in the form of a mare.”

On coming to know that she was there Lord Sun went thither

where his wife was staying. He himself assumed the form of a horse.

25-28. On seeing her in the form of a mare, the sun in the form of a horse rushed at her. On seeing the horse excited by passion and on hearing the sound, Uṣā the chaste lady hurriedly fled to the South. She had been meditating on her husband. She was afraid of being attacked by the horse. She did not know who it was. When the husband approached her she fled to the South in great hurry. "Who will be my saviour now, the sages or the Devas?" She thought herself. The sun in the form of a horse pursued his beloved who was running fast. Wherever Uṣā went the sun also went there.

29-31. If anyone comes under the influence of Cupid, what wicked thing does he not do? Facing the southern direction they crossed Bhāgirathī, Narmadā and other rivers, parks, forests and Vindhya mountain. Distressed with fear, the daughter of Tvaṣṭṛ went to Gautamī because she had heard that in Janasthāna there were sages who could protect her. After entering Gautamī, the mare went to the hermitage of sages.

32. The horse too came there. It was the Sun in that form. People who were staying in Janasthāna stopped that horse. Lord Sun, the husband of Uṣā, then cursed them in anger.

*The Sun said :*

33-36. Since you stopped me you will become banyan trees.

*Brahmā said :*

By their eye of knowledge the sages saw that he was the husband of Uṣā. Thereupon they eulogized the lord of Devas in great delight.

Even as he was being eulogized by the sages the Sun approached the mare sexually. The face of the horse came into contact with the face of the mare. After realising that it was her husband, the daughter of Tvaṣṭṛ shed the semen from her month. From their semen the Aśvins were born in the river Gaṅgā.

37-40. The following persons came there, viz. groups of Devas, Siddhas, sages, rivers, cows, medicinal herbs, groups of luminaries, holy chariot of the seven-horsed lord (i.e. Sun), Aruṇa the charioteer of the Sun, Yama, Manu, Varuṇa, Śani son of the Sun god, the holy river Yamunā, Tāpī, Mahānadi

and father-in-law of the Sun (i.e. Tvaṣṭṛ). O sages, out of wonder, the rivers had assumed their respective forms. They came there to see this wonderful event. On realising his purpose Sun spoke to his father-in-law.

*The Sun said :*

41. O Tvaṣṭṛ, mount me on to the lathe and chisel off my splendid parts for pleasing Uṣā who has performed excellent penance. O Prajāpati, you cut off my parts until she finds herself pleased.

*Brahmā said :*

42. After saying “So be it”, Tvaṣṭṛ began to cut off the splendid parts of the Sun in the presence of Somanātha. They know it as Prabhāsa.

43-47. The place where Uṣā in the form of a mare came into contact with her husband, the place where Aśvins were born, is called Aśvatīrtha.

It is also called Bhānutīrtha where there is the hermitage with five banyan trees. Tāpī and Yamunā came there to see their father (i.e. the Sun). The confluence of the rivers Aruṇā and Varuṇā with the Gaṅgā is splendid.

There are nine times three thousand (i.e. 27000) holy centres of Devas there severally pertaining to Devas who had come to that holy centre. All these holy centres are good. Ablution performed and charitable gifts distributed there bestow great and everlasting merit.

O Nārada, by remembering, reading and listening to this, man becomes rid of all sins. He becomes virtuous and happy.

## CHAPTER TWENTY

### *Garuḍa Tīrtha*

*Brahmā said :*

1. The holy centre named Garuḍa destroys all obstacles. I shall recount its power, O Nārada, listen to it attentively.

2. There was an extremely powerful son of Śeṣa named Maṇināga. Afraid of Garuḍa he propitiated Śaṅkara with devotion.

3. Then the lord Maheśvara, Parameṣṭhin became pleased. He said to the great Nāga, "O Nāga, choose a boon".

4. The Nāga said, "O lord, grant me the boon of freedom from Garuḍa".

"So be it", said Śambhu to him, "You shall have freedom from the fear of Garuḍa".

5. The Nāga who was not afraid of Garuḍa, the younger brother of Aruṇa, went out to the place near the milk ocean where Viṣṇu was taking rest.

6. The Nāga wandered here and there over the place which was pleasingly chill. He went to the place which was occupied by Garuḍa.

