THE
SKANDA-PURĀNA

PART VI

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SKANDA PURĀṆA

BOOK II: VAIṢṆAVAKHAṆḌA

SECTION III: BADARIKĀŚRAMA-MĀHĀTMYA

CHAPTER ONE

Superiority of the Holy Place Badarikāśrama over all Tīrthas[1]

Salutation to Śrī Gaṇeśa
Obeisance to the Lord of Śrī Badarī

Śaunaka said:

1. Sūta! O Sūta! O illustrious one! The most excellent one among persons conversant with all holy rites and pious activities! O sage equipped with the knowledge of the essence of all the scriptures and fully accomplished in the Purāṇa Lore!

2. Vyāsa, the son of Satyavatī, is the immutable Lord Viṣṇu himself. Since you are his favourite disciple, there is no one else who is a better knower than you.

3. At the advent of the terrible Kali Yuga which is destitute of all the Dharmas, people become perpetrators of vicious actions. They are bereft of all piety.

1. *Badarikāśrama* (*mod. Badrīnāth*): Also known as Badarī and Viśālā Badarī. This sacred place of Viṣṇu in Garhwal (U.P.) lies on a peak of the main Himalayan range, also known as Gandhamādana. The temple of Nara-Nārāyaṇa is built on the west bank of Alakṇanandā (Bishengaṅgā) over the site of a hot spring called Agni Kuṇḍa. It is equidistant from the two mountains known as Nara and Nārāyaṇa (De 15). Sages Nara and Nārāyaṇa, sons of Mūrti and Dharma, performed penance here (Mbh, *Vana* 40.1). Pāṇḍavas performed a pilgrimage here (Mbh, *Vana* 145). BdP III. 25.67 and VP V. 37.34 repeat the association of Nara and Nārāyaṇa with Badarī. NP II. 67 describes Badarī at length and specifies the sub-Tīrthas. Parāśara, father of Vyāsa, resided here (*Parāśara Smṛti* I.5). Everything hereof: the river, rocks in the rivers, Kuṇḍas of water, streams, is sacred—each justified with a mythical legend.

4. Their span of life is short. They are of little vitality, strength and vigour, penance, holy rites etc. All of them are engaged in sinful activities. They have eschewed the Vedas and scriptures.

5. They are devoid of performance of pilgrimages, penances, charitable rites and devotion to Hari. How can the redemption of these small creatures be effected with small effort?

6 Which is the most excellent Tīrtha? Which is the most excellent holy place? Wherefrom can those who are desirous of salvation achieve the final emancipation? Where is the assembly of sages?

7 Which is that place where austerities and mantras yield fulfilment with a very little effort? Where does the glorious Lord of lords of the worlds dwell, who is the source of blessings and mercy unto the passionately devoted ones?

8. O holy sage highly efficient in blessing the people for the sake of the welfare of all the worlds, tell me this and all other things which are beneficial to others as their highest objective.

Sūta replied:

9. Very well! Very well! O illustrious one, you are devoted to the welfare of others. You have washed off all your mental impurities by means of your loving devotion to Hari.

10. It is as if the son of Devakī (Kṛṣṇa) has occupied my lotus-like heart by association with you, O Brahmanical sage. Rare indeed is contact with saintly people.

11. Association with good men is very difficult to get in this world. It dispels the accumulated mass of sins. It helps the (spiritual) progress of those who have undue attachment to their bodies and of those who have no control over their own self, with the superior merit (of such association).

12. Association with good men is very difficult to have for men in all the three worlds. It removes the bondage of the heart of those people who are afflicted by the bonds of *Karmas*. It accords lofty regions to those people who take to petty prattles. It affords rest to those who are weary on account of repeated births, deaths and other activities.

Sūta said :

13. O good Sir, this question was put formerly by Skanda to the Lord of the Daughter of the Mountain (Śiva). The place was the beau-

tiful peak of Kailāsa. The sages were listening to it from all around. The purpose of the question was bringing about the salvation of good people.

Skanda asked :

14-15. O Lord, the glorious lord of the men of Yādava clan is the maker, annihilator, protector and preceptor of all the worlds. For the sake of the welfare of all creatures he has resolved to perform penance. Where does that Lord reside now at the advent of the Kali Age which is bereft of (i.e. has no regard for) the Vedas and Scriptures?

16. Which are the meritorious sacred places, Tīrthas and sacred rivers? By whom is the Lord, the Slayer of Madhu, attained directly? O Lord, O father, kindly tell this to me who am full of faith.

Śrī Mahādeva replied:

17-18. There are many Tīrthas and holy places, O Six-faced One, where Hari is desirous of staying. Some of them are capable of yielding the desired objects to seekers of the ultimate truth. Some of them are bestowers of salvation. Some Tīrthas which bestow both the benefits of here and hereafter, yield much merit.

19-22a. (The following are the holy rivers[1]:) Gaṅgā, Godāvarī, Revā (Narmadā), Tapatī, Yamunā, Kṣiprā, Sarasvatī, the holy Gautamī, Kauśikī, Kāverī, Tāmraparṇī, Candrabhāgā, Mahendrajā ('rising from the mountain Mahendra'), Citrotpalā, Vetravatī, Sarayū—a meritorious river, Carmaṇvatī, Śatadru, Payasvinī, Atrisaṁbhavā ('born of Atri'), Gaṇḍikā, Bāhudā, Sindhu and Sarasvatī—all these are sacred and meritorious. When repeatedly served these yield worldly pleasures and salvation.

22b-23. (The holy places[2] are:) Ayodhyā, Dvārikā, Kāśī, Mathurā, Avantikā, Kurukṣetra, Rāmatīrtha, Kāñcī, Puruṣottama (Jagannātha Purī),

1. Modern names of the rivers mentioned: Tapatī (Tāpī or Tāptī); Gautamī (Godāvarī) (the name is repeated), Kauśikī (Kosī); Candrabhāgā (Chenab); Citrotpalā (Mahānadī or rather Chittutolā), Vetravatī (Betwa in M.P.) (De 50); Carmaṇvatī (Chambal in Malwa, M.P.); Śatadru (Sutlej); Payasvinī (Paisunī or Pisani, a tributary of Yamunā—De 156); Gaṇḍikā (Gaṇḍak), Bāhudā (Dhumela or Burhā-Raptī a feeder of Rapti in Oudh—De 10).

2. Modern names of the ancient places: Dardura (Nilgiri Hills)—De 53. Varāha-Kṣetra—Bāramula in Kashmir. It is on the right bank of Vitastā, at the head of western entrance in Kashmir valley. (HD IV, p. 818)

Puṣkara, Dardura, the holy spot Vārāha created by Brahmā and the highly meritorious holy place named Badarī which is the means for the achievement of all objectives in life.

24. By duly visiting Ayodhyā, the city which is the sole means of achieving salvation, (devotees) are rid of all their sins. They go to the region of Hari.

25. (Devotees of Hari) (go to Ayodhyā) after leaving their houses. There they engage themselves in worshipping, dancing and singing songs of praise in diverse ways, in the places which Viṣṇu (i.e. Rāma) had previously resorted to and where he had moved about. By meditating on Hari they go to heaven and they frustrate the endeavour of the god of Death.

26 If a person takes his bath at Svargadvāra (i.e. Ayodhyā) and sees the abode of Rāma with purity (of mind and body), he becomes one who has fulfilled his task. Hence I do not see (any need of) further activity for him (for salvation).

27. At Dvārikā Hari never leaves his abode. Even now his mansion is clearly seen by some meritorious persons.

28. If a man takes his holy bath in Gomatī and views the lotus-like face of Kṛṣṇa, he becomes liberated, O Six-faced One, even without Sāṁkhya (i.e. perfect knowledge).

29. Even the immortal Devas wish for death that brings in great benefit in (Vārāṇasī) which extends to five *Krośas* (i.e. 5x3 = 15 Kms) and lies between (rivers) Varuṇā and Asī. What to say of ordinary human beings?

30. If a man takes his bath in Maṇikarṇī, Jñānavāpī, Viṣṇupādodaka (i.e. Gaṅgā) and the lake Pañcanada (Pañcagaṅgā), he will never drink the breast-milk of a mother.

31. Even if a man casually visits Viśveśa (i.e. Śiva) at Kāśī, O Six-faced One, he becomes liberated without any further birth or death.

32a. Why should I say much? Nowhere is there a holy place like this.

32b. One who performs penance and observes holy fasts in Mathurā and goes to the place of birth (of Kṛṣṇa) becomes rid of all sins.

33. By taking bath in Viśrāntitīrtha in accordance with the injunctions and offering libations to the Pitṛs with gingelly seeds and water, one redeems them from hell and goes to the world of Viṣṇu.

34. If unwittingly a man commits a sin there, it becomes reduced to ash instantaneously, if he has his holy ablution in Viśrānta (Tīrtha).

35. Men who duly take their holy bath in the month of Vaiśākha

at Avantī in river Śiprā, will never undergo the state of a ghost even in the course of hundreds of births.

36. By taking holy bath in Koṭitīrtha, visiting god Śiva called Mahākāla and feeding excellent Brāhmaṇas, one is liberated from all sins.

37. This is a holy spot yielding salvation. It is the direct means of attaining my world. By making charitable gifts poverty is eradicated (and there is happiness) here and hereafter.

38. By gifting gold (to Brāhmaṇas) in accordance with one's capacity at Kurukṣetra in Rāmatīrtha during solar eclipse a man becomes liberated.

39. Men who accept those gifts out of covetousness will never attain manhood even in the course of hundreds and crores of Kalpas.

40. In the holy spot of Hari people should take their bath in the water of his holy feet (i.e. Gaṅgā) and see Hari. By doing so they will be rid of all their sins and will rejoice with Hari.

41. Many groups of Sky-walkers (gods etc.) stay here. Groups of sages eat fruits, roots and leaves. The sages here restrain their breaths and thereby they have gradually subdued the power of sense-organs.

42. In Viṣṇukāñcī Hari is directly present. In Śivakāñcī Śiva himself is present. Since there is no difference between these two, salvation is within the reach of everyone through devotion (to either). If they differentiate between Śiva and Viṣṇu, men will meet with evil results.

43. If a man takes his holy bath in Mārkaṇḍeya Hrada and sees Jagannātha (at Purī) at least once, he shall stop sucking the breasts of a mother even without recourse to Jñānayoga (redeeming knowledge or practice of yoga).

44. On a day in conjunction with the constellation Rohiṇī, one should take holy bath in the ocean or Indradyumna Hrada and then consume the Naivedya of Viṣṇu. Thereby one obtains residence in Vaikuṇṭha.

45. The holy spot (Puruṣottama Kṣetra) extending to ten Yojanas (i.e. 10x12 = 120 Kms) is situated on the conchshell (i.e. a place with the shape of a conchshell). Even worms there will have a form having four arms. There is no doubt about this.

46. On the Kārttikī day one should take bath at Puṣkara, perform Śrāddha with monetary gifts and feed Brāhmaṇas devoutly. Thereby one is honoured in the world of Brahmā.

47. If a man takes his holy bath in the lake at least once, and sees the sacrificial post with great concentration and mental purity, he shall be rid of all sins and will be born as an excellent Brāhmaṇa.

48-49a. The benefit that one obtains by practising Yoga for sixty thousand years, can be obtained by duly taking a bath in Saukara Tīrtha and worshipping Hari with purity. The sins committed in the course of seven births perish instantaneously.

49b-50. Tīrtharāja (Prayāga) is of great merit. It is resorted to by all the other Tīrthas. By performing holy rites the desires of all creatures who wish for anything shall be realized. By taking holy bath in Veṇī (Triveṇī, i.e. confluence of Gaṅgā, Yamunā and Sarasvatī) one shall become purified. Thereafter, one should visit Mādhava. Thereby one enjoys the pleasures of meritorious persons and in the end attain the state of Mādhava (himself).

51-52. Merely by reciting the name of Badarī one attains the benefit which a man full of devotion gets by bathing in Triveṇī in the month of Māgha.

The Tīrtha called Daśāśvamedhika yields the benefit of ten sacrifices.

O son, it (i.e. the glory of Tīrthas) has been succinctly spoken. What more do you wish to hear?

Śrī Mahādeva said:

53. The holy spot of Hari named Badarī is difficult of access in all the three worlds. Merely by remembering the holy place men who have committed great sins are immediately absolved of sins. Those who die there attain salvation.

54. Even a mental pilgrimage to Badarī becomes equal to a severe penance performed in other Tīrthas.

55. There are many Tīrthas in heaven, earth and nether worlds, but there never was a Tīrtha like Badarī nor will there ever be (one).

56. Within a moment one gets in Viśālā (i.e. Badarī) that benefit which one derives after performing thousands of sacrifices or a penance with only air as subsistence.

57. This holy spot is called Muktipradā ('bestower of salvation') in Kṛtayuga, Yogasiddhidā ('bestower of yogic powers') in Tretāyuga, and Viśālā in Dvāpara; and in Kali Age it is called Badarikāśrama.

58. The gross and the subtle body are the dwelling places of the Jīva. Since the holy spot destroys it through perfect knowledge, it is called Viśālā.

59. This holy spot exudes nectar because of the contact of a Badarī tree (jujube tree); so it is called Badarī by wise men, where lives a group of sages.

60. Lord Viṣṇu may abandon all the Tīrthas in the course of different Yugas on different occasions, but he never leaves Badarī.

61. O Guha, by visiting Badarī one obtains that benefit which people derive by taking a plunge in all the Tīrthas or by performing penance, yogic practice and Samādhi (meditation).

62. The benefit obtained by yogic practice in sixty thousand years is obtained in a day by staying at Vārāṇasī and the same benefit by (simply) going to Badarī.

63. It is called Viśālā as it is the abode of all the Tīrthas, all the Devas and all the sages.

CHAPTER TWO

Agni Eulogizes the Lord

Skanda asked:

1. How did this (holy place) originate? By whom was this holy spot resorted to? Who is its presiding deity? Tell these in detail.

Śiva said:

2. This (sacred place) is beginningless like the Vedas which constitute Hari's body. The presiding deity is Hari himself. It is resorted to by Nārada and others.

3. Formerly, in the beginning of Kṛtayuga, Brahmā attempted to have sexual intercourse with his own daughter who was richly endowed with beauty and youth.

4-5. On seeing him like that I cut off his head with a sword into five parts in a great fury.[1] Taking the skull (sticking to) the hand that attempted the murder of Brahmā, I immediately left the place in order to resort to various Tīrthas in heaven, earth and nether worlds and performed penances as well.

6. But (the sin of) the slaughter of Brahmā did not leave me. The skull remained (stuck up) like that on my hand. Then I went to Vaikuṇṭha to see Hari, the Lord of Lakṣmī.

7. Bowing down with humility and saluting him again and again, I mentioned all my distress to that merciful soul.

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1. Removal of the fifth head of Brahmā by Śiva for his improper behaviour with his daughter is not mentioned in Mbh. In DB the reason of beheading was Brahmā's arrogance and lust in other Purāṇas.

8-15. On his advice I went to Badarī. At that very moment the (sin of the) slaughter of Brahmā (the skull stuck up to my hand) began to tremble frequently. That skull dropped down from my hand and vanished.[1]

Ever since I respectfully stay there along with Pārvatī, performing penance and causing delight to the sages.

I have infinite times more delight there than what I have in Vārāṇasī, on the peak of Śrīśaila and on Kailāsa along with Pārvatī.

In other holy spots, people attain salvation after death and when their duties have been duly completed. But, merely by visiting Badarī, salvation comes within the reach of all men. Vaiśvānara (Fire-god) himself is present where Hari is present. At that place my Liṅga has been installed in the form of Kedāra. By visiting, touching and worshipping Kedāra with devotional feelings, the sins committed in the course of crores of births become reduced to ash instantaneously.

There in that holy spot I stay with only one digit. All (the other) fifteen Kalās (digits) are particularly deposited here in the middle of the idol.

16. Śivayogins themselves worship the Matted-hair-bearing Lord (Śiva). They have conquered the fear of the god of Death. Deer-skin and elephant-hide constitute their good clothes. Excellent *Vibhūti* (holy ash) and matted hair are ornaments unto them.

17. They are contented with fruits, leaves, water and air. With their minds devoted to Śiva they have frustrated the attempt of the god of Death (to get them). Their intellect of great prosperity has surpassed by their quality of clearness the (translucent) Mānasa lake situated on the excellent mountain.

18. Their lotus-like faces have the tender lustre of lotuses. By means of Śiva's mercifulness they have utterly defeated their enemies. With eyes fixed on Śiva they keep their palms joined together on their heads. Thus they worship Śiva at dusk.

19. They hold the rosaries of beads in their hands. They have perfect calmness and contentedness. They are devoted to the performance of obeisance and daily prayer to the Moon-crested Lord. Since they meditate on the lotus-like feet of Hara, they obtain perfect knowledge and a form that brings in distress to the feelings of love in the people because they have perfect identity with Śarva (Śiva).

1. Practically every important holy place claims a Kapāla-mocana Kuṇḍa. Brahmā's head sticking to Rudra's hand fell down by the efficacy of the holy Kuṇḍa. Here mere entry into Badarī did the trick. Hence the claim of Badarikāśrama to be the holiest place.

20. By the worship of my Liṅga there the people, when they die at Vārāṇasī, are redeemed by the one who is called Brahma.

21. Vahnitīrtha remains shining near the feet of the Lord. By seeing the great Liṅga named Kedāra one does not have any rebirth thereafter.

Skanda said:

22. Why did Vaiśvānara, the glorious and sole cause of all the worlds, station himself at Badarī?[1] Narrate it to me, O one of great wisdom.

Śiva said:

23-24 Formerly there was an assembly of sages who had sublimated their sexual energy, at the place where goddess Gaṅgā had joined Kālindī. It is the holy spot named Daśāśvamedhika well-known in the three worlds. Fire-god was present there bowing down with great humility. Standing in front of the sages he began to ask:

Vaiśvānara asked:

25-26. O sages, you are the most excellent ones among the knowers of Brahman. Your eye of knowledge sees equally what is seen and what is unseen (by ordinary people). You all are full of kindness towards the distressed. Your heart melts with pity. You are all full of mercy. Your minds are not contaminated by the sins arising from all evil characteristics. O most excellent ones among those who know Brahman, how can I get free from hell?

27. There came the prominent sage Vyāsa, the greatest among all excellent sages. After taking his holy dip in the waters of Gaṅgā, he spoke these words:

Vyāsa said:

28-29. There is a very great means for getting free from the sin born of your fault called omnivorousness. Resort to Badarī where Lord Janārdana, the lord of Devas, is himself present. The Slayer of Madhu is the destroyer of the sins of both devotees and non-devotees.

1. In fact the Agni-tīrtha or the hot-water spring at that height of the Himalayas was the main factor in increasing the importance of Badarī. The mythical legend narrated here is just an explanation of its existence and is meant to enhance the importance of Badarī.

30. There you take your holy bath in the waters of Gaṅgā and circumambulate Hari. Then prostrate yourself like a rod. Thereby, all the sins will be destroyed.

31-32. On hearing the advice orally given by Vyāsa, which the (other) sages supported, Vahni started towards the North and went to Mt. Gandhamādana.

After arriving at Badarikā, he took his holy bath in the waters of Gaṅgā. He then went to the hermitage of Nārāyaṇa, bowed down devoutly and prayed:

Agni said:

33. I bow down to the sole lord of the universe who is ancient and eternal; who is replete with pure and perfect knowledge; who is the lord and sire of the creators of the universe; who is one as well as many; who is resorted to by infinite number of persons and is of pure intellect.

34. Taking up his Śakti in the form of Māyā (the Lord assumes three forms which I worship). I worship the Lord, the Creator of the universe, who is endowed with Rajoguṇa. I worship the cause of its sustenance by means of Sattvaguṇa. I praise Ugra the annihilator by means of Tamoguṇa.

35. The Lord, the Ātman, enchants the universe by means of Avidyā. The sole form of Vidyā extensively spreads in the three worlds. I resort to the omniscient Lord who is the resort of Vidyā and who becomes Jīva (the individual soul) through Avidyā.

36. I praise the Lord who reveals (himself in) forms in accordance with the wishes of devotees, who adopts the yogic slumber on the vast body (of the serpent-king), who is the power wearing yellow silken clothes and who has eight wonderful powers.

37. The Lord who is stationed in the heart and is eulogized by all became delighted. He spoke these sweet words to Pāvaka (Fire-god) who sought sanctity:

Śrī Nārāyaṇa said:

38. Choose the boon. Welfare unto you. I am the bestower of boons and I have come. I am pleased with this prayer of yours as well as your humility, O sinless one.

Agni said:

39. It is known to you fully why I have come. Still I shall speak it by way of carrying out the behest of the Lord.

40. Indeed I am *Sarvabhakṣa* ('consumer of everything'). How can I have redemption? On this account I am excessively frightened.

Śrī Nārāyaṇa said:

41. Merely by seeing the holy spot the sin of living beings ceases to exist. With my favour may you never have any sin.

42. Thereafter, Pāvaka who is present all round in the form of a *Bhūta* (Element) remained there by means of a single Kalā (digit). He was rid of all defects.

43. He who gets up in the morning and with purity listens to this or recites this, shall undoubtedly attain the merit of a holy bath in Agnitīrtha.

CHAPTER THREE

The Greatness of Agnitīrtha and Śilās of Nārada and Mārkaṇḍeya

Skanda said:

1. O Lord, O lord of all living beings, O expert in all holy rites, O father, kindly narrate to me the greatness of Agnitīrtha.

Śiva said:

2. This is an extremely secret Tīrtha, resorted to by all the (other) Tīrthas. Out of deference to you I shall relate it succinctly.

3. Those who have committed (the five) *Mahāpātakas* (great sins), those who have committed sins called *Atipātakas*,[1] O son, become pure without any exertion merely by bathing (in it).

4. A sin lasting till death, which cannot be dispelled even by expiatory rites, is destroyed merely by ablution in Vahnitīrtha.

1. *Atipātakas*: Sins due to sexual intercourse with nearest relatives such as brothers and sisters, father and daughter.

5. Just as gold excessively contaminated by impurities becomes pure (in fire), so also by resorting to Agnitīrtha the embodied soul becomes rid of sins.

6. Merely by taking his bath here a man gets the merit which one gets in other holy spots by performing severe penance for three years and taking (nothing but) drops of water from the tip of a Kuśa blade.

7. If people feed Brāhmaṇas here in accordance with their affluence, there shall never be poverty in their families.

8. One who casts off his life in Agnitīrtha by observing fast, breaks through the worlds of the Sun etc. and reaches the world of Viṣṇu.

9. By taking his holy bath in Vahnitīrtha, a man obtains that merit which is acquired by thousands of *Cāndrāyaṇas* and crores of *Kṛcchras*.[1]

10. This is my opinion that people who have committed the five kinds of sins, O Six-faced One, will become pure by *Japa* as well as *Prāṇāyāma* here.

11. Those base men who knowingly commit sins out of delusion, are born in the wombs of vampires (and stay therein) as long as fourteen Indras (i.e. for a period of a Manvantara).

12. Whether a person is Āśramī (one who follows the four orders or stages of life) or Anāśramī (non-Āśramī), he should not commit any sin knowingly in Vahnitīrtha as long as he is alive.

13. Holy bath, charitable gift, Japa, Homa, Sandhyā-prayers and worship of the Deities, O Six-faced One, all these performed here, have infinite number of times more merit than those in other Tīrthas.

14. There are many sacred and great Tīrthas. But there never was a Tīrtha equal to Vahnitīrtha, nor will there ever be any.

15. Neither Brahmā, nor Śiva, nor Śeṣa, neither Devas nor ascetics are competent enough to recount the merit originating from Vahnitīrtha. They cannot.

16. Of what avail are many Yajñas, charitable gifts, observances and restraints to them, if people can take holy bath in Vahnitīrtha for ten days?

17. One who casts off his life in Vahnitīrtha by observing fast,

1. *Cāndrāyaṇa* is a penance involving increase and decrease in the intake of morsels of food according to the increase and decrease in the digits of the moon (HD IV, 134-138). *Kṛcchra* is a general term for several penances (HD IV, 138-141).

one who fasts for three (days) and worships Janārdana in Vahnitīrtha becomes comparable to Fire-god.

18. There is perpetual presence of Hari in the middle of the five rocks. It is there alone that Vahnitīrtha is destructive of all sins.

Skanda enquired:

19. How did the five rocks (come) there? By whom were they created there? What is the merit and what is the fruit of them. It behoves you to relate this entirely.

Śiva replied:

20. The five rocks are well-known as Nāradī, Nārasiṁhī, Vārāhī, Gāruḍī and Mārkaṇḍeyī.[1] They yield all Siddhis.

21-23. Nārada, the noble sage, performed a very severe penance for securing the vision of Mahāviṣṇu. He remained standing on a rock taking in air and sustaining himself with the products of trees for sixty thousand years. At that time, Lord Viṣṇu came there in the guise of a Brāhmaṇa. He appeared in front of him with great compassion and spoke these sweet words to the excellent sage: "O sage whose sins have been destroyed through penance, why are you undergoing this great strain? What is it that you wish (to have)? Tell me."

Nārada said:

24. Who are you, O excellent Brāhmaṇa? In this forest devoid of people, you have come to me with a desire to bless me. My mind is delighted on seeing you.

25-28. On being spoken thus by Nārada, Lord Janārdana who held a conch, a discus and an iron club, who was adorned with garlands of lotus and sylvan flowers, shining along with yellow robes, who appeared splendid with Śrīvatsa scar and Kaustubha jewel, who was the pure abode of Kamalā (Lakṣmī) and who was eulogized (by sages) headed by Sanandana, revealed his own form to Nārada with great compassion. On seeing him who came like the vital air into the body, Nārada rose up immediately. With palms joined in reverence he bowed

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1. These rocks are in the Bishenganga i.e. Alakanandā which flows near the temple of Badrīnāth. The Purāṇa writers are experts in creating mythical legends. This Purāṇa writer glorifies the rocks by associating legendary names like Nārada, Nṛsiṁha, Varāha, Garuḍa and Mārkaṇḍeya with these rocks.

down again and again. In great humility, he eulogized the lord of the chiefs of all the worlds.

Nārada said:

29. May that Lord of sanctifying divine form be pleased, the Lord who is the witness unto all, who is the overlord of the worlds, who richly endows himself with bodies in accordance with the wishes of devotees and who is the ocean of mercifulness for those who resort to him.

30. May the Lord whose form is the abode of Sattvaguṇa be pleased, the Lord who glances with delightfully graceful smiles for the welfare of the world and for producing excessive delight in the minds of the good through (creating therein) eagerness and yearning etc.

31. May the Lord whose mind is moved with pity for the poor be pleased, the Lord who is handsome with the grace and charm of Kandarpa (god of Love), who makes Indirā (Lakṣmī) delighted with his pleasingly majestic words and who is the excellent Kalpa tree for those who resort to him.

32. People whose minds have become devoid of impurities by worshipping his lotus-like feet, cut off all the causes of bondage with the sword of knowledge. They realize the bliss of Brahman and become free from weariness. May that Lord whose mind is filled with pity for the wretched, be pleased.

33. May the Lord, the very experience of the bliss of Brahman, be pleased: the Lord who is the bridge built across the ocean of worldly existence, who is the cause of creation, sustenance and annihilation, who is called Upendra ('brother of Indra') and who has acquired physical forms from Guṇas.

34. Let that one and only Lord and Master be pleased: the Lord who is the cause of development from subtle form of the elements stabilized in the sense-organs(?), who is the most excellent one among the refulgent ones and who assumes the state of individual soul by his own Māyā.

35. May the Lord who is most excellent among those who are merciful towards the wretched and the poor be pleased—the Lord by whom *Mahat* is spread over (controlled) by his *dṛg-guṇas* (the qualities of his vision?), by whom the world consisting of five Bhūtas (elements) is made dependent on his guṇas. Though he is one (without a second), he is united with many qualities.

36. Devas are your followers. As such they convert the ocean of miseries into an insignificant pit dug by the hooves of calves and live in heaven without any fear.

37. Obeisance to you, to Vāsudeva. Obeisance to Saṁkarṣaṇa; bow to Pradyumna, to Aniruddha,[1] to the Ātman of all living beings.

38. Today my life has become blessed; today my penance has become fruitful; today my knowledge has borne fruits, because of your sight, O Janārdana.

Śrī Bhagavān said:

39-40. I am delighted with this penance and eulogy of yours, O Nārada. Nowhere in the three worlds is there a devotee of mine greater than you. Welfare unto you. Choose your boon. I am the bestower of boons standing in front of you. Know this, O Nārada, that your desires will become realized on seeing me.

Nārada said:

41-42. O Lord, if you are (intend) to grant me boons, if I deserve a boon, O Lord, grant me unflinching devotion to your lotus-like feet. Your presence in my rock should never be stopped by you. (Finally) this is the third boon to be given to me—No one should have union with physical bodies any further (i.e. everyone should be liberated from Saṁsāra) if he sees or touches my Tīrtha, takes bath in it or drinks its water.

Śrī Bhagavān said:

43. Let it be so. Due to my love for you, I shall reside in your Tīrtha for the purpose of enabling all the creatures, both mobile and immobile, to get rid of their bodies for good. There is no doubt about it.

44. After saying thus Hari vanished there itself. Nārada of great splendour stayed at Badarī along with (the Lord) for a few days. Being delighted he went to Madhupurī (Mathurā) from there.

Skanda said:

45. Recount to me the greatness of the rock of Mārkaṇḍeya. What

1. The influence of Pāñcarātrism is evident by the mention of these four Vyūhas—Vāsudeva, Saṅkarṣaṇa etc.

is its merit? What is the benefit therefrom? How did it come to have that designation?

***Śiva said*:**

46. Formerly, at the end of Tretāyuga, the great son of Mṛkaṇḍu, knowing that he would be short-lived, repeated the greatest Japa (i.e. Mantra).

47. Hari, the immutable one, was worshipped by means of the twelve-syllabled Mantra (viz. *oṁ namo bhagavate vāsudevāya*). Realizing that his span of life was seven Kalpas (? i.e. granting him that span of life), Hari went away from there.

48-49. Mārkaṇḍeya heard about the wearisome nature of pilgrimage to Tīrthas. He saw Nārada at Mathurā, O Six-faced One. Nārada, the excellent sage, who was worshipped and saluted by him, told him about the greatness of Badarī where Keśava stayed.

***Nārada said*:**

50. O excellent one, why do you trouble yourself by resorting to tiresome wanderings to various holy places. There is a great holy place named Badarī where Hari is perpetually present.

51. Go there. You will see Hari directly with your physical eyes.

On hearing it, the sage was struck with wonder. He came to Viśālā (Badarī).

52. After taking his holy bath, he sat on a rock and repeated the eight-syllabled Mantra, viz. *oṁ narāyaṇāya namaḥ*.. Lord Janārdana was pleased within three days (and appeared before him).

53. On seeing him holding conch, discus, iron club and lotus and adorned with garlands of sylvan flowers, he got up immediately. Mārkaṇḍeya bowed down to Janārdana and eulogized him with words faltering due to devotion. He eulogized Janārdana.

***Mārkaṇḍeya said*:**

54. In this unstable world your lotus-like feet alone are stable. (Otherwise) how can men be uplifted? Save me, O great Lord.

55. O Acyuta, mercifully save me; I am utterly weary and exhausted on account of the three-fold distress. There are many kinds of ignorance developing (within me). I am disoriented in this hole of the world.

56. O ocean of mercy, I have suffered great pain brought about by the stay in wombs and the egress from many wombs as if from mechanical contrivances.

57. In the womb full of clusters of entrails worms have eaten all parts of my body and I have been overcome and troubled due to hunger and thirst. Save me, O Slayer of Madhu.

58. I have been smeared with unclean filth etc. Due to weariness I have become inactive. I have been confounded. I am thinking of the fruits of my own Karmas. Save me, O Slayer of Madhu.

