

CULTURAL STUDY

Social and religious data :-

Social data :-

Without the study of society the study of the cultural history will ever remain incomplete. The Mahābhāgavata Pu. supplies considerable information for the reconstruction of the social, cultural and religious history of medieval India. The term 'Society' means the whole tissue of human relations whether organized or otherwise. The concept of society implies contact direct or indirect and the binding tie of relations enduring and comprehensive. Society is not relations but beings in their relationships. Thus the study of society takes into account to study of the institution of caste or class, occupations, customs, food, dress, beliefs, family life etc.

Social norms :-

A Check on the Behaviour of Sons and Fathers-in-law :-

Lord Śiva drew the attention of Sātī to the fact that with a view to insult Him Dakṣa had not invited Him to the sacrifice and hence it was not proper for Them to go there (8.4-7^{ab}).

Śiva rightly refers to the condition in which one should visit the house of one's father-in-law. One should do so if there is respect for one. But if the going is devoid of respect it becomes more painful than death (8.7^{cd}-8^{ab}).

Lord Śiva established a moral rule that disrespecting a son-in-law generates loss of righteousness and ordained that the envy of a son-in-law should be avoided (8.8^{cd}-11^{ab}).

Lord Śiva also forbade that a son-in-law should not do anything unpleasant to the father-in-law in order to avoid falling into hell for many births (8.11^{cd}-12^{ab}).

In this manner a check is put on the behaviour of both the son-in-law and the father-in-law.

Protection of Sacrifice - a duty of a True Kṣatriya :-

Once upon a time, sage Viśvāmitra came to Daśaratha and requested him to send Rāma along with Lakṣmaṇa for the sake of protecting his sacrifice in the penance grove (38.3-4^{ab}).

The wicked Rākṣasas were used to destroy the sacrifice of Viśvāmitra which necessitated his seeking the help of Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa. Thus this destruction of the sacrifices was a special trait of the non-Aryan aborigines.

After entering into the great forest Rāma burnt to ashes Subēhu, who was obstructing the sacrifice by discharging a single arrow (38.5^{cd}-6^{ab}). By another single arrow Rāma threw Mārīca far away on the sea-coast (38.6^{cd}-7^{ab}).

Killing a Woman was Prohibited in the Aryan Society :-

After reaching the forest Rāma killed the fierce Rākṣasi (demoness) Tāḍakā and obtained from the sage the knowledge of discharging missiles (38.4^{cd}-5^{ab}). Even though

killing a woman was forbidden in the Aryan Society still an exception was made for Tāḍakā who was an antisocial creature.

In this manner Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa were equipped with the knowledge of discharging missiles which was to prove absolutely essential for their combat with the demons of Laṅkā in future.

The System of Primogeniture observed by the Retiring Aged King :-

After reaching the city of Ayodhyā, king Daśaratha along with his ministers decided to crown Rāma as the king (38.16) in accordance with the prevailing system of primogeniture (i.e. the eldest son's succession to kingship as a rule).

A king used to arrange a Meeting of the Council of Ministers:-

It was customary for a king to have the counsel of ministers on vexing problems. Accordingly Rāvaṇa, the king of the demons called all his ministers for counsel (39.40).

In the meantime in keeping with the counsel of his ministers, Kāṁsa sent Pūtanā, the killer of children to Gokula (51.3).

After taking counsel of his ministers Kāṁsa sent Akrūra to Gokula to bring Rāma and Kṛṣṇa there by trickery with the intention to get them slain in wrestling by the wrestlers viz. Muṣṭika, Gaṇūra etc. (54.10-12).

Taking counsel of his ministers by Kāmsa shows that even under absolute monarchy it was deemed necessary to take advice of wise councillors.

The counsellors of Bali advised him to give by way of alms whatever was demanded by Vāmana as the alms which satisfies the receiver would be fruitful and would increase glory (65.17).

Righteousness brings Peace and Prosperity-Unrighteousness brings Calamity :-

Where intellect follows righteousness there there is peace and riches and lustre also. Where there is unrighteousness there that goddess Śivā Herself is of the form of calamity (42.32).

Righteousness wherein the goddess is adored is the bestower of victory. Where there is unrighteousness, there that goddess is of the form of calamity (42.70).

The idea expressed in Mahbg.P. 42.32 is repeated here.

Following the Path of Righteousness Was Incumbent on Everyone :-

Devī foretold that all the Pāṇḍavas would be following the path of righteousness (49.49^{cd}).

Radhā also after having abandoned shame sported along with Kṛṣṇa constantly as it were increasing righteousness (53.41).

Increasing righteousness was considered to be the first and foremost duty of a human being in the society.

King Yudhiṣṭhira who was solely devoted to righteousness participated in the game of dice again on account of the fear of transgressing one's own duty (55.55^{cd} - 56^{ab}).

Before Indra Dadhīci remarked that the body of that embodied one was blessed the use of which was done for the sake of the happiness of others, since it was transient and the duty only was eternal (60.24).

This shows that the sages and other persons spiritually advanced considered duty only as eternal and body as transient. So they cared to protect duty more rather than body.

Brahmicide Incurred Even By Prompting A Brahmin To Lay Life :-

Even though Dadhīci voluntarily laid down his life as he was prompted to do so by Indra the sin of Brahmicide was thus committed by Indra (60.30).

Breaking A Promise Gave Rise To A Great Sin :-

Breaking one's own promise given to another was considered to give rise to a great sin. Hence Bali was reluctant to break his promise given to Vāmana to give him the alms of the earth measurable by three steps in spite of his preceptor's forbidding him to do so again and again (65.27-28).

Devī's Worshipper Never Suffers a Loss in the Tree Worlds :-

According to Lord Brahmā those who worship the goddess daily in their case there is no loss either in heaven, on the earth or in the nether regions (42.67).

Victory of the Follower of Righteousness is Inevitable :-

Brahmā told Rāma that He possessed pure nature and that He was the benefactor of all the worlds and was following the path of justice and hence His victory was inevitable (42.71).

Thus an assurance is given in the Mahbg.P. 42.71 that victory is ^aguaranteed to the followers of the path of righteousness.

Complete Enjoyment of the Fruit of Auspicious deed -
Guaranteed :-

The auspicious fruit of the auspicious deed performed by someone must be enjoyed completely and that nothing should be left unenjoyed out of it (42.72).

Vision of Devī obstructed by One Another Bestows Merit :-

The vision of Devī obstructed by one another is the giver of merit. There is no consideration of superiority nor the discrimination of castes (43.85).

Thus in Devī's presence the distinctions of rank, caste etc. vanish. Thus Śakti worship tried to establish equality amongst the people in spite of the prevalence of rigid caste distinctions in those times.

Importance Of A Guru And His Words :-

Nārada informed Indra that the statement of a Guru is the highest scripture and it is the highest authority. A satisfied preceptor is a liberal bestower and whatever is spoken by him is never falsified (61.15). Guru's statement is an expiation which is unanimously accepted by all the Vedas. After performing a rite in accordance with Guru's command Indra would get rid of the sin (61.16). From times immemorial great importance was attached to Guru and his words.

Importance Of Gurubhakti :-

Indra assured Gautama that his order to approach Brahmā would never be futile and undertook to go in proximity of Lord Brahmā (61.43). Before departing Indra circumambulated Gautama thrice and after having prostrated before him like a staff on the ground went to Brahmloka (61.44).

Appessing Sin - An Absolute Necessity For One's Well-being :-

Brahmā consoled Indra by assuring Him to try His best to appease the sin, since if it would persist it would be a source of manifold calamities on the residence of the gods (61.50-51).

Duty Of A Chaste Woman :-

Gāngā directed Bhagīratha to propitiate Lord Śiva, Her husband to obtain His consent to come down to the earth to release his ancestors (66.44^{cd}-45) and thereby followed the duty of a chaste woman and set an example for chaste women.

Influence of Śākta Tantra :-

On Lord Śiva's inquiring of Satī about the specific names of the goddesses Satī introduced to Śive the ten forms of the goddesses viz. Daśa Mahāvidyās that had appeared before Him (8.64) describing their peculiarities. These Mahāvidyās are well known in Śākta Tantra.

According to Satī that one with black hue and dreadful eyes who was in front of Him was Kālī (8.65^{ab}). The one standing over Śiva's head was Tārā of the nature of Mahākālā (8.65^{cd}-66^{ab}). That one situated on Śiva's right hand side who was without a head was the terrible Chinnmastā (8.66^{cd}-67^{ab}). On Śiva's left there was Bhuvanēśvarī (8.67^{cd}). In Śiva's rear there was Bagalā, the killer of the enemies (8.68^{ab}). In the South-east corner of Lord Śiva, the goddess bearing the form of a widow was Dhūmāvatī (8.68^{cd}-69^{ab}). In the South-west of Śive there was, Tripurasundarī (8.69^{cd}). In the North-west of Śiva there was the daughter of Mātanga (8.70^{ab}). In the North-east of Śive there was Śodasī (8.70^{cd}). The goddess introduced Herself to Lord Śiva as Bhairavī and advised Him not to be afraid (8.71^{ab}).

The names of Daśa Mahāvidyās given above are the same as those found in 8.62^{cd}-63 with one exception that while in 8.62^{cd} name Kamalā is mentioned whereas in 8.71^{ab} name Bhairavī is mentioned.

According to the goddess the ten Mahāvidyās were the givers of desired fruit and the four fold objects of human life to the devotees (8.72).

These Deśa Mahāvīdyās accomplished the eight types of tasks for the benefit of their devotees as desired viz. killing (Māraṇa), eradicating (Uccāṭana), agitation (Kṣobha), deluding (Mohana), putting to flight (Drāvṇa), subduing (Vaśya), paralysing (Stambhana), and enmity (Vidveṣa) (8.73).

Initiation in the Devīmantra :-

The goddess predicted that Vasīṣṭha would teach Viṣṇu's incarnation in human form a sacred formula (Devīmantra), which He should repeat in the battle for the sake of His own protection and for the destruction of Rāvṇa (36.68^{cd}-69) when He would be born as a human being in the solar race (36.68^{ab}).

Sage Vasīṣṭha initiated Rāmacandra, Bharata, Lakṣmaṇa and Śatrughna in the sacred formula of the goddess (Devīmantra) as a result of which all of them became proficient in all the Śāstres (branches of knowledge) (38.1-2).

Just as Kāmākhyanamaskāramantra is actually given in the Mābhg.P. 12.34^{cd}-35^{ab}, in the same way the actual Devīmantra referred to above is not given in the Mābhg.P. It may be that the Devīmantra may be a Tāntric formula of the Śākta sect. At least there is a strong probability of its being a Tāntric Śākta sect formula. It reflects the spread of Śāktism and its influence in eastern India at the time of the composition of the Mābhg.P.

The Origin of Āgama Śāstra :-

The highest goddess ordained that Lord Śiva would be the person to proclaim the Āgama Śāstra throwing light on the sacred formulæ, the yantras, the ceremony of worship and that of oblation and the rites of Puraścaryā and the eulogies, Kavacas, observances (Ācāras) and regular practices (Niyamas) of the worshippers of these goddesses (8.74-76). Thus in keeping with the desire of the goddess Lord Śiva became the first propounder of Āgama Śāstra.

The Importance of Āgama Śāstra :-

The goddess added that Āgama and Veda were Her two arms, by means of which this whole world moveable as well as immovable used to be supported (8.77). She added that these two viz. Veda and Āgama were the causes of one's well-being and that they were difficult to understand even by intelligent persons and were boundless (8.79). According to the goddess a transgressor of the commands of either Veda or Āgama cannot be uplifted even by the goddess Herself (8.80). Thus the goddess gave as much importance to Āgama as was given to Veda.

It was insisted by the goddess that the sacred formula, the yantra and the Kavaca given by a guru should be kept a secret (8.83) as its disclosure would harm one's accomplishment and would bring something inauspicious (8.84).

Sectarian Colouring :-

After having bowed down to the parents and preceptor Vasistha with devotion and after remembering the goddess and after prostrating before Her again and again the best of Raghus set out on the tenth of the bright half of the month Iṣṣ (Āśvina) for the sake of slaying Rāvana (38.20-21). Thus Rāma is shown as worshipping Devī to accomplish his objective. In this way an attempt is made to spread the Śākta sect by this sort of colouring.

Annual Autumnal (Śāradya) Worship of the Devī Promulgated by Rāmacandra for the First Time :-

The Lord Rāma desirous to wage a war thought of worshipping the great goddess for the sake of attaining victory over Laṅkā (40.12^{cd}-13^{ab}). Rāma thought that it was Dakṣiṇāyana at that time, so the goddess of the three worlds must be asleep and hence He was ready to worship Her at an improper time (40.13^{cd}-14^{ab}). So thinking Lord Rāma, the immutable Nārāyaṇa determined to offer Her oblations Who was of the form of the manes (40.14^{cd}-15^{ab}).

Mahāmāyā in the Form of Manes in Pitṛpakṣa :-

Rāma thought that the very same goddess Mahāmāyā was of the form of manes in that fortnight (40.15^{cd}). He determined further to worship the great goddess Who was of the form of Manes and the giver of victory in keeping with the ceremony called Pārvaṇa and then would fight with enemies for their death (40.16^{cd}-17). Then at the proper time, Rāma of true prowess performed the Pārvaṇa Śrāddha, remembering the goddess (40.21).

In the Gītā Press edition of Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa VI. 42.9^{cd}-47, there is no reference to the worship of the goddess or to the performance of Pārvaṇa Śrāddha by Rāma. In this way there is a sectarian colouring in the narration found in the Mahābh. P.

By way of reply to Rāma's inquiry regarding the way to conquer the demons (41.5), Lord Brahmā addressed Rāma as the Lord of Kamaḷā and told Him that He knew everything (41.12). However Brahmā informed Rāma that the eternal goddess Who is the mother of the three worlds and Who is of the nature of Brahman, Kātyāyanī is the remover of great danger and is fit to be worshipped by Him (41.13).

The worshipping of the goddess Kātyāyanī by Rāma at the time of Kumbhakarna's setting out for battle is not mentioned in the Gītā Press edition of Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa VI.66. Brahmā advised Rāma to pray to goddess Durgā, the saviour from calamities, the giver of victory to all the worlds and Herself invincible (41.14). Brahmā further added that without Her pleasure it was not possible for Him to conquer Rāvaṇa etc. in the battle (41.15). In support of His statement Brahmā quotes the incident of Lord Śambhu's remembering Her name at the time of drinking deadly poison and conquering death in this world and becoming Mṛtyuñjaya (41.16). Brahmā added that Rāvaṇa was devoutly devoted to Candikā and hence nobody was capable to conquer him without Her graceful glance (41.19). Brahmā reminded Viṣṇu (in Rāma's form) that the goddess Herself had told Him formerly about

it in the presence of Lord Mahādeva and in His (Brahmā's) presence also (41.20). Thus there is sectarian colouring in the narration found in the Mābhg.P.

Brahmā reminded Viṣṇu (in the form of Rāma) about the incident of the meeting of the trinity with the great goddess to decide to annihilate Rāvaṇa in which the goddess had advised Him to remember Her while fighting with Rāvaṇa in His human form (36.71;42.9). The goddess instructed Rāma that He would conquer Rāvaṇa by worshipping Her earthen image on the sea coast in autumn in accordance with the laid down ceremony by Her good grace by worshipping Her at an inopportune time (36.73-74;42.11) and (42.14^{cd}-15^{ab}). The above noted incident is reiterated in order to stress the importance of Devī's worship. Brahmā warned Rāma that in case Rāvaṇa worships the goddess in the outset of the bright fortnight, he would not die (42.15^{cd}-16^{ab}). Thus there is sectarian colouring in the narration found in the Mābhg.P.

On Rāma's expressing a doubt before Lord Brahmā as to how would He be able to adore the goddess who might be asleep at that time (i.e. in Dakṣiṇāyana) especially as it was the dark fortnight (42.20-21), the latter assured Rāma that He would awaken the goddess for Rāma's victory and for the assassination of Rāvaṇa (42.22). Hence Brahmā insisted upon Rāma to adore the great goddess in inopportune time and assured Him about His victory (42.23). Brahmā reminded Rāma that the goddess had foretold that Rāvaṇa would die at the hands of Rāma and that it was beyond doubt (42.28). He further

stated that in case the goddess worshipped by Rāma again gives that boon then Rāma would certainly win a victory (42.29). In this way there is sectarian colouring in the narration found in the Mabhg.P.