7. On seeing the Nāga moving about fearlessly Garuḍa seized him and took him off into his own abode.

8. By means of nooses, Garuḍa bound the mighty Nāga. In the meantime, Nandin said to Īśa, the lord of the universe:

*Nandikeśvara said :*

9. Certainly the Nāga has been either swallowed or imprisoned by Garuḍa, O lord of Devas. Hence he does not come. The nāga may not come out alive.

*Brahmā said :*

10-13. On hearing the words of Nandin and understanding the situation himself Śiva said:

*Śiva said :*

The Nāga has been bound and imprisoned in the abode of Garuḍa. Go quickly and tell the lord of worlds, Viṣṇu. At my instance, you, yourself, bring the Nāga bound by Garuḍa, son of Kaśyapa.

On hearing the words of lord Śiva Nandin went and intimated to the lord of Śrī, the ultimate resort of the world, Viṣṇu, (the details).

Pleased in his mind Nārāyaṇa spoke to Garuḍa:

*Viṣṇu said :*

14. O son of Vinatā (Garuḍa), give Nandin the Nāga at my instance.

Vainateya the bird understood it but said "No". In the presence of Nandin, Garuḍa spoke to Viṣṇu in anger:

*Garuḍa said :*

15-19. Other masters give their servants whatever is most pleasing to them but you do not do so. Instead you want to take away what has been acquired by me.

See, the three-eyed lord wishes to release the Nāga through Nandin. But you wish to give Nandin the Nāga captured by me.

I bear you always along the path. Hence something should be given to me by you always. It is not proper for you to say "Give" in regard to the Nāga acquired by me.

This cannot be the practice of good masters who wish to maintain good service. Good men give unto the servants. But you are one who takes away what has been brought by me.

O Keśava, it is through my power that you conquer the asuras in battles. In vain do you boast, I am extremely powerful.

*Brahmā said :*

20-24. On hearing these words of Garuḍa Viṣṇu the bearer of discus and club laughed in the presence of Nandin even as the guardians of the worlds were watching.

The extremely intelligent lord said this: "You have become lean by bearing me (regularly). It is due to your power that I conquer Asuras, O excellent bird."

After saying this, O brahmin, the lord of Śrī spoke this, with his anger calmed down: "Be quick. Bear the small finger of my hand, in the presence of Nandin."

Placing the small finger of his hand over the head of Garuḍa Viṣṇu said again:

"It is true that you carry me always. See to your duty, O bird."

When the finger was placed over his head the head penetrated into his belly and the belly went inside the foot and became smashed. Then, the distressed Garuḍa said piteously out of shame, with palms joined in reverence:

*Garuḍa said :*

25-28. Save me, save me, O lord of the universe, your

servant. You are the lord of all gentle and submissive worlds. You are the supporter and the supported also. Those who are powerful, forgive thousands of offences. All the sages call you merciful since you have great sympathy even for those who have committed offences.

O mother, residing in the lotus, O mother of the Universe, save me who am distressed. O Kamalā, fond of your son, save me who am miserable and wretched.

*Brahmā said :*

Then the merciful goddess Śrī spoke to Janārdana:

*Kamalā said :*

29. O lord, save your own servant Garuḍa who has been involved in adversity”.

Thereupon Janārdana spoke to Nandin the attendant of Śiva:

*Viṣṇu said :*

30-31. Take the Nāga to Śiva along with Garuḍa. On being glanced at by Maheśvara and favoured by him Garuḍa will regain his own form.

*Brahmā said :*

After saying “So be it” Nandin went to Śiva along with the Nāga and Garuḍa and intimated everything to him. Śiva, who has the crescent moon on his forehead spoke to Garuḍa:

*Śiva said :*

32-33. O hero of long arms, go to Gaṅgā, Gautamī the sanctifier of worlds. She is calm and bestower of all cherished desires. After plunging into it you will regain your body and all cherished desires.

O bird, Gautamī, the bestower of all desired things, is the refuge for all living beings whose enterprises are ruined by adverse fate and who are tormented by all sins in hundreds and thousands of ways.

*Brahmā said :*

34-36. Garuḍa listened to his words with humility. He went to Gaṅgā. After plunging into it he bowed down to Śiva and Viṣṇu. Then the bird of golden complexion regained his