59. I have been unable to speak, to handle things and even to breathe. I have become frightened. I have experienced great miseries during the stay in wombs. Save me, O Slayer of Madhu.

60. I have been afflicted by the worldly existence full of miseries due to old age, death, infancy etc. I (foolishly) consider this ocean of misery as one of happiness. O ocean of compassion, protect me.

61-62. Sometimes I attained the state of worms. Sometimes I became an insect born of sweat. Sometimes I was a plant or (a germinating seed) and sometimes I was a man. Thus I have been through all sorts of wombs. I have undergone miseries. I have lost lustre. I have become helpless. Now I have resorted to you. O Acyuta, save me.

63. On being thus eulogized by the intelligent Mārkaṇḍeya, Kṛṣṇa became pleased. He said to him: "O Brahminical sage, let the boon be chosen from me."

Śrī Mārkaṇḍeya said:

64. If you are pleased with me, O Lord fond of the wretched and the poor, grant me steady devotion to you in worshipping and seeing you. Let there be your presence in the rock. This is to be my boon.

Sūta said:

65. Saying "so be it" Mahāviṣṇu vanished. O Brāhmaṇa, Thereupon, Mārkaṇḍeya who was pleased, went to his father's hermitage.

66. This is a holy place which is destructive of all sins. The man who listens to or recites to others (its glory or this episode of Mārkaṇḍeya) will have access to Govinda (or his residence in Vaikuṇṭha).

CHAPTER FOUR

The Greatness of the Rocks of Garuḍa, Varāha and Nārasiṁha

Skanda said:

1. O father, recount to me the greatness of Vainateya Śilā (Garuḍa's rock). What is its merit? What is the benefit thereof? What is its greatness?

Śiva replied:

2-3. Garuḍa and Aruṇa of great strength and valour, were born of Vinatā's womb to Kaśyapa. Aruṇa is the charioteer of the Sun-god. With a desire to become Hari's vehicle Garuḍa performed a penance on the peak of Gandhamādana on the southern side of Badarī.

4. He restricted his diet to fruits, roots and water. He was unaffected by mutually opposed pairs (such as pleasure, pain). He was the most excellent one among those who performed Japa.

5-6. He, desirous of seeing Hari, continued the penance for thirty thousand years. He stood with only one foot on the ground. He performed the Japa without any ailment.

Thereafter the yellow-robed Lord equipped with his own weapons, directly appeared before him like the full Moon in the East. He spoke to him clearly with a tone as grave as the thundering sound of a cloud.

7. Still there was no external reaction (from Garuḍa). Thereupon, the Lord blew his conch. Still there was no visible response on the part of Garuḍa, the noble-souled one.

8. Then the Lord entered into him through his breath. He made him extraverted and shone in front of him outside.

9. On seeing Lord Hari, Garuḍa became free from fright. There was horripilation all over his body. With palms joined in reverence he eulogized thus:

Garuḍa said:

10. Be victorious, be victorious, O Lord whose abode is the minds of the people of the three worlds; O Lord who have suppressed the mass of sins; O Lord with excessive fragrance of the lotus-like pair of feet which are saluted by all the Devas; O destroyer of the forest of enemies; O refulgent one; O Lord with your lotus-like pedestal ren-

dered graceful by crores of crowns of all the Suras and Asuras; O Lord who have dispelled the thick veil of darkness from the hearts of your own people; O Lord who, like the moon, dispel three kinds of distress with your feet; O Lord to whom the rise, sustenance and annihilation are graceful sports; O Lord who have increased the prosperity of the universe with the fame of your three-fold form; O Lord who are like a bee unto the lotus-like minds of your own people; O Lord who, like the Sun, illuminate the minds of those who have understood all the Vedas; O Lord whose feet have been saluted by your own men as well as sages; O Lord whose nails produced the waters[1] (of Gaṅgā) and purified the Devas; O Lord of all the worlds, the dust of whose feet mentally saluted by the sages, has become the essence of your favour. Obeisance to you, O Lord of worlds; obeisance to you.

11. Also; may the Lord protect me: the Lord who is accompanied by eight Śaktis; who wears the garlands of sylvan flowers; who shines in his yellow robes and flowers; whose feet shine like a lotus pool (?); and whose sense-organs are perfect.

12. Everyday may the Lord protect me: the Lord whose form shines within the lotus-like heart of devotees; whose fame originates from the suppression of the wicked Daityas; who built the bridge (at Rāmeśvara); who has protected all the people who resorted to him; and who is the Lord of all the worlds.

13. Let the Lord of great intellect protect me: the Lord who like the Moon dispels the three kinds of distress of mobile beings; whose refulgence is like that of the shining Sun; who, though single, assumes various guises through his Māyā.

14. This is the meritorious activity of the Lord who assumes forms in due consideration for the wishes of devotees; who even in infancy had chastened many kings; who follows the path of the Vedas, which is beneficent in many ways.

15. May this embodied form of Rāsa (rhythmic dance performed by Kṛṣṇa and Gopīs) protect us. He partakes of Yajña; he captivates the heart; he is cosmic-formed; he takes away the silk cloth of the women (Gopīs); he assumes many forms for the sake of protecting great men.

1. When Vāmana (god Viṣṇu) assumed a cosmic form to deprive King Bali of his rule over the universe, he covered the upper world by his second step and his toe-nail scratched and punctured the outer shell of the Brahmāṇḍa and the outer water-sheath of the universe forced its way through the hole caused by Viṣṇu's nail. It is said to be the heavenly Gaṅgā.

16. Let this Puruṣa who can be obtained (realized) by persons with love and devotion, who is the abode of all, who is delighted with the group of servants (i.e. devotees) (taking himself) as their own servant and whose glance is full of kindness, protects the universe.

17. With the tip of his nail with which he had pierced the neck of hyena, he pinched the breasts of the cowherd lasses. He has been sportingly given many forms by young women. Let this Śeṣa (?) be for (i.e. bring about) calmness and peace.

18. Let this Lord be the suppressor of all miseries for us: the Lord who is armed with the rod of punishment for chastising people; who is ready for sanctifying the great men who follow the rules prescribed by himself.

19-20. Thus, the Lord was directly eulogized by the noble-souled Garuḍa.

The son of Vinatā invoked Gaṅgā flowing in three paths (heavenly, earthly and nether-worldly) in order to worship (the Lord). Thereupon (the holy river) directly appeared on the mountain. She had five faces. The son of Vinatā performed the worship of the feet with that water.

21-22. Then Garuḍa was told by Hari, "Let the boon be chosen". He then said, "With your favour, may I become invincible to Devas and Daityas. May I be glorious with strength, vigour and valour. Let me be your sole vehicle. Let this rock be well-known after my name. It may be the dispeller of all sins. If this is remembered by men, they must not be afflicted by poison or sickness."

23. After saying thus, the son of Vinatā remained silent. Saying "It will be so", Viṣṇu spoke these words conducive to the welfare (of all):

24-28. "You go to Badarī resorted to by Nārada. By taking your holy bath in Nāradatīrtha etc. and observing fast for three days with purity, it will be easy for you to have my vision there." After saying this Viṣṇu vanished like lightning. Garuḍa joyously hastened to Badarī. He then went to Vahnitīrtha, resorted to the rock with devotion to him, took his holy bath in Nāradatīrtha and performed holy rites. Then he saw the Lord stationed in Nāradatīrtha. He bowed to him in accordance with the injunctions and at his bidding he went to his city. Ever since then, this rock is called Gāruḍī.

Skanda said:

29. O Lord of lords, recount to me the greatness of Vārāhī (rock). What is its merit? What is its benefit? How did it get this name?

Śiva said:

30-35. Having killed Hiraṇyākṣa, the enemy of Devas, in the battle and after lifting up the Earth from the nether worlds the Lord (Viṣṇu) came to Badarī. He stayed here till the end of the Kalpa. It is on account of the excellence of Badarī that the Lord stationed himself there. The Lord stationed himself there in the form of a rock. One should go there, take his holy bath in the pure waters of Gaṅgā and make charitable gift in accordance with his capacity. With his mind made calm and peaceful through the waters of Gaṅgā, he should sit and perform Japa day and night with full concentration of mind.

He will then begin seeing the rock as the Lord. Of what avail is much talk? Whatever the aspirant wishes for, he will realise quickly, even if it be very difficult to perform.

Skanda requested:

36. O Lord, recount to me the greatness of the rock Nārasiṁhī. With your favour I have heard rare things, O great Lord.

Śiva said:

37. After killing Hiraṇyakaśipu sportingly with the tip of his claws (nails), the Lord (in the form of Man-lion) (as if) blazed all over his body with the fire of anger. He resembled the fire appearing at the time of the ultimate annihilation of the world.

38. Devas came there. Full of kindness, they stood at a distance and eulogized the Lord who had sportingly taken his body (of Man-lion).

39. There Hari of great valour became delighted. He pervaded the excellent Suras and Asuras with his refulgence. He said, "Choose any boon that may cause great happiness to all the Devas."

40. Then the Self-born Lord, the Lord of Suras, spoke these words with smiles lighting up his face:

"O Nārasiṁha, this form of yours is very fierce. It strikes terror into the hearts of all embodied beings. Withdraw this."

41. The Lord did all these things duly, after depositing his divine body in many ways on the mountains etc. Then he said, "What task of yours should I perform now? O Devas who destroy your enemies, I am pleased (with you)."

42. "O Lord of cosmic form who have agitated (troubled) the world with this form, this is the boon desired by us that you shall have that four-armed form which is quiescent and causes internal happiness."

43. With his divine vision Hari espied the universe and went to Viśālā. With the mind engrossed in playing in the waters of Gaṅgā, the Lord spoke to the Suras and Asuras.

44. Then the Devas saw the Lord stationed in the middle of the waters. Their fright subsided. With great feelings of devotion firmly rooted (in their hearts), they bowed down and circumambulated the Lord. Then they gradually went to their city.

45. Then all the sages and ascetics came there bending down with the weight of their devotion. With hands joined together in reverence, they eulogized Nṛsiṁha of wonderful valour with the following words:

The sages said:

46. Obeisance, Obeisance to you, O Lord of all the worlds, O Lord of the universe according freedom from fear, O Lord of cosmic form, O ocean of mercy, O Lord whose lotus-like feet are Tīrthas that should be resorted to, O Lord of Śrī, be kind.

47. You are one but appear manifold through your own Māyā, just as the water in different pots that differ on account of the limiting conditions thereof.[1] O Lord who take wonderfully variegated bodies in accordance with the wishes of the devotees, be pleased, O Lord having faces everywhere, O Lord, the maker of the universe.

48. Thereupon, the delighted Lord Nṛsiṁha of leonine valour spoke these charming words: "Let the boon be chosen from me."

The sages said:

49-52. If the Lord is pleased, this is the boon desired by us that Viśālā should not be abandoned; O Lord of the worlds, kindly do (as we wish).

(The Lord said:) "Let it be so". All the sages went to their hermitages. Nṛsiṁha in the form of the rock became engaged in sporting in the waters. By observing fasts for three days and being devoted to Japa and meditation, (a devotee) shall undoubtedly see the Lord directly in the form of Nṛsiṁha.

One who, with purity, hears this with faith and recites this shall be rid of all sins. He will obtain a residence in Vaikuṇṭha.

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1. The usual illustration given by Advaita Vedāntins to show the relation between the Supreme Soul and individual souls and the reality of the Supreme Soul, the individual souls being his reflections only.

CHAPTER FIVE

The Greatness of Viśālā

Skanda said:

1. Why does the Lord stay there faithfully? What is the merit and the fruit of seeing, touching etc. (the rock)?

2. O father, kindly recount to me the merit of consuming the Naivedya and the fruit of performing the great worship as well as that of the circumambulation?

Śiva said:

3. Formerly, in the beginning of Kṛtayuga, the Lord himself incarnate resorted to Tapas and Yoga for the sake of the welfare of all living beings.

4. In Tretāyuga he could be resorted to by groups of sages by means of continuous practice of Yoga, because the Lord was devoted to it. When Dvāparayuga arrived, the Lord was difficult of access because he was devoted to knowledge (alone).

5-6. The Lord became one to be very rarely seen by sages and Devas. Not being able to gain access to the Lord, groups of sages and Devas went to the region of the Self-born Lord, agitated in their minds with surprise. After going there and joyously bowing down to the lord of the worlds, the sages and the ascetics as well as the Devas spoke with Bṛhaspati as their leader.

Devas said:

7. Obeisance to you, O Grandfather, O Lord of Suras; you are the support of all the worlds. You are the destroyer of the distress of those who seek refuge (in you). You are the bestower of sustenance. You are full of mercy. You are our redeemer and father. Our troubles are to be submitted to you.

Brahmā said:

8. Why have you all come with your minds agitated with surprise in the company of the sages? Tell me the purpose of your visit.

Devas said:

9-10. Ever since the advent of Dvāpara, the large-hearted Lord is not to be seen at Viśālā. What is the reason thereof? Tell us if Viśālā has been abandoned by him and if so the place where he has gone of his own accord. Or is it because of any offence on our part? Tell us how he can become gracious (unto us).

Brahmā said:

11. I do not know this. Indeed this has been heard now from you. What is the reason, O Suras, that the Lord has gone beyond the path of your vision (i.e. has become invisible to you)? Come. Let us go to the shore of the Ocean of Milk.

12. On being told thus, the heaven-dwellers, the sages and the ascetics, went to the shore of the Ocean of Milk with Brahmā at their head.

13. After going there, they eulogized Vṛṣākapi (Viṣṇu), the Lord of the Devas, the Lord of the universe, the overlord of all the worlds, with words of wonderfully variegated meanings.

Brahmā said:

14. Obeisance to you, O presiding deity of all Puruṣas, O Lord lying in the cave (of the heart) of all living beings, O Vāsudeva, O supporter of everything, O cause of the universe, O lord identical with the universe.

15. You alone are the cause, the lord as well as the support of all living beings. O Lord, the sole handsome one, with the help of your Māyā power you move about.

16. One becomes many. The immutable one becomes an actor (in assuming many forms). Though he is all-pervading, out of his merciful nature he becomes (a very small) bee occupying the lotus-like hearts of his devotees and gives them different kinds of happiness. I salute that Lord of the worlds.

Devas said:

17. The Lord is fire unto the forest of miseries. He takes the essence of all the people. He is the Lord of Devas and heaven. He is the imnanent soul of the mobile and immobile beings. He is the infinite Lord. Let the Lord glance at us with his benign eyes.

18. If a man is engaged in drinking the nectar of the name of the Lord even once, he will consider salvation insignificant like a blade of grass. I worship that Hari.

19. Reflected in Avidyā, he has assumed the form of the individual souls. Since he has perfect knowledge, he is of quiescent nature. May he sanctify the three worlds.

Gandharvas said:

20. Those who drink the water that is in contact with the feet of Hari, will never drink again and again the milk from (lying on the) lap of a mother. Even if men were to drink casually the nectar of his name, they will when dead become immortal. No one will go down (to hell). They will be free from doubts and fears.

21. On being eulogized thus, Hari rose up from the Ocean and spoke to Brahmā without being seen by the others. Only Brahmā knew it and no one else.

22-23 Brahmā understood it and bowed down to the Lord. He told the heaven-dwellers everything. "O Suras, listen respectfully. The Lord has vanished because he found the people vicious in their intellect." On hearing these words of his, all the Devas went to heaven.

24. Then in the form of a recluse[1] (i.e. Ācārya Śaṅkara) I (i.e. Śīva) will raise Hari from the Tīrtha named Nārada and instal him with a desire for the welfare of the worlds.

25. Merely by seeing that Lord, even great sins disappear instantaneously like deer on seeing a lion.

26. After conquering Dharma and Adharma and by seeing Lord Hari, Lord of Badarī, people attain salvation without any exertion, O Six-faced One.

27. As a result of (the advent of) Kali age, all the Tīrthas are practically abandoned by Hari. After reaching Badarī, he abides there directly (visibly).

28. After the advent of Kali, if salvation is desired, (only) Badarī should be visited after abandoning all the Tīrthas.

29. Even without perfect knowledge, without yogic practice and exertions of wandering from Tīrtha to Tīrtha, a creature attains salvation even in a single birth.

1. This recluse is the Advaita Vedānta teacher Śaṅkarācārya (6th century C.E. and not 8th as is generally supposed). He is credited to have re-installed the present idol of Badrīnāth and built the temple of Badrīnāth.

30. If Hari is worshipped by a man in the course of thousands of births, he should go to visit Badarī where the creature will not have any cause of grief.

31. By repeating (the name) "Badarī, Badarī" even casually, an excellent man shall illuminate the world oppressed by darkness.

32. Just as by seeing light one is not afflicted by darkness, so also by visiting Badarī no man need be afraid of death.

33. I salute the Lord of Badarī, beholding whom as the path to salvation, the unredeemed sins lament.

34. For every step taken in the circumambulation of Hari in Badarī, one receives as much merit as when the whole earth inclusive of mountains and forests is circumambulated ten times.

35. For every step taken in Badarī in the circumambulation of Hari, one receives as much merit as that of a horse-sacrifice or a hundred Vājapeya sacrifices.

36. For every step taken in Badarī in the circumambulation of Hari, one receives as much merit as that of the Caturmāsa holy rite or from that of giving away in charity the whole of the Cosmic Egg (Brahmāṇḍa).

37. For every step taken in the circumambulation of Hari in Badarī, one earns the same merit as that of *Atikṛcchra* and *Mahākṛcchra* rites mentioned in the Vedas.

38. The Naivedya of Viṣṇu at Badarī even if it be a lump of boiled rice, O Six-faced One, if consumed, dispels sin and purifies one like the fire of paddy husk that purifies gold.

39. The cooked food that the Lord eats along with Nārada and other sages should be eaten unhesitatingly by all for the purification of their nature.

40. Even the Devas really wish for it in every respect. Under some pretext, they go to Badarikā in order to consume the Naivedya of Viṣṇu, because they are eager to have it.

41. After partaking of food, they go to the abode of Viṣṇu. The devotees, the chief among whom is Prahlāda, enter the region of Hari.

42. Whatever sin is knowingly committed whether during infancy, youth or old age, it disappears on eating the Naivedya of Viṣṇu at Badarī.

43. By eating the Naivedya of Viṣṇu at Badarī, even that sin is dispelled, for which capital punishment is prescribed as the atonement.

44. In other Tīrthas one obtains salvation with great strain. (But in Badarī) a man obtains *Sālokya* by eating the Naivedya of Viṣṇu.

45. That man becomes Acyuta himself who has the form of Hari in his heart, the name of Hari in his mouth, the water with which Hari's feet have been washed on his head along with the Nirmālya and the Naivedya of Hari in his belly.

46. The sin of the murder of a Brāhmaṇa, drinking of liquor, stealing, carnally approaching the wife of one's preceptor—all these sins are destroyed by eating the Naivedya of Viṣṇu at Badarī.

47. A holy place like Badarī, wealth like Naivedya, a Tīrtha like that of Nārada has never been before nor will there ever be.

48. Badarī should be visited even with great exertion; the Naivedya there should be eaten; the Lord should be seen there at Vahnitīrtha; and the holy dip there is very rare.

49. The water with which the Lord's feet have been washed at Viśālā shall be far ahead of (i.e. holier than) all the Tīrthas on the earth as well as all the religious observances.

50. Of what avail are charitable gifts, penances and exertions for pilgrimages on the part of that person who gets at least a drop of the water with which Viṣṇu's feet have been washed at Badarī!

51. Atonements prattle (i.e. boast of their efficacy), O Six-faced One, only until the time of getting the water with which are washed the feet of Viṣṇu at Badarī.

52. If persons desire to proceed on the path of salvation easily without much trouble, the Naivedya of Viṣṇu should be (acquired and) eaten by them with great effort.

53. Those men who accept monetary gifts (after going to Badarī) are sinners. They always remain in the vortex of worldly existence. They will never have the merit of undertaking the pilgrimage there.

54. By despising the Naivedya people become afflicted by Tamas and are themselves censured. There is no doubt about this that one acquires purity of nature by eating the Naivedya.

55. Those who bring the Naivedya themselves and feed Brāhmaṇas with it, become contented like persons who have achieved their objectives. Of what importance is the merit of the charitable act called *Tulāpuruṣa-dāna*?[1]

56. By taking a mouthful (of Naivedya) at Badarī one gets that merit which is obtained by making great charitable gifts after going to Kurukṣetra during a solar eclipse.

1. *Tulāpuruṣadāna:* A *Mahādāna*. The donor is to be weighed against gold (or silver) and the precious metal is to be distributed amongst Brāhmaṇas. (HD II.ii, 871-72)

57. After reaching the holy place of Badarī, one should strive (to obtain) at least a mouthful (of Naivedya). This is a great means to propitiate Hari there in Badarī. By serving food to ascetics even an offender will be a beloved of Viṣṇu.

58. There is no other lord like Viṣṇu. There is no town equal to Viśālā; there is no deserving (i.e. eligible for receiving charity) person on a par with a mendicant; there is no Tīrtha like Ṛṣitīrtha.

59. Even Brahmā cannot recount the merits of those sacred men who perform Cāturmāsya (at Badarī).

60-61. The acquisition of merits by mendicants here is particularly glorified. Merely by seeing Badarī mendicants acquire ten times the merit usually obtained by listening to the Vedānta. During Cāturmāsya they derive particularly the benefit of salvation.

62. Those who renounce (i.e. become Sannyāsins), O dear son, in the holy place of Badarī, are liberated without strain. Those foolish persons and those who are insentient, those hyprocrites who wear ochre robes—all these can have salvation within their reach.

63. Whether they are persons of knowledge or not, whether they are renouncers or men of holy observances, Badarī should be visisted by all those who are desirous of obtaining benefits.

64. By listening to this meritorious chapter even casually a man shall be rid of all sins and honoured in the world of Viṣṇu.

CHAPTER SIX

The Greatness of Vasudhārā [1]

Skanda asked:

1. O my father Maheśvara, kindly recount to me the greatness of that Tīrtha where the skull dropped down from your hand.

Jaimini said:

2. This Tīrtha is a great secret. It is bowed down to by Suras and Asuras. Merely by bathing therein even a man guilty of the murder of a Brāhmaṇa becomes purified.

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1. A waterfall four miles north of Badrīnāth near the village Manal. It is the source of Alakanandā, a tributary of Gaṅgā. (De 3, 26)

3. There are five Tīrthas in the holy place named Kapālamocana which rids one of all the sins. Penance, charitable gifts and holy ablution therein (the merit accrued from) everything is expected to be inexhaustible.

4 By making rice-balls duly (and offering them to Pitṛs) one can redeem the Pitṛs from hell. This is called Pitṛtīrtha, eight times more meritorious than Gayā.

5. By the libation of water and gingelly seeds, the Pitṛs go to the excellent heaven.

6. If the devotee is steadily engaged in *Japa* day and night with concentration and mental purity, the fulfilment of his desire shall be great and instantaneous.

7. All the holy rites pertaining to the other world are unobstructed in the Tīrtha called Kapālamocana. Nothing more remains to be done about Pitṛs.

Skanda said:

8. Where is this Brahmatīrtha? Of what sort is its benefit? Who stay there? Kindly recount this to me, O father.

Śiva said:

9-10. Once Madhu and Kaiṭabha carried away the Vedas from the lotus-like mouth of Prajāpati who was stationed in the lotus coming out through the navel of Viṣṇu. They went away. Then the Lotus-born Lord got up from his bed and was desirous of creating (the universe). But without the Vedas he could not create the world. His power of memory was affected.

11. Then he came to Badarikā guarded by Hari. Bending his head down, he eulogized the eternal Lord.

12-14. Then, from the holy pit rose up the horse-headed Lord equipped with his own weapons. He was clad in yellow robes. He was white in complexion. He had four arms and very proud eyes. He was very wonderful in his features, with prominently keen eyes. He resembled a cloud tinged with moving lustre. By his own refulgence he had subdued all sorts of lustres. Endowed with mercy he appeared in front of Brahmā. On seeing him Brahmā became agitated with surprise. With his delight evident in his eyes he bowed down and eulogized him.

Brahmā said:

15. Obeisance to you having the lotus in your navel. Bow to you, O support of Kamalā (Goddess of fortune). Obeisance to you, O abode of Kamalā. Salute to the Lord wearing a large garland of sylvan flowers.

16. Obeisance to the Lord of the nature of pure knowledge, to the Lord residing in his abode in the cavity (hearts of all beings); obeisance to you, to Lord Hṛṣīkeśa, the calm one.

17. Salute to the Lord who have assumed many bodies for the sake of protecting your own devotees, to the wielder of the Śārṅga bow; obeisance to Brahman, to the wielder of the iron club for destroying infinite pain (of devotees).

18. Obeisance to the victorious Viṣṇu, to the protector of all creatures, to the Lord who engage yourself in various activities to stop the worthless worldly existence(?).

19. O Lord supporting the universe, obeisance to you from whom all the activities of the Guṇas have receded, O Lord, the excellent supporting pillar of Suras and Asuras; obeisance to you, the cause of recession, sustenance and renown?

20. On being praised thus by the Lord of Suras, the great Īśvara who is stationed in the heart and who knows everything along with all activities, came in between those demons suddenly, bound them and killed them sportingly.

21. Thereafter he took the Nigama (Vedas) and came near Brahmā. After giving his own Nigama unto him, he became happy and composed, and was eulogized.

22. Ever since then that Tīrtha which was manifested by Brahmā became well-known as Brahmakuṇḍa. It is famous in all the three worlds.

23. Merely by visiting it people of great sins become absolved of their sins. They immediately go to the world of Brahmā.

24. Those people who take their holy bath or perform holy rites there, go beyond the world of Brahmā, to that of Viṣṇu.

Skanda said:

25. What did Brahmā do after obtaining the Vedas from Janārdana? Kindly recount this and everything else to me now.

Mahādeva narrated:

26. Having seen Badarikāśrama, all the four Vedas were not inclined to go along with Brahmā, O dear son.

27. Thereupon Brahmā became depressed. On seeing him so, Siddhas, the residents of Janaloka, duly eulogized, prostrated and spoke thus:

Siddhas said:

28. The command of the Lord must be carried out by all the beings, mobile and immobile. The Lord is the maker, the annihilator, the father (protector) and the preceptor unto all the creatures.

29. Your stay (residence) near Brahmā has been commanded by Lord Hari himself. There is a way out, still without much of worry.

30. One form of yours should stay here in the liquid form and let the second form go with Brahmā to his world.

31. Thereafter, the Vedas with due consideration assumed two forms. They went to the world of Brahmā along with him with great delight.

32. Thereafter, the Four-faced Lord duly created the three worlds. The holy bath, charitable gifts, penances and other holy rites performed in the liquid forms of the Vedas will not be broken or interrupted until the ultimate annihilation of all living beings.

33. Men who observe fast for three days with some benefit in view become undoubtedly the commentators and expounders of the four Vedas.

34. All the four Vedas stand in the proper order at the side of the Lord. They are called Ṛk, Yajus, Sāman and Atharvan.

35. Even in Kaliyuga there are very few people who are meritorious, devoid of sins and masters of the Vedas and Vedāṅgas. Very few of them hear the chanting of the Vedas even.

36. Sarasvatī is above the four Vedas. If her name is repeated frequently, Sarasvatī[1] in the form of water dispels the inertia of men.

37. If a person stands in the waters of Sarasvatī and performs Japa (of a Mantra) with concentration and mental purity, that Mantra will never be broken.

38. Even the holy lord, sage Vedavyāsa of a liberal mind, be-

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1. This revulet is a tributary of Alakanandā. It is different from the Vedic Sarasvatī rising in Sirmur hill in Sewalik range or that near Somanātha (Gujarat) or Harakhaiti in East Afghanistan. (De 180-81)

came conversant with the import or contents of the Purāṇa collection, by the favour of Sarasvatī.

39. For the welfare of all the three worlds the Lord of the worlds duly established Vāṇī (Goddess of speech) who bestows the (rich) gift of speech.

40. If a person visits, touches, takes bath in it, worships it, eulogizes it or rejoices in it, his family will never have separation from Sarasvatī (Learning).

41. If men perform Japas on the banks of Sarasvatī, they will attain perfection in (the employment of) Mantras ere long. There is no doubt about it.

42. Of what avail is much talk? Vāṇī, having the liquid form (i.e. River Sarasvatī) bestows the gift of speech on men. (Merely) by seeing it, there shall result brilliant (excellent) purification.

43. Behind it on the southern side there is the Tīrtha Indrapada well-known as Dravadhārā, where Indra had performed penance.

44. After performing a very severe penance, he propitiated Janārdana. Then he obtained the position of Indra bowed to by Suras and Asuras.

45. Penance, charitable gifts, Homa, holy rites, pious observances and restraints—all these are said to yield merit multiplied infinite-fold. That Tīrtha is difficult of access.

46-47. Every month, on the thirteenth day in the bright half, a devotee should take bath in the excellent Tīrtha (named) Haritoṣaṇa. He should approach Sutrāmācchanda in its company(?) He should then fast for two days and worship Janārdana. He shall thereby be liberated and honoured in the world of (Indra).

48. There itself is (the holy spot) Mānasodbheda that is destructive of all sins. It is difficult of access to all creatures. There are great sages in that place.

49. They completely untie the mental knot of *Cit* and *Acit*. The name Mānasodbheda is proclaimed everywhere by the sages.

50. They split the knots in the heart and clarify many doubts. They destroy Karmas. Therefore (the holy spot) becan:e (known as) Mānasodbheda.

51. If by chance a man obtains only a drop (from the Tīrtha) here, he attains liberation instantaneously. What can be superior to this?

52. These sages live in their abodes in the caves of the mountain. They subsist on the diet of fruits, roots and water. They have conquered their minds and (desire for) objects. They have keen intellect. They are

agitated due to their fear of sins as well as that of the Kali Age. (*Defective Text*)

53. They get good clothes after exertions for (collecting) fruit (and bringing) water from springs in deep caverns. Everyday they take bath three times. Thereby these sages have subdued the onslaughts (strong impulses) of the sense organs.

54. There are many means (to salvation) involving physical strain. But the easiest means in the world is visiting Mānasodbheda.

55. On the day when a meritorious person obtains the (sacred) waters, he becomes similar to Vyāsa, Yama and the Pitṛs in due course.

56. This Tīrtha is one worthy of being desired by men. It keeps desires and ambitions under control by fulfilling them. There shall be salvation even if there is no desire. This is certain in both the cases.

57. If any man, by mistake, were to entertain desires, he will enjoy the fruits and later he will have liberation. There is no doubt about this.

58. People will enjoy all the pleasures in the worlds beginning with *Maharloka* as they desire. After the pleasures have been enjoyed, they go again (to this world) being subject to desires.

59. Learned men should endeavour for the acquisition of the aims of life. In my opinion their endeavour here in the holy spot Mānasodbheda does not go in vain.

60. On the western side of Mānasodbhedana there is the famous Tīrtha named Vasudhārā. It is the most fascinating of all. It is the rarest of Tīrthas in all the three worlds.

61. On hearing from Nārada that Badarikāśrama is the most excellent one among all the Tīrthas in the three worlds, all the Vasus came here.

62. They performed very severe penance for thirty thousand years with leaves and water for their diet. Thereby they attained Siddhi.

63-64. Their fatigue has been dispelled by the happiness of seeing the Lord. Their lotus-like faces became full-blown due to the mass of delight in their hearts. After seeing Lord Nārāyaṇa and securing a fine boon, they obtained the happiness, prosperity and devotion to Hari. Thus they became joyous.

65. By taking bath here, drinking the water and worshipping Janārdana, one enjoys happiness in this world and attains the greatest region in the end.

66. To meritorious persons a fiery refulgence is visible here in the middle of the water. On seeing this one does not stay further within

any womb (i.e. gets Mokṣa).