Rāma after having slain Kumbhakarṇa in the battle went to Lord Brahmā where He was adoring the goddess (47.6^{cd}-7^{ab}) and after having bowed down to Him informed Him that the younger brother of Rāvāṇa was slain in the battle (47.7^{cd}-8^{ab}), whereupon Brahmā informed Him about the rite of worship of Devī formerly told by the goddess and about the death of the enemies day by day (47.8^{cd}-9^{ab}).

In the Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa there is no reference to the approaching of Rāma to Lord Brahmā. This is clearly an elaboration introduced with a special purpose of glorifying the greatness of Devīpūjā. Thus there is sectarian colouring in the narration found in the Mabhg.P.

On the fall of Atikāya by Lakṣmaṇa, Rāma embraced His brother with His two arms affectionately and having smelt Him on His head went in proximity of Lord Brahmā with His soul overjoyed (47.29). Rāma's approaching Brahmā again on the death of Atikāya is also an elaboration in this Mabhg.P. which has no basis in the Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa.

As a result of the meditation, prayer and prostration of Rāma as well as of Brahmā on Mahānavamī in the afternoon, the goddess Herself gave an infallible weapon (arrow) shining brightly like the fire at the time of universal destruction to Brahmā for the destruction of the king of demons (47.64^{cd}-67^{ab}).

This intervention of Devī is an elaboration in the Mābhg.P. stressing the glory of the goddess. In the Vālmiki Rāmāyana III.12.32-34,37 it is mentioned that sage Agastya hands over the bow two quivers and an arrow and a sword to Rāma in the Aranyakānda. However sage Agastya teaches Rāma the Ādityahrdaya before the final encounter with Rāvana VI.105.4-29.

Rāma Accompanied by Sītā, Lakṣmaṇa and Vāneras Approached Brahmā Where He had Worshipped Devī :-

Then overjoyed Rāma carrying Sītā and accompanied by Lakṣmaṇa and monkeys went where the goddess of the world was worshipped by Lord Brahmā (47.77^{cd}-78).

This is also a sectarian elaboration in the Mābhg.P. According to Vālmiki Rāmāyana, Rāma accompanied by Sītā, Lakṣmaṇa and Vāneras returns to Ayodhyā in the Puṣpeka vimāna (aerial car) VI.122-123.

The Burden of the Earth-Removed By Devī In Kuruksetra War :-

Devī added that She would generally destroy the Kings with wicked minds in the encounter between Kurus and Pāṇḍus (49.59^{cd}-60^{ab}). Thus the work of removing the burden of the earth would be accomplished by Devī (49.59^{cd}-61^{ab}). Thus ^{this} Māhābhāgavata, a Śākta Puṇḍā attributes the credit of removing the burden of the earth to Devī.

On Devakī's Request Kṛṣṇa Showed Her His Very Best Form of Durgā :-

On Devakī's requesting the boy newly born to show her his very best form of the nature of Devī Kṛṣṇa all of a sudden became black hued Durgā, possessing terrible face and having a corpse for Her vehicle (50.76-77).

The Frightful Appearance of Devī :-

The goddess had four arms and three eyes, and She looked frightful on account of rolling the tongue, Her back was covered by a mass of long trickling hair and she had a crown on Her head (50.78). At that time the beautiful Vanamālā transformed itself into a long garland of skulls (50.79).

Kṛṣṇa Assumed A Form of Kālikā After Killing Pūtānā :-

Kṛṣṇa's transforming Himself into another Kālikā possessing dreadful mouth and wearing a garland of skulls on Her chest after killing Pūtānā (51.16) is an addition found in keeping with Śākta colouring in the Mahābhāgavata-purāna.

Then again in half a moment Kālikā herself abandoned the body of the demoness and became a handsome young boy (51.17).

This elaboration was necessary to convince the residents of Vraja about the fact that the boy was in reality the goddess Kālī.

Kṛṣṇa Again Assumed The Form of Kālikā When Trṇāvarta Took Him Away :-

When Trṇāvarta took away Kṛṣṇa, He smiled and transformed Himself into Kālī putting on a tiger's hide and roared like the thunder of dense clouds (51.25). This transforming of Kṛṣṇa into Kālī is an instance of sectarian colouring peculiar to the Mahābhāgavata Purāṇa only.

Kṛṣṇa Remained In The House of Nanda-Yaśodā To Give Them The Fruit of Austerities :-

The venerable goddess who had assumed the form of a man through Her superhuman power for the sake of giving the fruit of austerities to Yaśodā and Nandagopa remained Herself assuming childhood in Gokula (51.32-33). This is also an instance of sectarian colouring peculiar to Mahābhāgavata Purāṇa.

Cowherdesses Born From The Part of Bhairavas :-

Kṛṣṇa sported with Rādhā and also with the throngs of cowherdesses born from the part of Bhairavas (53.6).

The representing of the birth of the cowherdesses from the part of Bhairavas as mentioned above in the Mahābhāgavata Purāṇa is a result of sectarian colouring. Contrast it with the statement of Subodhinī on Śrīmadbhāgavata in which it is stated that the Gopīs were the Śrūtis incarnate as explained by the commentator Vallabhācārya in his Subodhinī Adhyaya 26

on Śrīmedbhāgavata¹ X.29.1.

At Times Rādhikā And Kṛṣṇa Transformed Themselves As Śambhu
And Gaurī :-

At times Rādhikā transformed Herself and assumed the form of Śambhu possessing five beautiful lotus like faces along with Kṛṣṇa transforming Himself as Gaurī and both took a walk (53.15). Assuming the original forms of Śiva and Gaurī by Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa respectively as mentioned above in the Mābhg.P. is an attempt of peculiar sectarian colouring.

Religious data :-

Synthesis of different Sects :-

The Purāṇakāra has tried to synthesize the Vaiṣṇava and Śākta, Gaṇapatya and Śaiva sects into one sect in Adhyaya 34 stanzas 11-13.

Lord Śiva Considered to be Another Form of Devī :-

Devī Herself on account of Her sweet will, sports sportingly in Herself forever in the form of Paramesīva Who happens to be another form of Her own (43.41).

1 Vide : Prof.Bhatt G.H.(ed.), Vallabhācārya's Subodhinī on Bhāgavata X.26-32 (Rāsālīlā chapters), published by V.N.Shah, Bombay, 1943, introduction PP.21,22 and Gujarati translation of Tāmasefalsaprakaraṇa of Subodhinī Adhyaya 26 P.3.

Here Śiva is spoken of as another form of the goddess Herself. The sporting of Herself as Śiva is sporting in Herself on account of Her sweet will. Thus non-difference between the Śaiva and Śākta sects is aimed at.

The Origin of the Mahā (Śakti) Pīṭhas :-

The goddess remaining visible in the sky advised Lord Śiva to keep the body of the shadow of the Devī that had entered the sacrificial fire on His head and to pray to the goddess and to move over the earth (11.40). She continued that that body will fall on the ground in pieces and wherever those pieces fall, there will come into existence a Mahāpīṭha destroying sins (11.41) and that the place where Her female organ of generation would fall would be the best and highest Pīṭha staying wherein and practising penance He would again obtain Her (11.42).

Thus the goddess Herself refers to the unique greatness of the Kāmākhyā pīṭha.

Lord Viṣṇu undertook to cut the limbs of Chāyasatī by means of His discus Sudarśana (11.71^{cd}-74^{ab}) who was supported by the goddess for the sake of protection of the world (11.74^{cd}-75). The cutting of the limbs of Chayasati by means of the discus Sudarśana by Lord Viṣṇu and their falling on the surface of the earth, and turning into Mahātīrthas, Muktiṣetras and Siddhipīṭhas are described in 11.76-81^{ab}. The sacrifices and worship etc. pertaining to the goddess which are performed in the Śaktipīṭhas yield a fruit a crore times more than ordinary worship and sacrifice

(11.81^{cd}-82^{ab}).

After having repeatedly uttered the name of the goddess in Kāmākhyā pīṭha, a person attains a direct vision of the goddess and a sinner becomes free from the sin of committing a Brāhmicide (11.82^{cd}-83^{ab}).

The limbs of the Chāyāsati which fell on the ground turned immediately into stones for the sake of the good of the people (11.83^{cd}-84^{ab}). In this manner assuming the form of stones of the limbs of the goddess facilitated the need to worship Her on the part of the people.

Thereafter on seeing the organ of generation of the goddess fallen in Kāmarūpa, Lord Girīśa (Śiva) became anxious on account of lust and had horripilation on His body (11.113) and that organ of generation of the Devī seen by Śambhu with lustful eye began to enter the nether world breaking the earth as it were (11.114).

Lord Śāṅkara on seeing that assumed the form of a mountain Himself by a part of Satī and supported the organ of generation of Devī joyfully (11.115).

In all those pīṭhas like Kāmarūpa etc. Śiva Himself presided over in the form of Paśāṅga Linga and enjoyed (11.116).

On inquiry of Lord Śiva regarding the means to obtain Mahes'vari as His wife (12.7-9^{ab}) Lords Brahmā and Viṣṇu advised Śiva to practise penance there contemplating on the goddess in Kāmarūpa (12.9^{cd}-10^{ab}). They added that

that was a Mahāpīṭha where the goddess was the direct giver of fruit to the aspirants doubtlessly and that the greatness of that Pīṭha was indescribable (12.10^{cd}-11).

Lord Śiva with calm mind practised penance in the great Kāmarūpa Pīṭha meditating on Parameśvarī (12.14) along with Lords Brāhmā and Viṣṇu (12.15). After a lapse of long time the goddess, appeared before them (12.16) and asked them about their desired object (12.17^{ab}). Thereupon Lord Śiva requested Her to become His house wife as she had kindly become formerly (12.17^{cd}-18^{ab}).

Devī's giving a boon to Lord Śiva :-

The goddess replied to Lord Śiva that she would become subdivided into two and would become the daughters of Himālaya Herself before long (12.18^{cd}-19^{ab}). She added that as Śiva had kept Her on His head and danced therefore she would become by Her part the Ganges Herself of the form of water and would obtain Him as Her husband and would remain on His head (12.19^{cd}-20). By another part she would become Fārvatī and would remain in the house of Lord Śiva as His house wife (12.21). In this manner the goddess gave a boon to Lord Śiva to obtain Herself in the form of two wives.

After giving a boon to Lord Śiva the goddess bestowed the desired boons to Lords Brāhmā and Viṣṇu and then disappeared (12.22).

Just as on account of the greatness of the Mahāpīṭha the goddess Herself was pleased with Lord Mahēśa and gave Him His desired boon in the same way if anybody worships Mahēśvarī

in that Pīṭha she would bestow his desired object on him (12.25^{cd}-27^{ab}). In this manner the greatness of this Pīṭha is emphasised.

Fifty-one Śaktīpīṭhas according to Mahābhāgavata:-

By way of a reply to Nārada's inquiry Lord Mahādeva informs him that there are 51 Śaktī Pīṭhas which have come into existence by the falling of various limbs of chāyā Satī on the ground (12.29^{cd}-30^{ab}).

Kāmakhyāmāhātmya :-

Out of all of them Kāmarūpa is the best Śakti Pīṭha where the goddess Herself is staying in person (12.30^{cd}-31^{ab}).

Lohitya (Brahmaputra) Māhātmya :-

On visiting that Mahāpīṭha and on bathing in the waters of Lohitya even a man who has committed Brahmicide is freed from the bondage of birth (12.31^{cd}-32^{ab}). The current of Brahmaputra itself is Lord Janārdana Himself in the form of liquid. Hence one bathing in its waters is freed from all sins (12.32^{cd}-33^{ab}). The greatness of Brahmaputra is indescribable as it is considered to be the liquid form of Lord Janārdana Himself.

Tirthamahatmya :-

A man after ~~going~~ going to mānasa Kuṇḍāditīrtha and after having taken a bath according to rites and after having seen the pīṭha is liberated immediately not otherwise (12.35^{cd}-36). The fruit which a person enjoys by worshipping

Parameśvarī there in accordance with the injunctions mentioned in Tantra works and after having muttered the sacred formula and after having performed Homas etc. cannot be described with a crore of mouths even by Lord Śiva (12.37-38^{ab}).

Death in Kamakhya bestows immediate release :-

A person who dies in that field obtains release immediately without doubt (12.38^{cd}-39). Even the gods desire death in that field what to talk of human beings (12.39^{cd}-40^{ab}).

The Phala Śruti states that he who listens to this deed of the goddess with devotion obtains Śivatva (12.44). A man by hearing this deed of the goddess has his command irrevocable everywhere (12.46^{ab}). Even a difficult task is certainly accomplished in a moment (12.46^{cd}). By hearing this carīta of the devī the sins accumulated in other births get destroyed, the enemies are consumed and the lineage increases (12.47). After having heard this deed of the goddess which is a remedy of the disease in the form of transmigratory existence one becomes liberated even while alive immediately even if one be a great sinner (12.49).

Religious Practices :-

Bathing In Sacred River Brahmaputra and Saluting Kāmeśvarī :-

An aspirant should bathe in Brahmaputra, should offer libations to means with devotion and should ~~below at~~

utter the sacred formula shown below at the time of saluting Kāmeśvarī (12.33^{cd}-34^{ab}).

Kāmeśvarīnameśkāra mantra :-

The sacred formula which should be uttered at the time of saluting Kāmeśvarī is as follows :

Kāmeśvarīnce Kāmākhyām Kāmarūpanivāsinīm || 12.34^{cd}

Tapta Kāñcanasaṅkēśām tēnamāmi Sureśvarīm || 12.35^{ab}

Oath taking :-

Lord Śiva took on oath that He would serve the goddess whole heartedly for all times and that He would not do anything disagreeable to Her at any time and that He would not abandon Her even for half a moment at any time (25.25-28^{ab}).

In keeping with his oath, king Yudhiṣṭhira gave up successively the whole kingdom. Still the wicked son of Dhṛtarāṣṭra invited him to the game of dice again (55.54-55^{ab}).

Oath taking was a common practice in the society as is evident from Yudhiṣṭhira's declaring on oath at the commencement of the game at the second time that in case of his defeat he would reside in a forest for twelve years and would remain incognito for one year more (55.56^{cd}-57^{abc}).

Similarly from Arjuna's taking on oath to kill Jayadretha before sunset (57.38), it appears that oath taking was a common practice in the society.

Worship of Manes in accordance with Rites :-

Rāma conveyed His idea of doing Pārvaṇa Śrāddha in the afternoon on that day (on the Pratipattithi) devoutly (40.18) and then to fight with the king of the demons (40.19^{ab}). On hearing Rāma's words all the Vānaras advised Him to worship devoutly and respectfully the manes in keeping with the laid down rites for the sake of victory in the battle (40.19^{cd}-20).

Then at the proper time Rāma of true prowess performed the Pārvaṇa Śrāddha² remembering the goddess (40.21).

Taking Sesamum-seeds And Kuśa²grass In Hand-For Almsgiving :-

In order to give something by way of alms to a brahmin, it was customary to take in one's own hand sesamum-seed and Kuśa grass. Accordingly Bali took in his hand sesamum-seeds and Kuśa grass in order to give Vāmāna, the earth measurable by three steps (65.18).

Bathing In Gaṅgā's Waters, Practising Penance In It And Using It While Alms-giving Practised Since Its Descent :-

Since the time of Gaṅgā's coming down to the earth the practice of bathing in its waters, practising penance in it and giving alms with its waters all are considered to be the givers of great reward and the destroyers of great sin (69.2). Because Jāhnavī washes off the sin accumulated within ten births there therefore that Deśamī is called Deśaharētithi (69.3).

2 For details about Pārvaṇa Śrāddha see Chapter VIII footnote 6, P.438.

On Tuesday When The Moon Be In Hasta Constellation Gaṅgā Destroys Ten-fold Sin Accumulated Within Ten Births :-

Since Bhāgīrathī Herself destroys the ten-fold sin of the people accumulated within ten births by bathing or plunging into its waters when the moon happens to be in the Hasta Constellation on Tuesday, therefore all embodied ones who are desirous of getting rid of all great sins should bathe in its water diligently (69.4-5).

Fire Worship :-

The goddess told Brahmā that fire was ordained as the fifth face of Brahmā and when oblations are offered into it all the gods get eternal satisfaction (42.54).

This shows the importance of fire worship and the offering of oblations into fire which is a very ancient feature of Vedic religion. It is a common feature of Indo-Iranian religious practices.

Special Traits of Devī's Vāmamārgīya Upāsana :-

Rāma addressing Devī as the lover of battle, as blood thirsty, as devourer of flesh, as remover of calamity of the seeker of protection in the battle prayed Her to give Him victory (44.4). Here the adjectives "raktabhakṣe" and "māmśabhakṣaṇakāriṇī" indicate the prevalence of the Vāmamārgīya Upāsana of Devī in the society at the time of composition of Mahābh. P.

Rāma also addressed Devī as the wielder of Khaṭvāṅga and a sword, as one whose figure was shining with a garland of skulls and requested Her to be the remover of miseries of those who remember Her in calamity (44.5). Here the epithet "Muṇḍamālēdyotitavigrahe" indicates the prevalence of the Vāmamārgīya Upāśnā of Devī in the contemporary society.

Rāma praised Devī as the lover of the blood of Mahiṣa in the battle, as the killer of Mahiṣāsura, as the daughter of the mountain and as the giver of protection (44.9). Here a clear trait of Vāmamārgīya Upāśnā of Devī is indicated by the epithet "Mahiṣāsṛjapriye".

Rāma addressed Devī as one possessing red eyes and red teeth and as one whose limbs are smeared with blood, as the killer of Ratkṣbīja and prayed Her to give Him victory (44.11). Here the epithet "Raktacarcitagātrake" indicates beyond doubt the prevalence of Vāmamārgīya Upāśnā of Devī in the contemporary society.

Devī instructed the gods desiring victory of Rāmacandra to adore the image of Devī made of clay by pure means and by proper victim offered to Her in keeping with the laid down rites from seventh to ninth of the bright fortnight (45.27-28).

At the opportune time i.e. at the juncture of eight and ninth Devī should be worshipped by various articles of worship viz. flesh and blood (45.32). This practice of

offering a victim to the Devī and Her worship by flesh and and blood clearly indicate the influence of Vāmamārgīya Upāsana.

One should try to please the goddess by offering of victims of fishes, by flesh of goats of buffaloes, and of rams as well as by other articles of worship (48.16).

The solely devoted devotees of the goddess should offer a victim to Her of an animal as Caṇḍikā captures the wicked in the form of cattle (48.18).

Others also desiring the favour of the goddess should make an offering of an animal in a great sacrifice (48.19^{ab}). This is in keeping with the Vedic injunctions found in the Pūrva Mīmāṃsā.

Devī's Instructions To Gods Regarding Her Autumnal Worship :-

Devī instructed the gods desiring victory of Rāmacandra to adore the image of Devī made of clay by pure means and by proper victim offered to Her in keeping with the laid down rites from seventh to ninth of the bright fortnight (45.27-28).

Dakṣiṇamārgīya Śākta Upāsana Includes Vedic and Purāṇic Eulogies :-

Devī further instructed the gods that she should be eulogized with devotion by the eulogies mentioned in the Vedas and the Purāṇas (45.29^{ab}). Thus the eulogies of Devī found in the Vedas and Purāṇas were utilized to please Her as mentioned in 45.29^{ab}. This is a feature of Dakṣiṇamārgīya Śākta Upāsana.

Patrikā Praveśa :-

She further instructed them that on the seventh they entering into a Patrikā attended by the bow of Rāma should be done in keeping with the ritual when the moon is connected with the constellation Mūla (45.29^{cd}-30^a). The rite of entering into a Patrikā is a special feature.

Faśubali :-

Devī advised the gods to worship the image of Devī made of clay by various articles of worship viz. flesh and blood at the opportune time i.e. at the juncture of eighth and ninth (45.32).

Śatrubali :-

Then the icon (Mūrti) of the enemy made of flour should be prepared and should be offered as bali to the goddess (45.33^{ab}) on the ninth of bright fortnight. This is a custom of Śatrubali which is prevalent in Bengal since bygone ages.

Devī assured the gods that worshipped by different balis on the ninth she would make Rāvāna fall down in the afternoon in the battle (45.33^{cd}-34^{ab}).

Devī advised the gods to adore Her idol on the tenth in the morning and to dismiss it in flowing water ceremoniously (45.34^{cd}-35).

Thus after having celebrated a great festival within fifteen days, the gods will attain the fulfilment (45.36).

Devī Ordained Annual Śārādīya Pūjā :-

Devī ordained that the great festival of the goddess should be celebrated in the manner shown by Her by the residents of the three worlds for the sake of gratification of the goddess every year on the advent of this inopportune time (46.1) also (46.27^{cd}-28^{ab}). On the ninth of Bhādrapada connected with the constellation Ārdrā the goddess should be adored in a bilva tree and should be addressed with devotion till the ninth of the bright fortnight (of Āsvini) (46.2).

Thus in accordance with the ordaining of Devī the practice of annual Śārādīyapūjā came into vogue.

Devī's Grace Obtained by Giving a Bali on the Ninth :-

Those who desire the grace of the goddess should give a bali as she is highly pleased by the offering of a victim on the ninth (46.26^{cd}-27^{ab}).

The practice of dismissing the image of the goddess in water after adoring it in the morning on the tenth was started by the grand sire Brahmā (48.7).

Śārādīyepūjā of Devī Is Incumbent On The Followers of All Sects :-

The adoration of the goddess in the Śārādīya i.e. autumnal festival is incumbent on the followers of Śakte, Śaiva, Vaiṣṇava and Saiva sects (48.15). One should not be frugal in spending money for the adoration and should sacrifice invariably and respectfully for the goddess in the Śārādīya festival (48.17).

All the gods headed by Indra etc. remain under the command of those who are engaged in the adoration of the goddess every year (48.19^{cd}-20^{ab}). The merit arising from the adoration of the goddess cannot be equalled by any other merit in the three worlds (48.20^{cd}-21^{ab}).

Hearing of the Fruit (Phalaśruti) of this Best Rāmāyaṇa :-

By way of the hearing of the fruit of this best Rāmāyaṇa which is considered to be an extensive glory of the goddess destroying great sins it is stated that a hearer devoutly hearing this attains the rank of the goddess which is very difficult to attain even by Brahmā etc. (48.21^{cd}-22).

Investiture of The Sacred Thread Ceremony Of Rāma And Kṛṣṇa :-

Then Vasudeva after having brought the great sage Gargācārya got performed the investiture of the sacred thread ceremony of Rāma and Kṛṣṇa according to the laid down rites (54.64^{cd}-65^{ab}).

In accordance with the prevailing practice, Vasudeva after having invited the sage Gargācārya, got performed the said ceremony. It is to be specially noted that in those days even Kṣatriyas had to perform the investiture of the sacred thread ceremony. This is also found recorded in Śrīmadbhāgavata X.45.26-29. Gargācārya taught them all the saṁskṛtaśāstras and the science of archery (54.65^{cd}).

The Practice Of Touching And Adoring Kāmākhya-Prevalent :-

A man after having seen, having touched and having adored the goddess in the form of well protected female organ of generation becomes released while still alive (76.10). The practice of touching and adoring Kāmākhya was prevalent at the time of composition of the Mābhg.P.

The Practice Of Putting On Rudrākṣa While Performing A Rite :-

Even if a person be a Śaiva, a Vaiṣṇava or a Śākta, still he should put on the beads of Rudrākṣa, since a rite performed after putting on Rudrākṣa yields great merit (77.20).

One who puts on Rudrākṣa after having worshipped Rudrā, the destroyer, attains Rudrahood in this region doubtlessly (77.21).

There was a practice to repeat the sacred formula of Bhairavī in the evening on Amāvāsyā or the fourteenth or eighth or ninth day (77.22).

Efficacy Of Kāmākhya - Kavaca :-

The practice of recitation of the Kavaca of Devī Kāmākhya for the sake of one's own protection and for the accomplishment of the mantras was prevalent in the society and it was supposed to remove the rise of fear (77.24). Nārada desired to know from Lord Maheśvara the Kavaca of Devī Kāmākhya which averts great danger (77.26). Lord Śiva narrated to Nārada the Kavaca of Kāmākhya which is extremely auspicious and fit to be kept a secret (77.27). By the grace of this

Kavaca a mortal becomes fearless resembling Bhairava and his mind remains steady in the rites of Japa, Homa etc. and he attains the accomplishment of mantra, tantra etc. without obstruction (77.30).

Nature Of Kavaca :-

Just as a soldier puts on an armour before proceeding for a battle in the same way before proceeding for any religious rite, repetition of mantra etc. an aspirant utters Kavaca mantras touching the various limbs of the body for the sake of their protection and safe and fruitful completion of the undertaking. Thus spiritual protection is sought from different gods and goddesses by the aspirant by means of a Kavaca.

Kāmākhyā Kavaca :-

Tārā, the resident of Kāmarūpa may protect me in the eastern direction. Devī Śoḍaśī may protect me in the South-eastern direction and Devī Dhūmavatī Herself may protect me in the Southern direction. May Bhairavī protect me in South-western direction and Bhuvaneśvarī may protect me in the west. The great goddess Chinnamastā may protect me constantly in the north-west (77.32). May Devī Bagalāmukhī protect me in the northern direction. May Tripurasundarī protect me in the northern direction forever (77.33). May Matāṅgī protect me over my head. May Kāmākhyā i.e. Kālī Herself protect me from all sides forever (77.34).

Āṅganyāsa :-

Goddess Durgā who is Mahāvidyā of the nature of Brahme of the nature of all lores Herself may protect my head. May wife of Bhava protect my forehead (77.35). May Tripura protect me in the two eye-brows and Śarvāṅī my nose. May Caṇḍikā protect my eyes and Nīlāsrasvatī my ears (77.36). May Saumyamukhī protect my mouth, and Pārvatī my neck. May the goddess appearing terrible on account of lolling of the tongue protect my tongue (77.37). The goddess of speech may protect my face and Mahēśvarī may protect my chest. May Mahābhujā protect my arms and Sureśvarī fingers of my hands (77.38). May Bhīmāsya protect me from rear, and Digambarī may protect my waist. May mahodarī, the mahāvidyā protect my belly. May Ugratārā protect my shank and my thigh. May Surasundarī protect my testicles, penis, anus and navel (77.39-40). May Bhewānī, the goddess of the gods protect the fingers of my feet. May goddess Śavāsānā protect my blood, flesh, bones and marrow (77.41).

After Āṅganyāsa, Kavaca Continues :-

May Kōmākhyā, the Mahāmāyā, the remover of great danger protect me from terrible dangers (77.42). May Devī Kālikā residing on Bhāsmācala seated on a divine throne protect me always in all calamities (77.43). May the goddess Sarvarakṣanakārinī always protect the place devoid of protection as well as Kavaca (77.44).

This Kavaca of Kāmākhyā is the highest protector of all (77.45). An aspirant after arranging protection by this becomes fearless. Terrible danger obstructing mantra Siddhi would not touch him (77.46) and the desired accomplishment is attained without obstruction (77.47^{ab}). He who bears this Kavaca in the neck or on the arms becomes an expert in all the lores, whose command is not obstructed and he attains happiness and auspiciousness daily everywhere (77.47^{cd}-48). He who recites attentively this wonderful Kavaca attains the dignity of the goddess doubtlessly (77.49).

Among the Vaiṣṇavas there was a practice of putting on Tilaka marks on the forehead, on the neck, on the ears, on the hands, on the breasts, on the top of the head, on the back, on the sides and on the navel with the mud near the root of Tulasī (79.19-20^{ab}).

Giving cows by way of alms and performing sacrifices like Vājapeya was a usual practice (79.23^{cd}).

The Adoration of Śiva - The Saviour In The Kali Age :-

In the grim Kali age even, the adoration of Lord Mahādeva is the bestower of salvation to men with sinful minds (81.9). Kali does not harass him who after having prepared earthen phallus of the nature of Śiva and Śaktī adores it remaining self-restrained (81.10). Except the adoration of Lord Śambhu with meagre requirements there is no other means in the Kali age (81.11). Verily for a penniless person Lord Viśveśvare only is the god whose idol

can be made with mud whose adoration can be accomplished by a bilva leaf and the playing upon musical instruments can be accomplished without effort by one's own cheeks and the resulting fruit is the status of Śāyujya with the Lord (81.12). There is no other rite equalling the adoration of Lord Śambhu in the Kāli age. Either a Śākta or a Vaiṣṇava or a Śaiva after having adored Śānkara in the beginning should adore thereafter one's own favourite deity with devotion (81.13-14^{ab}). In the beginning one should adore the phallus with Bilva leaves otherwise everything done without the adoration of Śiva is nullified like a Śūdra (81.14^{cdef}).³ That sinful one who reverses the order due either to arrogance or infatuation falls down and his adoration is futile (81.15). He who meditates upon Lord Mahādeva, the Lord of the Lord of all the worlds attains sameness with Him and is not reborn again (81.16). The adorer of Śiva of the nature of all gods with true devotion is freed from all the sins and attains the world of Śiva (81.17). He who gives to Mahesā water for washing the feet is also freed from sins and attains heaven (81.18). Whatever like Arghya etc. is given to Śambhu part of all that should be given on the phallus (81.19). All that is unacceptable and one should not eat the remnants of food offered to Śiva. The remnant of food offered to Viṣṇu is acceptable not of that offered to others as one incurs the

3 This is in accordance with Tāntric practice as noted by Arthur Avalon in his 'Principles of Tantra', Ch.XIX, P.752.

wrath of Viṣṇu by accepting it (81.20). All that has come in touch with the stoneslab of Śāligrāma is acceptable. After having eaten the remains of an offering to an eternal phallus one attains the status of Śaṅkara. In case one eats the remnants of food offered to that (eternal phallus) one attains the status of Śaṅkara (81.21). He who adores Śive with or without devotion is not fit to be punished by Yama (81.22). The best of men attains incomparable health, happiness, and increase in progeny and prosperity by adoring the phallus of Śive (81.23). He who dances in proximity of Mahēś closely intent on devotion attains the world of Śambhu and enjoys for long (81.24). A man who sings and plays upon musical instrument in proximity of Śive remains in proximity of Śive and becomes the lord of his Pramēthas (81.25). A place where a person absorbed in adoration and devotion of Śambhu stays that region is holy, even though devoid of Gaṅgā (81.26). He who adores Mahādeva with devotion at the root of Bilva definitely attains the fruit of thousands of Aśvamedha yajñas (81.27). He who adores Mahādeva with Bilva leaves in the Gaṅgas attains salvation even if he might be a perpetrator of hundreds of sins (81.28). Lord Mahēś Himself is the giver of salvation at the end to one who adores Śambhu even for pastime in Kāśī (81.29). In whichever place producing merit in the holy Bhāratākhaṇḍa, a man after having adored Viśveśa does not suffer the pangs of rebirth (81.30).

On the southern side of Himādrī up¹ to the union of Gaṅgā with the sea the region is most sacred in which there is no other rite equalling the adoration of Śiva which destroys great sin, is sacred and is the remover of all calamities (81.31-32). Out of the innumerable sin destroying rites described in Śāstras the adoration of Śiva should be understood as the highest and the best as well as the recitation of the names of Śiva and of Durgā especially (81.33-34). The adoration of Durgā and the recitation similarly of the name of Rāma and the hearing of their virtues and visiting the places of pilgrimage should be understood as the greatest destroyers of sins in the Kālī age (81.35). If a man performs any rite spoken of in the Śāstras such as Veda etc. after remembering the names of Sambhu it becomes inexhaustible to the utmost (81.36). He who utters even once, ॐ Śive, ॐ Viśvanātha, ॐ Viśveśa, ॐ Hara, ॐ Gaurīpati may you be pleased for his protection the wielder of trident Himself after taking the trident runs quickly along with the Pramethas (81.37-38). A mortal after having abandoned the body while remembering the name of Śiva attains the status of Mahēśa Himself even though he might have performed hundreds of sins (81.39).