67. If sinners of impure parentage, whose minds and activities are those of heretics, come here, the waters generally do not fall on their heads.

68. Good people who remain pure, worship Janārdana and fast for three days with great devotion to the Lord, see the Siddhas.

69-70. Those who are fickle-minded and covetous, who do not speak the truth there, who fraudulently take away the wealth and wives of other people and ridicule others, who are clad in dirty clothes, who are not calm, who are not pure, who have abandoned good holy rites and whose minds also are impure, never attain any benefit here.

71-72. The few calm and quiet Sādhakas (aspirants) who take the path enjoined in the Vedas (attain happiness). Their Japas, penances, Homas, charitable gifts, holy rites, pious observances etc. pursued in accordance with their capacity bestow everlasting benefits.

73. Even the least bit of auspicious rites performed by embodied beings may yield a great result and even excellent salvation.

74. Is it necessary to recount more about the benefits of a place where (even) Devas go seeking benefit? After Hari's worship those people who sought pleasing things became joyous and are engaged in the path leading to heaven.

75. (This is a holy spot) where there are no persons who create obstacles to holy rites. Afraid of Hari, they (? holy rites) become fructified. Those who possess the power of discrimination enjoy the benefit. All good souls engaged in the path of duty (enjoy the benefit).

76. Those who read, teach and recite (this sacred treatise) that has been revealed, that has reference to the holy Tīrtha, become adorned with devotional feelings. They go to the auspicious region of Hari.

CHAPTER SEVEN

The Greatness of Pañcadhārā and Other Tīrthas

Śiva said:

1. On the south-west thereof, five streams of water flow down. Know that they are Prabhāsa, Puṣkara, Gayā, Naimiṣa and Kurukṣetra in liquid (water) form, O Six-faced One.

2. Formerly those intelligent ones went to the abode of Brahmā

in unclean forms, (because) they had been polluted by the sins of sinners.

3. After going there and bowing down to Brahmā, the sanctifier of the worlds, all of them stood there with palms joined in reverence and told the purpose of their arrival.

4. On hearing it the Lord of the universe went into a trance. On recollecting Badarikāśrama he smiled and spoke the following sweet words:

5. "Do not be afraid. Go quickly to Badarikāśrama of Hari by entering which great merit will accrue to you."

6. Then they bowed down to Brahmā and with their eyes (like) full-blown (lotus) on account of excessive delight, they went to Viśālā of unmeasured lustre.

7. The moment they entered Viśālā, all their sins were dispelled. Thereafter, they assumed two forms and eagerly went to their own abode.

8-10. In liquid (water) form as well as in another all those five stand free from the impurities. By taking bath in accordance with the injunctions in those Tīrthas and by performing the daily routine of holy rites with purity, one obtains the merit of the respective Tīrtha and attains the greatest position in the end. One who is engaged in the observance of fasts for five days and then worships Janārdana, enjoys many worldly pleasures here and (after death) attains Sālokya (i.e. residence in the same world as that) of Hari.

11. Beyond that is the Tīrtha free of impurities, named Somakuṇḍa. It is the place where Soma, the storehouse of digits, performed a penance.

Skanda said:

12. O you the most excellent one among eloquent beings, describe to me the greatness of Somakuṇḍa. O great Lord, I wish to hear about it with your favour.

Śiva said:

13. Formerly Soma, the glorious son of Atri, attained youth. From Gandharvas he frequently heard that heaven-dwellers enjoy (perpetual) happiness. Then he went to his father to ask him how it could be obtained.

Soma said:

14-15. O holy lord conversant with all pious activities, O ocean of the nectar of mercy, how can heaven that is the most excellent of all, be obtained? Kindly tell me, O father, that (holy) means through which I shall become Lord of Planets, Stars, Constellations and Medicinal Herbs.

Atri said:

16. O son, if one propitiates Govinda by means of restraints and pious observances, what is difficult of access to him? Nothing is difficult to be obtained by good people in this world and in the other world.

17. From Nārada he heard that (Badarī), the holy place, is excellent and free from impurities. After bowing down to his father, he went to the North, to Badarī.

18. After going there, he performed the worship of Viṣṇu by means of pure and praiseworthy fruits. He performed Japa of the excellent and charming eight-syllabled Mantra (viz. *oṁ nārāyaṇāya namaḥ*).

19. For eighty thousand years he performed the excessively austere, great penance with the Lord in view. It was the cause of great panic to all the worlds.

20. Then the delighted Lord, fond of his devotees, came there and spoke to Soma duly: "O devotee of excellent holy rites, choose your boon."

21. Then Soma got up, bowed to him again and again and said: "With thy favour I wish to be Lord of Planets, Stars and Constellations as well as all the Brāhmaṇas."

Hari said:

22. Choose another boon that is more difficult to obtain to people like you.

Then he did not choose any boon, O Son of the Daughter of Himavān.

23. With his mind excessively distressed, Soma performed a great penance once again for thirty thousand years by the standard of gods, O dear son.

24. At that time, with his heart filled with pity, the Lord went there and said, "Welfare unto you. Choose a boon. I am the bestower

of boons in front of you." Soma chose a boon like the one before. On hearing it, Hari vanished.

25. Thereupon Soma who became more distressed performed a great penance once again. A very difficult penance was performed (by him) for forty thousand years.

26. Thereupon, the delighted Hari appeared directly before him holding the conch, the discus and the iron club. He spoke these charming words to the exhausted Soma, the storehouse of penance:

27. "Get up, get up; welfare unto you. Choose a boon, O (devotee) of holy rites. I, the storehouse of penances, have been certainly propitiated by you by means of penance."

Soma said:

28. If you are delighted with me, O holy Lord, the most prominent bestower of boons, grant unto me the lordship of Planets, Constellations and Stars as well as of Medicinal Herbs, Brāhmaṇas and Night, O Lord of the universe.

Śrī Bhagavān said:

29. A thing very difficult to obtain has been prayed for, O dear one. Yet I shall grant it. Let it be so.

Thereupon all the heaven-dwellers came there and duly crowned Soma as the king with great respect.

30. Thereupon the Moon-god came in a chariot covered with fine cloths. He then got into the aerial chariot. Being eulogized by Suras, he rose into the firmament.

31. Ever since then that Tīrtha became well-known as Somakuṇḍa. It is a rare sacred place. Merely by seeing it, men become rid of their faults and sins.

32-34. Even persons of despicable nature go to Soma's world by touching it and drinking its waters. By taking the holy bath in it, by propitiating Pitṛs and Devas in accordance with the injunctions, the devotee shall pierce Soma's world and pass on to the world of Viṣṇu.

If anyone observes fast for three days and worships Janārdana, he never returns to the earth even in the course of hundreds and crores of Kalpas.

If a person stays there for three days, worships Janārdana, performs particular Japas, he can achieves mastery over Mantras.

35. By visiting Somakuṇḍa, all the sins of men, committed mentally, verbally or physically, shall be destroyed.

36. Beyond that is the Dvādaśāditya Tīrtha which is a great destroyer of sins. By performing a very difficult penance here a son of Kaśyapa became the Sun-god.

37. It is very difficult to get (a Tīrtha like this) in all the three worlds. It is the sole cause for success of penance. On Sundays, the seventh lunar day and on the days of the transit of the Sun (from one Zodiac to another), one should take his holy bath in accordance with the injunctions. He becomes purified of all the sins committed in the course of seven births.

38. One shall perform the *Pārāka*[1] expiatory rites duly and worship Janārdana. He will rejoice in the world of the Sun and will be honoured in the world of Viṣṇu.

39. One who is afflicted with severe illness should take bath and drink its water with mental and physical purity. Ere long he will be liberated from ailments. There is no doubt about it.

40. The next Tīrtha is Catuḥsrota. It is very fascinating to the eyes. The four aims of life, Dharma (virtue), Artha (wealth), Kāma (love) and Mokṣa (salvation), stay there in liquid form.

41. In compliance of the behest of Hari in this Vaiṣṇava holy place, the Puruṣārhtas (aims of life) themselves in liquefied form are the causes of the salvation of all living beings.

42. The aims of life with Dharma as the most important one occupy the quarters beginning with the East in due order. They are there as if they have separate bodies. If people worship them as they occupy (the quarters) in due order, indeed people will derive perpetual pleasure.

43. In other holy places these four have not come together like this. They are not obtainable even to gods. Those who have masses of merit acquired before, take birth as Brāhmaṇas and see them.

44-45. *Those who are wicked, those who are in league with vicious

1. *Pārāka*: Also called *Kṛcchra* by some (*Baudhāyana Dh. S.*II.1-91). It consists of a twelve-day fast. This penance removes all sins. For details *vide Manu* XI.215. *Yājñavalkya* III.320, *Baudhāyana Dh.S.*IV.5.16, AP 171.10.

*In v44 the second line: *kṣamārijaya-prāṇa-jaya-pradhānā*, should form the 4th line of the verse and should meaningfully be connected with verse 45. Thus lines 1, 3 & 4 of verse 44 form one meaningful sentence, viz. "Those wicked people who are in league with the vicious, like pet animals of vulgar women, do not see (i.e. attain) for a long time the Puruṣārthas."

Line 2 of v 44 taken with v 45 means "Those persons who are mainly characterised

people, those who are like only pet short animals of vulgar womenfolk, may give importance to forbearance, straightforwardness, and vital breaths. They do not see the aims of human life even after a long time.

Similarly they find ere long those aims of life that may cause Tattvajñāna (knowledge of the Truth).

46. Devas beginning with Brahmā, sages and ascetics come here during Parvan days with great purity, in order to take their holy bath, O Six-faced One.

47-50. There, beyond that is the Tīrtha named Satyapada. It is charming to all. This Kuṇḍa is in the shape of a triangle. It is destructive of sins. On the eleventh day (in the lunar fortnight) Hari himself comes to that holy spot. After him come all the sages, saints and ascetics, in order to take their bath duly in the Kuṇḍa named Satyapada. A few persons who are devoutly engaged in the practice of truth hear the song of Gandharvas and celestial damsels at midday on the eleventh day. On seeing this holy Tīrtha even great sins flee with fright like deer on seeing a lion.

51. A clever devotee should take holy bath in accordance with the injunctions of one's own branch (of Vedas). Thereby he attains Satyaloka. Thereafter he attains salvation.

52. One should be pure (mentally and physically) and observe fast for a day and a night. Then he should worship Janārdana in accordance with his capacity. He shall be worthy of being a liberated soul even while alive.

53. Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Rudra are stationed in a triangle. They perform penance with perfect concentration everyday for giving delight to all the worlds.

54. This Tīrtha which gives the region of Satya(-loka), named Trikoṇamaṇḍita should be visisted with great effort by those who desire to be rid of all sins.

55. It is impossible even for Brahmā to express the greatness of those who perform Japa, penance, eulogy of Hari, worship, adoration and salutation to Hari.

56. Beyond that is the hermitage of Nara and Nārāyaṇa, named Ativimala. There the pure water is seen in two forms.

57. Both of them will be certainly delighted with both of these.

by forbearance, straightforwardness, control of breath (or Yogic practice) similarly look (i.e. achieve) ere long those objectives of human life which are caused only by the knowledge of Truth.

One who takes bath there with determination and worships Janārdana shall certainly be liberated from all sins.

58. Thereafter, a sacred Tīrtha[1] of fine shape on the summit that is the abode of Nārāyaṇa, is the manifestor of Urvaśī (i.e. her birth place).

Skanda said:

59. O father, how did Uravaśī reveal herself on that summit? What is the merit and the benefit of that holy Tīrtha there? I have great curiosity. Recount it to me.

Śiva said:

60. Mūrti was the wife of Dharma, O Six-faced One. Nara and Nārāyaṇa were born to her. The Lord himself was born (of her).

61. Getting the sanction from their parents, they determined to perform penance. They stationed themselves on the two mountains like personifications of penance itself.

62-63. On seeing them, Śakra was surprised. He sent Manmatha (i.e. the god of love) along with his group, so that the penance might be (disturbed and) destroyed. They went to Gandhamādana with pride in their exploits. Realizing the rise in the strength of Nārāyaṇa duly, they lost their hope and they became dispirited. The Lord of the universe said to them:

Hari said:

64-66. Why have you come? Let my hospitality be accepted.

After saying this he gave them fruits and roots as well as Urvaśī. Then he vanished even as they stood observing her as one who might cause obstruction to the penance. They became frightened and went to heaven where they mentioned to Śakra about the strength of Hari. On getting Urvaśī Śakra experienced ecstatic delight.

67-68. Ever since then, that Tīrtha became famous separately after the name of Urvaśī. In the place where the Lord sits engrossed

1. This is difficult to climb even now-a-days. The Purāṇas claim Urvaśī's birth from Nārāyaṇa whose laps (*uru*) she is said to have occupied (√*vas*). Her name suggests that she must have been a resident of Ur in Central Asia.

in penance, a devotee should take his bath in accordance with the injunctions and observe fast for two nights. By worshipping Hari there Nara (Man) becomes Nārāyaṇa himself.

69. A man who reaches Urvaśīkuṇḍa and takes his bath there with an ardent desire obtains the world of Urvaśī, O dear son.

70. Near Urvaśīkuṇḍa the Lord is always present in the (posture of) performing a penance, contemplating on the well-being of all living beings.

71. Above it even wind bears the fragrance obtained solely from the lotus-like feet of the Lord of Śrī. If those who are afflicted by the sins of Kali come into contact with it, they will never suffer due to the mass of sins.

72. (*Defective Text*) A person who is dejected due to the glory of (his high) office attained delight by the power of the contact with it. He serves Acyuta alone in the cavity of the mountain. Bearing the pair of the feet of the Lord of Śrī all round, he becomes calm in the wind.

73. Even a worm which is full of excessive sins laughs at Devas because, stationed in that holy spot, all his evils have been subdued and he has become devoid of desires. Indeed that region is obtained after abandoning the flower which has become sport due to his contact(?).

74. After going to that place, the minds of sages are not aware of external objects, because they (their minds) are fixed to the lotus-like feet (of the Lord). The Lord of the earth stationed there, allots his own region to the people coming in due order.

75. There are many Tīrthas on the mountain resorted to by Nārāyaṇa. They are destructive of all sins instantaneously. I know them but the common people do not.

76. In the terrible cave of Saṁsāra where (the existence of) the Ātman is concealed, after reaching Urvaśīkuṇḍa a man should stay there for a day.

77. To the southern side of Urvaśīkuṇḍa, there are the weapons of the Lord of the universe. By seeing them one will not meet with any danger from weapons.

78. He who listens to this devoutly or he who reads or recites this with concentration shall be rid of all sins. He attains Sālokya of Hari.

CHAPTER EIGHT

The Greatness of Various Tīrthas at Badarī

Śiva said:

1. To the south of Brahmakuṇḍa is the great mountain Narāvāsa ('Abode of Nara'). It is there that Meru which is the most beautiful in the world was fixed by the Lord.

Skanda said:

2. How was Meru fixed by the Lord near Nara? O father, my curiosity is great. Let it be narrated if you like it.

Mahādeva said:

3-6. When the Lord himself transferred his residence to Viśālā, Devas, great sages, Siddhas, Vidyādharas and Cāraṇas left the peaks of Meru because they were eager to see the Lord.

On account of the delight caused to them by the sight of the Lord they abandoned heaven. Then, O Six-faced One, for their happiness (and convenience) the Lord uprooted the peaks of Meru with his single hand playfully and placed them (at Viśālā). Thereby the Lord increased the pleasure of all. Then all of them saw the mountain made of gold. They all were delighted; they eulogized Nārāyaṇa who is devoid of ailments.

Devas said:

7. We pay our obeisance to that Lord of fierce splendour and power of penance, who assumes sportingly many bodies for our happiness as well as for the rest of the world, who brought the golden mountain here, who conquers hundreds of demons, and who solely belongs to the side of Suras.

8. The Lord destroys out of compassion the distress of the miserable like fire reducing to ash even a mountain of cotton. He is the supporter of those who seek refuge in him; he is the most excellent one among those who know the one (and our Lord). Let him be pleased with us by whatever he does out of kindness. Whatever he does has never been imitated by any person.

9. Like a father he gives us perfect training and makes us lofty-

minded. He is kind and full of his own acquisition. His glances are efficient in the protection of the three worlds. He is the ocean full of nectar. Let him protect (us) from adversities.

The sages said:

10. The entire universe is superimposed on him. It is only an implement for his sports. It appears to be true. There is a mass of splendour on the face of the unborn Lord of great plenty. He is the Lord whose form is resorted to (by all). We bow down to you, O eternal Being.

Siddhas said:

11. Great men have attained Siddhi due to an iota of his kindness. Other men of the world too have crossed the terrible ocean of worldly existence without delay. This is our considered opinion.

Vidyādharas said:

12. O Lord endowed with a host of good qualities, O Lord with welfare as your form (i.e. whose form is conducive to welfare), O great Lord, O cause of continuous series of honour, is there any wonder that those who are inebriated with the sweet flavour of the liquor (extracted) from your lotus-feet stay completely satisfied?

13. Thereupon the delighted Lord (appeared) before those heaven-dwellers. On being told "Choose your boons", they said to (the Lord) who is the most eminent among the bestowers of boons:

14-16. "If (you) the Lord of Devas, the Lord of Ramā, are really pleased, Badarī should never be abandoned by you, nor should Meru too. Those who see the peak of Meru are meritorious persons. With your favour let their residence be on Meru itself. After enjoying the pleasures there for a long time, let them become merged in you."

Saying "so be it" Hari vanished there itself.

17. Ever since then all of them began to sport about on the peak of Meru. They were being protected repeatedly near Nara and Nārāyaṇa.

18. They used to stay in heaven for some time and some time in the middle of Meru. The sages and ascetics were devoid of distress and fear. They were not excited or agitated.

19. The Lord too stays there in the form of (the sage) Nara holding the bow and arrows. The glorious Lord is comparable to fire on account of (the brilliance of) his penance. He resorts to penance and causes bliss to the multitudes of sages.

20. Beyond that is the excellent Tīrtha saluted by the Guardians of the Quarters. Hari himself established the Guardians of the Quarters there.

Skanda said:

21. How were the Guardians of the Quarters established there by the Lord? O dear father, I have great curiosity and eagerness in regard to it. O highly intelligent one, recount it (to me).

Śiva said:

22. Once, while bringing those who had resorted to the middle of Meru here, Hari was eager to see the activities of Devas and the chief sages.

23-27. On seeing him the heaven-dwellers got up suddenly and bowed down to him. All of them humbly said, "O Lord, be pleased".

The Lord halted there for a moment and duly surveyed the scanty place there. He thought that the proximity of the sages and the Devas was not proper. Then Lord Madhusūdana called the Guardians of the Quarters and laughingly said to them: "Persons like you should not stay here. Indeed the sages, ascetics and Siddhas stay here along with their womenfolk. The abode of persons like you has already been well-arranged by me."

Then Hari hurriedly went to the beautiful and excellent mountain. O Guha, he called the Guardians of the Quarters and established them there.

28. Desirous of water, he hit the mountain with a piece of rock. Thereby he created a charming pond for their sport.

29-30. There Devas roam about as they please along with their wives. Gandharvas sing and rejoice. The forests and parks of heaven-dwellers were fascinating with the fragrance of flowers. All the embodied beings spend the days happily as though they were so many moments.

31. Delighting them, the Lord himself comes there to take his holy bath on the twelfth day as well as full-moon day.

32. After that, all the sages and ascetics take their bath, O Guha,

according to the injunctions, at midday. They see with their own eyes the great fiery splendour in the waters moving without any obstruction.

33. By seeing Daṇḍapuṣkariṇī they obtain instantaneously the merit which is said to be equal to that of taking the holy bath in all the Tīrthas.

34. All the rites performed for some desired results by the wise become fruitful there. The offering of riceballs there has eight times the benefit than that at Gayā.

35-36 Yajña, charity, penance and holy rite when performed there on the twelfth day in the bright half of the month of Jyeṣṭha, O Six-faced One, are said to be everlasting, since one becomes blessed and contented by taking the holy bath in accordance with the injunctions (there on that day). This secret is well guarded by the excellent Suras in regard to Badarītīrtha. This should not be disclosed to anyone and everyone. It was out of love for you that it has been mentioned to you.

37. Why should much be spoken about it here? Only those with plenty of merit see this famous holy place well-guarded by Suras. Not others. They will not even think about this. O Guha; Devas think about this everyday.

38. If people have performed all holy rites for the Lord in accordance with the religious injunctions and if they have regularly studied the Vedas, they see the rare Tīrtha named Daṇḍoda (i.e. Daṇḍa Puṣkariṇī). Otherswise it is not seen well.

39. There has never been and there will never be a Tīrtha greater than Daṇḍodaka, a god like Viṣṇu and a holy spot on a par with Viśālā.

40. Viśālā should be resorted to by clever devotees with great determination if they wish to be always near the Lord.

Skanda said:

41. What are those Tīrthas which are connected with Gaṅgā and are conducive to welfare in the region of good people? Recount them briefly to me.

Mahādeva said:

42. The Tīrtha in the vicinity of Mānasodbheda where Gaṅgā comes in contact, is devoid of impurities. It is meritorious. It is, superior to Prayāga.

43. Merely by taking there bath at the confluence of Gaṅgā, men obtain as much merit as is obtained by performing penance while taking in only air for thirty thousand years.

44. The Tīrtha to the south of the confluence is glorified as Dharmakṣetra. It is reported that the sages Nara and Nārāyaṇa were born of Mūrti there.

45. That holy spot is very sacred in the human world. It is the most excellent of all excellent holy spots. There alone does the Holy Lord Dharma stand on all his four feet.

46. If Yajña, penance or charity are performed by men there—whatever that may be, the merit thereof is not destroyed even in the course of hundreds and crores of Kalpas.

47. To the south of it is the Tīrtha named Urvaśīsaṅgama. Merely by taking holy bath there all the sins of men and embodied beings are destroyed.

48. Beyond that is Kūrmoddhāra. It is the sole means for devotion to Hari. By taking bath therein all living beings will gain purity of nature.

49. Next to it is the holy spot named Brahmāvarta. It is the sole and direct cause (of attaining) the world of Brahmā. Only by visiting the Tīrtha all the sins will be destroyed.

50. There are many Tīrthas here. But they are not easily approachable to embodied beings. O dear one, it has been briefly recounted because of my considerateness for you.

51. He who always listens to this, or he who recites this or reads this with mental purity and concentration shall get rid of all sins. He attains the region of Viṣṇu.[1]

52. A king gains victory; he who seeks a son gets a son; he who prays for a daughter gets a daughter; a virgin obtains a good husband.

53. He who seeks wealth gets wealth that is the sole means for the fulfilment of all desires.

54. If a man devoutly listens to this for a full month with concentration and purity, there is no doubt that what is wished for by him will be acquired even if it is rare.

55. Where this (text of) the greatness (of Badarī) is present, there is no danger from mental worry or physical ailment or trouble, poverty or strife. All these are not present at all in the houses where this (text of) greatness (of Badarī) is present.

56. There is no premature death, nor danger from serpents etc. There is no ill-luck or mishap. There is no bad dream or affliction

1. VV 51-58 give the *Phalaśruti* (the benefit accruing from listening, reciting etc.) of Badarikāśrama-Māhātmya.

caused by evil spirits. There is no danger (of invasion) from other nations.

57-58. In the event of a battle, at the time of a journey, during marriage, when there is a case pending in court and during auspicious holy rites this (Purāṇa) should be carefully read by clever devotees—either the whole book or a chapter or half of that. All tasks shall be fruitful. There is no doubt about this.

:: *End of Badarikāśrama-Māhātmya* ::

SECTION IV: KĀRTTIKAMĀSA-MĀHĀTMYA[1]

CHAPTER ONE

Praise of Kārttika Vow

Obeisance to Śrī Gaṇeśa

1. One should recite this Purāṇa after bowing down to Nārāyaṇa (i.e. Kṛṣṇa) who abides in the hearts of men, Nara (Man i.e. Arjuna), Narottama (i.e. Sage Vyāsa who enlightens people and enhances their spiritual status) and Goddess Sarasvatī.[2]

The sages said :

2. O Sūta, the meritorious greatness of the month of Āśvina has been recounted to us. We wish to hear about another thing (i.e. narration), the greatness of Kārttika (October-November).

3. What is the means of achieving the goal without strain in the Kali age in the case of men of sinful activities, whose minds are defiled by dirty thoughts and are immersed in the ocean of worldly affairs?

4. O holy Sir, please tell us that Dharma among all Dharmas

1. *Kārttika-Māsa-Māhātmya*: *Māsa-Māhātmyas* or glorification of certain months is a part of *Vrata* section of the Hindu Dharma Śāstra. Certain *Vratas* (religious observances) are prescribed for certain months and the importance of the Vratas is emphasized by glorifying the particular month.

The present volume being Vaiṣṇavakhaṇḍa of SkP, the months of Kārttika, Mārgaśīrṣa and Vaiśākha are glorified due to the prescription of Vaiṣṇava Vratas in them.

2. Traditionally a new work should begin with a benedictory verse (*Maṅgalācaraṇa*), as it helps the prevention of obstacles in completing the work. SkP is not one book but a library of books. This benedictory verse shows that this Māsa-Māhātmya was an independent work incorporated in SkP. There is another Kārttika-Māsa-Māhātmya in PdP VI, *Uttara Khaṇḍa, Pūrvārdha*, Chs. 88-118, which is textually more or less the same as in our SkP.

This verse was at first used for Mbh (originally named *Jaya*). But it came to be associated with Purāṇas like BhP and lesser works like such *Māhātmyas*. The commentator interprets *Narottama* as 'Vyāsa'.

which is the greatest means of achieving salvation, a giver of good results here and salvation (hereafter) to men.

Sūta said :

5. Nārada, the sage and son of Brahmā, asked Brahmā, the preceptor of the universe, the same question as I have been asked by you all.

6. Similarly, Satyabhāmā who was desirous of listening to the greatness of Kārttika asked Śrīkṛṣṇa, the Lord of the universe (the same question).

7. The same was recounted by the sages, Vālakhilyas, in the assembly of sages, in the form of a dialogue between the Sun-god and Aruṇa. It is extremely fascinating.

8. On Kailāsa the greatness of Kārttika was recounted by Śaṅkara to Ṣaṇmukha (Skanda) along with various anecdotes and narratives.

9. After hearing it in the olden time directly from Brahmā, O eminent Brāhmaṇas, the greatness of Kārttika was recounted to Pṛthu by Nārada.

10. Once Nārada, the Yogin, went to Satyaloka and humbly asked the Grandfather of all the worlds:

Śrī Nārada asked :

11. What is that fire, O Brahmā, that burns the fuel of terrible sins irrespective of its being dry or wet? It behoves you to recount it.

12. O Lord of Devas, surely there is nothing in the three worlds within the Cosmic Egg that is not known to you.

13. O Pitāmaha, name particularly the most excellent month among all the months, the most excellent one among the excellent Devas and (the most excellent Tīrtha among) Tīrthas.

Brahmā replied :

14. Among the months Kārttika is the most excellent; among Devas the Slayer of Madhu is the most excellent. The most excellent Tīrtha is the one called Nārāyaṇa.[1] All these three are very rare in Kali age.

1. *Nārāyaṇa Tīrtha or Nārāyaṇa Saras* : It is at the Sindhu-Sāgara-Saṅgama, 81 miles north-west of Bhuj, capital of Cutch (Gujarat). There was a great lake here in ancient times. (HD IV, 785.1)

Nārada said :

15. O Lord, I am your servant. I am your devotee, O favourite of Hari. Tell me (what are) the pious activities of Vaiṣṇavas. You are omniscient, O Pitāmaha.

16-17. At the outset it behoves you to recount the greatness of Kārttika to me, O Lord. (Then) describe the greatness of the gift of lamps, the holy observances of those who observe vows, the greatness of *Gopīcandana* (a species of white clay found near Dvārakā used for putting the vertical sectarian mark on the forehead) and that of Tulasī (the holy basil plant), the greatness of Dhātrī *(Āmalaka*—Emblic Myrobalan) and the injunction regarding holy bath etc. When is the Vrata to be begun? Describe the procedure of *Udyāpana* (concluding rites).

18. It behoves you to recount all of whatever Vaiṣṇava observances there are. Thereby, with your favour, I shall go to the region devoid of ailments.

Sūta said:

19. On hearing these words of his son Brahmā became delighted. After remembering Rādhā and Dāmodara,[1] he spoke to his son :

Brahmā said:

20. What has been asked by you, O son, for the sake of uplifting the worlds, is well-put. There is no doubt. I shall tell you the greatness of Kārttika.

21. On one side let there be all the Tīrthas and all the Yajñas with adequate monetary gifts (on the other side let there be the month of Kārttika). All those do not deserve (to possess) even a sixteenth part of the (greatness of the) month of Kārttika.[2]

22. On one side there is dwelling in Puṣkara or in Kurukṣetra or on the Himālaya mountain. On the other side there is Kārttika, O son, which is considered most meritorious of all.

23. There is on one side gold equal (in amount) to Meru and all types of charitable gifts and on the other side there is Kārttika, O son, which is always favoured by Keśava.

1. The special importance attached to Rādhā and Dāmodara in this work shows the establishment of Rādhā cult.

2. A typical example of *Atiśayokti* (Exaggeration) found in Purāṇas. It is such denigration of Yajñas by later Brahmin writers which adversely affected the Yajña cult. Even *Dāna* is regarded as inferior to Kārttika observances.

24. Whatever meritorious rite is performed in the month of Kārttika with Viṣṇu in view—I do not see any end to its merit. It has already been told (to you) by me, O Nārada.

25. On having got an extremely rare chance of being born as a human being which forms the staircase leading to heaven, one should maintain oneself in such a way that one will not fall back (to an inferior birth).

26 After attaining human birth which is very difficult to get, if a man does not perform the holy rites prescribed for the month of Kārttika, O most excellent one among righteous souls, he is (no better than) a murderer of his mother and father.

27-31. The month of Kārttika is the most excellent of all months. It is the most meritorious. It sanctifies all sanctifying things.

In this month, thirty-three Devas are present together, O sage. People perform all these rites now, O Nārada, with full devotion : holy baths; charitable gifts; feeding; holy rites; the various gifts of cow made of gingelly seeds, gold, silver, plots of land, garments and cows.

Suras duly accept those gifts made over (to deserving persons). Whatever is given, O eminent Brāhmaṇa, the penance that is performed, is said by Viṣṇu, the powerful one, to give inexhaustible merit. Relief from sins in the month of Kārttika is highly commended.

32-35a. Hence charitable gift is made with great care and effort, O Brāhmaṇa, in the month of Kārttika. Whatever is given in the month of Kārttika by men with Viṣṇu in view, especially the gift of cooked food, gives inexhaustible merit. Just as, O Nārada, O Brahminical sage, there is no destruction of rivers, mountains and oceans, so also, O sage, the gift that is made in the month of Kārttika has no destruction, O Brāhmaṇa. The sin is split into a thousand.

35b-37. On seeing the arrival of the month of Kārttika, if a man refrains from taking other people's cooked food, everyday he secures without difficulty the benefit of the holy rite *Atikṛcchra*.[1]

There is no month on a par with Kārttika. There is no Yuga equal to Kṛta. There is no scripture comparable with the Vedas. There is no Tīrtha on a par with Gaṅgā. There is no charitable gift on a par with that of cooked rice. There is no happiness on a par with that of the wife.

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1. *Atikṛcchra: Kṛcchra* is a general term for several penances involving fasts. In *Atikṛcchra* one morsel of food is to be eaten in the morning only (and complete fast at night) for three days, after this one morsel to be eaten at night only for three days and it is followed by complete fast for three days (*Manu* XI. 213). *Gautama* 26.22 states that it purifies all sins except Mahāpātakas.

38. Wealth acquired by justifiable means is the rarest thing for those who make charitable gifts. Performance of rites by mortals in a Tīrtha is also a rare (chance).