Customs :-

Custom of Selecting a Groom by the Bride :-

While advising Dakṣa to practise penance in order to propitiate the goddess to become Dakṣa's daughter, Brāhmā had informed him that she would be the wife of Lord Śiva. But on her attaining marriageable age, Dakṣa changed his idea and

wanted some virtuous god or demon or yakṣa or kinnara to be the husband of Satī and not Lord Śiva. Hence Dakṣa arranged for a Svayamvara (selecting a groom by the bridge) of Satī in which he did not invite Lord Śiva (4.33-35).

When Satī was brought by Dakṣa to the place of Svayamvara Lord Maheśa appeared all of a sudden in the firmament mounted on a bull (4.44).

The Patriarch Dakṣa, noticed the absence of Lord Śiva in the assembly and told his daughter Satī to select a virtuous handsome young person from among the persons present there (4.45-47^{ab}). On her being told thus, she uttered 'Sivāyehamaḥ' and laid the garland on the ground (4.47^{cd}-48^{ab}), whereupon Lord Śiva appeared in a divine form and bore that garland on His head (4.48^{cd}-49^{ab}).

This shows that the custom of selecting a bridegroom by the bride was prevalent in the society.

Uninvited One Should Not Visit Another's Place :-

In keeping with the social custom one should visit a place, only if one happens to be invited to it. Lord Śiva repeated some of the points already mentioned before and finally told Satī that it was not proper for them to go to the sacrifice of Dakṣa, as they were not invited (3.12^{cd}-21^{ab}).

Custom of honouring Women folk on Festive Occasions :-

Gifts of garments, ornaments etc., were usually offered to daughters, sisters and women folk on festive occasions.

Dakṣa expresses his pleasure at Satī's visit to his sacrifice (9.50^{cd})⁴ and offered Her garments and ornaments which were kept ready for Her (9.51^{ab}).

Even though Dakṣa had not invited Satī to his sacrifice considering Her to be the wife of Śiva, Dakṣa expected Satī to come to his sacrifice of Her own accord and to accept the garments and ornaments which were kept ready for Her in keeping with the social custom.

Custom of Honouring the guest (Atithisatkāra) :-

Once upon a time when the King of the mountains was sitting with Gaṅgā in his lap, in the interior of the city, Nārada came there to see Gaṅgā (13.10^{cd}-11^{ab}). The king of the mountains saluted him, washed his feet offered him ~~water~~ water to sip and respectfully asked him about the reason of his visit (13.12^{cd}-14^{ab}).

From times immemorial, the custom of honouring a guest by saluting, washing the guest's feet and offering water to sip and asking politely about well being etc. has been prevalent.

The sage Nārada advised Lord Brahmā to approach Himālaya along with other gods and to solicit Gaṅgā by way of alms (13.39). Not only things but living persons were also given by way of alms to a guest visiting accidentally and

4 In Śrīmad-Bhāgavata, Dakṣa does not say anything to Satī (IV.4.8), while in the Mahābhāgavata Pu., he expresses his great paternal love for Her and asks Her to accept the garments and ornaments already kept ready for Her (9.51).

soliciting.

Receiving a guest with words of welcome was the duty of a householder. In keeping with that duty Lord Viṣṇu welcomed Brahmā (61.59). Brahmā thereupon informed Viṣṇu that Indra was waiting outside the city gate, expecting His permission to see Him (61.60).

Sage Kapila after having known about the approach of Gaṅgā, adored her with water for washing the feet etc. (71.^{2cd}-3^{ab}), in keeping with the custom of Atithisatkāra.

Social Etiquette :-

Etiquette Of A Visitor :-

It is a matter of etiquette to be observed by a member of civilized society in keeping with which a person can enter another's city or place of residence only after attaining permission from the other. Accordingly Indra waited for Viṣṇu's permission to enter His city (61.60). Thereupon Lord Viṣṇu ordered Garuḍa to make Indra enter in the centre of the city (61.61) which command was carried out by Garuḍa (61.62).

Similarly Lord Rudra's asking Gaṅgā to inform Mahākālī about their arrival and awaiting for Her reply suggests the observance of this sort of social etiquette (63.17-18).

Custom of Welcoming The Groom by Bride's Father :-

The king of mountains came forward and welcomed ceremoniously Lord Śiva, Brahmā, Viṣṇu, Indra and other gods and great sages like Marīci etc. and after adoring them led them into his city (28.1-3).

Coming forward to formally welcome the bridegroom's procession was expected from a would be father in law. Accordingly Himālaya received the groom and the participants of the procession.

Custom of Handing Over A Bride to her Groom as per Rites by her father :-

On Lord Śambhu's requesting Pārvatī to save Him from the ocean of lust (24.10), Pārvatī advised Him to obtain Her hand from Her father in accordance with the rites thereafter only it would be possible for Her to approach Him (24.13).

It was a well established custom that a bride should be handed over to her groom by her father in accordance with due rites. Pārvatī further advised Maheśvara to convey His intention of marriage to Her father through an intelligent person (24.14).

Some intermediary was considered necessary to convey the intention of marriage to the elderly person of the other party.

Accordingly Lord Śambhu remembered the seven great sages Marīci etc. (24.24^{cd}) who at once approached Him (24.25^{cd}) whom He conveyed that since the time Satī abandoned Him and went away He was practising penance keeping Her in His heart (24.29^{cd}-30^{ab}). That goddess was pleased by that penance and after becoming a daughter of Himālaya Herself accepted Him as Her husband as per Her own sweet will (24.30^{cd}-31^{ab}).

Custom of Grasping the hand of the Bride by the Groom :-

Lord Śiva added that He was waiting for the time when Himavān would invite Him and hand over Pārvatī to Him in accordance with the prescribed rite of grasping the hand, whereafter that lady would be His wife (24.31^{cd}-32).

In keeping with the prescribed rites for grasping the hand, Lord Śambhu accepted the daughter of Himālaya as His wife, Who was the creator, sustainer and destroyer of the universe (28.9).

This is a reflection of the prevailing custom in the society at the time of the composition of this Purāṇa.

Custom to Hand over a Decorated Bride at an Auspicious time :-

Himālaya agreed with the offer of Lord Śiva conveyed to him by the seven sages and told them to convey to Him to let him know the auspicious time when he would hand over his daughter decorated in keeping with his means (24.50,51).

The sages advised Śiva to accomplish His marriage for the sake of increase in progeny on thursday the fifth of the bright half of the month of Vaiśākha (25.7^{cd}-9^{ab}).

At an auspicious time the king of mountains respectfully handed over Pārvatī to Lord Śiva (28.8).

Customary Rejoicings of Music, Dance etc. on the Occasion of Marriage :-

The preliminary ceremonies performed in the city of the king of mountains to celebrate the marriage ceremony of Pārvatī are described in details in 26.1-7.

As a part of the rejoicings the earth the sky and the midregions were filled with the sounds of kettle-drums, drums, tabors and trumpets which were considered auspicious (26.2). The overjoyed Gandharvas sang sweet songs and the celestial damsels danced gracefully (26.3). On the occasion of marriage ceremony customary rejoicings of this sort viz. playing upon musical instruments, singing and dancing etc. were usually carried on from times immemorial.

As a part of the rejoicings of the gods, the musical instruments were played upon, the Gandharvas sang songs, the celestial damsels danced and there was a shower of flowers in the penance grove of Lord Śiva (26.19^{cd}-21). The trees were laden with the bunches of full blown beautiful flowers in the forest of the great god (26.22). The male cuckoo emitted sweet note and the bees emitted humming sound and the wind from the mountain Nalsya began to blow in the forest (26.23).

Not only living beings but the flora and the birds etc. also joined in the rejoicings in the forest of the great god in their own way.

A custom to perform a Wonderful feat prevailed among Kṣatriyas for being selected as a groom in Svayamvara :-

Rāma broke the great bow of Lord Maheśa, whereupon king Janaka gave his four daughters to the four sons of Daśaratha in marriage ceremoniously (38.9-10).

This shows that amongst the Kṣatriyas there was a custom in accordance with which a would be groom had to perform certain feat, after the successful performance of which the bride would place a wreath indicating his selection as a groom in the groom's neck.

Janaka gave Sītā to Rāma, Ūrmilā to Lakṣmaṇa, Māṇḍavī to Bharata, and Śrutakīrti to Śatrughna (38.11-12^{ab}).

The marriage ceremony is not described here in the Mahāg.P. but it must be understood to be the same as it is found in the Bālakāṇḍa of Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa.

Out of the four daughters Sītā was obtained by Janaka while ploughing the field for preparing the ground for the sacrifice. While Ūrmilā was Janaka's legitimate daughter. Whereas the other two were the daughters of his brother (38.12^{cd}-13).

General Reference To Marriage Rites :-

In the statement that Vasudeva married Rohiṇī as well as Devakī in keeping with the rites there is a general reference to marriage rites in 50.16.

Custom of Bearing Matted Hair on the head by an Anchorite :-

Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa after having prepared the matted hair there mounted along with Sītā a boat and crossed the river Gaṅgā and went to the hermitage of sage Bharadvāja and thence to Citrakūṭa mountain (38.25-26^{ab}).

Custom of Performing the Obsequies of the Dead Father by the Son :-

Bharata after having arrived from the house of his maternal uncle performed the obsequies of Daśaratha and rebuking his mother again and again went along with his younger brother and ministers to Rāmacandra (38.27^{cd}-28).

Performing the obsequies of the dead father was the customary duty of his son since times immemorial.

Practice of Bowing down to Parents and Preceptor at the time of Departure :-

After having bowed down to the parents and the preceptor Vasīṣṭha with devotion and after remembering the goddess and after prostrating before Her again and again the best of Raghus set out on the tenth of the bright half of the month of Iṣa (Āśvina) for the sake of slaying Rāvaṇa (38.20-21). The outgoing persons used to bow down to the parents and preceptor.

Juniors Fall At The Feet Of Senior While Taking Leave :-

The practice of falling at the feet of senior superior person before taking leave is reflected in falling at the feet of Maheśvarī by the gods Brahmā etc. before starting for their respective place of residence (63.65^{cd}-66^{ab}).

Prostrating Before One's Parents-Behaviour Of Nobly

Born Persons :-

The parents of Gaṅgā received Her well and Gaṅgā also honoured them by prostrating before them (69.39). This Gaṅgā's prostrating before Her parents was in keeping with the behaviour of persons of noble birth.

Bowing Down To Elderly Persons And Seeking Their Blessings Before Waging War ÷ General Practice :-

Then the king, the son of Dharma, after having bowed down individually to his elderly persons like Bhīṣma, Droṇa etc. who were arrayed for the battle and after seeking their permission for the battle came to his own chariot again (57.11).

This shows that Yudhiṣṭhira followed the righteous path by bowing down to the elderly persons like Bhīṣma and Droṇa and seeking their blessings even though they were to fight against him in the battle.

Before Selecting A Groom A Bride Used To Worship Durgā :-

As stated in Mahg.P. 55.29 Rukmiṇī was being led by other women to the temple of Durgā Devī for Her worship.

It was a well established custom that before the selection of the groom the bride should go to the temple of Durgā and worship Her to obtain Her favour.

Abducting A Bride In A Svayaṁvara - a custom Among Kṣatriyas:-

In the ceremony of the selection of the bridegroom of Rukmiṇī who was born from the part of Śive, the king of Vidarbha invited all the kings (55.21) who arrived at his capital (55.22^{ab}).

Among the Kṣatriya kings it was customary to arrange for the ceremony of the selection of the bridegroom for their daughters.

Kṛṣṇa abducted Rukmiṇī who was being led by other women to the temple of Durgā Devī for Her worship (55.29^{ab}, 30).

Practice :-

Practice of indulging in Free Sexual Enjoyment prevailed in Non-Aryan Women :-

Rāma stayed for sometime in the Daṇḍakāraṇya in order to kill the Rākṣasas (38.33), after constructing a Paṇḍśālā in the Pañcavaṭī (38.34) where a demoness called Śurpaṇakhā, capable to assume different forms who was stricken with love approached Rāghava to make Him her husband (38.35).

Among the non-Aryan aborigines the women usually enjoyed more freedom in selecting their husbands. This shows that their morals were rather loose.

Practice of Telling White Lies prevailed in non-Aryan aborigines :-

Śūrpaṅakhā wrongly reported to her brother Khara that she was trying to bring that woman (Sītā) of exquisite beauty for Khara while the younger brother of Rāma cut off her ears and nose (38.40^{cd}-41). This shows that telling white lies was a common practice among the non-Aryan aborigines.

As befits a demoness, Śūrpaṅakhā here in Mahāg.P. 38.40 tells a white lie to Khara, her brother, which is a fitting after-thought of the Purāṇakāra.

In the Aranyakāṇḍa of Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa (Gītā Press ed.) 19.18 Śūrpaṅakhā tells Khara that She was put in such a condition by the two brothers for the sake of that woman. Here Śūrpaṅakhā tells Khara about the real reason of her wretched condition.

Ceremony of Naming the child :-

Lord Brahmā along with other gods, performed the ceremony of naming the child of goddess Pārvatī (30.33^{cd}-34). Lord Brahmā named Him as Kārtikeya as He was born from the womb of Kṛttikās (30.35). According to Him He will also be known as Ṣaṇmātṛs as the Kṛttikās were six in number (30.36). He will also be known as Śkandā as He was born from the mass of semen virile dropped from the Kṛttikās (30.37). As He would be known as Tārakavairī in the world (30.38).
the slayer of Tāraka in battle He would be

Musical Modes - Sung in Befitting Time :-

The birds sing pertaining to the virtues of the goddess and their varieties in sweet voice joyfully in keeping with the musical mode befitting the time forever (43.49).

This shows that a particular musical mode was customarily Sung at a particular time of the day or night.

The custom of Śatrubali :-

Devī instructed the gods that on the ninth of bright fortnight the icon (Mūrti) of the enemy made of fluor should be prepared and should be offered as bali to the goddess (45.33^{ab}).

This custom of Śatrubali is prevalent in Bengal since bygone ages.

Custom of Celebrating the Birth of A Son :-

Nanda after having come to know in the morning about the birth of a son celebrated the occasion by giving alms to the Brahmins which included precious clothes, wealth and thousands of cows (51.1-2^{ab}).

It was customary to celebrate the birth of a son by giving alms to Brahmins.

Regular Payment of Taxes To The Ruler - A customary Duty of Subjects :-

Immediately thereafter i.e. after celebrating the birth of a son Nanda went to Mathurā to pay tax to the king (51.2^{cd}).

In the meanwhile i.e. after the death of Pūtanā, Nandagopa also after having paid government tax came there (51.20).

When Approaching A King Gifts Were Given To Him :-

The residents of Vraja viz. Nanda etc. hurriedly went near the king Kāṁsa and after saluting him, gave him the gifts (54.35).

It was a long standing custom to give gifts to a king while approaching him. In accordance with the said custom Nanda etc. gave gifts to Kāṁsa. The general rule is that one should not approach a king, a deity or a preceptor empty handed Cf. Riktapāṇistu nopeyād rājānaṁ devatāṁ gurum)

Sending Envoy By One King To Another - A Customery Practice :-

The king of Vṛṣṇi after having come to know about Duryodhana's intention which would bring about the destruction of the Kṣatriyas sent Akrūra as an envoy to the king of Hastināpura (55.11).

The practice of sending envoy by one king to another was a very old practice in keeping with which Akrūra was sent by the king of Vṛṣṇi to the king of Hastināpura.

Bearing the Remains of An Offering To Kāmākhyā-Customary Practice :-

He who bears the remains of an offering to Kāmākhyā (flowers etc.) attains the status of being fit to be worshipped by the gods and wanders like a Bhairava (76.24). In his case no fear can arise from anywhere on the earth. The generators of fear run away from a distance on account of his fear (76.25).

Eating Unhesitatingly The Remnants Of Food Offered To
Kēmākhyā - A Customary Practice :-

It is customary to eat immediately without pondering over the remnants of food offered to Kēmākhyā obtained from anybody by a person (76.26). In so doing one belonging to a higher caste should not hesitate in eating the remnants of food obtained from one belonging to a lower caste. By so doing and by honouring it by bowing down one's head one attains splendour and salvation by Devī's grace (76.27).

This sort of eating the remnants of food offered to Lord Jagannātha in Purī, Orrissa obtained by a person of higher caste from that of a lower caste is also prevalent till to-day.