39. O tiger (i.e. prominent one) among sages, worship of Śālagrāma[1] stone and remembrance of Vāsudeva are the rites that should be performed in Kārttika by one who is afraid of sins.

40. If a person passes Kārttika of such a nature without doing anything (meritorious), he will certainly see the destruction of the merit acquired before.

Nārada said:

41. How is the excellent rite of Kārttika to be performed by a weak person? O Pitāmaha, tell me that whereby he too shall obtain its benefit.

Brahmā said:

42-45. If a man is (physically) incapable, he should perform the Vrata in the following manner. He should give money to another person and make him perform the Kārttika Vrata (for himself).

He should take the merit from him by means of the rite of Dāna saṅkalpa (i.e. ceremonious pronouncement of religious gift).

If he is incapable of making monetary gifts, O excellent one among the divine sages, he should drink the water from the Tīrtha. If a person is incapable of doing that too, he should joyously remember Hari always and repeat the names with due observances. Then, he will acquire the full benefit of the Kārttika Vrata.

46-48. The rite of *Harijāgara* (i.e. keeping awake for the whole of the night) should be performed in the temple of Śiva or Viṣṇu. If there be no temple of Śiva or Viṣṇu, he can perform it in the temple of any deity. If one is in an emergency, one can stay in the forest of Durgā(?) and perform the rite. He can also perform it at the root of a fig tree or in a forest of basil plants. If (literary) compositions on Viṣṇu's names are sung in the presence of Viṣṇu, the man obtains the benefit of the gift of a thousand cows.

49-51. One who plays on a musical instrument shall obtain the benefit of the Vājapeya sacrifice. The dancer shall obtain the benefit

1. *Śālagrāma*: Black stone found in the river Gaṇḍakī and worshipped as a symbol of Viṣṇu.

arising from taking a plunge in all the Tīrthas. The person who gives money to these people shall obtain all these merits. By listening to or by seeing (these) one obtains one-sixth of the benefit. If a person is in difficulties and he cannot obtain water anywhere, or if a person is afflicted with sickness, he should perform the *Mārjana* ('wiping off') rite by taking (i.e. muttering the) name of Viṣṇu.

52. If a person who has started the Vrata cannot perform the concluding rites, he should feed Brāhmaṇas for the sake of concluding the Vrata.

53. If a person is incapable of gifting away a lamp, he should light other people's lamps. Or he should protect another man's lamp from the blowing winds etc.

54-55. If there is no worship of Viṣṇu (if Viṣṇu worship is not possible), Tulasī or Dhātrī (Emblic Myrobalan) should be worshipped. If everything else is not available, the Vratin should worship Brāhmaṇas or cows. If these too are not available, he should repeat the names of Viṣṇu.

Nārada said:

O Brahmā, recount in detail the holy rites due in the month of Kārttika.

CHAPTER TWO

Rites to Be Observed in Kārttika

Brahmā said:

1-2. Henceforth, O Nārada, I shall recount the holy rites (to be observed) in the month of Kārttika.

On seeing that the month of Kārttika has come, if one refrains from taking food from other people, one attains salvation. There is no doubt about it.

Of all virtuous activities, worship of the preceptor is considered to be the greatest. O excellent sage, one obtains everything through service to the preceptor.

3. If the preceptor is pleased, all the Devas including Indra will be pleased. If the preceptor is displeased, all the Devas including Indra will be displeased.

4-8. In the month of Kārttika one may perform many holy rites, but if one does not serve the preceptor, one gets into hells only. Whatever is ordered by the preceptor, the disciple should carry it out. O Brāhmaṇa, one who is commanded by the preceptor, should not transgress his directions. If one meets with misery etc., one should seek refuge in the preceptor. A learned man should treat the preceptor as his mother and father. What is not obtained from the preceptor is not obtained elsewhere too. There is no doubt in this that with the favour of the preceptor one obtains everything. Medhāvī, Kapila and Sumati of great penance attained immortality by serving well their preceptor Gautama.[1]

9. Hence, the devotee, loyal to Viṣṇu, should serve the preceptor with all (possible) efforts in the month of Kārttika. Thereby he shall attain salvation.

10. An excellent Brāhmaṇa who imparts (knowledge of) Vaiṣṇavite holy rites unto men, shall obtain the merit that is obtained in making a gift of the earth inclusive of the oceans.

11. O (sage) of good holy rites, devotees will make (to him) gifts of cows made of gingelly seeds, gold, silver, plot of land, garments and cows with great sincerity and faith.[2]

12-16. Of all charitable gifts the gift of virgins (in marriage) is the best. Gift of a thousand cows is on a par with gift of a hundred bulls. Gift of ten bulls is on a par with gift of a vehicle. Gift of ten vehicles is on a par with gift of a horse. Gift of an elephant is superior to that of thousands of horses. Gift of gold is on a par with that of thousands of elephants. Gift of learning is on a par with thousands of gifts of gold. Gift of land is crores of times superior to that of learning. Gift of cows is superior to thousands of those of lands. Gift of cooked food is superior to thousands of gifts of cows. The universe subsists on cooked food (for its maintenance)—it has been said. Hence it should be given in the month of Kārttika.

17. By avoiding other men's cooked food one shall get the merit of (observing) the Cāndrāyaṇa vow. One obtains the merit of Atikṛcchra observed everyday.

18. In the month of Kārttika one shall particularly avoid meat and distillation of liquors. Even if one eats meat once, one attains birth in Rākṣasa species.

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1. The story how these students went to heaven along with their physical bodies is given in KM (Kārttika-Māhātmya) in *Śāroddhāra* (Comm.).

2. VV 11-16 enumerate various *Dānas*; vv 37-41 gift of food; vv 42-45 gift of cows.

19. If one observes restraint even in the intake of non-prohibited foodstuffs in the month of Kārttika, identity with the form of Viṣṇu is certainly obtained. It is a status that leads to salvation.

20. If one sleeps on bare ground, one obtains that merit, O dear one, which is obtained on making a gift of land to Brāhmaṇas during eclipses of the Sun and the Moon.

21-22. Feeding of Brāhmaṇa couples, worshipping them, offering them unguents, blankets, gems as well as clothes of various kinds—this must be done in the month of Kārttika. Cotton should be given away along with covering cloths. O (sage) of good holy rites, do offer footwear and umbrella in the month of Kārttika.

23-27a. One who lies down on bare ground in the month of Kārttika, shall dispel all the sins incurred in the course of a Yuga. He who keeps awake (with prayers) at dawn in the month of Kārttika in front of Dāmodara, O celestial sage, shall obtain the merit of (gifting) a thousand cows.

If one does not have (regular) bath in a river (everyday), does not listen to the stories of Viṣṇu, and does not see Vaiṣṇavas in the month of Kārttika, his merit acquired in the course of ten years shall be destroyed.

O tiger among sages, if an intelligent man remembers and gets into touch with Puṣkara mentally, verbally and physically in Kārttika, the merit thereof shall multiply lakhs and crores of times.

Prayāga in the month of Māgha, Puṣkara in the month of Kārttika and Avantī in the month of Vaiśākha shall dispel sins acquired (and accumulated) in the course of a Yuga.

27b-32. Those men are blessed in the world who, particularly in Kali age, perform the worship of Hari regularly for the sake of his propitiation.[1] There is no doubt about this that their Pitṛs are redeemed from hell.

If for the sake of the Pitṛs Viṣṇu is bathed in milk etc., they will attain heaven and stay there for a crore of Kalpas along with Devas.

If Kṛṣṇa, the lotus-eyed one, is not worshipped in Kārttika, O eminent Brāhmaṇa, Kamalā (Goddess of wealth) shall not be present in their houses in the course of a crore of births.

Alas! They are robbed, they are ruined, they have fallen into the cave of Kali—they by whom Hari is not devoutly worshipped with blue and white lotuses.

*1. VV 27b-36 recommend worship of Viṣṇu, esp. with lotus-flowers and Tulasī.

He who worships the Lord of Devas, the Lord of Goddess Lakṣmī, with a single lotus, destroys the sins of ten thousand years. Śveta[1] attained salvation by means of his worship with lotuses.

33-36. If the Lord of Devas is bowed down to and worshipped with a single lotus, he forgives thousand of guilts and seven hundred offences.

If anyone worships Hari with a hundred thousand leaves of the holy basil plant in Kārttika, O excellent sage, he will get a pearl for every leaf as the fruit thereof.

He who carries a Tulasī leaf taken out from an idol of Kṛṣṇa in his mouth, body or head, he who wipes his body with the Nirmālyas of Kṛṣṇa, shall be freed from all ailments and shall be rid of all sins.

Water from conchshell, devotion to Hari, Nirmālya, water from the feet, sandal paste and the residue of incense—all these are removers of the sin of the slaughter of a Brāhmaṇa.

37-41. In the month of Kārttika, O eminent Brāhmaṇa, the devotee should regularly take bath in the early morning. He should serve charitable gifts of cooked rice to Brāhmaṇas in accordance with his capacity.

Gift of cooked rice is superior to all other charitable gifts. The world is produced by means of cooked food. It develops through cooked food. Indeed, they know that cooked food has become vital to all living beings. A person who gifts food shall be the donor of everything in the world; he shall be (benefited as) the performer of all Yajñas. Of what avail to him is a bath in Tīrthas; of what use is the divine procession etc. to him? O Brāhmaṇa, everything is achieved through gift of food. There is no doubt about it. Formerly a Brāhmaṇa Satyaketu[2] attained the benefit of all meritorious deeds and acquired the rare benefit of salvation.

42. One who strictly adheres to Kārttika Vrata should make the excellent gift of cows. His Vrata becomes fulfilled thereby. There is no doubt about it.

43-45. There is no greater gift in the world than the gift of cows,

1. The story of King Śveta of Kāśmīra achieving salvation at Puṣkara by Viṣṇu-worship is given in *Brahma P.* (Comm.)

2. To illustrate the importance of the gift of food *Sāroddhāra* gives the story of Satyaketu who did not find time to go to Gaṅgā due to his *Vrata* of food-gift. Satyajit, a pious pilgrim, refused to accept food from Satyaketu as he did not perform ablution in Gaṅgā. But when he went to Gaṅgā, the river disappeared. When prayed she ordered him to take food from Satyaketu first and then come for bath.

which takes one across the ocean of worldly existence, O Nārada, as in the case of the Brāhmaṇa Suśarman.[1]

In the month of Kārttika, O eminent Brāhmaṇa, one may make many kinds of gifts. But if he does not remember Hari, those gifts do not sanctify him.

The efficacy of repetition of the holy names (of Viṣṇu) cannot be (adequately) described by me. Formerly the residents of hell were released by Puṣkara.[2]

46. (The Mantra of sacred names is) "O Govinda, O Govinda, O Hari, O Murāri, O Govinda, O Govinda, O Mukunda, O Kṛṣṇa, O Govinda, O Govinda with the discus in your hand, O Govinda, O Dāmodara, O Mādhava."

47. In the month of Kārttika, one should read half a verse or at least one quarter of a verse from *Bhāgavata* everyday in the month of Kārttika with faith and devotion.

48. Futile indeed is the birth of those men by whom *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* has not been listened to, nor the primordial Puruṣa has been propitiated, nor have the Brāhmaṇas been fed.

49. O great Brāhmaṇa, if a Brāhmaṇa reads the *Gītā* in the month of Kārttika, I am not capable to recount his merit.

50. A scripture on a par with the *Gītā* there has never been before nor will there ever be. It is the perpetual destroyer of all sins. The *Gītā* alone is the bestower of salvation.

51. By reading even a single chapter (of the *Gītā*), all sinners will be liberated like Brāhmaṇa Jaḍa.[3]

52. O sage, if a person makes the gift of a Śālagrāma stone (in

1. Suśarman, a pious Brahmin, heard Indra ordering his subordinates to bring even sinners to heaven if they have gifted a cow. Suśarmā went to his house and from the sky he urged his sons to gift cows. They obeyed and went to heaven. (Comm.)

2. VV 45-46 extol the importance of God's name. *Sāroddhāra* tells that once, by mistake, Yama's attendants took a pious Brahmin by name Puṣkara. Yama apologized and requested him to return. Puṣkara expressed the desire to see the hells. Seeing the tortures in hells he pitied and asked the sufferers in hell to take God's name which they did and went to heaven. (Comm.)

3. *Sāroddhāra* illustrates the importance of the recitation of the *Bhagavadgītā* by telling how Jaḍa, a Brāhmaṇa of sinful acts, was murdered. His sons not knowing anything from him, presumed that he was dead and were going to Vārāṇasī for the obsequies. On the way, at the root of the tree where Jaḍa was murdered they read the 3rd Chapter of BG. The sinner was absolved of sins and went to heaven. While going he told his sons to redeem others by reading BG. (Comm.)

the month of Kārttika), the amount of his merit cannot be assessed even by Viṣṇu.

53. Listen to the merit of that person, O Brāhmaṇa, who makes the gift of a Śālagrāma to a Brāhmaṇa well-versed in the Vedas, after duly worshipping it, O great sage.

54. One shall, by making the gift of a Śālagrāma stone, attain that merit which is obtained by gifting away land extending as far as the seven oceans.

55. A certain Brāhmaṇa lady became widow on the fifth day after her marriage. By making the gift of a Śālagrāma stone in the month of Kārttika she revived her husband.[1]

56. Hence in the month of Kārttika the gift of a Śālagrāma stone should be made after duly taking holy bath etc. There is no doubt about it.

CHAPTER THREE

The Glory of Kārttika

Brahmā said:

1-5. O great Brāhmaṇa, listen to the greatness of Kārttika further.[2] It (i.e. Kārttika vow) should start on the tenth day (in the month of Āśvina) and conclude on the tenth day (in Kārttika).

It should start on the full-moon day (of Āśvina) and conclude on the full-moon day (of Kārttika). The devotee should start on the eleventh day in the month of Āśvina. After bowing down to Dāmodara he should perform the rite of *Saṅkalpa* at the outset: "O Dāmodara, obeisance to you. O destroyer of all sins, it behoves you to grant permission to perform the (specific) religious observance of Kārttika. O Puruṣottama, O Lord of Devas, make its observance free from obstacles during the whole of this month." After praying thus, the devotee should duly begin the religious vow.

1. VV 53-56 emphasize the importance of the gift of a Śālagrāma. *Śāroddhāra* states how a girl from a Yājaka family got widowed on the fifth day after her marriage. Her father made her give a Śālagrāma to a Brahmin whereby her husband returned to life. The woman lived happily ever after gifting away a Śālagrāma.—(Comm.)

2. VV 1-5 state the days on which the Kārttika Vratas are to be begun and concluded and the *Saṅkalpa*.

What was being narrated to Anūru (Aruṇa, charioteer of the Sun-god) by the Sun-god, was heard by me. It is the cause of the attainment of heaven in Kali. May it be heard.

The Sun-god said:

6-8a. Out of the twelve months, the month of Mārgaśīrṣa is highly meritorious. It is said that Vaiśākha on the banks of Narmadā is more meritorious than that. The month of Māgha at Prayāga is a hundred thousand times more meritorious than that. It is declared that Kārttika is more fruitful than that at any water reservoir.

8b-9a. With all (kinds of) charitable gifts, vows and pious observances on one side and the holy bath in the month of Kārttika on the other side were weighed in balance by god Brahmā (and both were found to be equal).

9b-12a. If in Kali Age people are (found) endowed with many children and plenty of wealth, know that holy bath in the month of Kārttika has been certainly taken by them with great respect.

Those who perform the following in the month of Kārttika are indeed living-liberated souls[1]: Holy bath, gifting away lamps, keeping forests of Tulasī plants, sleeping on bare ground, celibacy, avoidance of two-leafed plants, glorification of Viṣṇu, truthfulness, and listening to the Purāṇas:

12b-14. There is nothing conducive to righteousness on a par with Kārttika; there is nothing more conducive to wealth than Kārttika; there is no *Kāmya* rite (that which yields desired results) on a par with Kārttika. There is no better rite bestowing salvation than Kārttika (Vrata).

This Vrata was observed by Yudhiṣṭhira for the sake of virtue (Dharma), by Dhruva for the sake of wealth, by Śrīkṛṣṇa for the sake of love and by Nārada for the sake of salvation. Hence it is very excellent and a favourite of Kṛṣṇa.

Aruṇa said:

15. Say, O Sun-god, the immanent soul of all, when should this Vrata be begun to make it completely fruitful? Which deity should be properly worshipped here?

Bhāskara (Sun-god) replied:

16. Viṣṇu, Śarva, I, Goddess and Vighneśvara i.e. Gaṇeśa (are to

1. The various *Vratas* during Kārttika.

be worshipped).[1] Though I am only one, I have become five as in the case of a Stage Manager in the course of a play.

17-18. Know, O lord of birds, that these are all our own different forms. Hence holy bath in the month of Kārttika should be taken for the purpose of dispelling all sins by Sauras (followers of the Sun), Gāṇeśas (followers of Vighneśvara), Śāktas (followers of Śakti or Goddess), Śaivas (followers of Śiva) and Vaiṣṇavas (followers of Viṣṇu).

When the Sun is in the Zodiac of Libra, it should be taken for propitiating the Sun-god.

19. Beginning with the full-moon day in the month of Āśvina and ending with the full-moon day of Kārttika, the holy baths should be taken by men for the delight of Śiva.

20. Beginning with the fortnight of Devī and ending with the fourteenth night, Mahārātri, the holy bath should be taken proclaiming, "May the Goddess be pleased".

21. Beginning with the fortnight of Gaṇa(pati) from the fourth day and ending with the fourth day of the dark half of the month of Kārttika, the holy bath should be taken for the propitiation of Gaṇapati.

22. The devotee should begin the Vrata on the eleventh day in the bright half of the month of Āśvina and conclude it on the eleventh day in the bright half of the month of Kārttika. If he does like this, Janārdana shall be delighted.

23. There is no other month on a par with Kārttika; there is no other city equal to Kāśī; there is no other Tīrtha on a par with Prayāga; and there is no Lord greater than Keśava.

24. If the holy bath in the month of Kārttika is taken casually, or under compulsion, knowingly or unknowingly, (the devotee) shall never meet with torture at the hands of Yama.

25. If one is (physically) incapable of taking the holy bath, he can offer money etc. to another. When the other comes after concluding the bath, one should grasp his hand. Thereby one attains the merit thereof.

26. Or the devotee should offer quilts, blankets etc. to Brāhmaṇas who take the holy bath in the month of Kārttika. Thereby he shall attain the benefit accruing from the holy bath.

1. This shows a synthesis of the main five sects of Hinduism. This oneness is represented by *Pañcāyatana* worship. The credit of this synthesis is given to Ādi-Śaṅkarācārya. VV 18-22 specify the day (*tithi*) on which a follower of a specific deity is to begin and conclude the *Kārttika Vrata*.

27-29. In the month of Kārttika, Rādhā and Dāmodara should be particularly worshipped.

The idols of Rādhā and Dāmodara may be of gold, silver (or if it is not possible, of) copper or clay. They may be even pictures or figurettes made on the ground with flour pastes etc. and painted with colours. Those who worship these idols or pictures etc. of Rādhā and Dāmodara underneath a Tulasī plant should be known as living-liberated souls.

30. A man may be defiled by thousands of sins, but through the holy bath in the month of Kārttika, he will certainly become liberated. There is no doubt about this.

31. O bird, if Tulasī is not available, the worship should be conducted beneath a Dhātrī (Emblic Myrobalan) plant. But the main worship is to be conducted in the mystic diagram of the Sun.

32. All the Devas are invisible but he (the Sun-god) is the visible Lord. All the Devas are under the control of Kāla (Time, Death) but the Sun-god is Kālakāla (Regulator or death(?) of Kāla).

33. One who is incapable of worshipping in this manner should worship an idol. There is greater merit in worshipping a Brāhmaṇa than an idol.

34-38. A poor man is a deserving recipient of charitable gifts. If he happens to be learned, he is particularly so. If a Brāhmaṇa is not available, black cows are charming. A fixed idol of Viṣṇu is better than a mobile (portable) one.

He who worships and bows to the idols installed by Śūdras, goes to hell along with ten ancestors and ten descendants.

If one touches the idol woshipped by a Śūdra, he will burn (get burnt) his family up to the seventh generation.

Hence one must enquire and worship an idol that has been installed by Brāhmaṇas. Better than this is an idol made by Devas. It yields worldly pleasures and salvation.

If an idol is not available either an Aśvattha (fig tree) or a Vaṭa (banyan tree) should be worshipped, since Aśvattha is a form of Viṣṇu and Vaṭa is a form of Śiva.[1]

39. A base man who eats Tulasī Śāka (basil leaf cooked as a vegetable dish) or betel leaf knowingly or unknowingly in the month of Kārttika shall go to hell.

1. As per *Sanatkumāra Saṁhitā*, Aśvattha is a form of Viṣṇu, Vaṭa (banyan tree) is a form of Śiva, Palāśa (*Butea frondosa*) is god Brahmā and mango tree is Indra. (Comm.)

40. Hari is always present in the circular line in the Śālagrāma stone. Hence by all means one should worship the Śālagrāma stone.

41. Cows have become eaters of faeces on account of Rudra's curse.[1] Still they are to be worshipped because they yield merit in both the worlds.

42. In the month of Kārttika, one who takes food on a leaf of Palāśa tree (*Butea frondosa*) which is born of a part of god Brahmā, shall go to the world of Viṣṇu.

43. Aśvattha is a form of the Lord (Viṣṇu) and Vaṭa is a form of Sadāśiva. Hence by all means one should worship Aśvattha in the month of Kārttika.

44-46. A woman devotee should circumambulate (an Aśvattha tree) a hundred thousand times in the month of Kārttika. On Saturdays she should worship Rādhā and Dāmodara beneath it. She should then feed a couple representing Rādhā and Dāmodara. After feeding the couples, she should take food with restrained speech. (By observing this Vrata) even a barren woman shall get a son. Nothing need be said about others? Viṣṇu is always present in all as in a Brāhmaṇa.

47. He is present in the Aśvattha tree among trees, and in the Śālagrāma among stones. Hence the worship of Viṣṇu should be performed at the root of Aśvattha.

48. The worship of Aśvattha should be conducted on Saturdays by touching it. On other days if a man touches it he will become poor.

49. Those men who perform holy bath, keep religious vigil, light the lamps and keep a forest of Tulasī plants in the month of Kārttika are the forms of Viṣṇu.

50. Those men who sweep the temple of Viṣṇu, offer Svastika etc. and those who worship Viṣṇu are living-liberated souls.

51. I shall mention the time for the holy bath in the Tīrthas that will be beneficent. Know from me the benefit thereof and the rites concerning the holy bath and all other connected things.

1. According to *Sanatkumārasaṁhitā*, the Divine Cow (Kāmadhenu) gave false evidence that Brahmā had seen the upper part of the head of Śiva. Śiva cursed her (and her species) to eat faeces by the mouth which told a lie. (Comm.)

CHAPTER FOUR

The Procedure of Kārttikasnāna[1]

Brahmā said:

1. When a period of forty-eight minutes is still left for sunrise, the devotee should go to a water reservoir (a tank, a pond or a river) taking with him clay, Tulasī and clothes and a waterpot, O sage.

2-3. After coming to the bank he should place the vessel there on its bank. He should then wash his feet and repeat the name of the place, time etc. He should remember the rivers beginning with Gaṅgā and the deities beginning with Viṣṇu and Śarva. He should stand in navel-deep water and repeat this Mantra:

4. "O Janārdana, O Dāmodara, the Lord of Devas, I shall perform the early morning ablution in the month of Kārttika for propitiating you along with Mā (Lakṣmī).

5. O Keśava, the destroyer of sins, I shall perform the *Nitya* (daily) and *Naimittika* (to be done on special occasions) rites in the month of Kārttika and then take the holy bath. I shall then offer *Arghya*. Make it (the procedure of bath) free from obstacles."

6. Thereafter he should offer *Arghya* etc. to the deities of the Tīrtha etc. in the proper order: "O Hari accompanied by Rādhā, accept the *Arghya* offered by me.

7. Obeisance to the Lotus-naveled Deity; bow to you lying in the waters. Obeisance to you, O Hṛṣīkeśa. Accept the *Arghya*. Obeisance to you.

8. I am observing the Vrata in the month of Kārttika. I have taken my holy bath duly. Accept the *Arghya* offered by me, O destroyer of prominent demons.

9. May the five rivers Kiraṇā, Dhūtapāpā,[2] Sarasvatī of meritorious waters, Gaṅgā and Yamunā sanctify me."

10. The man should offer *Arghya* to the other rivers as well in

1. *Snāna* (Bath) has a special religious significance in the life of Hindus. Apart from the compulsion of bath everyday and recommendation of bath twice a day to a householder and thrice a day to a recluse (*Yati*), there are special occasions and religious merit from taking bath at certain places (vide HD II, i, 658-669). The present chapter deals with the procedure, time etc. of holy bath in the month of Kārttika.

2. Dhūtapāpā: A river with Himalayan source as per VāP I.45.95, SkP V.ii.74-76. A tributary of Gaṅgā in Banaras (De 57).

accordance with the injunctions. He should remember Gaṅgā in every Tīrtha.

11. He shall never remember other Tīrthas in Gaṅgā. After uttering all these Mantras, he should take the bath for removing the dirt.

12. Thereafter he should perform the clay-bath,[1] the bath unto the manes and the bath unto the preceptor. After that he should sprinkle water on his own head (uttering Pavamāna hymns).

13. Repeating the Aghamarṣaṇa Mantra,[2] he should perform the water libation which is an ancillary to the holy ablution. Thereafter, he should sprinkle water on his own head repeating the *Puruṣa Sūkta* (RV X.90).

14-16. Then he should come out and place the Tīrtha on his own head. He drinks the Tīrtha three times, comes out of the water with Tulasī in his hand and squeezes out the water from his clothes outside the water reservoir:

"Since the water has been defiled by me through the mass of dirt from my body, I am propitiating Yakṣman (the deity of consumptive disease) to expiate for that sin."

After squeezing out the water from the clothes, he should apply *Tilaka* (sacred sectarian mark on the forehead) etc.

Sūta said:

17. Listen ye all, O sages, to the merit arising from the holy bath during Kārttika. This has been related in detail by the Sun-god to Aruṇa.

Aruṇa said :

18. In which Tīrtha and holy spot is the benefit of the holy bath during the month of Kārttika the best? O Lord, tell this.

The Sun-god said:

19-22. During the month of Kārttika holy bath can be taken in any water whatsoever.[3] In any place bath can be taken in hot water during the month of Kārttika. (This is for invalids.)

If one takes bath in cold water, it has ten times the benefit of the bath with hot water. If the bath is taken in a small well outside, it has

1. A fashion of those days (see HD II, i, 663-64 for the usual procedure of bath). 'Bath unto Pitṛs' means reciting *Pitṛ Sūkta* during bath.
2. Aghamarṣaṇa 'Sin-effacing hymn' (RV X.190.1-3).
3. VV 19-27 give gradation of merit-giving baths.

hundred times more benefit. The benefit arising from the bath in a tank is a thousand times that of the bath in a big well. From the bath in a lake that benefit will arise ten thousand times. By taking bath in a stream the merit shall be ten times of that. There shall be more benefit if the holy bath is taken in a river in the month of Kārttika.

23. The bath in a Tīrtha is proclaimed as one having ten times the benefit of the bath in a river, O excellent bird. Ten times more benefit accrues from the bath at the confluence of two rivers.

24-27. There is no end to the merit accruing from a holy bath taken at the confluence of three rivers. The following holy Tīrthas[1] are very difficult of access for holy bath during Kārttika: Sindhu, Kṛṣṇā, Veṇī, Yamunā, Sarasvatī, Godāvarī, Vipāśā, Narmadā, Tamasā, Mahī, Kāverī, Sarayū, Śiprā, Carmaṇvatī, Vitastā, Vedikā, Śoṇa, Vetravatī, Aparājitā, Gaṇḍakī, Gomatī, Pūrṇā, Brahmaputrā, the excellent lake Mānasa (or Nārāyaṇa in Kaccha), Vāgmatī, Śatadru and Badarikāśrama. Know the other Tīrthas from me.

28. Āryāvarta is the bestower of merit more than all other holy spots. Kolhāpurī[2] is more excellent than that and it is said that the two Kāñcīs (i.e. Viṣṇu's as well as Śiva's) are still more excellent.

29-33. Anantasenavasati[3] (Residence of Anantasena), Varāhakṣetra and Cakrakṣetra[4] are respectively superior to the previous one. Muktikṣetra[5] is superior to that. Avantikā is more excellent than that. Better than that is Badarikāśrama. Ayodhyā is superior to it and Gaṅgādvāra is superior to that. Greater than that is Kanakhala and superior to that is Madhupurī (Mathurā).

If people stay at least for one Kārttika month at Mathurā, take

1. Some of the modern names of these Tīrthas:
   Vipāśā — The Bias, Panjab
   Tamasā — Tonse, 12 miles west of Sarayū. It falls into Gaṅgā (*VR* 1.2.3)
   Vitastā — The Jhelum, Kashmir
   Vāgmatī — Bāgmatī—A sacred river in Nepal. Rises in the Himalaya. *Varāha P.* 215.49

2. Kolhāpurī: Mod. Kolhapur. A Devī-sthāna of Lakṣmī (*Devī Bh. P.* VII.38.5, PdP V.176.42). Probably the author must have been a Maharashtrian. He records above Kṛṣṇā and Veṇī as two different rivers.

3. Prob. the same as Anantaśayana of PdP VI.110.8, VI. 280.19. Padmanābha in Travancore (Kerala) (HD IV, 733).

4. If the same as Cakra-Tīrtha, it is variously located at Kurukṣetra, Tryaṁbaka in Mahārāshtra, Vārāṇasī and at Rāmeśvara (SkP III, Setu-Māhātmya Ch. 3) (De 43).

5. Muktikṣetra or Muktisthāna is difficult to pinpoint as SkP IV (Kāśīkhaṇḍa 6.21-23 enumerates 26 places as Muktisthāna such a Prayāga, Naimiṣa, Tryambaka (Maharashtra) etc.

regular baths in the waters of Yamunā, they remain in Vaikuṇṭha for a long time. Rādhā-Dāmodara himself took his holy bath therein in the month of Kārttika. Hence Madhupurī is the most excellent one. Particularly Yamunā is very excellent.

34-39. Dvārāvatī is more excellent than that. Everyday Keśava used to bathe there along with sixteen thousand women and other Yādavas.

One by whom a Tilaka with (local) clay (called Gopīcandana) has been applied at Dvārakā, should certainly be known to be a living-liberated soul. The greatness of holy bath taken at Dvārakā cannot be (adequately) described by me. To those who have dedicated their minds to Govinda, it is the brilliant Sun of merit. Beyond that is Bhāgīrathī which flows close to Vindhya (?) (Vindhyavāsinī Devī?). Ten times more merit than it comes from Tīrtharāja (Prayāga) here.

When ten thousand years of Kali Age pass by, Viṣṇu will forsake the earth. With regard to the waters of Jāhnavī the period is half of that and that of the groups of Devas is half of that again. As long as Gaṅgā remains, all the Tīrthas too remain. In their own respective places, they dispel the sins of men only till then.

40-43. 'When Gaṅgā itself has passed off, who will dispel their sins?' Thinking thus the excellent Tīrthas will go beneath the surface of the earth.

Hence, O ye all eminent sages, let holy rites be performed as long as Gaṅgā abides. Thereafter enter deep ecstatic meditation and be submerged within the earth till the advent of Kṛta Yuga. Otherwise a man of good intellect is likely to drop off and get polluted on account of Kali Age.

More excellent than that is Kāśī that has no destruction. It is with its support that Gaṅgā too dispels all the sins.

44. There is no destruction of Kāśī even if Brahmā passes away. It is to have a sight of Kāśī that Gaṅgā began to flow on the North. In Gaṅgā, the Tīrtha called Pañcanada (Pañcagaṅgā at Vārāṇasī) is well-known.

45-49. When the month of Kārttika arrives, those Pitṛs who have fallen into Raurava hell, begin to shout, "Will there be some fortunate one in our family who will go to the splendid Pañcanada and perform water libation unto us? Thereby we shall be taken across the ocean of hell."

At the advent of the month of Kārttika Tīrtharāja (Prayāga) and other Tīrthas go to Pañcagaṅgā for their holy bath. There is no doubt about it. —

Even if a hundred thousand sins have been committed, they all become

destroyed instantaneously by taking holy bath in Pañcanada, the splendid Tīrtha, and by worshipping Bindumādhava.

If people take their holy bath in the splendid Tīrtha Pañcanada, the merit thereof shall be crores of times that of the holy bath in all the Tīrthas.

Brahmā said:

50. If in the month of Kārttika a person wishes to take his holy bath in Kāverī, he will be liberated from all sins by that itself and he will attain *Sāyujya* with (i.e. absorption into) Viṣṇu.

51-53. Who can (adequately) recount the excellent greatness of Kāverī?

In this connection I shall describe unto you the ancient legend about Kāverī, O Brāhmaṇa, listen attentively.

Gaṅgā born of the lotus-like feet of Viṣṇu is on the northern bank of Gautamī. It is worshipped by all the worlds. It is destructive of all the sins of the three worlds. Once she became suspicious about her being sinful and thought thus:

54-57. 'All the people come to me and leave their sins in me. How can those sins be dispelled?'

With this thought worrying her, she went to Kailāsa in order to ask Bhava (Śiva), the lover of the Daughter of the Mountain. After meeting Mahārudra there the (river) born of the feet of Hari submitted:

Gaṅgā said:

O Mahārudra, obeisance to you. It is to ask you (something) that I have come here. All the people come to me and discharge their sins in me. It is impossible for me to bear those sins, O Lord of Pārvatī. Tell me the means whereby those sins do not beset me.

58-61. On hearing these words of Gaṅgā Parameśvara (Śiva) replied:

"It was to dispel sins that at the outset you appeared from the lotus-like feet of Padmanābha, O gentle lady who are worried and distressed. The overlordship for destroying sins has been allotted to you by Viṣṇu. Still I shall tell you the means of dispelling sins polluting you. Kāverī, the most excellent river, the divine daughter of Kavi(?), is the most excellent among all due to the power of (given by) Hari. She has the power to dispel all the sins in her.

62. One who takes his holy bath in Kāverī in the month of Kārttika, shall be rid of all sins. He goes to the highest region of Viṣṇu.

63. Hence, O gentle lady, go to that (river). You will be liberated from sins."

On being advised thus, Gaṅgā went to Kāverī, the dispeller of sins.

64. Merely by touching its waters in Kārttika, Gaṅgā, born of feet of Viṣṇu, became rid of all sins and went to her own abode.

65-66. Every year in the month of Kārttika Gaṅgā comes to Kāverī, the sanctifier of the three worlds, the dispeller of sins, in order to take bath with great devotion. Merely by touching her waters in Kārttika Gaṅgā, born of the feet of Viṣṇu, became rid of all sins and went to her own abode.

67-68. Hence holy bath in the month of Tulā (i.e. Kārttika) is praised by learned men. O sage, he who devoutly takes bath in Kāverī in the month of Tulā, becomes immediately liberated from sins and attains the greatest goal. Hence holy bath in Kāverī in the month of Kārttika is commended.

69. He who is devoutly engaged in *Kārttikavrata* obtains the merit of holy bath in Kāverī and then the greatest goal after hearing this legendary narrative.

70-71. The holy bath taken when a part of the night still remains, is the most excellent one. It causes satisfaction to Viṣṇu. It is of middling merit, if the bath is taken after sunrise but before the setting of the constellation Kṛttikā. It can be the holy bath (in the proper sense) (pertaining to Kārttika) only when taken in the stipulated time. Otherwise it is not so. The bath should be taken by women after receiving permission from their husbands.

72-73. Even a holy rite, if done without husband's permission, will cause harm to him. Women have no holy rite to be done after forsaking their husbands. Even if she commits a thousand sins, a woman is still virtuous and holy if she carries out the behest of her husband. This position she cannot attain by means of Vratas etc. alone.

74. Even if the husband is poor, fallen, foolish or wretched, he is the refuge unto his wife. By abandoning him a woman falls into hell.

75. O dear one, there is slackness among men in Kali Age in regard to taking a bath. Still I shall tell you about the holy bath during the months of Kārttika and Māgha.

76. One who has perfect restraint of speech and mind, who has good control over hands and feet and who possesses learning, penance and renown, has the benefit from a Tīrtha.

77. The following five do not benefit from Tīrthas: One who has no faith, one of sinful soul, an atheist, a man of unbalanced mind and

heart and one who enters into (unnecessary) disputation.

78. A Brāhmaṇa who gets up early in the morning and regularly takes his holy bath, shall be rid of all sins. He attains the Supreme Brahman.

79. Holy bath has been mentioned by learned men conversant with the same (procedure of bath) to be of four types, viz. Vāyavya, Vāruṇa, Divya and Brāhma.[1]

80. The Vāyavya bath is the bath with the dust particles of a cow. The Vāruṇa is the bath in oceans etc. The Brāhma bath is the bath to the accompaniment of the Mantras from the Brāhmaṇa portion of the Vedas. The Divya bath is one with rain water or the sun's rays.

81. Of all the types of bath, the Vāruṇa type is the best. Brāhmaṇas, Kṣatriyas and Vaiśyas should take the holy bath repeating the Mantras.

82-83. The bath prescribed for a Śūdra or women is one (to be) taken silently. A girl, a youthful woman, an old woman, a man or a woman or a eunuch—all these are rid of all sins by means of holy baths in the months of Kārttika and Māgha.

People who take holy baths in the month of Kārttika attain the desired result.

84-85. In the excellent Tīrtha of Puṣkara formerly, by the contact of (the cow) Nandā, (King) Prabhañjana became liberated from the birth as a tiger. By the words of Nandā he attained the greatest (Brahman) in the Kārttika month.[2]

Thus the procedure of taking the holy bath has been recounted. What else do you wish to hear?

CHAPTER FIVE

The Daily Routine of Duties in Kārttika

Nārada said:

1. When should the bath be taken? How should one stay through-

1. VV 79-81 explain four types of bath.

2. The Comm. states how king Prabhañjana was cursed by a female deer to be a tiger as he shot an arrow at her while she was feeding her young one. By way of redemption she told him that while at Puṣkara he will attack a cow Nandā feeding her calf. He was dissuaded by her. He got redemption by performing bath at Puṣkara in Kārttika.

3. The daily routine of a Hindu is regulated fairly strictly. Works like *Āhnika-Prakāśa, Āhnika-Tattva* elaborate the details. Also vide HD II, i, 643 ff.

out the day? O Pitāmaha, recount the *Āhnika*[1] (daily round of religious duties) in particular (during Kārttika).

Brahmā said:

2. **A person observing Vratas should always get up when a quarter of the night is still left. He should eulogize Viṣṇu with hymns (known as *Prātaḥsmaraṇa*) and then think about the daily round of duties.**

3-10. **The man should answer calls of nature[1] in the south-west corner of the village in accordance with the injunctions. He should place the sacred thread round right ear. (In the day time) he should sit facing the North and at night he should sit facing the South while passing urine or faeces. The earth should be covered with grasses before passing urine or discharging faeces. The head should be covered with a cloth. The mouth should be covered with cloth. He should sit there alone with a water pot by his side. After the evacuation of the bowels, he should go near the pot and perform cleansing rite with clay till the foul smell and the stickiness is removed. One part of clay shall be applied to the penis, then three parts to the left hand, then two parts of clay to each of the two hands. This rule is applicable to the cleansing rite after urination.**

Listen to the cleansing rite after discharging faecal matter. Five or seven parts of clay to the anus, ten parts to the left hand, then seven parts to each of the hands, three parts of clay to the feet. This is the cleansing rite in the case of a householder.

In the case of a Brahmacārī (religious student), it should be doubled, in the case of a Vānaprastha (forest-dweller) it should be trebled and in the case of ascetics (Yatis) it shall be quadrupled.

This rule is applicable for the day time. During the nights half the number should be followed. In the case of a wayfarer it may be halved. In the case of women and Śūdras it should be further halved.

All the holy rites of one without the cleansing rite are futile.

11-15. **Then the devotee should scrupulously perform the cleansing rite of the teeth and the tongue.[2] "O tree, grant me longevity, strength, fame, refulgence, progeny, animals and wealth, Vedic knowledge, intelligence, insight etc." (After repeating the above) he should cut off a twig, twleve Aṅgulas long, to be used as a toothbrush.**

1. VV 3-10 contain instruction regarding morning duties (evacuation of vowels etc.).

2. VV 11-15. Rules regarding cleansing of teeth.

The twig should not be cut off from a tree exuding milky fluid. (Nor) the twig of a cotton tree or a thorny tree or a burnt tree (should be used). The toothbrush twig must have a good smell. It must be soft too. Toothbrush should not be used during the sixth or ninth lunar day and on the following days: days of fast, Śrāddha or eclipse, Sundays, the first lunar day and new-moon day. When toothbrush is forbidden the devotee shall gargle twelve times.

16-18. After cleaning the teeth duly, he should wash the face with water.[1] He should then apply the sacred mark on the forehead vertically after performing the Ācamana rite. He should then light beacon lamps on poles in a temple, on the banks of a river and the highway in particular. There must be a lamp near the Tulasī plant also. Taking the materials of worship, he should go to a temple of his favourite deity. Then the intelligent devotee should perform the worship and then sing and dance.

19. After reciting the names (before the deity) of Viṣṇu, he should perform the Nīrājana rite (waving lamps before the deity) for Hari. When there is yet a period of Nāḍidvaya (48 minutes) left for dawning, the devotee should go to a water-reservoir (bathing place).

20. There, in accordance with the injunctions laid down, the person who has undertaken the Kārttikavrata should take his holy bath. After squeezing the water out of his clothes, he should apply the sacred mark (of Ūrdhvapuṇḍra) on the forehead.

21. Thereafter, he should perform Sandhyā prayers in accordance with the Sūtra followed by him. After that, till sunrise, he should perform Japa of the Goddess Gāyatrī.

22. What has been mentioned before is the duty for the remaining period of the night. Now the duty for the day time is being described. When those rites are performed, all the Kārttika Vratas shall be fruitful.

23. Then towards the end of the morning Sandhyā prayer he should recite the *Thousand Names of Viṣṇu* and other texts. He should then go to the temple and begin the worship once again.

24. In the activities such as dance, singing songs etc. (before the deity), he should spend one Prahara (three hours). Then for half a Yāma, he shall listen to the Purāṇas devotedly.

25-26. After honouring the reader of the Purāṇas, worshipping the

1. VV 16-28 describe the duties up to the time of taking meals. They include the ritual of bath, Sandhyā prayer, singing and dancing before God, performance of Vaiśvadeva and feeding a Brahmin guest (*atithi*).

Tulasī plant and saying midday religious prayers, the devotee should take his food shunning leguminous grains.

Offerings to deities should be made. *Vaiśvadeva* rite should be performed and the guests duly fed. One who takes his food after all these rites consumes (as if) nectar.

27. Brāhmaṇas should be fed in accordance with one's capacity everyday or on important Parvan days. *Haviṣya* (rice cooked with ghee) should be eaten. Āmiṣa (meat and other forbidden foodstuffs) should be avoided.

28. In order to purify the mouth, he shall chew Tulasī leaves along with Tīrtha water. The remaining part of the day should be spent in doing worldly business (work for self-sustenance and livelihood).

29. In the evening he should again go to a temple of Viṣṇu. After saying Sandhyā prayers he should light lamps in accordance with his capacity.

30. After bowing down to Viṣṇu and performing the splendid Nīrājana rite for Hari, he should recite hymns etc. and keep awake for the first yāma (three hours).

31. When the first yāma is over, the wise devotee should go to sleep. He should maintain celibacy by approaching his wife only on stipulated nights.

32. If the wife desires, he should satisfy her sexual urge. Thereby he does not become a sinner. Doing thus everyday, he should spend the whole month in accordance with the injunction.

33-34. He who observes the great Vrata thus in the month of Kārttika, shall get rid of all sins. He goes to the world of Viṣṇu. There is no other Vrata except Kārttikavrata, that dispels diseases, destroys sins, gives good intellect and nature, is conducive to the acquisition of sons, wealth etc., that is the cause of salvation and that which Viṣṇu likes well. There is no other such Vrata on the earth.

CHAPTER SIX

Directions for Kārttikavrata

Brahmā said:

1. Listen, O Nārada, I shall mention (the details about) the great Kārttikavrata, on hearing which you will be absolved of all sins and attain salvation.

2-7. At the advent of the Kārttika month one should avoid all prohibited things. Anointing the body with oil, consuming oil, partaking of other people's food, fruits with many seeds, leguminous grains etc. should be avoided in the month of Kārttika. There is no doubt about this.

One who observes the Kārttikavrata shall avoid pot-gourd, turnip, brinjal, *Solanum indicum linn* (known as *Ḍorle* in Marathi), stale cooked food, burnt rice or parched grain, Masūrī variety of pulse, taking food twice, liquor, taking food from other people, taking food in a bell-metal vessel, *Unguis doratus*, Masūra pulse, mushroom gruel, foul-smelling substances, group-food, food offered by courtesans, food offered by village sacrificer (offerer of sacrifices or conductor of ceremonies for every villager—even of the undeserving one), food offered by Śūdras or contaminated by Śūdras, food polluted on account of recent child-birth, food from Śrāddha, food offered during domestic festivals, viz. consummation of marriage, post-natal rites and naming ceremony, the Śleṣmāntaka fruit (*Cordia latifolia*, called *Bhokar* in Marathi).

8. The devotee should not take food on forbidden leaves. In the holy Tīrtha Puṣkara the devotee should never take food on the (leaves of) following trees: Madhu (a sort of citron), trumpet tree, plantain tree, jujube tree, Plakṣa (*Ficus infectoria*) and Makūṭikā(?)

9. In the month of Kārttika one who takes *Vanabhojana* (food beneath the *Emblica officinalis* tree in a garden) goes to the great world of the discus-bearing Lord Viṣṇu.

10. Bath should be taken early in the morning and Hari should be worshipped. O sage, listening to the story (of the Lord) in the month of Kārttika is praiseworthy.

11. *Gopīcandana* (soft white clay found near Dvārakā) should be gifted. Cows should be given to Brāhmaṇas well-versed in the Vedas in the month of Kārttika. Thereby one attains salvation.

12-13. Gifts of plantain fruits, the fruits of *Emblica officinalis*, garments to a Brāhmaṇa distressed due to cold, gift of vegetables etc. and particularly of cooked food and the gifts of Śālagrāma (with a Cakra within) to a Brāhmaṇa—all these are to be made.

14. He who gives uncooked food along with ghee and milk-pudding to a Paurāṇika (i.e. one who reads the Purāṇas) attains great riches as through feeding a hundred Brāhmaṇas.

15. One who worships the Lover of Kamalā (goddess of fortune) with lotus-flowers acquires merit. There is no doubt about it.

16. One who devoutly offers a Tulasī leaf to Viṣṇu in the month of Kārttika, becomes liberated from worldly existence and goes to the

great region of Viṣṇu.

17. One who worships the Garuḍa-emblemed Lord with Ketakī flowers, is worshipped for a thousand births.

18. If a person makes a gift of a conch marked with discus, his sins perish merely by means of that gift. There is no doubt about this.

19. If a person regularly reads the *Gītā* in the month of Kārttika which Viṣṇu likes well, it is not possible to recount the fruit of his merit even in hundreds of years.

20. He who regularly listens to *Śrīmad Bhāgavata*, becomes liberated from all sins and attains the greatest bliss.

21. He who observes fast on the eleventh lunar day, abstaining from all types of food, is liberated from the sins committed in the previous birth. There is no doubt about it.

22. By taking in the *Naivedya* of Śālagrāma (i.e. eatables offered to Śālagrāma), one shall attain the fruit of crores of Yajñas. If one takes in the *Naivedya* of any other deity he should perform the expiatory rite of Cāndrāyaṇa.

23. A man who rings the bell at the time of the worship of the Lord, gives greatest satisfaction to Hari. There is no doubt about it.

24. One who abstains from (taking in) other people's food in the month of Kārttika for the propitiation of Viṣṇu, secures the greatest satisfaction of Dāmodara.

25. If a person devoutly worships a guest who comes to his house at the proper time and who is tired due to continuous walking along the path, that holy rite is conducive to the destruction of thousands of births.

26. Those foolish persons who revile noble-souled Vaiṣṇavas, fall into the hell named Mahāraurava along with their manes.

27. If a person sees Brāhmaṇas devoted to the Lord but does not meet them eagerly (and does not honour them) by approaching them, Hari does not accept his worship for a period of twelve years.

28. After hearing someone who speaks ill of the Lord and of the people devoted to him, if a person does not go away from that place, he is also not a favourite of Lord Hari.

29. If a person circumambulates Keśava in Kārttika, he obtains the fruit of a horse-sacrifice for every step. There is no doubt about it.

30. If a person prostrates in front of Keśava like a long rod in the month of Kārttika, he secures the fruit of Rājasūyas and horse-sacrifices. There is no doubt about it.

31. O tiger among Brāhmaṇas, if a person feeds (his) family with

great devotion, his merit is infinite.

32. If a man commits adultery in the month of Kārttika, it is impossible to say where (and when) his sins will come to an end.

33. If the sectarian mark made on the forehead with clay of Tulasī is seen in a person, even Yama dares not to look at him, what to speak of his Messengers!

34. A green leaf, or a bit of salt or whatever one has, should be gifted away in the month of Kārttika for the sake of the propitiation of the Lord having the Śārṅga bow.

35. These are the various pious activities. They are pleasing to Viṣṇu when performed in the month of Kārttika. One shall perform these rites which cause satisfaction to the Lord. One should do them in accordance with one's capacity.

36. For the purpose of propitiating Hari one has to abandon certain objects one may like much. At the end of the month they must be given to an excellent Brāhmaṇa for the sake of the completion of the Vrata.

37. On one side there are all the Vratas (holy rites) and on the other side there is *Satyavrata* (the holy vow of truthfulness) alone. Therefore one should always endeavour by all means to speak the truth.

38. In regard to other holy rites, entitlement to perform them is subject to family and caste distinctions. But in regard to the holy rites of the Kārttika Vrata, all the people are equally entitled.

39. If the rite of *Gograsa* (offering a morsel of grass or food to a cow as an ancillary to an expiatory rite) is performed by people in the month of Kārttika, even Pitāmaha (God Brahmā) is incapable of recounting the fruit of their merit.

40. If, in the month of Kārttika, anyone sweeps the temple of Viṣṇu in the morning, his abode in Vaikuṇṭha is firmly ensured.

41. If a person gifts away plenty of firewood and timber for the purposes of holy rites, his merit does not perish even in the course of hundreds of crores of Kalpas.

42. If a person plasters or whitewashes the temple of Viṣṇu in Kārttika or paints pictures on the walls, he rejoices in the presence of Viṣṇu.

43. If taxes are levied on temples or holy Tīrthas by vicious kings and if some people come forward and pay them off, their merit is eternal.

44. If, in the month of Kārttika a Brāhmaṇa performs the Japa of *Śatarudrī* (or repeats the *Rudrī Mantra* a hundred times) in the pres-

ence of Gabhastīśvara[1], he achieves the Siddhi of Mantras.

45-47. At Vārāṇasī the devotees should stay for three years and perform Kārttikavrata along with the ancillary rites and observances. They should perform it with great devotion. They will enjoy the fruit thereof in this very world directly, such as affluence, progeny, fame, pious mind and activities.

They should avoid garlic, meat, beds, Śṛṅga (a kind of medicinal plant called Jīvaka), Sauvīraka (jujube fruit), Rājika (grains of *Senapis ramosa*) and articles causing madness. They shall eschew beaten rice.

48. The devotee observing Kārttikavrata should avoid Dhātrīphala (*Emblica officinalis*) on Sundays. He should not go to alien lands except to the holy places (in them).

49. One who observes Kārttikavrata should avoid derogatory remarks about Devas, Vedas, Brāhmaṇas, preceptors, cows, those who observe Vratas, women, kings and great men.

50. On the Naraka Caturdaśī day (fourteenth lunar day) the devotee may take oil bath. He should avoid oil bath on other days in the month of Kārttika. He should avoid radish, pumpkin, lotus stalk, the wood-apple.

51. The person who observes the Vrata shall not speak to a woman in her menses, to a Śūdra, a barbarian, a fallen fellow, a person who does not perform Vratas, those who hate Brāhmaṇas, and those who are excluded from the Vedas.

52. A person who performs this Vrata should not eat what is seen by these people or by crows, food polluted on account of recent childbirth, what is twice cooked and burned (parched) grain.

53-55a. Beginning with the first lunar day the devotee should avoid the following things in due order everyday: pumpkin, egg fruit, Taruṇī(?), radish, Bilva fruit, Kaliṅga[2](?), Dhātrīphala (*Emblica officinalis*), coconut, pot-gourd, snake-gourd, brinjal, Khurja fruit, Cavalī(?) (probably a kind of pulse (cf Marathi *Cavaḷī*), basil plant as cooked vegetable.

55b-56. In this manner in Māgha too the devotee should maintain the various pious observances.

Even the four-faced Lord Brahmā is not capable of recounting the merit of a person observing Kārttikavrata in the manner it has been laid down.

1. A holy shrine at Vārānasī.

2. Several plants such as *Wrightia antidysenteria* are given in the dictionary but the specific fruit implied here is not clear.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Special Efficacy of the Gift of Lamps

Nārada said:

1. O Lord, I am one who has fulfilled his objectives by resorting to your feet. There is nothing to be heard further by me, O excellent Deva.

2. Still, O Lord, there is something lurking in my heart that remains to be asked. I am not yet fully satisfied by drinking the nectar of your speech.

3. O Lord, I wish to hear the special efficacy of gifting lamps. O Four-faced Lord, tell me who they were, by whom this gift was made formerly.

Brahmā said:

4. A devotee should take bath early in the morning. Remaining pure in body and mind, he should offer the lamp assiduously. Thereby sins shall perish like darkness at the rise of the sun.

5. Whatever sin has been committed by a man or a woman ever since birth, shall perish by gifting lamps in the month of Kārttika.

6. In this connection I shall describe to you a legendary story. By listening to it it destroys all sins. It yields the merit of the gift of lamps.

7. Formerly, in the land of Draviḍas there was a Brāhmaṇa named Buddha. His wife was a vicious woman engaged in immoral conduct, O sage.

8-12. As an ill consequence of his contact with her, his life shortened and he died. Even when the husband was dead, the wife continued to be engaged all the more in misdemeanour. She was never ashamed even of the ill-repute of hers in the world. Having no sons or kinsmen, she used to have her meals by way of alms received. She never had any opportunity to take consecrated food. She regularly ate stale food. She was addicted to food cooked by others. She never undertook pilgrimage etc. She never listened to the holy narratives and legends. O Brāhmaṇa.

Once, a certain learned Brāhmaṇa named Kautsa who was devoutly engaged in pilgrimage to sacred places, came to her house. On seeing that unchaste woman engaged in improper conduct, the excellent Brāhmaṇa Sage became furious. With his eyes red (with anger) he spoke to her :

Kutsa said:

13-15. O foolish woman, I am going to tell you something now. Listen attentively to my words. O woman running errands! Why do you nourish this body (of yours) constituted of five elements, which is filled with putrid blood and is the cause of misery? This body is like a bubble of water. It will certainly perish. Depending upon this transient body, you consider it permanent in your heart.

16. Therefore, O stupid woman, eschew your internal delusion and begin to think. Remember the Lord who is the most excellent of all. Do listen to holy books respectfully.

17. When the month of Kārttika comes. perform the rites of holy bath, charitable gift etc. In order to propitiate Dāmodara make the gift of lamps.

18-20. You should have a hundred thousand wicks etc. and a hundred thousand lotuses etc. ready. In the month of Kārttika, circumambulate the Lord and make obeisance to him.

Perform the rites of observing and conducting the Vrata with devotion. This Vrata is for all women with or without husbands.

It suppresses all sins. It destroys all calamities. There during the month of Kārttika, let an excellent lamp be gifted.

21. Lamp is a cause of delight to Hari certainly in the month of Kārttika. Even a person who has committed great sins becomes liberated through the gift of lamps (or lighting of lamps).

22-28. Formerly there was a good Brāhmaṇa named Harikara. That Brāhmaṇa became sinful and attached to sensual objects. He always visited prostitutes. He squandered the wealth of his father. He was an axe as it were in cutting down his own family. Once, O widow, much wealth of his father was lost by him in gambling because of his association with wicked people. Therefore he became grief-stricken.

Once he came into contact with some saintly people who were engaged in pilgrimage to holy places. In the course of pilgrimage, O dear one, that highly sinful Brāhmaṇa came to Ayodhyā.

In the month of Kārttika he reached the house of a very prosperous Brāhmaṇa. Always under the pretext of gambling(?), a lamp was immediately lighted in front of Hari by him. Thereafter, the Brāhmaṇa, in course of time, became dead and attained salvation.

Though he was a perpetrator of great sins, he sought and got refuge in Hari. Hence, you too make gifts of lamps and light lamps in the month of Kārttika. Similarly make other charitable gifts too with great devotion.

Having commanded her thus, Kutsá, the Brāhmaṇa, went to another house.

29. That (woman) repented after hearing the words of Kutsa. She resolved to perform the holy rites in the month of Kārttika.

30. In the course of the entire month of Kārttika, she took bath in (cool) water at the time of sunrise and also observed the Vrata of lighting lamps.

31-32. When her span of life was over, she died after some time. Though she had committed great sins, that woman went along the path of heaven due to the great efficacy of lighting of lamps. In due course she attained salvation too. Hence, O Nārada, who can (adequately) recount the efficacy of offering lamps?

33-35. Gift of lamps and lighting of lamps in the month of Kārttika yields exceedingly meritorious fruits.

He who strictly adheres to the Kārttikavrata, he who lights lamps, shall attain salvation on hearing this legendary narrative of lighting of lamps.

Who can (adequately) recount the efficacy of the lighting of lamps?

Now, O Nārada, listen to the efficacy of lighting other people's lamps.[1]

36-38. If one has no capacity (to light lamps), one can lighten other people's lamps. He who does so also attains the benefit. There is no doubt about this.

He who offers wicks, oil, vessels, etc. for the lamps or he who (physically) renders help to those who offer excellent lamps, attains salvation. There is no doubt about this. Who can (adequately) describe the efficacy of lighting lamps in Kārttika.

39. If there is no capacity in oneself one should lighten other people's lamps. He too obtains the benefit thereof. There is no doubt about it.

40. There was a courtesan named Indumatī.[2] By brightening other's lamp in her house, a mouse attained salvation difficult to achieve.

41. Hence by all means one shall brighten the lamps of others. Thereby one should attain salvation like the mouse (in the courtesan's house) undoubtedly.

1. VV 35 ff describe the efficacy of brightening other people's lamps in Kārttika.

2. *Sāroddhāra* tells us how a female mouse happened to brighten the lamp in Indumatī's house while the mouse drank up the oil in the lamp and happened to circumambulate the god unintentionally and thereby got salvation.

42. O sage, if the benefit of brightening other people's lamps is like this, by whom can the greatness of directly gifting lamps be described?

Nārada said:

43. The great efficacy of offering lamps in Kārttika has been heard by me. The greatness of lightening other people's lamps also has been heard. Now, I wish to hear about the greatness of *Vyomadīpa*[1] (beacon lights on poles).

Brahmā said:

44. Listen, O son, with concentration to the greatness of beacon lights. Merely by listening to it one will be inclined to offer lamps.

45. I shall describe the merit of that person who is devoted to taking bath in early morning on the advent of the month of Kārttika and who offers beacon lights on poles.

46. He will become the overlord of all the worlds and be endowed with all types of riches. He will enjoy happiness in this world and attain salvation in the end.

47. After the holy bath and (offering) charitable gifts and other rites, the beacon should be lighted on the top of the temple of Hari for the whole of the month of Kārttika. On the full-moon day, in the month of Kārttika, it should be ceremoniously discharged in accordance with injunctions.

48. He who lights beacons in the month of Kārttika in accordance with the injunctions will never return (to *saṁsāra*) even in the course of hundreds and crores of Kalpas.

49. In this connection I shall describe unto you an ancient legend, merely by listening to which one shall get the benefit of lighting the beacon.

50-51. Formerly there was a fowler named Niṣṭhura. He was a thorn unto the world. He was like another god of death. He lived on the banks of Yamunā. He used to wander over the forests, kill all animals and sustain himself. Wielding a bow he used to harass wayfarers by robbing them.

52-53. Once in the month of Kārttika, O sage, the fowler went to a certain village for the purpose of stealing. At that time the king

1. VV 44ff describe the importance of *Vyomadīpa* (beacon lights on poles).

in the city of Vidarbha was Sukṛti by name. At the instance of a Brāhmaṇa named Candra Śarmā, the intelligent king lighted a beacon on top of the temple of Hari.

54-56. After offering the light the king listened to the sacred story at night with great devotion. At that time itself (the fowler) came there for the purpose of stealing. He stood for a moment gazing at the beacon offered by the king.

At that time a vulture came there, swiftly snatched the pot of oil along with the lamp, carried the same in its beak and then perched itself on the top of a tree.

57. That kingly bird drank up the oil and placed the lamp on the top of the tree and rested itself there for a moment.

58. At that time a cat came there by chance. In order to catch the excellent bird, it climbed up the tree where the bird was perching.

59-62. Seeing the lamp in front of him, the cat paused for a short while. At that time Candra Śarmā was expounding the efficacy of beacon lights to the king named Sukṛti. The bird and the cat heard those words. The cat then (tried to) catch the bird that was perched on another branch. Due to the defect of being unsteady (by nature) both of them fell on a rock from the tree as if urged by fate. The bird and the cat got their bodies smashed on the ground and both of them died. They got divine bodies. Riding in an aerial chariot, they went to heaven.

63-70a. The fowler who had come for stealing saw everything. With his vicious intention vanished, he went to the sage who was expounding the narrative. Addressing Candra Śarman, he spoke these words:

"O Candra Śarman, the fascinating beacon offered by king Sukṛti has been seen by me who had come here for the purpose of stealing something.

At that time, by chance, a certain bird took off the pot and drank away the oil. Thereafter, it placed that fascinating pot along with the lamp on the top of a tree and stayed there for a short while.

A certain cat came there in order to seize the big bird. Urged by fate as it were, they resorted to two (different) branches.

They heard for a moment the story that was being narrated by you. Afterwards, on account of the defect of his own fickle-mindedness, the cat seized the bird.

Both of them fell down and died instantaneously. Both assumed divine forms and seated in an aerial chariot, they went to heaven. On seeing this wonderful thing I have come here to ask you:

70b-78a. Who were those, the cat and the bird, formerly? O Brāhmaṇa, tell it. How did they come to be born as lower animals? By which holy act were they released?"

On hearing these words of the fowler, Candra Śarmā said then:

"Listen, O fowler, I shall presently speak in details. This cat was formerly a Brāhmaṇa, born of Śrīvatsa Gotra. He was called Devaśarmā. He used to steal temple properties. He got the post of the worshipping priest of Ahobala Nṛsiṁha.[1]

He used to steal the oil, money and materials that came to the temple and used to maintain his family thereby.

He spent the whole of his life thus and ultimately met with his death. On account of that great sin he fell into the following hells one by one: Mahāraurava, Raurava, Nirucchvāsa and Asipatravana. He was chopped by the huge-bodied terrible messengers of Yama. After experiencing all these tortures, he became a Brahmarākṣasa. Then he was born as a dog. Thereafter, due to his evil Karmas, he became a Cāṇḍāla. After taking a hundred such births, he became a cat on the earth.