The Performance Of A Śrāddha In Kēmākhyā Excels Its
Performance In Gayā :-

The performance of a Śrāddha in Kēmākhyā to the forefathers is equal to its performance in Gayā for a thousand years (76.28).

Varṇāśramadharmas as laid down in Śrutis and Smṛtis :-

As taught by the goddess to Himālaya one should carry on adoration and should perform sacrifices etc. in accordance with the ceremony laid down in the Śruties as well as Smṛties and in keeping with one's own caste and stage of life (15.62). Thus there was emphasis on the performance of Śrautas-mārtadharmas. One should adore the goddess by means of all sacrifices, austerities and alms giving (15.63^{ab}).

Places of Pilgrimage :-

Importance of the Place of Pilgrimage Kāmākhyā visited
by Pāṇḍavas :-

As stated in Mabhg.P. the great souled Pāṇḍavas in course of their wanderings came to Kāmākhyā in order to see Her after a long period of time (56.1). That venerable Kāmākhyā is the giver of fruit directly in the yonipīṭha. Even Lord Śambhu formerly practised penance at Kāmākhyā along with the great gods (56.2).

The dutiful Pāṇḍavas adored the goddess in keeping with the rites there and prayed for regaining their kingdom and for the terrible death of their enemies the wicked Kurus along with their ministers in the battle (56.3-4). This visit of Kāmākhyā by Pāṇḍavas is an innovation in Mabhg. as it is not found in Mahābhārata.

The Greatness Of Kāmākhyā :-

The greatness of Kāmākhyā was such that even Gaṅgā desired to see Her and hence turned towards the east from Kāśī (70.20).

On Nārada's request to describe to him the splendour of the Tīrtha of Kāmarūpa in details (76.1-2), Lord Śiva advised Nārada to listen attentively to its splendour wherein the goddess Śivā, the giver of fruit directly on the earth resides in person (76.3). Therein the Mahāmāyā, the greatest goddess Self-sufficient and foremost remains in the form of female organ of generation on the earth by Her sport for the benefit of the people (76.5).

The repetition of the great mantra there enables persons to become accomplishers of mantras and to attain the status of wanderers in sky as well as that of being fit to be worshipped by the gods (76.9). Thus the repetition of the great mantra confers miraculous accomplishments on the aspirants.

A man after having seen, having touched and having adored the goddess in the form of well protected female organ of generation becomes released while still alive (76.10). He becomes a wanderer at will on the earth who is capable to control and favour even the gods just like another wielder of Śūla i.e. Śiva (76.11). All the gods among whom Indra is the foremost, carry out his command. There is nothing which cannot be accomplished by him in the three worlds (76.12).

Only his birth is fruitful who after having reached Yonimāṇḍala prostrates with great devotion, goddess Tripurabhairavī (76.13). The mere touch of the field frees a killer of a Brāhmin from the sin on account of the grace of Kāmākhyā (76.14). The sight of Kāmākhyā is difficult to have even for the gods. Therefore he who sees Kāmākhyā is worshipped even by the gods (76.15). The sight of Kāmākhyā burns in a moment a mass of sins accumulated by thousands of births (76.16).

There is no other Tīrtha equalling Kāmākhyā on the surface of the earth (76.17).

The Felling Of The Limbs Of Satī Bestowed Sin destroying Character To The Region :-

The sin destroying character of the region in the Bhāratakhanda is due to felling of the limbs of Satī and hence it is very auspicious (76.18). Out of all the limbs of the goddess yoni is the best one and hence that goddess remains in all women in the form of Yoni (76.19). Where that Yoni fell, there Satī Herself resides in person, hence there is no other auspicious place on the earth equalling it (76.20).

The greatness of Lord Śambhu lies in His being the giver of salvation in Vārāṅasī and hence He is fit to be worshipped by the Siddhas, the Gandharvas, the gods, the Kinnaras and the Rākṣasas (76.21). Since that Lord Śambhu desires freedom after approaching the great goddess (Mahesvarī) daily there is no other place superior to that (76.22).

One who circumambulates the place of pilgrimage viz. Śrīyonimaṇḍala by him all the three worlds are circumambulated (76.23).

The Extra-Ordinary Fruit Of Practising Puraścaryā There :-

An aspirant after taking a bath in the river Lauhitya and after practising Puraścaryā becomes an accomplisher of a sacred formula (76.29). His command is unobstructed and he becomes just like another Lord Nṛsiṅha. He attains the status of being a wanderer in the sky on account of its grace (76.30). One who repeats sacred formula should not take into

consideration the auspicious time etc. for the performance of Purescaryā through infatuation as he would go to hell on considering it (76.31). Those who repeat the sacred formula pertaining to Bhairavī there for them the status of a god, of the king of god, of Brahmā, of Lord Śiva, of Lord Viṣṇu is easy to attain (76.32).

One thinking that Kāmākhyā is the highest place of pilgrimage, the highest penance, the highest righteousness, the highest abode, the highest affluence, the highest position becomes freed from taking rebirth (76.35-36). The place of pilgrimage called Śrī Kāmarūpa is difficult to attain even for the gods. It is much more so for others just like the world of Devī (76.38). There is no other place which gives the fruit of great merit other than Kāmākhyā Tīrtha (78.20^{cd}-21^{ab}).

Yonipīṭha :-

The Yonipīṭha of great goddess is a place containing all Tīrthas is higher than all the Tīrthas and is difficult to attain even by all the gods (78.23). Where the accomplished one Herself containing all the gods and fit to be worshipped remains and where Lauhitya which contains all the Tīrthas, that pair is very difficult to attain (78.24).

There he who offers libations to the manes in Yonipīṭha with devotion with the waters of Lauhitya his forefathers attain release and go to Brahmeloka free from disease (78.26). The penance, alms-giving performed there

gives rise to greater fruit of merit than in other thousands of Tīrthas (78.27).

Just as amongst the magicians, the person wielding a mace (Gadādhara i.e. Viṣṇu) is the best, in the same way the Yonipīṭha is the best among all the Tīrthas (78.29). The mortal who hears the splendour of this yonipīṭha which is the king of Tīrthas attains the dignity of Devī (78.30).

Kurukṣetra :-

The Kurukṣetra, which was principally a holy place at that time was pervaded by the elephants, the horses, the chariots and the foot soldiers coming from different countries (57.4).

Kurukṣetra was considered to be a holy place even before the Mahābhārata war broke out.

The kings residing in different regions came to render their assistance to either the Pāṇḍavas or the Kauravas (57.2^{cdef}).

Tīrthas On The Bank Of Gaṅgā - Their Greatness :-

Haridvāra :-

Devī Gaṅgā after having traversed many Yojanas came to Haridvāra along with that great souled king Bhagīrathe (70.1). The Māhātmya (greatness) of the tīrthas on the bank of the Ganges e.g. Haridvāra, Prayāga, Kāśī and Gaṅgāsāgarasāṅgama is note-worthy. Gaṅgā is difficult to attain in Haridvāra, Prayāga and Gaṅgāsāgarasāṅgama (70.12).

Prayāga :-

After having come to the region of Prayāga, Gaṅgā joined with Yamunā and Sarasvatī (70.5^{cd}-6^{ab}). Here there is a mention of Trivenisaṅgama of the rivers Gaṅgā, Yamunā and invisible Sarasvatī.

The bething, penance and alms-giving are considered to be more meritorious at Prayāga. It is sanctifying to such an extent that even all the best of gods Brahmā etc. consider themselves to be purified after having bathed therein (70.7^{c-f}).

Gaṅgā is difficult to attain in Haridvāra, Prayāga and Gaṅgāsāgarasaṅgama (70.12).

Kāśī :-

At Kāśī Gaṅgā is most meritorious and the remover of great sins and the giver of great salvation just like Kāśī (70.9). He who knowingly or otherwise departs from his body there to him Gaṅgādevī becomes the giver of final beatitude (70.10).

Gaṅgāsāgarasaṅgama :-

That Gaṅgā speedily went towards the southern direction, searching the progeny of Sagera and subdivided Herself into thousands of streams (70.58-59). On reaching the proximity of the sea as well as that of the hole Gaṅgā became overjoyed (71.1). Gaṅgā is difficult to attain in Haridvāra, Prayāga and Gaṅgāsāgarasaṅgama (70.12).

Visiting places of pilgrimage gives rise to merit. But as accepted in many Purānas, Gaṅgā is the highest sacred place of pilgrimage on the earth (71.26).

Greatness Of The Sacred Place Kāśī :-

He who takes bath in Gaṅgā flowing northwards at Kāśī in keeping with rites with devotion, attains the status of Śivahood (73.40-41^{ab}). The libation of the manes performed there is the giver of salvation (73.41^{cd}). Kāśī is the abode of all sacred places, and is the place of residence of Viśveśvara. It is outside the earth, eventhough remaining on the earth and hence is difficult to attain (73.42). That place where the waters of Jāhnavī are available, there salvation is easy at hand, even in the case of embodied ones who are sinners (73.43). Where Annapūrnā, the mother Herself of all creatures is the giver of food, where Gaṅgā is the giver of water, and where Sarasvatī is the giver of knowledge where death is the highest human goal and where the Lord of the universe is the father on account of His preaching the path of salvation (73.44-45). He who does not dwell in Kāśī is deceived by providence (73.46^{ab}). After having bathed in Menikernikā, and after having worshipped Lord Viśveśvara by the leaves of bilva etc. in Kāśī one attains conjunction with Lord Śiva (73.46^{c-f}).

Thus from stanza 40 to 46 Kāśīmāhātmya is described.

Efficacy Of Bathing In Gaṅgā (Gaṅgāsnānēmahātmya) :-

One who bathes in Gaṅgā is freed from terrible sin on account of the grace of the great goddess, even if he may be the killer of a brahmin, or a killer of a cow or a wine drinker or one committing incest with elderly person's wife, even if he may be a degraded person without sacred formulæ and even without true devotion (73.1-2). The Pañcamahāpātakas include Brahmicide, wine-drinking, stealing, committing incest with the wife of an elderly person and a person who comes in contact with their perpetrators. The bathing in Gaṅgā frees one from such terrible sins⁵ as noted above. By taking a bath even once accompanied by the knowledge of Gaṅgā's greatness a man is freed from ignorance even. Endless merit i.e. inexhaustible merit comes into existence arising from seven births (73.3). In case the bath in the Gaṅgā be taken with devotion and in keeping with the laid down rites it will bring prosperity and highest bliss and would destroy all sins (73.4-5^{ab};16).

Not only bathing in Gaṅgā gives rise to merit but bathing elsewhere while remembering Gaṅgā also gives rise to merit equalling a bath in the Gaṅges (73.5^{c-f}). Even the sinners get rid of their sins after having seen a man who bathes in the waters of the Ganges in the morning daily as he is a meritorious soul as it were another Lord Śambhu (73.6-7^{ab}).

5 Vide :- Brahmahatyā surāpānem steyam gurvaṅgnāgamah /
Mehānti pātakānyāhustatśamsargī ca pañcamah ||

The merit that accrues by bathing in the waters of the Ganges in keeping with the rites in the morning when the Sun is either in Tulā or Makara or Meṣa rāśī is capable to lift up the manes belonging to both the lineages and the person attains the status of Śankara after abandoning the body (73.7^{c-f}-8). The performance of thousands of Mahāyajñas and hundreds of vows and adorations do not equal even a digit of bath in the Ganges (73.9). A bath in the Ganges taken at the time of day break on the seventh of the bright half of the month of Māgha frees a creature from the fetters of transmigratory existence (73.10).

The worship of the Sun on the bank of the Ganges on the seventh of the bright half of Māgha frees a person from great diseases doubtlessly (73.11). Thus the Ganges has Her share in giving worldly happiness in the form of removal of diseases.

A bath in the waters of the Ganges in keeping with the rites on the full moon day leads to washing off of all sins and to the attainment of Sāyujya type of salvation (73.12). There are four grades in the final beatitude. (1) Sālokya, (2) Sārūpya, (3) Sāmīpya, (4) Sāyujya in the rising scale. After bathing in the Ganges on the full moon day of the month of Kārttika and after having seen Jāhnavī a person is freed from a host of great sins (73.13). After bathing in the Ganges according to rites on the thirteenth of the dark half of Cēitra a person is freed from all sins and attains the summum bonum (73.14). These are however other worldly fruits.

The bathing in the Ganges also gives worldly fruits viz. good health, affluence, fulfilment of desires etc. (73.15).

Abandoning One's Body In Gaṅgā or Coming In Contact With Its Water Of The Flesh Or Bone Of One Departed Elsewhere Leads To Heaven :-

A person knowingly abandoning his body in Gaṅgā is freed from sins and attains final beatitude (74.1). After having abandoned one's body therein out of ignorance, even a great sinner attains Sāyujya with Lord Śiva on account of the grace of Gaṅgā (74.2).

Even a person who has died elsewhere, if his flesh or bone per chance comes into contact with the water of Jāhnavī, then he also would attain heaven (74.3) even if he be a sinner who has committed innumerable great sins like Brahmahatyā (74.4).

There results final release in the water of Gaṅgā, the same is attained in the water as well as on the earth in Vārāṇasī, it is attained in the water on the earth as well as in the atmospheric regions at Gaṅgāsāgarasaṅgama (74.5).
The Sinner Dhenādhipa Vaiśya Released On Contact Of His Flesh With Gaṅgā :-

As narrated by Mahādeva to Nārada, there was a Vaiśya called Dhenādhipa who was a great sinner engaged in plunder and dalliance with wives of others (74.7).

After abandoning his body he was placed by Yama in the hell called Asipatravana (74.8).

Twenty-eight Hells And Sins Leading To Them :-

The concept of hell is come across here. There are twenty-eight hells of different sorts as mentioned in the Purāṇas⁶ and Dharmasāstra works. Asipatravana is one such hell.

Dhanādhipa's dead body which was not burnt lay in the midst of the forest and a hungry fox ate it (74.9). A great vulture attacked the fox and after having eaten the remainder came to Gaṅgā and drank the water in which the flesh of the dead body entered (74.10-11). By the touch of the water of Gaṅgā that sinner was freed from terrible sin and after having attained a body resembling that of Lord Śaṅkara went to heaven (74.12).

The protectors observing him going out from the hell came to Dharmarāja and told him about what had happened (74.13). After having heard that from the followers Yama was astonished and told his soldiers after having known the reason of that by his eye of knowledge (74.15).

The eye of knowledge or the divine eye or the third eye is capable to impart knowledge about matters unseen which might have happened at a distant time or place. Generally all gods and sages have this sort of capacity.

6 Vide Śbh. V. 26.7-37.

Yama explained to his messengers that even though that person was the most degraded one, he became released at once on account of coming in contact of his flesh devoured by a fox with the water of Gaṅgā (74.16). He after having attained complete mergence into Lord Śiva enjoyed for long eulogized by the gods (74.18).

Thus the auspicious Gaṅgā who is the destroyer of great sin by sight or by touch is the giver of final release (74.19). Since death is inevitable, one should solely and devoutly resort to Gaṅgā if one desires release (74.20). Before the invulnerable God of death all of a sudden comes and catches hold of one by hair, one should resort to Gaṅgā (74.21).

Gaṅgā - The Best Relative - As The Remover Of Births :-

A son, a friend, a wife etc. are not real relatives. Gaṅgā alone is the best relative because She is the remover of births (74.22). Gaṅgā is considered to be the closest relative Who is the giver of happiness and salvation by sight by touch, by reciting Her names and by meditating upon Her (74.23). A son etc. everything spreads the tie of infatuation and Gaṅgā is the giver of permanent release. So thinking one should resort to Her (74.25). One should take a person who is about to die to Gaṅgā who is the giver of salvation. And he also attains release by the grace of Jēhnavī (74.26).

Gaṅgā is the closest relative. Gaṅgā is the highest happiness. Gaṅgā is the greatest wealth. Gaṅgā alone is the highest abode (74.27). Gaṅgā Herself is the highest release. Those who consider that Gaṅgā is the highest essence, for them She is not far away at ~~at~~ any time (74.28). Those who utter Gaṅgā to them Gaṅgā follows just as she had followed Bhagīratha by the sound of a conch formerly (74.29).

A person who abandoning the bank of the Ganges resides elsewhere, abandons release residing in his hand and searches for hell (74.30). The region where Gaṅgā, the purifier of the three worlds remains is praiseworthy. The same which is without Gaṅgā is not considered pradēśa (country) (74.31). Begging or dying on the bank of Gaṅgā is better. A man should not pray for kingship elsewhere (74.32).