78b. Now by a lucky chance, he has listened to the efficacy of beacon lights. He has been rid of all sins and he has gone to the place of Hari.

79-83. This vulture was formerly a Brāhmaṇa in Mithilā, well-versed in the Vedas. He was well-known by the name Śaryāti in the world. He was a great lord.

He had association with women servants and courtesans. Due to that great sin, when he died, he fell into the exceedingly terrible hell Kumbhīpāka and stayed there for four Yugas. With the residue of his Karmas, he was born as a vulture.

Urged by his own fate, the vulture came here for drinking the oil. After having offered a beacon (?) and after having heard the story of Hari, he was also absolved of all his sins and went to the place of Hari.

84-85. Thus, O fowler, everything has been recounted to you. Return happily."

On hearing his words the hunter went back to his abode. He observed the Ākāśa Dīpa Vrata in accordance with the injunctions, O sage. He spent the remaining part of his life there and went to Hari's abode.

1. A famous sacred place of Nṛsiṁha to the east of Cuddapah in SirvelTaluka in Karnool District (Tamil Nadu). The temple is on a hill. It was visited by Śaṅkarācārya and Caitanya Mahāprabhu. (De 3)

86. The great king Sunanda (Sukṛti) became wonder-struck. In accordance with the injunctions, he did everything for a month under the guidance of Candra Śarmā.

87-92. In the month of Kārttika, the king took his early morning bath. With purity of body and mind, he worshipped Janārdana with tender Tulasī leaves. At night the king offered beacon lights with this Mantra: "After making my obeisance to Dāmodara, the universal and Cosmic-formed Lord, I offer the beacon light which Hari likes much. O Lord of Devas, make it (this Vrata) devoid of obstacles till the month is over. O Lord of Devas, let my devotion to you increase by performance of this Vrata."

By means of this Mantra, the king made the offering of the light. Again in the Brāhma Muhūrta (the hour before dawn) he offered beacon light. Viṣṇu's worship was performed, O dear one, and he took his early morning bath.

After performing the rites for *Utsarga* (concluding rite of the Vrata) he again offered a beacon. After feeding the Brāhmaṇas, he dedicated the Vrata to Viṣṇu.

93-96. O excellent sage, by the power of that merit the king enjoyed for a hundred thousand years enchanting pleasures along with his kinsmen, sons, grandsons and his wife.

At the end, O excellent Brāhmaṇa. O sage, he got into a charming aerial chariot along with his womenfolk and went along the path to salvation.

In the world of Viṣṇu, he assumed the form of Viṣṇu with four arms. He had yellow garments. He held the conch, the discus and the iron club. He was always called Viṣṇu by the immortal ones. There the lofty-minded king sported as he pleased.

97. Hence, after attaining human birth which is rarely to be achieved, one should offer the beacon light in the month of Kārttika in accordance with the injunction. It is a thing which Hari likes.

98. Those men who offer beacon lights for the propitiation of Hari in the month of Kārttika, O eminent sage, never see Lord Yama having exceedingly cruel face.

99. Henceforth, I shall recount another (instance of) the efficacy of the beacon light. It was narrated formerly by Vālakhilyas. Listen to that, O excellent Brāhmaṇa.

Vālakhilyas[1] ***said:***

100-102a. (*Defective Text*) May the excellent sages perform the rite of Ākāśadīpa (beacon light on the top of a pole) either in the month of Vaiśākha or in Kārttika according to the calendar which begins the month with the dark half (*Pūrṇimānta-māsa* calendar), from the beginning of the month previous to Kārttika i.e. Āśvina (i.e. from the full-moon day of Āśvina).

In the month of Tulā, the devotee should offer beacon lights on poles with gingelly oil at dusk. He who offers this continuously for a month to the Lord of Śrī accompanied by Śrī, is never separated from glory and prosperity.

102b-103. A pole of twenty *hastas* (in length i.e. height) is the excellent one for beacon light,[2] one of nine *Hastas* is the middling one and one of five *Hastas* is the lowest one. It shall be so fixed that the light is seen by the people standing far off.

104-105. The offering of light in lanterns of mica or glass is specially recommended. There must be a flag, the length of which is a ninth of the pole.

Above it a bunch of peacock feathers or a pot should be placed. This lamp causes delight to Viṣṇu. It uplifts the Pitṛs.

106-107. The lamp should be offered on the eleventh day or on the full-moon day when the Sun is in Libra. To Dāmodara the lamp is offered in Śrāvaṇa. In the month of Tulā, the lamp is offered (to Viṣṇu) along with Lakṣmī: "I am offering you the light. Obeisance to Ananta, to Vedhas."

There is nothing else like the beacon light on the pole which uplifts and redeems the Pitṛs.

108. Helika[3] had two sons. One of them became a ghost. But by the merit of offering a beacon light he attained salvation difficult to achieve.

1. *Vālakhilyas*: A class of (60,000) thumb-sized sages attending the Sun's Chariot. They were born of Kratu, son of god Brahmā. (Mbh. *Ādi* 66.4-9; *Anuśāsana* 141.99-102; 142.33 ff)

2. VV 102-105 describe the details of the beacon light (*Ākāśa-dīpa*).

3. SKS gives the following details of this story: Helika, a Brahmin in the Vindhya mountain, had two sons—Citrabhānu and Manojava. They became vicious and ultimately resorted to forest. A Bheel girl named Nanānī kept them in her house where they saw Nanānī offer *Ākāśa-dīpa* for her deceased father. Manojava died but his sentence in Tamisra hell was exonerated due to his help in *Ākāśa-dīpa* and became a Piśāca. He possessed Nanānī but Citrabhānu took her to Vārāṇasī where due to *Ākāśa-dipa-dāna*, Manojava was absolved and he was born as a son of Nanānī. The three stayed at Vārāṇasī and got salvation.

109-111. The following Mantra should be recited: "Obeisance to the manes, to the ghosts. Bow to Dharma, to Viṣṇu. Salute to Yama, to Rudra. Obeisance to the Lord of the forest."

Those men who repeat this Mantra and offer to the Manes beacon light on the poles, attain the excellent goal. Even those who have gone to hells attain this excellent goal.

Thus the offering of light has been described to you.

One should offer beacon lights for the purpose of getting fortune and good progeny.

112-116. This *Nīrājanāvidhi* (procedure of offering and waving lights) is to be done in the dark half of Kārttika month for five days beginning with the twelfth day, in the earlier part of the night.

There must be special arrangement for the lights in the temples of Brahmā, Viṣṇu, Śiva etc. and the following places: tops of grain stores, pavilions (for sacrificial purpose), assemblies, river banks, rampart walls, gardens, tanks, bylanes in villages, house-gardens, stables, lonely places, elephant yards etc. Lamps should be offered in the beginning of the nights. They must be charming.

Those who are seen in the world making use of gems and jewels and are glorified, are those who had (in their previous births) offered lamps in accordance with the injunctions in the month of Kārttika.

If one is incapable of offering lamps, one should protect and preserve the lamps offered by others.

117. Is there a man in the world who stands ready to recount the merit of the person who respectfully offers oil for the lamps of the students (and reciters) of the Vedas?

118-120. In the month of Kārttika, the devotee should offer various kinds of lamps in the presence of Viṣṇu.

After the advent of the month of Kārttika, when the sky is clear and bright with myriads of stars, at night Lakṣmī comes to view the cosmic spectacle.

Wherever the Ocean-born Goddess (Lakṣmī) sees the lamps, she is exceedingly delighted with it, but never so in darkness. Hence, lights must always be fixed (prominently) in the month of Kārttika.

121. It is declared that those who seek fortune and beauty should offer lamps particularly in temples, river banks, and more particularly on highways.

122-124a. The glow of one who offers light at the place of sleeping is all-pervasive. One who sees the abode of a (financially) weak person, whether he be a Brāhmaṇa or one of another caste, without any lamp and then offers lamps, is honoured in the world of Viṣṇu.

He who places lights in an inaccessible and rugged place or an impassable place infested with insects and thorns will not go to any hell.

124b-128. If a person offers lamps in Pañcanada at night according to the injunctions, the boys born in his family will be the illuminators of the race.

By lighting and kindling another person's lamp in the month of Kārttika, one gets the same benefit as is obtained by gifting food in the *Pitṛpakṣa* (the dark fortnight of Bhādrapada pertaining to the Manes) or by giving water in the months of Jyeṣṭha and Āṣāḍha.

By kindling other people's lamps and by serving Vaiṣṇavas in the month of Kārttika, one attains the fruit of Rājasūya and horse-sacrifices.

Formerly there was a Brāhmaṇa[1] Harikara who was always engaged in sinful activities. For the sake of gambling, lamps were lighted by him during the month of Kārttika. Due to the power of that meritorious deed he became an excellent Brāhmaṇa and attained heaven.

129. Formerly King Dharmanandana got into an excellent aerial chariot and went to the world of Viṣṇu as a result of offering beacon lights.

130. I shall recount the merit of that person who offers camphor-light in front of Viṣṇu in the month of Kārttika and particularly on the day of awakening called *Prabodhinī* (*Ekādaśī*) (eleventh day in the bright half of Kārttika).

131. Men born in his family will be favourites of Hari. After sporting about for a long time, they attain salvation in the end.

132. A person who keeps lights burning day and night in the abode of Hari, particularly on the eleventh lunar day, goes to the place of Hari.

133-134. Even a fowler offered lamp on the fourteenth lunar day (in the dark half of Māgha) in the temple of Śiva and on the great Liṅga and went to the world of Śiva even without any special devotion.

A certain cowherd kindled the lamp of the Śārṅga-bearing Lord on the new-moon day and repeated "Be victorious, be victorious" frequently. He became king of kings.

1. VV 127 ff give some examples of yore showing the efficacy of *Ākāśa-dīpa* in Kārttika. Out of these vv 133-134 give the story of a fowler offering lamp in a Śiva temple.

CHAPTER EIGHT

The Greatness of Tulasī (Basil Plant)

Nārada said:

1. O Lotus-seated Lord, speak further. I am not satisfied with drinking the nectar of your speech. (In fact) the thirst has increased further.

Brahmā said:

2. In the month of Kārttika one should take bath early in the morning. Remaining pure in body and mind, he should be devoted to Viṣṇu. Then he should worship Dāmodara with tender Tulasī (Basil) leaves. Thereby he attains salvation. There is no doubt about it.

3. If one is devoid of devotion but worships the Lord with gold and other (valuable) things, the Lord does not accept the worship. There is no doubt about it.

4. It is declared (in scriptures that) devotion is the greatest thing in everyone. A holy rite devoid of devotion does not please Viṣṇu.

5. On being worshipped with devotion (even) with half a leaf of Tulasī everyday, Lord Hari, the overlord (of the world), becomes directly visible.

6. Formerly Viṣṇudāsa went to the world of Viṣṇu by worshipping him devoutly with Tulasī. King Cola also attained a subordinate post. (*vide infra* Chs. 26, 27)

7. Listen to the greatness of Tulasī which is destructive of sins and is conducive to the increase of merit. I shall recount to you what was formerly narrated to Ramā by Viṣṇu.

8. After the advent of the month of Kārttika, those men who devoutly worship Tulasī and Hari, attain the highest region.

9. Hence, by all means, the Lord who destroys all pains and distresses should be worshipped with great devotion, with the tender leaves of Tulasī.

10. The devotee is honoured in the world of Brahmā for as many thousands of Yugas as the extent of the roots of the Tulasī plants fixed by him.

11. If a person takes bath in the water that has come into contact with Tulasī leaves, he shall be rid of all sins. He rejoices in the abode of Viṣṇu.

12. Even if a person makes a raised platform for planting Tulasī,

O great sage, he gets instantly rid of his sins thereby. He becomes worthy of being absorbed in Brahman.

13. O Brāhmaṇa, the house in which there is a grove of Tulasī plants becomes a sacred place. The servants of Yama do not go there.

14. The grove of Tulasī plants is meritorious. It destroys all sins. It yields what is desired. The excellent persons who plant it, do not see Bhāskari (Yama, the god of Death).

15. If a man smears scented unguents (upon his body) mixed with (powdered) Tulasī twigs, the sin that is being committed will not (even) touch his body.

16. For the propitiation of the Pitṛs (Manes), Śrāddha should be performed, O Brāhmaṇa, where there is the shade of Tulasī plants.

17. Even Yama is not powerful enough to look at (directly) a person, if a Tulasī leaf is visible in his mouth, ears or head; what to speak of his awful messengers!

18. He who constantly listens to the greatness of Tulasī with great respect, becomes absolved of all his sins and goes to the world of Brahmā.

19. In this context they cite this ancient legend of Tulasī.[1] O Brāhmaṇa, if it is listened to, it is destructive of sins.

20. Formerly in the land of Kāśmīra, there were two Brāhmaṇas named Harimedhas and Sumedhas. They were engrossed in devotion to Viṣṇu.

21-22. They were endowed with kindness and compassion towards all living beings. They were conversant with all essential principles (of philosophy). Once those excellent Brāhmaṇas were engaged in pilgrimage to holy places. They were going through a forest once, when they became utterly exhausted at a certain place. The two Brāhmaṇas, the suppressors of their enemies, saw a grove of Tulasī plants there.

23. On seeing that great grove of Tulasī plants one of those two, namley Sumedhas, circumambulated it and bowed down to it with devotion.

24-28. Harimedhas observed this. In order to understand the greatness of Tulasī and the benefit thereof, he repeatedly asked (Sumedhas) with great joy:

Harimedhas enquired:

O Brāhmaṇa, there are Devas, Tīrthas, holy rites and leading Brāhmaṇas. Still why did you make obeisance (to the plants)?

1. VV 20-59 give dialogue between Harimedhas and Sumedhas about the greatness of Tulasī.

Sumedhas replied:

O Brāhmaṇa of great fortune, your speech (enquiry) is well-worded. Listen. The heat of the sun is oppressive. We shall go to that banyan tree. Under its shade I shall tell you the truth.

Having told thus, Sumedhas, conversant with piety and virtue, went to the banyan tree wherein there was a great hollow cavity. He went there in the company of Harimedhas. There he rested for a while. The Brāhmaṇa then spoke to Harimedhas:

29. "O tiger among Brāhmaṇas, may the excellent story of Tulasī be listened to. With the favour of the great Lord it originated in the ocean.

30. Formerly, due to the curse of Durvāsas, Purandara (Indra) lost all his glory and prosperity. Suras beginning with Brahmā churned the Milk Ocean along with the Asuras.

31-34. From it all the (following) things came up: Airāvata, Kalpa tree, the Moon, Goddess Lakṣmī, Uccaiḥśravas, Kaustubha, Hari in the form of Dhanvantari and all the divine medicinal plants beginning with Harītakī (yellow myrobalan). O excellent Brāhmaṇa, all of them were conducive to the welfare of all the worlds.

Viṣṇu (in the form of Dhanvantari) held in his hands the pot of nectar that bestows immunity from old age and immortality. Holding the pot of excellent base and glancing at it, he experienced the highest mental satisfaction. Drops of his tears of joy fell into the pot of nectar forming circular figures which immediately became Tulasī.[1]

35-40. Lakṣmī endowed with all good features and adorned with all ornaments, was also born therefrom.

Devas headed by Brahmā gave unto Hari, Lakṣmī and Tulasī that had originated there. Lord Hari accepted them. That is why Tulasī is exceedingly pleasing to the Lord of the worlds.

Nārāyaṇa is the protector of the universe. Tulasī is his favourite beloved. Like Viṣṇu she is also worshipped by all the groups of Devas. Therefore, O Brāhmaṇa, I made my respectful obeisance to it."

Even as the noble-souled Sumedhas said this, a great aerial chariot,

1. This version of Tulasī's creation is special to this Purāṇa. In *Devī Bhāgavata* the plant is identified with Mahā-Lakṣmī and is a daughter of King Dharmadhvaja (DB IX 15-24). According to PdP VI (Uttara Khaṇḍa Chs. 3-16) Vṛndā, the wife of Jalandhara, became Tulasī in the next birth.

refulgent like the sun, was seen nearby. At that time, O sage, the banyan tree fell down in front of him.[1]

41-43. And also two men came out of that tree, brightening all the quarters with their refulgence. They resembled the sun. They bowed down to Harimedhas and Sumedhas. On seeing them, Harimedhas and Sumedhas became frightened. Struck with wonder, they spoke to those two persons who resembled Devas:

Harimedhas and Sumedhas said:

44-49a. O beings resembling Devas, who are you? You are auspicious unto all. You have worn a fresh garland of Mandāra flowers. You are immortal ones; therefore, you are worthy of being saluted by us. You are Suras.

On being spoken thus by those two Brāhmaṇas, those persons who came out of the tree spoke thus:

"You are our father, mother and preceptor. There is no doubt about this that you alone are our kinsmen etc."

The elder one said:

I am a resident of the world of Devas. My name is Āstika. Once I went to Nandana park for the sake of sport, surrounded by groups of celestial damsels. My mind was engrossed in sensual pleasures. There, on the mountain, the divine ladies began to cling to me and embrace me as they pleased.

Jasmine garlands and pearl necklaces of the women fell on sage Romaśa who was engaged in penance there. On seeing it, the sage became angry.

49b-53. "This is not the fault of the women who are not independent. This fellow of wicked activities deserves being cursed." Then he said to me, "You shall become a Brahmarākṣasa and hover around this banyan tree."

On being propitiated by me, he told me the means of redemption too: "When you hear from a Brāhmaṇa the name of Viṣṇu as well as the greatness of Tulasī leaf, you will immediately attain complete release."

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1. VV 41-57 show how by listening to Tulasī's greatness two cursed celebrities were absolved.

Having been cursed thus by the sage, I began to abide here on this banyan tree with great sorrow for a long time. Fortunately I have been liberated by seeing both of you, from the curse of the Brāhmaṇa. Listen to the story of the second one.

54-57a. This is an excellent sage. Formerly he was engaged in serving his preceptor. Once he disobeyed the order of his preceptor and became a Brahmrākṣasa.

With your favour, he has been released now from the curse of the Brāhmaṇa. The benefit of the pilgrimage has been achieved by you both. Your merits will increase more and more everyday.

After saying this and bowing down to those excellent sages again and again, they took their permission and went to their respective abodes with great joy.

57b-60. Then, O eminent sage, those two great ascetics went on their pilgrimage praising the meritorious Tulasī.

Thus, O Nārada, who can (adequately) describe the greatness of Tulasī? Hence, O Nārada, in this month of Kārttika which brings delight to Hari, the worship of Tulasī should be performed. There is no doubt about it.

Thus the *Aṅgavratas* (ancillary observances) have been described, O excellent sage. I shall narrate the *Upāṅgas* (subsidiary ancillary rites) as told by Vālakhilyas.

CHAPTER NINE

Rites to be Performed on Vatsadvādaśī, Yamatrayodaśī, Naraka-caturdaśī and Dīpāvalī

Vālakhilyas said:

1. Kṛṣṇa described to Dharma (i.e. Yudhiṣṭhira) (the holy day) named Vatsadvādaśī.[1] The twelfth lunar day must be in conjunction with the time of sunset in worshipping a calf.

1. This *Vrata* is a relic of the pastoral stage in our social evolution. Cows have been regarded as 'sacred' since the Vedic times due to their importance in agricultural economy. Gopāla Kṛṣṇa, the cowherd boy-god came to be identified with the Vedic god Viṣṇu and the worship of cows and their calves assumed the status of a *Vrata* pleasing to Viṣṇu and came to be included as an item in the *Vratas* to be performed in Kārttika, a month 'dear' to Viṣṇu.

2-3. "On the first day, worship of a calf is to be performed under the shade of a banyan tree. One should apply sandal paste etc. to a domesticated milch cow along with its calf of the same colour. Then he should worship them with flower-garlands.

On that day, O Yudhiṣṭhira, the devotee should abstain from food-stuffs deepfried in oil, cooked in pots, cow's milk, cow's ghee as well as mixture of curds and milk.

4. At the time of sunset, either one *ghaṭikā* (24 minutes) before or one *ghaṭikā* after the disc of the sun is half-set, the rite of *Nīrājana* should be performed and it should be ascertained whether the omens are auspicious or inauspicious.[1]

5-6. At the outset many lamps are lit. They are then placed in golden vessels etc. Then the rite of Nīrājana should be performed and the omens observed. Then he should take all the lamps and place them facing the North. The important lamps are said to be nine. He should have others too.

7. If the flame is brilliant with sparks and if it shoots towards the South, (it is a good). If the flame is steady, it indicates happiness. If it is otherwise, it forebodes misery.

8. It is laid down that the rite of Nīrājana for men is (to be performed) in the earlier part of the night on the five lunar days beginning from the twelfth day of the dark half of Kārttika.

9. The first lamp indicates the fortnight; the second, the month; the third, the season; the fourth, the Ayana (i.e. north and south transits of the Sun); and the fifth lamp, the year. Thus the lamp shall indicate auspiciousness and inauspiciousness.

10. 'Lamps are born of parts of the Sun. They are the dispellers of darkness. Let them illuminate me in all the three units of time and let them indicate auspiciousness or otherwise.'

11-12. After consecrating it with the above incantation, the Nīrājana rite should be performed in due order to the following: Devas at the outset, then Brāhmaṇas, elephants, horses, elders, excellent people, lower people and the women, the chief of whom is mother.

13. After performing the Nīrājana rite, the lamps should be placed

1. VV 4-13 indicate the ancient belief in divination of the future by the movements and colours of the flames of the lamps in Nīrājana on this evening. The identification of lamps with units of time and the *Dīpa-Mantra* (v 10) poetically attributing the parentage of lamps to the Sun-god and the prognosis from them (vv 7, 13), an example of the beneficiary (14) and Phalaśruti—all this is the Purāṇic way of draping old customs as a *Vrata*.

in their respective places. If the flames are rough, there is loss of wealth; if white, there is destruction or shortage of food; if they are dark-red, there shall be wars; if the flames are black, there is death.

14. A cowherdess named Ekāṅgī[1] first performed this Vrata. Within three years she became endowed with wealth and foodgrains.

15-16. Hence the worship of cows must be performed on the twelfth day in the month of Kārttika. After hearing about the greatness of this Govrata those men who perform this rite will never be wanting in cows due to the power of Govrata. If any offence has been committed by him against cows that shall perish due to this Vrata."

Vālakhilyas said:

17. The devotee should perform this Vrata on the fourteenth day in the dark half of the month of Āśvina near about the festival of light.[2]

18-19. On the thirteenth lunar day the devotee should cleanse his teeth and take early morning bath. Then with great devotion to Govinda, he should make the resolution of observing the pious rites for three nights. At the end of this Vrata the festival of Govardhanotsava should be celebrated. Trayodaśī which extends to more than three Muhūrtas (3 x 48 = 144 minutes) is permitted. Overlapping by the next Tithi does not amount to transgression (and consequent deficiency).

20. On the thirteenth day in the dark half of the month of Āśvina, the devotee should offer Yama Dīpa[3] (lamp facing the South) in the early part of the night with oblations too. Premature death can be avoided (thereby).

21. Formerly the infant son of Hemanaka[4] became liberated from the calamity of premature death on the thirteenth day in the dark half of the month of Āśvina, due to the mercy (of the Lord).

1. As an instance of a person benefitted by this Vrata, the Purāṇa mentions the name of an Ābhīra girl Ekāṅgī who, though expelled by her father on his Priest's allegation about her character, was able to reunite with her father and got happily married due to the observance of this *Vrata* for three years. The story appears in the SKS.

2. VV 17 ff describe the *Vrata* connected with Dīpāvalī days.

3. It is our practice to light a lamp facing the South in the evening of the 13th day in the dark half of Āśvina. It is called *Yama-dīpa*. The *Vrata*-aspect of the practice is described in vv 20-26.

4. The story how Hemanaka's son was saved from premature death is given in SKS.

The Messengers (of Yama) said:

22. O Yama, take pity on us and tell the means whereby one will not fall off from life in this type of great festival.

Yama said:

23-26. "May the son of Sun (Yama) be pleased along with Mṛtyu (god of Death) along with the noose and the rod, Kāla as well as MĀ (Lakṣmī) be pleased, because a lamp has been offered on the Trayodaśī day."

If after reciting this Mantra, a person who offers (lights) excellent lamp at the entrance of the house in the early part of the night on the thirteenth day in the dark half of the month of Āśvina every year, O messengers, such a person should not be brought here during the festival of light, even in the case of premature death. Let my order be carried out.

Reciting this Mantra he who keeps the lamp at the door of his house, need not be afraid of premature death during the (Dīpāvalī) festival.

Vālakhilyas said:

27. On the fourteenth day mixed with the thirteenth too, in the dark half of the month of Āśvina, one should try to take his bath early in the morning.[1]

28. If a man takes his bath, except at dawn, on a *Rikta* day (i.e. fourth, ninth and fourteenth days in the lunar fortnight), all his holy rites for the whole of the year perish undoubtedly.

29. Similarly, O Suras, taking oil bath at sunrise on the fourteenth day in the dark half of the month of Āśvina (i.e. in last watch of the night) is considered excellent.

30. (*Partially defective text*) When there is no Caturdaśī (fourteenth day) for two days at moonrise, or when it occurs on two days the first one alone is taken.

31. If one does not take oil bath due to compelling circumstances, stubbornness or out of courteous nature on the fourteenth day, one shall fall into Raurava hell.

32. There is Lakṣmī in the oil and Gaṅgā in the water. He who

1. VV 27-35 describe the procedure of bath on the Dīpāvalī day. VV 43-47 also give a special procedure for the same.

takes early morning bath on the fourteenth day i.e. on Dīpāvalī day, does not see Yama's region.

33-35. For the destruction of Naraka, the devotee should stir and whirl *Apāmārga* (the plant *Achyranthes aspera*), Tumbī (pot-gourd) or Prapunnāṭa (*Cavia alata*) in the water kept for bath. The following excellent Mantra should be repeated nine times:

"O Apāmārga, you are endowed with thorny leaves and you are in contact with the lump of clay from the furrow. Dispel sin even as you are being whirled again and again." He should then move round Apāmārga and Prapunnāṭa above the head.

36. After taking bath, the devotee should, with the wet clothes on, offer lamp to the sons of Mṛtyu:

"The two canine brothers Śyāma and Śabala are the sons of Mṛtyu and attendants of Yama. May they be pleased by this offering of lamp on the Caturdaśī day."

37. One should perform this holy ablution along with dear and near relatives. Then by performing the libation of water which is an ancillary to the holy ablution, Yama should be propitiated.[1]

38-40. "Obeisance to you, to Yama, to Dharmarāja, to Mṛtyu, to Antaka, to Vaivasvata, to Kāla, to Sarvabhūtakṣaya (destroyer of all living beings), to Audumbara, to Dadhna, to Nīla, to Parameṣṭhin, to Vṛkodara, to Citra, to Citragupta."

These fourteen shall be the Mantras severally with *namaḥ* (obeisance) added on to them (such as *yamāya namaḥ* etc.). With each mantra three handfuls of water with gingelly seeds should be offered.

41-42. While performing this Tarpaṇa (libation), the devotee may wear his sacred thread in the usual manner or in the opposite direction because Yama has the two forms, viz. that of a Deva and a Pitṛ. Even a person whose father is alive can offer libation to Yama and to Bhīṣma.

After worshipping the Devas, *Dīpa* (Lamp) should be offered to Naraka.

43-45. In this context itself, the procedure for taking bath in the case of one who desires fortune is being spoken by me.

If on the fourteenth day of the dark half of Āśvina, or on the new-moon day (of the same month) or on the first day of the month of Kārttika, one takes the holy bath, he should take it with oil or unguent applied at the time of moonrise.

A man who takes the auspicious bath on the second day in the

1. VV 38-42 describe *Yama-Tarpaṇa* for which even a person with his father alive is eligible and can do it with *Savya* (the usual) way of wearing the sacred thread.
Bhīṣma-Tarpaṇa is described in Bhīṣmapañcaka Vrata (Ch. 32).

month of Kārttika, in conjunction with Svāti constellation, is not separated from fortune. There is Nīrājana rite with lamps. Hence this is remembered as Dīpāvalī.

46-47. Even if the moon sets, even after the transit the sun has set and the day has come to a close, taking oil bath then will not incur any evil. But in the morning for the purpose of dispelling sins, the devotee should eat Māṣaparṇī leaf (*Glycine debilis*). By taking oil bath on the Caturdaśī day called Preta-Caturdaśī, the devotee is liberated from all sins.

(On the whole there shall be three days of the festival of lights).

48-49a. On the fourteenth day in the dark half of the month of Āśvina, on the new-moon day and on the first day (of Kārttika) which is in conjunction with Svāti constellation, one should take these three days as the festival days of lights.[1]

49b-55. Bali, the great king, was told thus by Hari who was delighted: "Welfare unto you. Choose your boon, whatever may be in your mind."

On hearing these words of Viṣṇu, Bali spoke these words:

"What is there to be requested for, for my own sake? Everything has already been given over by me. For the sake of the general public I shall request. If you are competent, grant it unto me. Today the earth was gifted to you who are in the false guise of a Dwarf. Since that has been taken over by you by means of three steps in the course of three days, let there be my rule on the earth for three days, O Hari.

Let this lady, your wife (Lakṣmī), stay permanently in the house of those people who offer lamps in my kingdom on the earth.

Let the continuous darkness of the shadow of Lakṣmī fall on that house in my kingdom where there will be darkness due to want of lights.

56. If people offer lamps to Naraka on the fourteenth day, all their forefathers shall cease to be in Naraka (Hell).

57. O Keśava, how will there be bright illumination of lamps in the house of those people by whom rows of lamps were not lit after reaching the kingdom of Bali?

58-60. (*Defective Text*) There is no doubt about this that there shall be perpetual grief in the house of those people who do not show enthusiasm and who are always glor ny and dejected in the kingdom

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1. The festival of lights is celebrated fo hree Dīpāvalī days as these three days are of the regime of King Bali on the eart Viṣṇu (Vāmana), after depriving Bali of his kingdom granted these three days fo he enjoyment of all in Bali's kingdom.

of Bali (i.e. during the Dīpāvalī days). Let the reign of Bali be for three Caturdaśī days."

This should have been the request(?)

Formerly, in the form of a dwarf the Lord requested for this earth and handed it over to Indra the guest(?) and by Hari thus three days were given to Bali, the Lord of the Daityas rendered a resident of Pātāla. Hence great festival should be celebrated (during these three days).

61. O great sages, a goddess called Mahārātri[1] was born (appeared) on the fourteenth day (of the dark half of Āśvina). Hence those who are devoted to worship of Śakti should celebrate her festival.

62-64. After coming to the kingdom of Bali, Yakṣas, Gandharvas, Kinnaras, medicinal herbs, ghosts, Mantras, magic crystals etc., all of them get delighted. They dance in the early part of the night. There is no doubt about this that those Mantras will be accomplished in the kingdom of Bali. Just as the people coming to the kingdom of Bali are highly delighted, so also on that day the people should be full of delight.

65-68. When the sun is in Libra, on the nights of Caturdaśī and new-moon day, men should celebrate the festival of "showing the path unto the Pitṛs" with firebrands in their hands. The dead men and ghosts who are in hell see the path, due to this Vrata always. No doubt need be entertained in this respect by leading sages.

In the month of Āśvina three Tithis have been glorified beginning with Caturdaśī. They should be taken when they spread over the midday for the rites of offering lamps etc.

If these three Tithis fall before *Saṅgava* (second of the five divisions of the day), the celebrations of offering lamps etc. should be conducted when they are in conjunction with the previous Tithis.

The sages enquired:

69-71. O Brāhmaṇas, we wish to enquire about the greatness of Kaumodinī festival. What is to be eaten on that day? Whose worship is to be performed? Why is it performed? Which is the deity thereof? What is to be given specially as charitable gift on the day? What in particular should not be given? What rejoicing is indicated in this? What sport is glorified? May the excellent sages recount the benefit from the Festival of Lamps (Dīpāvalī).

1. A deity associated with complete destruction of the world. The deity is worshipped in left-handed manner as described in *Devī-yāmala-Tantra*.

Vālakhilyas replied:[1]

72-74. At the time of daybreak on the new-moon day, O leading sages, one should take bath and devoutly worship and bow down to Devas and Pitṛs. He should then perform the *Pārvaṇa Śrāddha* with curds, milk, ghee etc. None but children and sick persons should take food during the day time.

Then, at nightfall, he should worship the splendid Goddess Indirā (Lakṣmī). He should then erect a clean and beautiful pavilion for Lakṣmī by means of various kinds of cloths.

75. It should be wonderfully decorated with various kinds of sprouts and flowers of various colours. There he should worship Lakṣmī as well as Devas.

76-77. Goddesses (such as Sarasvatī, Kālī, Gaurī) too should be worshipped with many types of offerings and services. He should devoutly massage the feet of Lakṣmī and others. Formerly it was on this day that Devas were set free from the prison of Bali. Lakṣmī too was released (therefrom).

78-83. Thereafter, the Devas went to the Milk Ocean along with Lakṣmī. They slept soundly for a long time. Hence, O great sages, the cots are to be made with twines within and there should be fine cotton beds. They shall be covered with excellent sheets resembling milk and foams. The devotee should install those Suras and Lakṣmī in the proper directions to the accompaniment of Vedic chants. Freed from the fear of Daityas, Lakṣmī slept soundly within the lotus. Hence, here too, all amenities for sound sleep should be made.

If a person makes a bed of lotuses on that day, for increasing the happiness of Lakṣmī, she will not go anywhere else leaving his house.

If persons do not provide such amenities for the sound sleep of Lakṣmī, can those men sleep at night without being worried about money? Hence a man should worship Lakṣmī making all efforts.

84-85. He should be rid of poverty and become well-established among the members of his own community.

Cow's milk should be boiled along with nutmeg, cloves, cardamoms and camphor. Sugar should be added as much as is necessary. Laḍḍukas

1. VV 72 ff describe the Kaumodinī or Kaumudī festival and the procedure of celebrating it. According to the commentator *Kaumudī* is derived from *Ku*, 'The earth' and √*mud*, 'to be delighted'. It means 'festival of delight on the earth':

kau modante janā yasmān nānābhāvaiḥ parasparam/
hṛṣṭās tuṣṭāḥ sukhāpannās tenaiṣā kaumudī smṛtā//

(ball-shaped sweets) shall be made thereby and dedicated to Lakṣmī.

86. All the four types of foodstuffs also should be made and offered saying, "May Śrī be pleased." Even before Hari wakes up, Lakṣmī should be wakened through women devotees.

87. If a woman or the man wakens Lakṣmī at the (proper) time and then takes food, Lakṣmī never forsakes her or him for the whole year.

88-90. Demons became frightened of Viṣṇu. After getting shelter and immunity from fear from Brāhmaṇas they went to the Milk Ocean. After knowing that Lakṣmī who had resorted to the lotus was asleep, they eulogized her: "You are the refulgent splendour of all the luminous bodies like the sun, the moon, fire, lighting, gold and stars. You are the splendour of all luminous bodies. Obeisance, O Goddess stationed in the (bright) flame of the lamp. May that Lakṣmī who is present on the meritorious day of Dīpāvalī on the earth, and in the cowpen on the Kārttikī day be the bestower of boons to me."

91-93. Thereafter the lamp should be offered in the early part of the night. A firebrand should be whirled round one's own head. It is preventive of all calamities and misfortunes.

'Light-trees' should be made according to one's capacity in temples etc., quadrangles. cremation grounds, rivers, mountains, houses, roots of trees, cowpens, levelled square-shaped plots of sacrifice, etc. The grounds along highway should be decorated and beautified with cloths and flowers.

94-97. After decorating the entire city at nightfall, the king should feed Brāhmaṇas as well as all hungry persons. Then he should take food, decorating himself with new clothes and ornaments. Then in the afternoon (of the next day) the king should announce thus: "O people, today, this is the kingdom of Bali. Sport as you please. O children, play as you please." After commanding thus, the king should provide them with toys. Therefrom, he shall find out the auspicious and inauspicious features. In the kingdom of Bali one is at liberty to do whatever one may think about.

98. O great sages, five (sinful deeds) are said to be gateways unto hell, viz. violence to living beings, drinking liquor, carnal approach to forbidden women, theft and breach of trust. One should abstain from these five in the kingdom of Bali.

99. Then at midnight the king himself should go round the city slowly on foot in order to survey the beautiful kingdom of Bali and the gaiety therein. After seeing the same, he should return to his abode.

100. After the midnight passes thus, when men are asleep with half-closed eyes, the delighted women of the city begin to drive away Alakṣmī (Ill-luck, Misfortune) from their respective courtyards with winnowing baskets and small Ḍiṇḍima drums.

101-103. If there is Daṇḍaikarajanī Yoga(?) the new-moon day has to be fixed for the next day. At that time the previous day is discarded and the festival of *Sukharātrikā*[1] (Happy Night) is celebrated on the following day.

If Vaiṣṇavas or non-Vaiṣṇavas do not celebrate this festival of the kingdom of Bali, their pious and holy rites shall be futile undoubtedly.

At night people should keep awake by reading the Purāṇas etc. or playing at dice in front of Hari or reciting the *Gītā*.

CHAPTER TEN

The Greatness of the First Day in the Bright Half of Kārttika

Brahmā said:

1. On the Pratipad day (first day of Kārttika) the devotee should take bath with unguents and then perform the Nīrājana rite. Dressed neatly, he should spend the day in listening to good stories, singing songs and making gifts.

2. God Śaṅkara formerly created the fascinating *Dyūta* (game of dice) on the first day in the bright half of the month of Kārttika. It is true.

3-4a. Listen to the greatness of the kingdom of Bali (spoken) accurately. Men and women should take bath with gingelly oil. If out of delusion one does not do so, one goes to the abode of Yama.

4b-5. Formerly, at the beginning of Kṛtayuga, Bali was the great king of Dānavas. The earth as well as his own head was given to Vāmana by him. At that time the Lord himself was delighted and he spoke to Bali:[2]

6-8. "O sinless one, since you have given me the earth on the first day in the bright half of the month of Kārttika with great devotion, I am delighted thereby. I shall grant you a boon, O king."

1. *Sukharātrikā* is the name of a special Vrata for conjugal happiness.

2. VV 6-8 explain why the 1st day in the bright half of Kārttika is called *Bali Pratipadā*.

After saying this, he granted the boon: "O king, the first Tithi of the month of Kārttika shall be known by your name. If devotees take oil bath etc. and worship on this day, O king, that shall give everlasting benefit. There is no doubt about it."

9-12. Ever since then, the Pratipad Tithi has become very famous in the world. If the Pratipad overlaps the previous Tithi (i.e. new-moon day) this is not to be accepted at all.[1]

One should not take oil bath if on the Pratipad day there is *Darśa* (new-moon day) of about a Muhūrta's duration, otherwise there will be death.

If the Pratipad of Bali is overlapped by *Darśa* (new-moon day) and if any auspicious rite is performed on that day, his wealth etc. will perish.

If the Bali-Pratipad (the first day of Kārttika) is vitiated by *Darśa* and if any woman, out of delusion, performs *Ārtikya* (waving of lamp around the face) on that day, women will meet with widowhood and their progeny will certainly die.

13-15. If there is Pratipad next day at least for a Muhūrta (48 minutes) without being overlapped, that alone is to be accepted for the holy rites, festivals etc., as laid down by learned men.

If on the next day there is no Pratipad at all even for the shortest while, the one that is overlapped can be taken. There shall be no sin in doing so. On that day, an idol should be made with cowdung in the courtyard; curds should be sprinkled there in front of it.

16-20. After placing *Ārtikya*(?) there, the devotee should do like this in accordance with the injunctions.

On that day, O great sage, if people do not take bath with unguents, during the whole of that year there shall surely be nothing auspicious unto them.

For the whole of the year one shall be in the same form and features as one was on that auspicious day. Hence one should perform auspicious rites.

If one wishes to enjoy very splendid pleasures, divine and charming, one should celebrate the beautiful festival of lights on the thirteenth and following days.

Śaṅkara and Bhavānī played the game of dice by way of fun formerly. Śaṁbhu was defeated by Gaurī in the game and let off naked. For that reason Śaṅkara became miserable while Gaurī was ever happy.

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1. VV 9-14 specify which should be accepted as the *Pratipad Tithi*.

21. O wise men! Game at dice (gambling) is forbidden at all times except on this Pratipad. If one wins a game at the outset, one shall have happiness for the whole of that year.

22. Lakṣmī who was requested by Bhavānī remained in the form of a cow.[1] Govardhana is to be worshipped in the morning and the game of dice is to be played at night.

23-26. Cows should be adorned (but) they should not be milked. Bulls should not be engaged to bear burden: "O Govardhana, O supporter of the earth, O protector of herds of cows, you are lifted up by the arms of Viṣṇu; be the bestower of crores of cows (to me). May Lakṣmī dispel my sins, Lakṣmī who stood by in the form of a cow for the sake of the guardians of the worlds, and who bears ghee for the sake of Yajña. Let cows be in front of me. Let cows be behind me. Let cows be in my heart. I stay amongst cows."

Thus should be worshipped Govardhana.

27-29. The king should please the different kinds of people with suitable presents etc. Devas and saintly people should be pleased by goodness (of nature and behaviour). Others by offering food; the learned men by giving them (the opportunity for) disputations, and the members of the inner apartment by means of garments, betel leaves, incenses, flowers, camphor, saffron, foodstuffs of various types and different kinds of edibles. He should propitiate rural people by giving them bullocks and vassal kings by giving them wealth. Groups of (common) people and the infantry should be propitiated by means of excellent necklaces. The king should satisfy the good people specifically by giving them splendid bracelets with his name engraved on them.

30-32. After propitiating (everyone) befittingly, the king should watch the fight (combats, duels etc.) of wrestlers and of other men, of bulls, buffaloes and well-equipped foot-soliders of the king.[2] Seated on a (raised) platform he should see personally, actors, dancers and Cāraṇas and make cows and buffaloes fight and then provide them with garments to cover them. Calves should be attracted through cows. There may be arguments and counter-arguments.

33-35. Then, in the afternoon, the devotees fix up the effigy of

1. VV 22-29 describe the custom of Govardhana worship. Govardhana is a hill 18 miles from Vṛndāvana in Mathurā Dist. (U.P.). Kṛṣṇa is said to have held it up on his small finger and protected cows, calves and people of Vraja under its umbrella, while Indra poured a deluge of rain for one week.

2. VV 30-32 advise the king to watch war-games of men as well as those of animals.

Mārgapālī[1] (road protectress—a deity made of Kuśa and Kāśa grass) in the Eastern direction, O sage of holy rites. They fix it on the pillars of the fortness and trees. The effigy shall be of divine nature with many props. Horses and elephants should be taken beneath Mārgapālī. Cows, bullocks, male buffaloes and female buffaloes should be tethered in big herds. Through eminent Brāhmaṇas who have performed Homas, they should get them tied (near) the Mārgapālikā.

36. Then, O sage of good holy rites, he should make obeisance repeating this Mantra: "O Mārgapālī, obeisance to you, O bestower of happiness to all the worlds, let the horses, elephants and cows stay happily beneath you."

37. O son, cows, great bulls, kings, princes and Brāhmaṇas in particular should go beneath the Mārgapālī.

38-44. By crossing Mārgapālī they become free from ailments. They are happy.

After doing all these the devotee should perform the worship of Bali[2], the king of Daityas, directly in a mystic diagram drawn on the ground. The worship is to be performed at night after drawing the picture of the great demon Bali in five different colours. He should be fully adorned with all the ornaments and accompanied by Vindhyāvalī. He is surrounded by Dānavas, Kūṣmāṇḍa, Maya, Jaṁbha, Ūru and Madhu. The whole face is dark in colour. He has brilliant ear-rings and a crown. The king of Daityas should have two arms only.

After making the picture, he should worship it within his own house in a large hall in the company of mother, brothers, kinsmen and other people.

He should worship with lotuses, lilies, red lotuses and sweet-smelling flowers. There should be Naivedyas of cooked rice, milk, jaggery, milk puddings, liquor, meat, wine, various kinds of foodstuffs (articles to be licked, sucked and eaten etc.). Accompanied by his ministers and priest, the eminent king should worship with the following Mantra. He will be happy for a year:

45. "Obeisance to you, O King Bali, O lord, O Son of Virocana, O enemy of Devas, the future Indra; may this worship be accepted."

46-48. After performing this worship in accordance with the injunctions, he should keep awake. He should celebrate a great festival at night through dances and story recitals.

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1. VV 33-37 describe the procedure regarding Mārgapālī. This deity is regarded as a protector of cows etc. on the way.

2. VV 39-58 prescribe the procedure of Bali worship.

The common people also should place the offerings of white rice grains within their houses. They should install King Bali and worship him with fruits and flowers.

O sage of good holy rites! All that is to be done with Bali in view. Whatever is (so) done is stated to give everlasting benefit by sages who have realized the truth.

49. Whatever is given as charitable gift, whether it be small or large in quantity, shall yield everlasting benefit. It shall be auspicious and pleasing to Viṣṇu.

50. (Viṣṇu said thus to Bali:) "O Bali, may all the Vedic rites of those men who do not worship you come over to you."

51. This great festival that tends to favour Asuras, has been granted to Bali, O dear one, by Viṣṇu who was delighted.

52-55. Thus every year, one day and one night in the month of Kārttika have been given to the king of Dānavas on the earth, as if it was the ideal for him.

If a king performs this, how can there be the fear from sickness in his kingdom? There will be prosperity and plenty, welfare and perfect health. His wealth will be excellent. All the people will be free from diseases and devoid of all types of calamities. O sage of good holy rites, this festival of Kaumudī is celebrated in order to generate and regulate noble feelings and sentiments on the earth. Everyone will have delight or gloom, weal or woe in accordance with his manner of acting on this particular day.

56-57. If anyone weeps, the whole year will be a year of lamentation; if he is gay, the whole year shall be one of gaiety; if he enjoys pleasures (eats and drinks), the whole year becomes pleasurable. If he is normal and healthy, he shall be so (throughout the year). This Tithi in the month of Kārttika is mentioned as being special to Viṣṇu as well as to the Demon.

58. Those who splendidly celebrate the festival of lights causing delight unto all the people and who perform auspicious worship of King Bali, the whole year of (their) families (which are) blessd with charity, enjoyment, pleasure and intelligence will pass with delight and excessive joy throughout.

59-60. After performing the worship of Bali, the devotee should celebrate *Gokrīḍana*[1] (sports of cows and bulls). If on the day of the

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1 VV 59-63: sports of kine: bull-fights are a part of this festival.

sports of cows the moon becomes visible, Soma Rājā (the shining Moon) kills the animals and the worshippers of the cows.

61. The sports of cows should be celebrated on the day when the *Darśa* (new-moon) overlaps Pratipad (first day). This is the accepted position. If a person celebrates it on a day when Pratipad is overlapped by Dvitīyā, he will meet with destruction of money and death of wife and son.

62. The cows are to be adorned then. They should be adored with offerings of *Gogrāsa* etc. (morsels of food). They should be taken out of the city to the accompaniment of intrumental and vocal music. They then should be brought back and the rite of Nīrājana should be performed.

63. If the duration of Pratipad is short, a woman should perform the Nīrājana rite. Thereafter, on the second day in the evening, the auspicious rite of garlanding shall be performed.

64. If the Pratipad be joined with the previous Tithi (the new-moon day), the rite of Yaṣṭikākarṣaṇa[1] (pulling out of stick/string?) be performed.

65-66. The Yaṣṭikā (string) should be made of Kuśa. It should be fresh and firm. That should be brought to the entrance of the temple, of palace of king or to a crossing of four roads. The princes should hold one end and the people of the lower castes the other end. After holding it they shall pull at it as many times as their strength permits.

67-69. The two teams should consist of an equal number of persons. All of them should be very strong. If in this (tug of war), the inferior castes win, the king shall be victorious throughout the year. A line should be drawn behind each of the teams holding the string. If the people cross the line they are considered to have won and not otherwise. It is the king who is to draw this line of victory carefully.

1. VV 64-69. This is an interesting social event: a Tug-of-War wherein a bamboo stick or a rope of Kuśa grass is used.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

The Efficacy of Yamadvitīyā
(The 2nd day of Kārttika)

Nārada said:

1. O Lord, I wish to ask you humbly about that Vrata[1] whereby man does not meet with death.

Brahmā said:

2. If, O great Brāhmaṇa, you ask me about the most excellent Vrata, listen to the Vrata named Yama-dvitīyā. It is destructive of Mṛtyu (Death).

3. O great sage, it is to be performed on the second day in the bright half of the month of Kārttika in accordance with the injunctions. It prevents the death of all.

4. After getting up in the Brāhma Muhūrta (i.e. an hour before the dawn) on the Dvitīyā day the devotee should think about what is conducive to his welfare. He should not think of anything harmful to himself.

5-10. After cleansing the teeth he should take his early morning bath. Then he should wear white cloth and white garlands. He should smear himself with unguents. He should finish his daily routine of duties. With great delight he should adorn himself with ear-rings and armlets. He should go near an Audumbara (wild fig) tree and there draw the excellent mystic diagram with eight-petalled lotus. There, with calm mind, he should with sandal, agallochum, musk and saffron, with flowers, incense and with Naivedya of coconut fruits etc. worship Brahmā, Viṣṇu, Rudra and Sarasvatī the bestower of boons having the lute and the book (in her hands).

Thereafter, for the purpose of preventing death, he should give a milch cow along with her calf, to a Brāhmaṇa learned in the Vedas. The cow should be richly adorned and gifted away for the prevention of premature death as well as for being taken across the ocean of worldly existence.

1. This is a touchingly affectionate occasion of meeting of brothers and sisters once a year on the 2nd day of Kārttika. '*Vrata*' is a dry Purāṇic term for this family meeting. The *Vrata* is described in vv 2-40 with all the formalities of an orthodox religious observance.

11. He should give the cow to the Brāhmaṇa exponent of the Vedas, repeating this Mantra: "O Brāhmaṇa, I am giving this gentle-natured cow to you."

12-14. If a cow is not available, he should devoutly give a pair of shoes to the Brāhmaṇa. Then he should conclude the worship with great devotion to Puruṣottama. He should make obeisance to the elderly members of the family and excellent kinsmen with great devotion. He should propitiate his own relatives with different kinds of beautiful coconut fruits. Then, O sage, he should go to the house of his own uterine sister and salute her with great devotion.

15. "O gentle lady, O my sister of good fortune, I have come to your abode in order to make obeisance to your lotus-like feet."

16-18. After saying this to his sister, he should salute her, thinking her to be Viṣṇu.

Then, on hearing the excellent words of her brother, O Nārada, the following words should be addressed by the sister to the brother:

"O my brother, today I have become blessed and auspicious, thanks to you. O lamp of the family, today you should take your food in my house for my longevity, O brother, on the second day in the bright half of the month of Kārttika.

19. On this day formerly Yama was fed by Yamunā in her house and was duly honoured by her. Hell-dwellers were set free on this day by Yama. Those who are fettered with the cords of Karma too, are roaming about as they please.

20-22. The sins beginning with that of the slaughter of a Brāhmaṇa shout thus: 'We are very glad on receiving that sinful man who does not take his food in the house of his sister, even on Yamadvitīyā day. We have been without food (for a long time). We shall devour him today.'

Hence, O my brother, take food in my house today, the second day in the bright half of Kārttika well-known in all the three worlds. O brother, learned men do not take food in their own house on this day."

23. On being told thus, the devotee should worship his sister with garments, ornaments and embellishments with great delight, O highly fortunate one.

24. If the sister is elder to him, he should make obeisance to her and get blessings from her. All the sisters should be satisfied by gifts of garments and ornaments.

25. In the absence of one's own sister, one should go to the house of the sister of one's father with respect and take food there.

26-27. O son, he who observes this rite of the Dvitīyā named after Yama, shall be liberated from premature death surrounded by sons, grandsons etc. He will enjoy abundant pleasures as he pleases and in the end attain salvation. My words shall not be otherwise.

28-29. These Vratas and all rites of charitable gifts of various kinds are proper only for a householder. Hence one should take up the householder's life. One who adheres to the Vrata of Yamadvitīyā should listen to the story thereof. Mādhava says that all his sins will perish.

Sūta said:

30. On the second day of Kārttika one should worship Yama in the forenoon. By taking his holy bath in Yamunā, one does not see the world of Yama.

31-32. O Śaunaka, on the second day in the bright half of Kārttika, formerly Yama was fed and honoured by Yamunā in her own house. The conclusion of the festival too is on the Dvitīyā day. Hell-dwellers too were satisfied. They were rid of their sins and all of them were set free from bondage.

33. Here they were all fed. They became delighted. They all stayed there as they pleased.They celebrated a great festival causing great happiness to the kingdom of Yama.

34-36. Hence this Yamadvitīyā is well-known in the three worlds. So no wise man should take his food in his own house, O Brāhmaṇa. He must take food from the loving hands of his sister. It is conducive to the increase of his strength.

On the second day in the bright half of Kārttika Yama was honoured and propitiated. Yama is seated on his vehicle, the buffalo. The Lord holds his staff and the mallet. He is surrounded by his delighted servants. Obeisance to the Ātman pertaining to Yama.

37. Sisters of good residential facilities should be propitiated by gifts of garments. If this is done, they need not be afraid of their enemies. They will never be involved in any quarrel till the end of the year.

38-40. O sinless son, everything has been expounded by me, along with its esoteric secret. It is conducive to wealth, fame and longevity. It is a means of achieving virtue, wealth and love.

It was on this day that Lord Yama was fed by Yamunā with all the love of a sister. On that day, if a person takes food from the hands of a sister, he attains excellent wealth and splendid prosperity.

Sūta said:

Some more special details were mentioned by Vālakhilya sages which I shall recount. Listen to them, O excellent sages.

Vālakhilyas said:

41. The second day in the bright half of Kārttika is named after Yama. Then in the afternoon the worship of Yama should by all means be performed.

42-43. Formerly Yamunā used to come to Yama everyday with the request, "O brother, come to my house for food in the company of your attendants." Everyday Yama used to reply that he would go "today or tomorrow or the day after." There is no leisure to persons with minds engrossed in their duties.

44-46. Then once, he was invited with persistent solicitation, O great sages, on the Dvitīyā day in the month of Kārttika. He went there after setting free all the residents of hells. Accompanied by his attendants, the son of Sun was received with great hospitality by Yamunā. O bird, different kinds of dishes were prepared. He was anointed with oil by Yamunā and sweet-smelling, fascinating unguents were smeared upon his body. The son of Sun was bathed duly.

47-49. Then ornaments were presented to him along with different kinds of clothes, sandal paste, garlands etc. He was made to sit on a cot.

The gentle lady Yamunā cooked in gold vessels sweet rice dishes of various kinds with delighted mind and fed Yama.

After taking food, Yama honoured his sister with ornaments and different kinds of clothes. Then he said, "O beautiful lady, choose your boon." On hearing his words Yamunā spoke these words:

Yamunā said:

50-51. Come to my house for food every year. O Yama, all sinners are to be set free from hell today. Those who take food today from the hands of their sisters, should be happy. Grant them happiness. I choose only this.

Yama said:

52-53. O Yamunā, he who takes his bath in Yamunā and offers libations to Pitṛs and Devas, he who takes food in the house of his

sister and worships her, shall never see the entrance to my abode.

54-56. Yamatīrtha on the north-east of Vīreśa (a deity at Kāśī) is glorified. There the excellent man should take his holy bath and duly offer libations to the Pitṛs and Devas. Then till midday he should repeat these (following) names, facing the Sun with controlled mind. He should have steady posture and remain silent. The devotees repeat these names of Yama: "Yama, Nihantā (Annihilator), Pitṛdharmarāja, Vaivasvata (son of Sun), Daṇḍadhara (Holder of rod of punishment), Kāla, Bhūtādhipa (overlord of all beings), Dattānusārī (one who follows what is given), Kṛtānusārī (one who follows what is done) and Kṛtānta."

57-59. After worshipping Yameśvara he should go to the house of his sister. With the following Mantra he should be respectfully fed at the outset by her:

"O bróther, I am your younger sister. Eat this splendid food for the delight of Yamarāja and Yamunā in particular."

He should then propitiate his sister with garments, ornaments etc. Thereby, he will not see the world of Yama even in dreams.

60-65. Those who are detained as prisoners by kings should necessarily be sent to their sister's abodes on my day for taking their food.

The sinners should be released by me from Narakas (hells) on this day. Those who keep persons imprisoned today, should be beaten by me by all means.

If one has no younger sister,[1] one shall go to the elder sister's house. If she too does not exist, he should go to the abode of the married daughter of his paternal uncle.

In her absence, to the house of mother's sister or to that of the maternal uncle's daughter. The order of precedence shall be fixed on the basis of the relationships as the children of co-wives or of the same Gotra.

In the absence of all these, some lady should be considered as a sister. If she too is not available, one should make a cow or a river as his sister. In the absence thereof, the devotee should make a forest his sister's house. O gentle lady, one must not take one's food in one's own house on this day.

66. Those men of evil deeds who take food (in their own house), fall into hell.

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1. VV 62-65: The substitutes for a sister in the case of a sisterless person. A person should accept food in the house of sisters as per priority given here but should not eat in his own house on this day (Yama Dvitīyā day).

After saying this Dharmarāja went to his capital Saṁyaminī.

67. Hence, O excellent sages, all those who perform the Kārttika Vrata should eat from the hands of their sisters. It is true. It is true. There is no doubt (about it).

68. If a person does not take food in the house of his sister on the Yamadvitīyā day, the merit accrued to him during the year perishes. This is the statement heard from Sun-god.

69. The woman who feeds her brother on the Tithi pertaining to brother and adores him with betel-leaves will never have widowhood.

70. The span of life of the brother too shall not decrease at all. In regard to the feeding of the brother, the Dvitīyā should extend to the afternoon.

71-73. If out of ignorance or out of delusion, food is not taken in the sister's house because the brother happened to be touring abroad, or sick or had been imprisoned, or if there is no sister, one shall get the benefit of taking food there by listening to this story.

In the month of Kārttika particularly, if one resorts to the shade of *Emblica officinalis* and takes food, one shall attain Vaikuṇṭha.

CHAPTER TWELVE

The Efficacy of Dhātrī

Śaunaka said:

1-2. The eulogy of Kārttika is the bestower of great merit. When did Dhātrī originate? How did it attain fame? Why is it holy? Why is it destructive of sins? By whom was Āmardakī (*Emblica officinalis*) made? Tell it in detail.[1]

Sūta said:

3. I shall narrate it, O excellent Brāhmaṇa, how it is a bestower of merit. The devotee shall worship Dhātrī on the fourteenth day in the

1. Tree-worship is an age-old custom in India. Trees like Banyan, Pippal (Aśvattha), Bilva, Tulasī etc. have been objects of worship since hoary antiquity. Purāṇic writers have invested them with interesting legends like a beautiful drapery and we have such stories about religious importance of Dhātrī (*Emblica officinalis*) etc. A picnic and open air food under the shade of a tree is a happy social function but it is converted into a religious function by the Purāṇa writer here.

bright half of the month of Kārttika.

4-5. The great tree of Āmardakī is destructive of all sins. On the fourteenth day named after Vaikuṇṭha, the man should resort to the shade of a Dhātrī tree and worship there the Lord of Devas, Lord Hari accompanied by Rādhā. Then he should circumambulate it one hundred and eight times.

6. With a hundred and eight pieces of gold or silver or the fruits of *Emblic Myrobalan*, he should severally make a hundred and eight circumambulations.

7. After prostrating with eight limbs touching the ground, the devotee should pray to the great Lord. Resorting to the shade of the Dhātrī tree, he should listen to this story.

8. Afterwards he should feed Brāhmaṇas, paying them Dakṣiṇā in accordance with his capacity. If the Brāhmaṇas are satisfied, Hari, the bestower of salvation, is also satisfied.

9. In this connection I shall recount to you the story that gives merit. Even Brahmā is not competent to recount the benefit of Āmardakī (lit., that which destroys sin all round).

10-11. Formerly when everything was turned into a vast sheet of water, when mobile and immobile beings had been destroyed, when the types of Devas and Asuras, Serpents and Rākṣasas had been annihilated, the eternal supreme soul, the Lord of the chiefs of Devas (Brahmā) performed the *Japa* of the great and immutable Brahman (Mahāviṣṇu) transcending his own soul.

12. As he performed the *Japa* (mental repetition of the holy names) of Brahman, a deep breath came out of him. Due to the affection on seeing it water came out of the eyes.

13. Drops of tears of love burst out and fell on the ground. The great tree of Dhātrī grew from those drops.

14. It had plenty of branches and twigs. It was laden with fruits. It is glorified as the first among all the trees.

15. Brahmā created it at the beginning and then all the other subjects (such as) Devas, Dānavas, Gandharvas, Yakṣas, Rākṣasas and Serpents.

16. The Lord then created human beings devoid of impurities. Devas came to the place where the Dhātrī, the favourite of Hari, stood.

17. On seeing it those highly fortunate ones were struck with great wonder. They thought and pondered over it frequently, "We do not know what this tree is."

18-19. Even as they were thinking thus, an unembodied speech

said: "This is the Āmardakī tree. Since it is an excellent Vaiṣṇava tree, one will get the benefit of making the gift of cows merely by remembering it. By seeing it one gets twice that benefit and by eating (its fruits) three times the benefit.

20. Hence Āmardakī should always be resorted to by all means. It is Vaiṣṇavī and said to be the destroyer of all sins.

21. Viṣṇu is stationed at its root.[1] Brahmā is stationed above. Lord Rudra Parameśvara is stationed on its trunk.

22. The twelve Suns are stationed on its branches, Devas (the Guardians of the Quarters like Indra and others) are stationed on its twigs. The (thirty-three crores of ordinary) Devas are on its leaves and Maruts are on the flowers.

23-24. All the Prajāpatis (Patriarchs like Dakṣa) are established on its fruits. This tree has been mentioned by me as full of all the Devas.

Hence it should be worshipped for the purpose of attaining all the desired objects.

Once Nārada, the Yogin, stood in front of Brahmā. He bowed down to the Lord of the universe and with great wonder asked thus:

Śrī Nārada said:

25. Just as a grove of excellent basil plants is always liked by Hari, so also a grove of Dhātrī trees is liked by Śrī Hari in the month of Kārttika.

Brahmā said:

26. If anyone performs the worship of Hari in the forest of Dhātrī and takes food under the shade thereof in the month of Kārttika, his sin perishes.

27. When the Sun is stationed in the Zodiac Libra, all the Tīrthas, sages, Devas and Yajñas resort to the Dhātrī in Kārttika and abide themselves here.

28. Whatever meritorious deed a man performs here in the shade of Dhātrī trees, shall become increased crores of times. There is no doubt about it.

29-30. In this context they citc this ancient legend. O excellent Brāhmaṇa, there was a certain Vaiśya in the city of Ayodhyā. He had

1. VV 21-24 describe how Dhātrī is occupied by all Devas.

no wife or sons as ill luck would have it. He was afflicted with poverty.

31-35. He used to assuage the fire of his hunger by begging for alms, O Nārada. Once, he was afflicted with hunger and begged of some merchants. By begging he got some whole grams. He took it and went to the shade of a Dhātrī tree. It was in the month of Kārttika, O Nārada, and he ate the grams there.