In the region in which a man solely devoted to Gaṅgā resides, that region is also very auspicious and the alms-giving in that region bears great fruit (74.33). The ^{śr}ādhā and the libation performed thereⁱⁿ satiates the menes, and the repetition of sacred formulae and the performance of sacrifices etc. are the givers of infinite fruit (74.34). Gaṅgā is the highest happiness. The name Gaṅgā is the highest penance. He who remembers Gaṅgā always has no danger arising from yama (74.35).

Religious observances or vows :-

Menakā daily prayed to Satī that she might be ^hyon as her daughter (7.13^{cd}-14^{ab}). She observed a vow on Mahāṣṭamī and continued to observe it on every eighth of bright fortnight till one year (7.14^{cd}-15). Thereupon Satī housewife of Śive accepted to become her daughter (7.16-17^{ab}).

The observance of the vow of Mahāṣṭamī (on every eighth of bright fortnight) was prevalent in the society.

A man reciting this Pārvatīgītā devoutly on Aṣṭamī or Caturdaśī or Navamī becomes freed while still alive (19.8). He who observes a fast on the Mahā-Aṣṭamī night in the autumn and recites this Pārvatīgītā at night his merit is indescribable (19.9).

Observing A Fast On Ekādaśī And Reciting Aṣṭo^tṭaraśatanāmāni of Gaṅgā-~~Lead~~ To Heaven :-

One who observes a fast, on the eleventh of the fort^h night and after taking bath, recites this mähātmya near Tulasi or Bilva, he goes to the highest heaven (75.42).

Recitation Of This Mähātmya In The Midnight On Mahāṣṭamī Brings Highest Happiness :-

The man who recites this mähātmya in the midnight on Mahāṣṭamī day, he attains highest happiness on account of the grace of the great goddess (75.44).

Repeating The Highest Mantra On Akṣaya^tṛtīyā After Adoring Caṇḍikā :-

The fruit of repeating the highest mantra on the third day of Vaiśakha after heving adored Caṇḍikā is the

attainment of merit multiplied by a crore and the absence of rebirth (78.1-2^{ab}).

Prāharapūjā Of Śiva On Mahāśivarātrī Day :-

Here there is an allusion to observance of fast and the adoration of Lord Śaṅkara preherawise in the night on Mahāśivarātrī day which produces great merit equalling that arising from the performance of a hundred Aśvamedha Yajñas (78.2^{cd}-4).

This shows that the adoration of Lord Śaṅkara Preherawise in the night on Mahāśivarātrī day was a current practice in those times also.

Bathing In Lauhitya And Adoring Devi On Caitra Śukla Aṣṭamī Releases A Person :-

Bathing in Lauhitya in keeping with rites on the eighth of the bright half of Caitra and adoring the mother of the world by its waters with devotion frees a person from transmigratory existence (78.21^{cd}-22).

The eighth is a very auspicious day which is difficult to attain and hence the coming together of all this is the result of great merit (78.25^{g-d}). In case of such a person the doubt of taking rebirth on the earth does not exist (78.25^{ef}).

Performance of Actions With The Spirit Of Dedication To Viṣṇu:-

The fruit of alms-giving with the intention to please Viṣṇu is considered to be unique (65.31). A person with

deluded intellect does not perform any rite for the sake of pleasure of Viṣṇu. But he who does so is never drowned (65.33)/

The idea of performing a rite for the sake of pleasure of Viṣṇu i.e. to perform actions with the spirit of dedication is noted here as taught in the Bhāgavadgītā IX.27.

(
The Efficacy of Sacrifice :-

In order to avert the possible attack of Śiva, Dakṣa in consultation with his ministers decided to perform a sacrifice and to appoint Viṣṇu as its protector (7.31-34^{ab}). Thus it was believed that successful performance of a sacrifice in keeping with laid down injunctions was capable to avert the attack of goblins. However the intention of Dakṣa in not inviting Lord Śiva and Satī to his sacrifice was to deprive Śiva of His legitimate share in the sacrifice (7.35^{cd}-42).

Dadhīci insisted upon inviting Sādēśiva, because the sacrifice without Śiva would never be fruitful (7.58-63^{ab}).

Nārada reported to Satī and Śiva that all the creatures in the world except them were called by Prajāpati and advised them to go there. But Śiva disagreed to it (7.86-91). Nārada prudently insisted that in case Dakṣa succeeded in performing the sacrifice and in excluding Śiva's share, the other people also would follow suit and hence either Śiva should go to that sacrifice and accept His share or to create obstruction in that sacrifice (7.92-93).

In order to remove the sin of Brahmicide committed by Indra by prompting Dadhīci to give up his body the sages advised him to perform a horse sacrifice which Indra performed (61.7,8,10). This shows that this sacrifice had the potency to remove the sin of Brahmicide.

Efficacy of Penance :-

As stated in 1.4, a benedictory stanza, the goddess, created the universe by Her own free will, and after having taken birth, obtained Lord Śambhu as Her husband, as a result of His practising austere penance.

Sege Vyāsa considered that even the great knower Lord Maheśvara knew not the essence of the goddess thoroughly well and hence sege Vyāsa went to the summit of the Himālayas and practised penance filled with devotion to the goddess (1.18,19).

Once upon a time Lord Śiva practised penance in order to obtain that (Pūrṇā Prakṛti) goddess as His wife (3.37). After having come to know that Lord Viṣṇu and Brahmā also began practising penance with the same intention (3.38,39). The goddess tried to frighten Brahmā and Viṣṇu by assuming a terrific form. As a result of which both gave up practising penance (3.42,43,44-46). When she approached Lord Śiva, in the same manner, His mind was not distracted from penance (3.47-48). Thereupon the highest goddess, the best of nature itself, attained Lord Śiva in the form of heavenly Ganges (3.49).

The mother of the world judged that Lord Brahmā and Viṣṇu both were attached to object of sense while Lord Śiva was the highest Yogī with whom she was pleased (3.70,71). She was requested by Lord Śiva to become His wife, after being born somewhere sportingly (3.75). The goddess assured Lord Śiva that she would be born as the daughter of Dakṣa and would become Śiva's wife (3.76).

At the behest of Lord Brahmā, Dakṣa practised penance for three thousand divine years, on the shore of the ocean of milk and propitiated the goddess parā prakṛti in order that she might be born as his daughter to become Śiva's wife (4.8-10^{ab}). Then the goddess appeared before Dakṣa assuming a terrific form, which is worshipped by the followers of Vāmanērgīya Śākta Saṃpradāya. The complexion of the goddess who appeared before Dakṣa was just like soft collyrium. She had four arms. She was riding a lion and had the directions for Her garment. Her lustre equalled the lustre of a hundred Suns at the Zenith (4.10^{cd}-12). The goddess promised Dakṣa that she would be born as his daughter and would be having a beautiful golden hue form (4.16-17).

The great goddess Gaṅgā, appeared before Her father Himālaya, in dream at the fog end of the night just preceding the coming of the gods led by Brahmā, to see and to request Himālaya to hand over his daughter Gaṅgā to them, by way of elms. Gaṅgā informed Himālaya that Lord Śiva was practising penance in Kāmarūpa in order to obtain Her as His wife (13.60^{cd} to 61^{ab}).

Durgā the mother of the three worlds who is eternal and of the form of Brahman was solicited by the king of mountains and by Menkē, to be born as their daughter by performing austerities (15.4,5^{ab}).

There is nothing which cannot be obtained by one who practises penance. There is no fruit which one does not get by penance (20.9).

This statement is very important in so far as it emphasizes the power of penance. Everything and anything can be obtained by means of penance.

The goddess told Himālaya that She had agreed to do the bidding of Lord Brahmā as She was pleased with His penance (21.43^{cd}-44^{ab}) and hence She had been born in the house of Dakṣa and had deluded Lord Śiva once (21.44^{cd}) just like an ordinary beautiful woman deluding an ordinary man (21.45^{ab}).

The goddess added that on the decrease of merit of Dakṣa, She was worshipped by Himālaya and his wife and was born as their daughter (21.45^{cd}-46^{ab}).

The goddess added further that Lord Śaṅkara miserable on account of separation from Satī for a long time, practised penance in order to obtain Her (21.46^{cd}-47^{ab}).

After the departure of the king of mountains, the goddess who was prayed to by Lord Hara by means of penance remained in the forest in proximity of Meheśa, ready to favour Her devotees (22.5-6).

Brahmā added that it was His duty to retaliate the wrong done to the gods by Tāraka but He was unable to do so as He was pleased with his penance (22.17). Brahmā advised the gods to manage in such a way that Lord Śiva, might give up penance and might get married (22.19^{cd}-20^{ab}). Brahmā persuaded Tāraka, that he was given a boon to rule all the worlds for which he had practised penance (22.25).

The Lord of the universe keeping in mind Her highest form practised penance to obtain Her as His wife (22.38). At that time Lord Śaṅkara who was averse to Saṁsāra always was practising penance on the peak of mountain Himālaya (22.56).

The goddess Śervāṅī, pleased by Rāvaṇa's devotion remained in his city (36.6) along with the host of yoginīs bestowing victory always as long as the merit of his penance lasted (36.7).

Exhaustion of the merit of Rāvaṇa's penance made the Devī worshipped by Rāmacandra vacate his city and kill him along with his relatives (36.8-9).

Rāvaṇa had the fulfilment of all his desires and had obtained a fruit of his penance as reported by the goddess Maheśvarī to Lord Viṣṇu who sought Her advice for the destruction of Rāvaṇa (36.58^{cd}).

Both Aditi, the mother of the gods, and Kṣyapa, the progenitor prayed to the goddess and practised penance

remaining in waters in winter without meals and surrounded by fire in summer for two thousand divine years (50.5^{cd}-6^{ab}). On the goddess's being pleased and on Her appearing before them and on Her asking them to choose their desired boon, they requested Her to be born by Her sport in their house (50.6^{cd}-8^{ab}) at the end of Dvāpara. To their request the goddess replied that for the sake of accomplishing the desired object of Śambhu Her women form would by Her own sweet will change into the form of a man possessing the lustre of fresh clouds (50.10) in which case the garland of skulls in the neck of the goddess would become Vanamālā and Her dreadful form would become amiable with two eyes and two arms (50.11), wearing a pītāmbara with a flute in His hand and would be having the characteristic marks of Viṣṇu and would be gratifying the Gopīs (50.12).

When Devakī expressed her anxiety before her newly born son, that her eight issue tried to console her by stating that there was no one in the three worlds who was able to kill him as he was in reality the ancient highest lore destroying the world who had been born from her as she was pleased by their penance practised in former birth (50.72-75). On Devakī's requesting him to show her his very best form of the nature of the goddess (50.76). He appeared in the form of goddess Kālī before her (50.77-79). Devakī thereupon drew the attention of Vasudeva towards the goddess who eulogized Her stating that she had been born in his house

bearing the form of a son by Her Māyā on account of his good fortune acquired by practising penance for many births (50.82).

Dakṣa, the progenitor, became miserable on account of separation from Satī and thought that after having practised severe penance and after having attained a daughter who was the pre^eminent highest goddess, he was deprived of Her on account of slandering Śiva unknowingly due to infatuation (52.7-8). After having thought thus Dakṣa decided to practise penance again with a view to attain the goddess as his daughter again (52.9). Dakṣa accompanied by his wife Prasūti went to the highest peak of Himālaya and worshipped Ambikā for a hundred divine years (52.10-11^{ab}).

On the goddess's asking them to choose a boon, the progenitor requested Her kindly to take birth as his daughter (52.12^{cd} to 13^{ab}). Prasūti also requested the goddess to enable her to bring Her up with the affection due to a child (52.13^{cd} to 14^{ab}). The goddess granted Dakṣa his desired boon to be born as his daughter at the end of Dvāpara on earth and added that she would not remain in his house as a daughter remembering his former misdeed viz. slandering Lord Śiva (52.14^{cd} to 16^{ab}).

The goddess granted to Prasūti her desired boon and informed her about Her giving a boon to Kāśyapa and Aditi to be born as their son at the end of Dvāpara and added that at that time She would remain for sometime in the house of

Prasūti in order to give the fruit of her penance (52.17^{cd} to 20^{ab}). Thus Dakṣa and Prasūti were reborn as Nanda and Yaśodā (52.21^{cd}).

It was on account of the excess of the good fortune of Nanda and Yaśodā that Rāma and Kṛṣṇa had stayed there under the pretext of the fear of wicked Kāṁsa (54.20). In this way both of them have been rewarded by the complete fruit of the austerity practised by them in the previous birth (54.21). Thus austerity practised infallibly brings its complete reward.

Even Lord Śambhu formerly practised penance at Kāmākhya along with the great Gods (56.2).

As reported by Gautama to Indra severe penance practised till the end of the aeon leads to the vision of Mahākālī, the eternal supporter of the world fit to be known by Yoga (61.36).

Then Aditi, the mother of the gods, who was miserable on account of the loss of the kingdom of Her son Indra at the hands of Bali prayed to Lord Viṣṇu (65.2). Thereupon Lord Viṣṇu became pleased and appeared before Her and asked Her to choose whatever she desired and assured Her that He would give Her as He was satisfied by Her austere penance (65.3). Aditi requested Viṣṇu that He should handover the kingdom snatched away by Bali to Indra (65.4). Lord Viṣṇu replied that even though Bali was not fit to be killed by Him as he was born in the lineage of Prahlāda, and was His devotee and

was practising righteousness (65.5) still Viṣṇu promised Aditi that He would be born from Kaśyapa through Her in the form of a Dwarf (Vāmana) and would snatch away the three worlds by begging and would hand it over to Vāsava by trickery (65.6).

After a lapse of many thousands of years while practising penance on the northern peak of the mountain Himālaye Gaṅgā, the power of Śiva became pleased with king Bhagīratha (66.37). When Gaṅgā appeared before Bhagīratha he requested Her to come out from the foot of Hari and to come down on the surface of the earth in case she was pleased with him (66.38,39) and further requested Gaṅgā to sanctify the earth and thereafter to enter into the hole and to release his ancestors burnt to ashes by the sage Kapila (66.40). To it Gaṅgā agreed (66.42).

As per the command of Gaṅgā that righteous king Bhagīratha prayed to Lord Mahēsa on that very mountain (66.51). Bhagīratha abstained from food for a hundred years. Thereafter Lord Śankara became pleased with him and appeared before him with five faces (66.52). After having seen Him, Bhagīratha eulogized the great God by His eight thousand names (66.55).

Efficacy Of A Boon :-

Devī Kāmākhya Granted Yudhiṣṭhira His Desired Boon :-

After hearing Her eulogy by Yudhiṣṭhira, Devī Kāmākhya appeared before him and asked him to choose his desired boon (56.27). Thereupon Yudhiṣṭhira attributing his successful

completion of forest dwelling for twelve years to the grace of Devī (56.28) requested Devī to manage in such a way that they might be able to pass the thirteenth remaining year incognito (56.29-30).

Thereupon Devī advised him to reside in the city of the king of Matsya along with Pāñcālī and his brothers assuring him that he would fulfil his oath and would attain the kingdom again (56.31).

Due To The Grace of Devī Nobody Could Detect Pāñḍavas Remaining Incognito :-

Nobody could come to know about these royal personages in the thirteenth year on account of the grace of the great goddess (56.45).

Devī Granted Draupadī Her Desired Boon :-

Devī Durgā eulogized by Pāñcālī remaining in the atmosphere told her not to be afraid (56.76). Devī assured Draupadī that the another lascivious man viz. Kīcaka who desired her greedily would certainly be subject to death (56.77). After having obtained a boon from Devī Sairandhrī fearlessly wandered in the house of Matsya king (56.78).

Devī's Boon To Pāñḍavas Before Commencement Of War :-

Devī eulogized by the Pāñḍavas in the beginning of war became pleased and remaining Herself in the atmospheric regions gave them a boon (57.21). Devī told them that by Her good grace after having slain the enemies in the battle they

would be able to regain their kingdom devoid of enemies (57.22). Devī further disclosed to the Pāṇḍavas that for the sake of the removal of the burden of the earth as well as for their victory She had been born in the form of Vāsudeva by Her own sport (57.23) and assured them of Her protection by remaining in the chariot of Fālguna in the form of Vāsudeva (57.24). In Mahābhārata even there is no this sort of disclosing of the nature of Vāṅudeva.

Bhīṣma Got A Boon From His Father To Die At Will :-

That righteous souled, great chariot fighter Bhīṣma remained on the bed of arrows awaiting Uttarāyaṇa making known the boon of his father (57.35).

Vṛtrāsura Became Invincible On Account Of Brahmā's Boon :-

By way of a reply to Nārada's inquiry regarding Indra's getting polluted by committing Brahmahatyā (60.1) as also regarding the meeting of great gods with Devī (60.2-4), Lord Mahādeva told him that the demon Vṛtre formerly arose on account of the boon of Brahmā and after having conquered all the gods, himself became Indra (60.5).

Viṣṇu's Boon To Aditi :-

Viṣṇu became pleased by the penance of Aditi and promised Her that He would be born from Kaśyapa through Her in the form of a Dwarf (Vāmana) and would snatch away the three worlds by begging and would hand them over to Vāsava by trickery (65.6).

Viṣṇu's Boon To Bhagīratha :-

Lord Viṣṇu assured Bhagīratha that Gaṅgā after coming out in Her watery form, from His body and after having reached the surface of the earth would release his ancestors (66.33). Viṣṇu further advised Bhagīratha to pray to that Gaṅgā as well as to Lord Śambhu and assured him that all his desired objects would be achieved (66.34).

Gaṅgā's Boon To Bhagīratha :-

Gaṅgā further assured Bhagīratha that She would release his ancestors and thereafter would enter the hole to go to the nether regions increasing his fame (66.48).

Lord Śiva's Boon To Bhagīratha :-

Lord Śiva assured the king that his desire would be fulfilled by His grace before long (67.134).

The efficacy of curse :-

Lord Śiva's Curse To Viṣṇu :-

Lord Sadāśiva who was told by sage Nārada as to how Viṣṇu cut to pieces the body of Chāyā-Satī by His discus abandoned the dance and sighing again and again cursed Viṣṇu the Lord of Kamalā (11.106), saying that due to His curse He (Viṣṇu) would be born as a human being in the lineage of the Sun in the Tretā age on the earth (11.107). There His most beautiful wife more dearer to Him than His own vital airs, just like Satī to Me (Śiva), after having placed Her shadow and after abandoning Him would disappear Herself by Her supernatural

power. As a result He would be enamoured by Her supernatural power and would go a long way with His mind filled with joy (11.108-109). Thereafter just as Viṣṇu had made Him (Śiva) separated from His wife (Chāyāpatnī) just like a cruel demon in the same way a cruel demon would make Him separated from His wife (Chāyāpatnī) by abducting Her i.e. the Chāyāmayī wife and consequently He would be drowned in grief just as He (Śiva) was (11.110-111).

This curse of Lord Śiva to Lord Viṣṇu forms a seed of the incarnation of Rāma and of His pangs of separation from His wife Chāyāsītā according to this purāṇa.

Menā's curse to Gaṅgā :-

Menā cursed Gaṅgā that since She (Gaṅgā) had gone to Triviṣṭap (heaven) without taking leave of her mother therefore She should again come to the surface of the earth transformed in the form of liquid (14.8).

Gaṅgā after having attained the Mēyāpura of Her husband became transformed into liquid form (14.25^{cd}-26^{ab}) in accordance with Menā's curse.

Lord Brahmā's Curse to cupid :-

On hearing the words of the king of gods cupid remembers a terrific curse given to him by Lord Brahmā (22.63). When cupid shot Brahmā by His arrows made up of flowers to test their effectiveness, Lord Brahmā ran after Saṅdhyā (22.64).

The curse of Brahmā to cupid was such that He would be burnt to ashes by the fire from the eye of Lord Īra on His shooting arrows towards His limb (22.65).

Cupid thought that the time of that irrevokable curse had arrived. No person is able to transgress the destiny at any time (22.66).

Curse of Sage Aṣṭāvakra To The Descendants Of The Race Of Yādu :-

Kṛṣṇa informed His counsellors that on account of *the curse* of the sage Aṣṭāvakra, the descendants of the race of Yādu were dead and had generally gone to heaven (58.9).

Here there is no specification about the internecine struggle among the Yādavas. There is only an allusion to it by referring to the curse of Aṣṭāvakra. This may be due to hasty abridgement. For the description of the internecine struggle among the Yādavas vide Śrīmadbhāgavata XI. 30.12-15, 20-23.

Curse of Sage Kapila To The Sons Of Sagara :-

Bhagīratha replied Lord Śiva that formerly his fore fathers, the sons of Sagara were burnt to ashes by the curse of Kapila in a hole leading to the nether regions (67.131).

Efficacy of Śrāddha :-

Thus Rāgheva performed Śrāddha devoutly daily and obtaining the pleasure of the goddess destroyed the demons (40.26).

The Custom Of Performing Śrāddha Of The Departed Ancestors
On Their Death Anniversary :-

The fruit of reciting this legendary tale of Devīderśana by Indra on the day of the anniversary of a departed forefather is the satisfaction of the forefathers and their enjoyment of the best Kavya (63.73). The performance of Śrāddha of the forefathers on the day of anniversary was a common religious practice.

It is ordained in the works on dharmasūtras that the Śrāddha of the deceased forefathers should be performed by means of riches earned by fair means only. But here the Mābhg. P. mentioned an exception to the said rule by stating that even if the Śrāddha is performed by means of riches earned by unfair means still if it is accompanied by the recitation of this legendary tale it would be the giver of highest joy to the manes (63.74).

Thus the greatness of the performance of Śrāddha ceremony is stressed as well as that of the recitation of this legendary tale.

The custom of performing Śrāddha on the day of the anniversary of the death of a relative was prevalent and the recitation of this anecdote of Gaṅgāvataṛaṇa in the proximity of a brāhmin was considered to lead the ancestors to the highest human goal (71.16-17^{ab}).

That hearing of Gaṅgāvataṛaṇa becomes the cause of the great pleasure of the manes (71.17^{c-f}).

It is incumbent that after having reached the sacred place Gaṅgā, one should perform Śrāddha and should offer libations to the manes for their satisfaction, otherwise one goes to hell (73.20).

The manes of one who starts towards Gaṅgā are overjoyed and begin to dance and laugh desirous of enjoying Śrāddha (73.21). In case of the absence of the performance of Śrāddha the manes go away disheartened as a result one goes to hell (73.22).

The food cooked in the water of Gaṅgā, is difficult to be attained even by the gods. The manes are satiated by the Śrāddha performed with the food cooked in its waters (73.23).

He whose manes are satisfied his birth is fruitful. He whose manes get angry, his life is futile (73.24). Merit does not come into existence in the case of men whose manes get angry. Hence one should perform meritorious deeds after having satiated the manes (73.25).

The Śrāddha of the manes performed in keeping with the laid down rites after bathing in Gaṅgā at the time of the eclipse of the moon or the Sun becomes the cause of inexhaustible contentment of the manes (73.26).

The performance of a hundred Śrāddhas on the banks of the Ganges is the giver of the summum bonum (73.27^{ab}). By performing a Śrāddha during initiatory rite one has one's sacred formula accomplished (73.27^{cd}).

One accomplishes things which cannot be accomplished and becomes equal to Lord Śiva Himself. The performer of initiatory rite should make even someone else to perform Śrāddha (73.28).

After having taken a bath in the water of Jāhnavī on the Akṣayya tṛtīyā day or on the day on which yuga begins, one should not fail to perform Śrāddha by infatuation (73.29).

After having satisfied the manes by alms giving one becomes free from transmigratory existence (73.30). The utility of performing Śrāddha is described from st. 20 to 30.

Performing initiatory rites in Gaṅgā frees one from sins and makes one accomplish the sacred formula (73.31).

Alms-giving, meditation, repetition of a sacred formula, sacrifice, adoration, Śrāddha, and offering libations give rise to great merit when performed in Gaṅgā (73.32).

On the day of performing Śrāddha of the manes if a person recites this mahātmya (Aṣṭottaraśatanāme of Ganga) in proximity of a learned Brahmin, his manes are satisfied for ever (75.43).

Efficacy Of Libations Of Water To The Manes In Gaṅgājala :-

Those who offer libations to the manes in the Gaṅgā with concentration of mind their manes go to the Brahmaloḥa that is free from pain or sorrow (73.17).

Offering libations to one's ancestors elsewhere after fetching waters from Gaṅgā is prohibited and if one does so out of infatuation one has to perform expiation (73.18).

He who offers libations to the manes in Gaṅgā with singleness of purpose he is spoken of as the son, not the other one (73.19).

Materials used in Worship :-

Sandel paste, flowers, a respectful offering with water, incense (34.1).

Flowers of various kinds, bilvepatras, rice grains, Durvā grass (69.7^{cd}-8^{ab}). Flowers, incense (70.60).

Weapons of War :-

On the arrival of unassailable Atikāya on the tenth of Bhādrapada Kṛṣṇapakṣa a terrible great war of the wicked demons with the monkeys started in which the best of monkeys struck down the demons in hundreds and thousands by the clubs, parighas (a club studded with iron), trees and stones (47.11^{cd}-14).

That tumultuous war took place by hurling of great missiles and weapons viz. clubs, Parighas, swords, tridents and Pattiṣas (47.22).

Then on the fourth day in the night of the thirteenth Lakṣmaṇa killed the great hero Atikāya with big arrows (47.25).

On the fall of Atikāya, Rāvaṇa himself came out for the battle and on seeing Vibhīṣaṇa near there, got enraged and hurled at him a shining spear given him by Maya which was on the point of slaying Vibhīṣaṇa but Lakṣmaṇa hurriedly stood in front of it in order to save Vibhīṣaṇa (47.31^{ab}, 32^{ab}, 34-36^{ab}).

After threatening Rāvana that if he would not run away from the battle then he would be slain by sharp arrows, Rāma placed an arrow on the bow. Then giving up fighting on account of fear Rāvana came back to the city (47. 42-43).

As noted above the weapons of war were clubs, perighas, swords, tridents, pattisēs, spears, bows and arrows.

Arts And Crafts :-

Art of painting pictures on cloth :-

On seeing goddess Satī whose colour and form both had undergone change the amazed gods and sages saw her without winking and gave up their respective functions as it were painted in a picture on cloth (9.39-40).

The art of painting pictures on cloth was well known.

The Art Of Preparing Gold Ornaments Studded With Jewels :-

The art of preparing earrings and studding them as well as preparing other ornaments of gold studded with jewels must have been well known at the time of the composition of Mahhg.P. as learnt from the description of Devī wearing earrings and ornaments of gold studded with jewels (63.30).

The reference to Devī being fanned with a chowrie having a handle made of jewels (63.32) shows that the art of preparing chowries with handles made of jewels was well known.

The Art of Singing :-

The wonderful effect of the first song of Śiva was so much deep rooted that all the Lords of the gods Brahmā etc. were deluded by it (64.15).

Such wonderful effects of songs in keeping with the norms of music are occasionally experienced in case the songster happens to be the real knower of the modes of singing.

Politics :-

Akrūra on reaching the house of Nanda in Gokula, disclosed to Rāma and Kṛṣṇa the strategem prepared by Kāmsa in consultation with his ministers in which he intended to get them slain by the wrestlers in wrestling (54.17).

This preparation of a stratagem is adopted as a part of politics from times immemorial. It is employed to remove an enemy who is more than a match in open encounter.

Political Practice :-

Capital Of A Kingdom - Protected By Trained And Equipped Guards:-

The reference to Devī's city being protected by the throng of Bhairavīs (63.14) echoes the existence of the political practice in keeping with which the capital of every kingdom was usually guarded by well trained and equipped persons.

Posting A Guard At The Entrance Of The Inner Apartments :-

At the entrance of the inner apartments they saw Gaṇanāyaka having the head of an elephant (63.16). This suggests the posting of guards at important places.

Loose Morals Of Persons In Power :-

Sudeśnā was afraid to admit as her female attendant Sairēndhrī who was far more beautiful than herself because if the king would see her per chance he would try to approach her for enjoyment and consequently Sudeśnā would lose him (56.54-56).

This doubt of Sudeśnā shows the loose morals of the king as well as those of his brother in law Kīcaka. This is perhaps an echo of the degraded general moral standard of the persons in power in those times.

Beliefs and Superstitions :-

The significance of dreams dreamt at the close of a night :-

Prasūti narrated to Setī a dream dreamt by her the previous night which was very terrific (9.10^{cd}-11^{ab}). In dream she saw a black goddess with dishevelled hair and without attire coming to the sacrifice of Dakṣa and laughing loudly (9.11^{cd}-13^{ab}). The amazed Dakṣa asked Her about Her whereabouts as to who was she and whose beloved and how did She come there (9.13^{cd}-14^{ab}). On Her replying that she was Setī his daughter, Dakṣa censured Lord Śiva (9.14^{cd}-15^{ab}).

Thereafter she who was very much enraged on hearing that entered the sacrificial fire (9.15^{cd}).

Thereafter the hosts of Pramathas in crores led by a man resembling Kāla, Antaka or Yama attacked the gods with Viṣṇu as their chief and destroyed the sacrifice (9.16-17).

He cut off the head of Dakṣa and they sucked the blood of Dakṣa (9.18-20).

The citizens of Dakṣa cried loudly whereupon Lord Brāhmā brought Lord Śiva to the sacrifice and requested Him to bring Dakṣa back to life (9.21-22). On hearing His words Lord Śiva enlivened Dakṣa with his head substituted by that of a goat (9.23^{cd}-24^{ab}). Such a dreadful dream was dreamt at the close of the night (9.24^{cd}).

It is commonly believed that the dreams dreamt at the close of a night turn out to be true.

Just on the previous night about the fag-end of it Gaṅgā appeared in dream before the King of mountains and informed him about the activity of the gods (13.57-58^{ab}). The goddess Gaṅgā appeared before Himālaya in the form of a three eyed Devī riding a crocodile and told him that She was his daughter (13.58^{cd}-59^{ab}) and disclosed to him that she was the primordial nature which was one only who was formerly born as a daughter of Dakṣa, the progenitor, who had abandoned Her husband Lord Śiva in the sacrifice of Her father (13.59^{cd}-60). She foretold that the best of the gods viz. Brahmā etc. would come to him and would request him to allow Gaṅgā to go to Svargapura along with them (13.63). She consoled Her father and advised him not to grieve for Her sake on account of infatuation at any time (13.64^{cd}-65^{ab}). She had informed him before-hand in order that he might not repent for Her. Thereafter she disappeared in dream and Himālaya woke up (13.65^{cd}-66^{ab}).

The great mountain thought over what was said by Gaṅgā and gave up the affection for Her (13.66^{cd}-67^{ab}).

Censurers of the Lord were believed to become dumb cattle :-

It was believed that those who censured the Lord became dumb cattle invariably as stated in Īsvaraṃ ye vinindanti te mūkāḥ paśavo dhruvam / 10.84^{ab}.

Belief :- No Sin is Incurred by Cutting the Head of One Lying with Head in North :-

It was believed that if a person cuts off the head of another person lying on the ground with his head in the northern direction, the slayer does not incur sin (35.22-24^{ab}).

Belief - Telling a lie Destroys One's Iṣṭa and Pūrta (Meritorious deeds) :-

The truth telling Daśaratha gave Kaikayī the said boon (38.18^{cd}) on account of the fear of destruction of Iṣṭa and Pūrta by telling a lie. Here only one boon is mentioned, while in the Vālmīki Rāmāyana II.11.23-27^{ab} two boons are mentioned as given by Daśaratha to Kaikayī.

Hence the valorous Rāma abandoned the kingdom and set out for Daṇḍakāraṇya along with Sītā and Lakṣmaṇa (38.19).

Belief In The Eye Of Knowledge (Third Eye) :-

Dadhīci told Indra that he knew everything that had happened and whatever is going to happen by his eye of knowledge and asked Indra as to what He wanted him to do (60.17).

Accumulation Of Great Mass Of Merit Enables Visualizing
Kāmākhya :-

To be able to visualize Kāmākhya Tirtha one must have accumulated great mass of merit in thousands of bygone births (76.37).

Belief In Kāmākhya-Kavaca's Averting Great Danger :-

It was a common belief that Kavaca of Devī Kāmākhya averts great danger (77.26).

It was believed that by mere remembrance of this Kavaca the throngs of yoginīs⁷ and dakinis and the demonesses and other elements arousing obstruction and hunger, thirst and sleep run away from afar (77.28-29).

It is believed that where there is Tulasī plant there there is Bhāgīrathī Herself remaining along with all the Tirthas (79.40). Those who give up their bodies near Tulasī in their case the fruit that will accrue would be similar to that gained by their death in Gangā (79.41).

7 In accordance with the information recorded in 'Sabdakalpādruma, yoginītantra and Devīkośa yoginīs are the subordinate deities in the śākta sect that are considered to be the friends of Pārvatī. Their number is in crores. Out of them sixty-four are well known. Among them eight yoginīs are more famous who are the servants of Durgā Devī see Bhāratīya Samskr̥ti Kośa, Pt.VII. P.680. The origin of 64 yoginīs is described in yoginītantra who were created by Mahesānī during Her encounter with demon Ghora in order to make him realize Brāhmāhanda. Their names are mentioned in Skandapurāṇa, Kesikhanda. See Bhāratīya Samskr̥ti Kośa, Pt.III, P.484.

It was generally believed that in whosoever's house there is Rudrākṣa with one face in his house Lakṣmī (prosperity) will remain steady (80.16) and no misfortune will befall on him nor grim death (80.17^{ab}). He who bears Rudrākṣa in the neck or on the arm gets the pleasure of Lord Śambhu and attains profuse fruit of the rites and righteousness performed by him (80.17^{cd}-18). A person wearing Rudrākṣa definitely attains heaven after having abandoned the body anywhere (80.19). The wearing of Rudrākṣa is specially giver of fruit in Gaṅgā. It should be understood as giver of greater fruit in Kāśī (80.20).

Belief In The Retribution By Yama (The God Of Death) :-

He who adores Śiva with or without devotion is not fit to be punished by Yama (81.22).

Auspicious Omens :-

At an auspicious moment Lord Śiva mounted the OX and all of them started for the city of Himālaya. At that time there was a shower of flowers and the quarters were filled with the sound of drums beaten by the residents of heaven and cool fragrant breeze began to blow (27.27^{cd}-30).

The quarters became clear and the gods were overjoyed when the valorous son of Pārvatī was born (30.30^{cd}-31^{ab}).

On the destruction of the great demon Tāraka, the gods, Gandharvas and Kinnaras were overjoyed and the directions became clear (33.21). The Sun shone brightly and the world became steady (33.22).

The illomens :-

On seeing Kālī, enraged all the embodied ones were perturbed (8.103^{cd}), the Sun also was frightened the oceans were agitated, the directions were indiscernible, the wind blew speedily, and the meteors (U[†]Kā) fell on the ground in hundreds and thousands piercing the sun and indicating great inauspiciousness (8.104-105).

These are some of the ill omens that suggest inauspiciousness.

When Chāyāsetī entered the sacrificial fire in the sacrifice of Dakṣa, certain ill omens befell e.g. the earthquake took place, the wind blew fiercely, the meteors piercing the Sun fell on the ground, the directions became indiscernible, there was the rain of blood, the gods became pale, the fire in the altar got extinguished, the sacrificial oblations were eaten by jackals and dogs and the sacrificial ground became like a crematory in half a moment (9.83-85).

The crown of Tāraka fell down from his head on the ground and his body trembled (30.29^{cd}-30^{ab}).

At the time of marching of Tārakāsura's army for the encounter with the army of gods under the leadership of Kārtikeya, the meteors passing through the Sun fell down near his chariot (31.24^{ab}). The streaks of tears were shed by the horses from their eyes (31.24^{cd}). The hearts of all the warriors were dejected (31.25^{ab}). The birds of prey emitted fearful sounds and flew over his army (31.25^{cd}).

While the fight between Rāma Lakṣmaṇa and Atikāya was going on even in day time there was night-fall and the night also changed into a day. There was rainfall without clouds and the stormy wind began to blow (47.23). Hundreds of thunderbolts fell on the battle-field during the fight (47.24)^{ab}).

Uplifting Human beings as well as inert objects :-

Thereafter after having released the daughter of Brahmā viz. Ahalyā on the way to Mithilā Rāma accompanied by the sage Viśvāmitra came to the city of Janakā (38.7^{cd}-8).

Rāma transformed Ahalyā from the state of stone to that of a human being by the pious touch of His foot on His way to Mithilā. This shows that Rāma assiduously carried out His work of uplifting not only the human beings and other creatures but also the inert objects like the stone slab which Ahalyā was.

The Greatness Of Bilva (Bael) Leaves, Roots, Fruits Etc.:-

The fruit that accrues to a person offering bilvapatra with devotion to Lord Śiva surpasses that which would accrue to him as a result of bathing and alms giving and adoring the Lord in Kāśī on that day i.e. on Mahāśivarātrī or even that which would accrue by giving thousands of crores of cows as alms in Kurukṣetre (78.5-6). One who offers one bilva leaf to Lord Śiva with devotion attains salvation without doubt (78.7).

The adoration of Lord Śiva performed with Bilvepatra pleases Lord Śiva more than that performed with thousands of flowers of gold or by heaps of jewels or rubies and by precious stones (78.8-9^{ab}).

After having worshipped Śaṅkara Who brings auspiciousness to the world, in the root of bilva, a person attains eminence among gods and he is not deprived of it (78.9^{cd}-10^{ab}).

The highest place of pilgrimage resides in the root of bilva and hence the adoration of Lord Śambhu there is the destroyer of great sins (78.10^{cdef}).

Here in 78.10^{cdef} an attempt is made to explain why the adoration of Lord Śambhu in the root of bilva destroys great sins. The reason advanced is that the highest place of pilgrimage resides in the root of bilva and hence the adoration of Śiva in it destroys great sins.

Why Bilva Root Is Considered To Be Most Sacred :-

As Lord Rudra Himself of the form of Brahman, resides in the earth in person for the benefit of all people, the root of bilva is the most sacred place which destroys great sins and hence is greater than all Tīrthas (78.11-12).

It should be understood that Gaṅgā, Kāśī, Gayā-tīrtha, Prayāga, Kurukṣetra, Yamunā, Sarasvatī, Godāvarī, Narmadā and all other eminent tīrthas remain in proximity of roots of bilva (78.13-14).

There (at the root of bilva) whatever rites pertaining to gods or manes are performed according to laid down ceremony should be understood as inexhaustible in crores of births (78.15). He who dies on the root of bilva tree, he attains a very happy place difficult to attain even by Brahmā etc. (78.16). Since the bilva tree is very holy and pleases Lord Śambhu always therefore one is freed from the bondage of transmigratory existence after adoring Lord Maheśa by its three leaves (78.17-18^{ab}).

The fruit of that bilva tree arouses great joy in the mind of Lord Śambhu and hence after offering it to Him a person attains great merit (78.18^{cd}-19^{ab}).

Bilvapetra etc. arouses joy elsewhere also but it should be understood as arousing greatest joy especially in Kāmarūpa (78.19^{cd}-20^{ab}).

Bilva Leaf And Tulasī Leaf - Most Auspicious :-

Just as in the world, Bhavānī, the spouse of Bhava is most fit to be worshipped, in the same way among the leaves, the Tulasī leaf and Bilva leaf are auspicious (78.28).

The Splendour Of Tulasī (The Holy Basil) :-

When Nārada expressed his desire to hear the wonderful splendour of Tulasī, of Rudrākṣa, of Śiva and of the worship of Śiva in brief from the Lord, Lord Mahādeva replied that on hearing the splendour of Tulasī a man would be freed from all sins (79.3-4).

The Tulasī Plant - Lord Viṣṇu Himself In The Form Of A Tree :-

Lord Puṣṭottama, the saviour of all the worlds, the soul of the universe, the sustainer of the universe is of the form of the Tulasī plant (79.5).

The Sin-destroying Characteristics Of Tulasī :-

Tulasī always destroys the sins of men, by seeing, touching, reciting the name, by wearing and by giving (79.6). A person who after taking a bath in the morning sees Tulasī plant, attains the fruit of bathing in all Tīrthas together doubtlessly (79.7). The merit which one attains on seeing the god Gadādhara in the Puruṣottama kṣetre is also attained on seeing Tulasī (79.8). The day on which Tulasī is seen, that day is considered to be auspicious. There is no rise of any calamity from anywhere in his case (79.9). By seeing Tulasī plant, the sin extremely contemptible committed in other births is destroyed (79.10). Even if a pure or impure person touches the Tulasī leaf he is freed from all the sins at once and is purified (79.11) and at the end goes to the status of Viṣṇu (79.12^{ab}).

The Element Of Tree Worship In The Purāṇas :-

The touch of Tulasī is salvation itself, is a vow in itself (79.12^{cd}). By circumambulating Tulasī one circumambulates Lord Viṣṇu Himself doubtlessly (79.13). In the forest of Tulasī Lord Jaganmōtha Himself rejoices accompanied by Lakṣmī and Sarasvatī (79.15) and where Lord Viṣṇu, the lord of the worlds resides there Lord Mōheṣa with Rādrākṣa and Lord Brāhmā along with Sāvitrī also reside (79.16).

He who adores Lord Janārdana by the flower-stalk of Tulasī, he is also considered to be the best of the followers of Viṣṇu devoid of all sins (79.21). The offering of Tulasī leaf to Lord Viṣṇu after taking a bath in keeping with the rites in the morning in the month of Vaisākha, Kārtika or Māgha gives rise to multifold fruit (79.22-23^{ab}). He who adores Lord Hari with the Tulasī leaves or flower-stalks in Kārtika attains the fruit equalling giving of ten thousand cows by way of alms or equalling performing a hundred Vājapeya sacrifices (79.23^{cd}-24). The adoration of Jagannātha in Tulasī forest gives rise to the fruit arising from His adoration in a great field (Mahākṣetra) (79.25).

A rite performed without Tulasī would not bear its proper fruit (79.26). The morning, midday and evening twilight worship would be futile without Tulasī (79.27^{ab}).

Tulasīnamaskāramantra⁸ (a sacred formula for saluting Tulasī) is given in stanza 30 which should be repeated with devotion after circumambulating Tulasī thrice or seven times to overcome great calamity (79.31).

Tulasī should necessarily be given in the adoration of manes and gods etc. since without giving it the proper fruit of the rite is not attained by men (79.37). Tulasī gives highest pleasure to Lord Viṣṇu, the lord of the three worlds, to manes and to all gods and goddesses (79.38-39^{ab}).

8 The said Mantra runs as follows :

Nemaste devadeveśa surāsurajagadguro |
trāhi mām ghoreśamsārēnnemaste'stu tavēnagha || 79.30.

It is believed that where there is Tulasī plant there there is Bhāgīrathī Herself remaining along with all the Tīrthas (79.40). Those who give up their bodies near it (Tulasī) in their case the fruit that will accrue would be similar to that gained by their death in Gaṅgā (79.41).

If there be the Dhātrī tree also in proximity then that place should be understood as much more meritorious as those who give up their bodies there even out of ignorance still they would get salvation (79.42-43).

If a Bilva tree be there near these two then that place would be a Mahātīrtha equalling Vārāṇasī itself (79.44). The adoration of Śambhu, Devī or Viṣṇu there gives rise to great merit and destroys great sin (79.45).

There if one offers a Bilva leaf to Lord Maheśa, one attains the status of Lord Maheśa Himself (79.46).

Similarly after having adored Lord Viṣṇu with the leaves of Tulasī and Amalākī (Dhātrī) Emblic Myrobalan one attains Sāyujyamukti in the person of Viṣṇu truly (79.47). There if one offers a Bilva leaf to Lord Maheśa, Viṣṇu, or the goddess one gets rid of sin (79.48). After giving up vital aris there a man attains salvation and does not attain rebirth on account of the prowess of that Kṣetre (79.49).

The Splendour Of Rudrākṣa (Rosary beads) :-

Lord Mahādeva asked the sage Nārada to listen to the splendour of Rudrākṣa in brief (80.1).

The Sin-destroying Characteristics of Rudrākṣa :-

By wearing Rudrākṣa fruit on the limbs of the body the sin accumulated by all the embodied ones in hundreds of births is destroyed (80.2). The sin accumulated in crores of previous births on account of not saluting elderly persons, gods and the twice born ones due to pride or ignorance is destroyed by putting on Rudrākṣa on the head (80.3-4). The sin arising from telling lies, greed, eating the food left half eaten by another and drinking wine in crores of births is destroyed by wearing Rudrākṣa in the neck (80.5). The sin accumulated by usurping the wealth of others, by striking heavily other's body, by touching thing not touchable and by accepting gift from forbidden person in crores of previous births is destroyed by wearing Rudrākṣa on the hand (80.6-7). By putting on Rudrākṣa on the ear, the sin accumulated formerly by hearing the talk of a knave is destroyed (80.8). The sin accumulated by sexual intercourse with the wife of another, by brahmicide, by nonperformance of Vedic rites in many former births is destroyed by putting on Rudrākṣa anywhere (80.9).

He who bows down to one on seeing him adorned with the ornaments of Rudrākṣa is also freed from sins even though he might have committed hundreds of sins (80.10). While adoring Lord Śambhu, Lord Viṣṇu or the great goddess if a person puts on one Rudrākṣa, he will attain Sāyujya with Lord Śiva (80.12). In order to make a rite pertaining to gods or

manes bear fruit putting on Rudrākṣa while performing it was a must. Otherwise the rite would be futile (80.13). He who repeats the sacred formula of Lord Śiva or goddess Durgā with the string of Rudrākṣa, goes to heaven on account of the grace of Lord Mahādeva (80.14). It was forbidden to perform a rite at any time in Kāśī or in the sphere of Jāhnavī or in any other place of pilgrimage without Rudrākṣa (80.15).

In whosoever's house there is Rudrākṣa with one face in his house Lakṣmī (prosperity) will remain steady (80.16) and no misfortune will befall on him nor grim death (80.17^{ab}). He who bears Rudrākṣa in the neck or on the arm gets the pleasure of Lord Śambhu and attains profuse fruit of the rites and righteousness performed by him (80.17^{cd}-18). A person wearing Rudrākṣa definitely attains heaven after having abandoned the body anywhere (80.19). The wearing of Rudrākṣa is specially giver of fruit in Gaṅgā. It should be understood as giver of greater fruit in Kāśī (80.20).

The Phalaśruti of reciting or hearing with devotion this splendour of Rudrākṣa is the attainment of the status of Lord Śambhu difficult to attain even by gods (80.21-22). He who observing a fast recites this splendour of Rudrākṣa near the root of Bilva on the fourteenth day is freed from great sins accumulated through hundreds of births (80.23). The fruit of the recitation of this splendour of Rudrākṣa near Lord Śiva on the Śivarātrī day i.e. the fourteenth day either

in Gaṅgā or in Kāśī or in Setubandha or in Gaṅgāsāgarasaṅgama is the removal of all sins and the consequent attainment of Rudraloka (80.24-25).

Description of the Evil Characteristics of The Kali Age :-

Before actually describing the greatness of the adoration of Lord Maheśa, Lord Śiva takes a general survey of the condition prevailing in the Kali age.

In the Kali age all human beings will be devoid of righteousness, and engaged in the pursuit of sins and averse to the right duty (81.2). They will always be addicted to molesting the wives of others, incessantly engaged in envying others and slandering others and usurping the riches belonging to others (81.3). They will be devoid of devotion to the preceptors and engaged always in slandering the preceptor. They will abandon their own respective duty and will be greedy of wealth in the Kali age (81.4). All the twice born ones will always be engaged in the behaviour of the Śūdras and will be deprived of Śruti, penance and yogic practice (81.5). They will generally be engaged in satiating the urges of genitals and the belly in the Kali age (81.6^{ab}).

All the ladies will be averse to the devotion of their respective husbands and will generally be degraded and incessantly engaged in hatred of their mothers in law (81.6^{cd}-7^{ab}). The earth will produce meagre corn and the human beings will be deprived of food (81.7^{cd}).

The kings will be as good as barbarians always engaged in collecting taxes and the good will always suffer losses while the wicked will prosper (81.8).