Some of the grams which had been left over were given to a Brāhmaṇa by the Vaiśya who was hungry and emaciated. Thanks to the power of that merit, he became a rich king on the earth. Hence, charitable gifts should be made always in the month of Kārttika in a park of Dhātrī trees, O excellent sage, for the achievement of all desirable objects.

One who resorts to the shade of Dhātrī and listens to the story of Hari in the month of Kārttika will be released from all sins like the son of a Brāhmaṇa.

Nārada asked:

36. O Brahmā, who was this son of a Brāhmaṇa? What sin did he commit formerly? How did he attain liberation? Tell these in detail.

Brahmā narrated:

37-40. Formerly there was an excellent Brāhmaṇa on the northern bank of Kāverī. He was well-known by the name Devaśarmā. He was a master of Vedas and Vedāṅgas. He had a son of vicious conduct. The father advised him for his welfare:

"It is the month of Kārttika now. This month is a favourite of Hari. During this period take the holy bath, make charitable gifts and perform holy rites and observances. Dear son, perform the worship of Hari with flowers and Tulasī leaves. Make several offerings of lights, obeisances and circumambulations."

41. On hearing these words of his father the infuriated wicked-souled son spoke to his father censuring him with his lips throbbing (through anger).

The son said:

42. O father, I will not store merit in the month of Kārttika.

On hearing these words of his son, he angrily spoke to his son:

43. "O evil-minded one, be a mouse in the hollow of a tree in the forest."

Frightened on account of this curse, the son bowed down to his father and said:

44. "O my Sire, tell me how I can have liberation from the evil species."

On being propitiated thus, the Brāhmaṇa told him the means of expiation and redemption.

45. "When you hear about the merit accruing from Kārttikavrata which Hari likes much, you will have your liberation, O son, by listening to the story."

46-47. On being told thus by his father, he became a mouse instantly. He stayed in a cavity for thousands of years in the forest. Once, during the month of Kārttika, Viśvāmitra came there along with his disciples. He took his bath in the river, worshipped Hari and resorted to the shade of the Dhātrī.

48-50. He expounded to his disciples the greatness of the Kārttikavrata. At that time, a hunter of vicious conduct came there ahunting. On seeing the groups of sages that slaughterer of living beings (at first) wished to kill them. By their very sight he became pious-minded. He bowed down to the Brāhmaṇas and asked: "What is being done by you all, O Sirs?"

On being enquired by him thus, the eminent Brāhmaṇa Viśvāmitra spoke to him:

Viśvāmitra said:

51. Kārttika is said to be the most excellent of all months. Whatever holy rite is performed during this month increases like the seeds of a banyan tree.

52. One who, in the month of Kārttika, takes holy bath, makes charitable gifts and performs worship and then feeds Brāhmaṇas shall have everlasting benefit thereof.

53. The Brāhmaṇa (the mouse) heard about the virtue as told to the hunter by the sage. Then he cast off the body of a mouse and adopted a divine body.

54. He bowed down to Viśvāmitra. spoke the details about himself and on being permitted by the sage went to heaven seated in an aerial chariot.

55. The son of Gādhi (Viśvāmitra) and the hunter in particular became very much surprised. The hunter then performed the Kārttika Vrata and went to Hari's world.

56. Hence making all possible efforts, one should resort to the shade of a Dhātrī in the month of Kārttika and listen to the holy story in front of Keśava.

57. Even a mouse was liberated from the evil species by listening to the story about Kārttika. He who listens to or he who recites the story, shall undoubtedly be entitled to salvation.

58-59. One should have open-air meals in a forest (or a park) after resorting to the shade of a Dhātrī. At the outset, the devotee should take his holy bath in the water in the forest. After performing the usual routine religious duties he should worship Mādhava. Then he should sit in the shade of the Dhātrī with devotion to Hari and listen to the divine story in praise of the month.

60. Thereafter, he should feed, with great devotedness, Brāhmaṇas, the most excellent ones among those who have realized Brahman. Then he himself should take food, O great Brāhmaṇa, remembering Hari.

61. Listen with great attention, O son, to the sins that perish when the Vrata that Hari likes much, is performed thus in the month of Kārttika.

62-65. The sin[1] arising from enjoying what has not been dedicated to Hari, from looking at the Sun while taking food, from taking food from a sinner listening to the words of a woman in her monthly course, the sin of touching another person at the time of taking food, from taking prohibited food, the sin arising from taking food which is defiled and the sin accruing from abandoning pure food in the auspicious hour liked by Hari—all the sins like these will certainly perish. Hence, making all possible efforts one should take food under a Dhātrī tree.

66. If a Brāhmaṇa wears a garland of Dhātrī as well as one of Tulasī in Kārttika month, his merit is infinite.

67. If any man resorts to the shade of a Dhātrī tree and offers in particular a row of lamps, his merit is infinite.

68. Rādhā and Dāmodara are to be worshipped particularly under a Tulasī plant.[2] If Tulasī is not available, the splendid worship should be performed under Dhātrī.

1. VV 62-65 enumerate the social norms current then. The violation of those norms or etiquettes is regarded as 'sins'.

2. The cult of Rādhā-Dāmodara and the deification of Tulasī plant were well established before this Purāṇa.

69. If a man takes food at least once under a Dhātrī tree in the month of Kārttika and feeds a couple he is liberated from all evils of food.

70. At the conclusion of the Kārttika Vrata, one should worship the splendid Āmalakī (*Emblic Myrobalan*), feed a couple for the propitiation of Rādhā and Dāmodara and take one's own food later. His prosperity and glory will never wane.

71. O sage, if any devotee of Viṣṇu in the world wears the fruit of Dhātrī he becomes a favourite of Devas. Of human beings he is much more so—it is needless to say.

72. A person who smears his body with (the paste of) the fruit of Dhātrī, whose diet consists of the fruit of Dhātrī and who is endowed with the fruit of Dhātrī becomes Nārāyaṇa.

73. If a person holds the fruits of Dhātrī always within his closed hand, Lord Nārāyaṇa grants him the desired boon.

74-75. A man who desires prosperity and glory should always take his bath with Āmalaka fruits. Viṣṇu is delighted with the Āmalaka fruits particularly on Ekādaśī days.

One should avoid taking bath with Āmalaka fruits on the seventh and ninth lunar days, on a new-moon day, on Sundays, on a day when the Sun moves from one zodiac to another, on a day of lunar or solar eclipse.

76. If a man resorts to the shade of Dhātrī and offers rice balls (to Pitṛs), the Pitṛs attain liberation with the favour of Mādhava.

77-78. If a man wears the fruit of Dhātrī on the head, hands, face, arms and the neck, O dear one, if he is embellished with the Dhātrī fruits, Keśava lovingly rolls on his body as many times as the garland of Dhātrī moves to and fro round his neck.

79. Fruitful indeed is the life of that man in whose house these three exist, viz. a fruit of Dhātrī, Tulasī and the clay originating from Dvārakā (called Gopīcandana).

80. A man can reside in Vaikuṇṭha as many thousands of Yugas as the number of days he wears a garland of Dhātrī (flowers) in Kali Yuga.

81. A man who wears round his neck the two garlands, one of Dhātrī and the other of Tulasī, shall stay in heaven for crores of Kalpas.

82-83. If a person resorts to the shade of Dhātrī on the twelfth lunar day, worships Hari, feeds Brāhmaṇas there itself and himself takes cooked pulses and other stuffs as his food, he does not return (to the world) even after hundreds and crores of Kalpas.

84-86. One should worship Hari with leaves and fruits of Tulasī

and Dhātrī. If a Tulasī (plant) is watered along with Dhātrī in the month of Kārttika, all the sins like that of Brāhmaṇa-slaughter perish as in the case of the Brāhmaṇa Dharmadatta[1] who attained salvation formerly.

Nārada said:

87. Previously this has been said by you that it should always be resorted to by men in the month of Kārttika and worshipped. It should not be used in the four (rainy) months. Please tell everything completely to me.

Brahmā said:

88. O Brāhmaṇa-sage, beginning with the splendid Daśamī (tenth day) in the bright half of the month of Kārttika, it should be resorted to in all the holy rites of the deities or Pitṛs.

89-91. Men who worship Madhusūdana with its leaves and fruits from the tenth day pass on to Vaikuṇṭha.

When the Kārttika Vrata is concluded one should perform *Vanabhojana*[2] (taking food in the open air in a park or a forest). O highly fortunate one, one should celebrate *Vanabhojana* on the fifth, tenth or twelfth day or on the full-moon day.

Equipped with all condiments and ingredients and accompanied by old men and young children, an intelligent person should enter the park rendered splendid by Dhātrī trees.

92. There should be the following trees all round, beautifying that park: mango, Baka (*Sesbana grandiflora*), Aśvattha (the holy fig tree), Picumanda (*Azadirachta indica*), Kadamba, banyan and tamarind.

93-96. After going there, O highly intelligent one, the devotee should perform *Puṇyāha* rite (purificatory rite) at the outset. The *Vāstupīṭha* (pedestal of the holy site) for the sake of worship should be made at the root of Dhātrī. A square-shaped altar should be made. It shall be splendid and a *Hasta* long as a seat of deity. There shall be an *Upavedikā* (smaller altar) in front of the Altar: O highly intelligent one, the place should be beautified by means of minerals.

To the west of the Altar, he should make the pavilion for the Kuṇḍa

1. The story of Dharmadatta is given in details in Ch. 24.
2. *Vanabhojana* is really a picnic in a park but in vv 90-117, we find its transformation into a religious rite.

(holy pit). It must have three Mekhalās (girdles, circular rings) and a vaginic-shaped frontal inlet. O gentle one, it should extend to one *Hasta*.

97. Afterwards he should take his bath, perform *Japa* and worship of the Lord. Thereafter, he should gather fire and perform *Homa* in accordance with the injunctions.

98-101. The Homa should be with milk-pudding, ghee, jaggery, pulse-soup and Palāśa twigs. *Caru* should be carefully prepared for the sake of the Planets and the deities of the house-rite. Then *Rakṣā-Homa* (Homa for the sake of protection) should be begun repeating the synonyms of Dhātriī viz. Dhātrī, Śānti, Kānti, Māyā, Prakṛti, Viṣṇupatnī, Mahālakṣmī, Ramā, Mā, Kamalā, Indirā, Lokamātā, Kalyāṇī, Kamalā, Sāvitrī, Jagaddhātrī, Gāyatrī, Sudhṛti, Antajñā, Viśvarūpā, Sukṛpā and Abdhisaṁbhavā.

The Homa should be performed along with the principal deity.

102. Repeating the Mantra beginning with *Saṁsṛṣṭa* (*Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa*) as well as *Ṛṣabhaṁ mā* (*Ṛg Veda* X. 166.1) the devotee should make the offerings of *Apūpa* (sweet pie) mixed with jaggery and cooked pulse.

103. After performing one hundred and eight Homas with milk-pudding while repeating the Mūla Mantra, he should perform the Homas for the presiding Devas of the Planets etc. respectively.

104-109. In the Homa for Dhātrī, O highly intelligent one, and in Rakṣā-Homa, milk-pudding should be offered. Then the Homa for Sviṣṭakṛt (Fire-god of that name) should be performed. Then oblations should be made. The Rakṣā-Homa and worship should be performed for Indra and other Guardians of the Quarters carefully and scrupulously.

Afterwards oblation should be offered to Dhātrī tree along with the altar everywhere with cooked pulse mixed with jaggery. Then he should pray thus: "Obeisance to you, O goddess Dhātrī. Accept the excellent oblation with a mixture of jaggery and cooked pulse. O deity, the bestower of all auspiciousness, give me highly intelligent sons. Grant me auspicious renown, intelligence, prescience, presence of mind, good luck and devotion to Viṣṇu. Make me free from diseases forever and rid of all sins perpetually. O goddess, make me refulgent and rich." After praying, he should circumambulate and place the oblations.

110-111. Those who circumambulate at the time of offering oblations attain *Sālokya* (residence in the same world) with Viṣṇu along with the Manes. Then he should perform the *Pūrṇāhuti* (offering with ladleful of ghee) and conclude the remaining part of the Homa.

112. Those who see with their own eyes the smiling Lord of Ramā stationed at the root of Dhātrī tree attain *Sāyujya* with Viṣṇu.

113-116. Thereafter the rite of Vaiśvadeva should be performed and the sylvan deities should be worshipped. Then, O son of Brahmā, perfumes and raw rice grains should be offered to Brāhmaṇas. He should feed the Brāhmaṇas then. Thereafter, he should take his own food along with kinsmen. Afterwards he should take old people and children to their respective houses. At night, he should maintain perfect celibacy and sleep on bare ground.

The excellent rite of *Vanabhojana* should be celebrated by the learned man himself or in the company of other people in the village for ridding himself of all sins. After celebrating all these rites, he should dedicate everything to Kṛṣṇa.

117. In the rite of *Vanabhojana* the benefit is the same as that of a thousand horse sacrifices or a hundred Rājasūyas.

118. Hence, O highly fortunate one, Dhātrī is sacred. It is destructive of sins. Dhātrī (i.e. tree) is the Dhātrī (supporter and sustainer) of men. It acts like a Dhātrī (nurse).

119. If water (i.e. juice of Dhātrī) is drunk, it bestows longevity. If people take bath using Dhātrī they can secure more religious merit. It is destructive of Alakṣmī (Ill-luck). Merely by taking the bath, one shall attain salvation. By taking regular bath using Dhātrī men will never meet with obstacles.

120. Hence, O Nārada, O great Brāhmaṇa, try to take regular bath using Dhātrī. You will go to the abode of Hari after attaining Devahood.

121. Wherever one takes bath using Dhātrī (water), whether it is in a Tīrtha or in a house, Hari is present there.

122. O Brāhmaṇa sage, O excellent ascetic, if the bones in the body of a man are washed with the use of Dhātrī while bathing, he will never stay in any womb.

123. If, O great Brāhmaṇa, the hair of anyone is washed with Dhātrī juice, he goes to Keśava after getting rid of the dirt of Kali.

124. The fruit of Dhātrī is highly meritorious. The bath is stated as still more meritorious. O dear one, O excellent sage, if it is eaten, it is more meritorious than other meritorious things.

125. Even one single fruit of Dhātrī on the day of Mādhava (i.e. the eleventh lunar day) is more meritorious than Gaṅgā, Gayā, Kāśī, Veṇī and Puṣkara.

126. Bath with the use of Dhātrī, the name of Hari, Ekādaśī (eleventh lunar day) and Śrāddha at Gayā, O dear son, all these are on a par and the sages know it.

127. One who touches Dhātrī everyday, gets rid of all his sins of mind, body and speech.

128. O excellent sage, one should never take bath with Dhātrī fruit on new-moon days or seventh and ninth days or on Sundays or on the days of the transit of the Sun from one Zodiac to another.

129. Ghosts, evil spirit known as Kūṣmāṇḍa or Rākṣasas do not enter that house where, O excellent sage, Dhātrī grows.

130. He who does not wear round his neck a garland made of Dhātrī fruits, should not be considered a Vaiṣṇava or one who is engaged in devotional duties towards Viṣṇu.

131. Neither a garland of Tulasī nor of Dhātrī in particular nor that of lotus seeds should be abandoned by those who desire virtue, wealth or love.

132. One can stay in Vaikuṇṭha as many thousands of Yugas as the number of days on which the man wears Dhātrī garland in the Kali age.

133. Dhātrī is full of all Devas. It is a favourite of Vāsudeva. It should be planted, resorted to and worshipped always by men.

134. Thus the excellent greatness of Dhātrī has been entirely recounted to you. It yields the fruits of all the four great aims of life. It should be always listened to by devotees.

135. If a person resorts to the shade of Dhātrī in the month of Kārttika and takes food, the sin arising from contact with food for one full year perishes in his case.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

Previous Life of Satyabhāmā

Sūta said:

1. When the excellent Celestial Sage took leave of the husband of Śrī and went away, Satyā (i.e. Satyabhāmā) spoke to Vāsudeva with her face full-blown due to delight.

Satyabhāmā said:

2-3. I am blessed. I am contented. My life has become fruitful. I have (surely) done something good formerly by way of charitable gifts, holy rites or austerities, whereby, O Lord, I have become your

wife, though born of mortals. In the previous birth, what had been my conduct? Who was I? Whose daughter? (How) did I become your beloved? Recount everything to me.[1]

Śrīkṛṣṇa replied:

4-6. O beloved, listen with concentration how you observed meritorious holy rites in your previous birth. I shall narrate everything to you.

There was an excellent Brāhmaṇa named Devaśarmā in Māyāpurī[2] towards the end of Kṛtayuga. He belonged to the Ātreya Gotra. He was master of Vedas and Vedāṅgas. When he had become pretty old, he begot a daughter named Guṇavatī.

7. He had no son. He gave his daughter (in marriage) to his disciple named Candra. He considered him his son and the disciple of perfect self-control (honoured him) like his own father.

8. Once those two went to a forest in order to bring Kuśa grass, sacrificial twigs and fuel. They were killed by a Rākṣasa as hideous in form as the god of Death.

9-11. Both of them went to the world of Viṣṇu due to the power of their respective merits.

On hearing that both of them had been killed by a Rākṣasa, Guṇavatī became extremely distressed, having been separated from her husband as well as her father. She lamented in a pitiable manner. She quickly sold all the furniture, utensils etc. and performed according to her capacity their obsequies and other holy rites for (their) happiness in the other world. Living like a dead person, she continued to stay in the same city.

1. Rebirth, curses, boons etc. have been favourite motifs with ancient Indian story-tellers. For example, *Jātaka Tales* in Pali connect some incident in the previous birth of the Buddha or rather the Bodhisattva (*Atīta-Vatthu*) with a similar incident in his present birth and the identification of the persons in the previous birth with those in the present birth of Buddha (*Paccupanna Vatthu* and *Veyyākaraṇa*), explaining or justifying the present happening, has been a special characteristic of those tales. Thus in *Makhādeva Jātaka* (I.1-9) King Makhādeva of the previous birth was the Buddha, the barber Bhikku Ānanda and Makhādeva's prince was Rāhula, the son of Buddha. Jain Tales (both canonical and non-canonical) use the device of *Jāi-Saraṇa* (recollection of the previous birth) for the same. These ancient story-writers insisted on establishing the principle of justice in *Karma-vāda*.

Brahmanical Purāṇa-writers followed the same norm and sometimes invented stories of previous birth to establish the law of Karma. In this story 're-birth' is used as the motif in the life of the Jīva which came to be called Satyabhāmā and became the spouse of Kṛṣṇa. More authentic Purāṇic accounts of Kṛṣṇa as in Mbh or BhP do not necessarily support these late Purāṇic stories.

2. Region including modern Haridwar, Māyāpurī and Kanakhala (De 129).

12. Two Vratas were perfectly observed by her throughout her life till death, viz. the Vrata of Ekādaśī and the holy ṛite of Kārttika.

13-14. Thus Guṇavatī performed the Vratas every year. Once that slender-bodied one became afflicted with fever. She was in great physical pain. O my beloved, with great difficulty she went slowly to Gaṅgā for taking her bath. When she entered the water, she became distressed with chillness. She shivered.

15-16a. By that time the lady in distress saw an aerial chariot that had come from the sky. She got into that aerial chariot and went to the world of Vaikuṇṭha. Thanks to the merit of Kārttikavrata, she came to my presence.

16b-17. When I came to the earth at the request of the Devas headed by Brahmā, all those groups (of Devas) also came along with me. O beautiful lady, all these Yādavas are my own attendants.

18. Your father Devaśarmā now has the name Satrājit. He who had been called by the name Candra is Akrūra now and you are that splendid Guṇavatī.[1]

19-23. You gave me great delight, thanks to the merit of the Kārttikavrata.

Formerly a grove of Tulasī plants was made by you in front of my doorway. Hence, O splendid lady, the Kalpa tree (i.e. Pārijāta) has come to your courtyard. Since formerly you performed the Kārttika Vrata throughout your life till death, you will never be separated from me.

Satyā asked:

How did the month of Kārttika come to be the most excellent of all the months? O Lord of chiefs of Devas, why is it your favourite? Let the reason thereof be mentioned.

Śrīkṛṣṇa said:

O my beloved, you have asked an excellent question. Listen to me with great concentration.

I recount the dialogue between Pṛthu, the son of Vena, and Nārada, the great sage. Nārada was formerly asked in the same way by Pṛthu and he spoke thus:

1. As noted above, rebirth is used as a motif in this tale which establishes the law of Karma. This story was not traceable in Mbh and BhP. But PdP repeats not only the episode but many verses from this text.

Nārada said:

24. Formerly there was an Asura named Śaṅkha. He was the son of Sāgara (Ocean). He usurped the powers of Indra and other Guardians of the Quarters.

25. The Devas and others hid themselves in the forts of the caves of the Golden Mountain (Meru). They watched (the activities of the Asura). Then the Daitya thought thus:

26. 'Although the Devas have been vanquished by me and they have been divested of their powers, they appear to be strong. What should I do in this matter?

27. I know it now. The Devas have the power due to the Vedic Mantras. I shall take them away. Thereupon all of them will become powerless.'

28. The Daitya thought thus and, on seeing Viṣṇu asleep, he took away the Vedas from the primordial self-born Lord Brahmā from Satyaloka.

29. While they were being carried away by him, the Vedas, out of fear of him, escaped and entered the waters along with the seeds of the Yajñamantras.

30. In search of them, Śaṅkha too entered the ocean. Wandering here and there the Daitya did not find them together anywhere. Then Viṣṇu, eulogized and awakened by the Devas, spoke to them:

Viṣṇu said:

31-32. O groups of Suras, I am the bestower of boons. On the eleventh day in the bright half of the month of Kārttika, I have been awakened by you all through the auspicious sounds of musical instruments and songs.[1] Hence this Tithi (Lunar day) should be honoured much.

It is exceedingly delightful to me.

33. All the Vedas carried away by Śaṅkha now lie submerged in the waters. O Devas, I shall bring them all after killing the son of the Ocean.

34. From this day onwards forever, let the Vedas along with the mystic seeds of Mantras take rest in the waters in the month of Kārttika every year.

35. During this period (Kārttika), those excellent men who take the holy bath in the morning, will all be as though they have taken the

1. Hence this day is called *Prabodhinī Ekādaśī.*

Avabhṛtha bath (valedictory bath after a sacrifice). There is no doubt about it.

36. From today onwards I shall be in the middle of the waters. All of you along with the leading sages may also come along with me.

37. O Indra, protection should always be accorded to those who observe Kārttikavrata, by you.

After saying this, Lord Viṣṇu assumed the form of a Śapharī fish and plunged into the water from the sky even as Brahmā staying on Vindhya was watching.

38. After killing Asura Śaṅkha Viṣṇu went to the forest of Badarī. There the Lord called together all the sages and commanded thus:

Viṣṇu said:

39. O you all, do search for the Vedas scattered within the waters. Bring them quickly from the midst of the waters of the sea. Till then I shall remain at Prayāga accompanied by the groups of Devas.

Nārada said:

40-42. Thereafter those Vedas along with their *Bījas* (seeds) and the *Yajñas* were redeemed by all those sages endowed with the power of penance. O king, the number of Mantras for each (sage) was as much as he redeemed or found. Since then he came to be regarded as the sage (seer) of those Mantras. Then all the sages joined together and went to Prayāga.

43. They submitted all the Vedas they recovered to Viṣṇu accompanied by Brahmā. After regaining the entire set of Vedas Brahmā became delighted.

44. Accompanied by the groups of Celestial Sages, he performed a horse-sacrifice. At the end of the Yajña all the Devas submitted their requests immediately.

The Devas said:

45. O Lord of Devas, O Lord of the universe, listen to our prayer and submission. This is the period of delight for us. Hence be the bestower of boons.

46. With your favour, O Lord of Ramā, Brahmā regained the lost Vedas in this place. We too got back our shares in the Yajñas.

47. With your favour let this spot be the bestower of worldly pleasures and salvation and one that increases merits. Let it be the most excellent place for us on the earth.

48. Let this time be highly meritorious. Let it be the sanctifier of even the murderer of a Brāhmaṇa. It should cause the increase of everything given. Let it have everlasting benefit. Grant this boon to us.

Viṣṇu said:

49. O Devas, this (place) has been chosen by me. What you all requested has been accepted by me. Let this spot be easily accessible. Let it be famous by the name Brahmakṣetra.

50. A king born of the solar race (viz. Bhagīratha) will bring Gaṅgā here. It will be joined by Kālindī, the daughter of the Sun-god, here.

51. All of you including Brahmā should stay with me. This Tīrtha shall become well known as Tīrtharāja.

52-53. By mere sight of Tīrtharāja all the sins perish. It destroys the sins of those who take bath there when the Sun is in the Zodiac Capricorn. Let this period be the bestower of great merit unto men always. In the month of Māgha, when the Sun is in Capricorn, it shall grant the type of liberation called Sālokya.

Nārada said:

54. After saying this to Devas, the Lord of Devas vanished there itself along with Brahmā. All the Devas remained there partially. Indra and others then vanished.

55. He who worships Lord Hari at the root of Tulasī in Kārttika enjoys all pleasures here and goes to the city of Viṣṇu in the end.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

The Birth of Jalandhara

Pṛthu said:

1-3. O Brāhmṇa, the Vrata of Kārttika has been recounted in detail by you. But therein the worship of Viṣṇu at the root of Tulasī has also been enjoined by you. I, therefore, wish to ask you about the greatness of Tulasī. How is it that it became a great favourite of the

Śārṅga-bearing Lord of Devas? How did it originate? O Nārada, at what place did it originate? Describe this succinctly. You are respected as an omniscient person by me.

Nārada said:

4. O king, listen attentively to the greatness of Tulasī. I shall describe everything along with its legendary story that happened formerly.

5. Formerly Śakra went to the Kailāsa mountain to pay a visit to Śiva. He was surrounded by all the Devas and accompanied by groups of celestial damsels.

6. When he reached the abode of Śiva, he saw a person of terrible activities there. He was highly terrifying on account of his curved teeth and hideous face.

7. He was asked by him (Indra) : "Who are you? Where has the Lord of the universe gone?" Though asked thus frequently, O king, he did not reply.

8-9. Then the infuriated Lord with the thunderbolt in his hand rebuked him and spoke these words : "Oh! Though you are being asked by me, you have not replied. Hence I shall kill you with my thunderbolt. O vicious-minded one, who is there to save you?" After saying this, the Thunderbolt-bearing Lord smote him with force with his thunderbolt.

10. Thereby his throat became blue and the thunderbolt was reduced to ash. Then Rudra blazed with his refulgence as if he would burn (everything).

11. On seeing it Bṛhaspati immediately joined his palms in reverence. He made Indra prostrate flat on the ground and began to eulogize.

Bṛhaspati said:

12. Obeisance to the overlord of Devas. to the Three-eyed Lord with matted hair. Obeisance to the slayer of Tripuras, to Śarva, to the destroyer of Andhaka.

13. Bow to the lord with a hideous form, to the lord who is beyond all forms, to Śaṁbhu of many forms. Obeisance to the lord who caused destruction to (Dakṣa's) Yajña, to the lord who grants the benefit of Yajñas.

14. Obeisance to the destroyer of Kāla (Death), to Kāla (Time),

to the lord holding black serpents. Salute to the destroyer of Brahmā's head. Obeisance, obeisance to the Brāhmaṇa.

Nārada said:

15. On being eulogized thus by Bṛhaspati, Śaṁbhu said to him after withdrawing the flame of fire issuing from the eye—the fire that was capable of burning the three worlds :

16. "O Brāhmaṇa, choose a boon. I am pleased with this eulogy of yours. Since you granted life unto Indra, attain the reputation as *Jīva*."

Bṛhaspati said:

17. If you are pleased, O Lord, you do protect Indra who seeks refuge in you. Let this fire issuing from the eye in the forehead subside.

Īśvara said:

18. How can the fire re-enter the eye in the forehead? I shall cast this off very far, so that it will not trouble Indra.

Nārada said:

19. After saying thus he took hold of it in his hand and threw it into the briny sea. It fell where the river Sindhu met the ocean.

20. By that time it assumed the form of a child and began to cry. Due to the noise of his cries the entire earth shook frequently.

21. All the worlds beginning with Svarga (heaven) and ending with Satyaloka became deafened due to that noise. On hearing it Brahmā went there wondering what it was.

22-23. He saw the boy in the lap of the Ocean. On seeing Brahmā coming, the Ocean joined his palms in reverence, bowed down his head and placed the boy on his lap :

"O Brahmā, my son was born in the place where the river Sindhu joins the ocean. O Sire of the universe, perform the post-natal consecratory rites for him."

Nārada said:

24-25. While the Ocean said so, the boy, the son of the Ocean, caught hold of the beard of Brahmā and shook it frequently. As the

beard was pulled thus, water flowed from his (Brahmā's) eyes. Somehow Brahmā extricated his beard and spoke to the Ocean :

Brahmā said :

26. Since the water flowing from my eyes was held by him, he will become famous by the name Jalandhara.[1]

27-28. For this very reason, when he becomes a youth, he will become a master of all missiles and weapons. He will be invincible to all living beings, except Rudra. He will attain his end at the place where he was born.

Nārada said:

29. On saying this, he called Śukra and made him crown him as king in the realm. After taking leave of the Ocean, Brahmā vanished.

30. The Ocean had his eyes beaming like full-blown lotus at his sight. He requested Kālanemi for the hand of Vṛndā, his daughter, to be the wife unto his son.

31. Then the Asuras, the chief of whom was Kālanemi, became delighted. They gave his (Kālanemi's) daughter to him (Jalandhara). After securing her as an excellent friend (and wife), the powerful demon ruled over the realm with the assistance (and advice) of Śukra.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

The Victories of Jalandhara

Nārada said:

1. Daityas who had been formerly defeated by Devas and who had been staying in the nether worlds came without any fear whatsoever to the earth and resorted to him.

2. Once, on seeing Rāhu with his head cut, that king of Daityas asked Śukra about the cause of his head being cut off.

3. He told him the detailed story of the churning of the Ocean, the fact that all jewels were taken away by Devas and the defeat of the Daityas etc.

1. Popular etymology of the name *Jalandhara*.

4. On hearing about the churning of his father (i.e. Ocean), he became furious with eyes turned red. He sent Ghasmara as his messenger to the presence of Śakra.

5. The messenger went to heaven and entered the excellent (Assembly of Indra called) Sudharmā. With his head raised up (with self-respect) the messenger spoke to Devendra the following wonderful words.

Ghasmara said:

6. Jalandhara, the son of the Ocean, is the lord of all the Daitya-folks. I am sent by him as his messenger. Hear what he says :

7. "Why was my father, the Ocean, churned by you with a mountain? All the jewels had been carried away (by you). Return all those things to me immediately."

8. On hearing these words of the messenger the Lord of Devas became surprised. Moved by fear as well as anger, he spoke to the terrible Ghasmara :

Indra said:

9-10. Listen, O messenger, why the Ocean was churned by me formerly. The Mountains who were afraid of me were kept by him within his bowels. Other enemies too of mine, Daityas, were accorded shelter by him formerly. Hence, what came out of him has been taken away by me.

11. Śaṅkha too, a son of the Ocean, became inimical to Devas formerly. He was killed by my younger brother (Viṣṇu) and he entered the bowels of the Ocean for good.

12a. Therefore, go and tell him everything about the cause of the churning (of the Ocean).

Nārada said:

12b. Thus the messenger who was sent back by Indra went to the earth.

13. Then he told the Daitya all these words. On hearing them the Daitya became furious. His lips throbbed due to anger.

14. Accompanied by the army of Daityas, he went to heaven in order to fight. Then in that war the destruction of Devas and Dānavas was excessive.

15. Bhārgava (i.e. Śukra) resuscitated all those Daityas who died in the war there by means of his Vidyā (secret formula) named Mṛtajīvanī ('enlivener of the dead') and with water drops charged with Mantras.

16. Aṅgiras (i.e. Bṛhaspati) acquired divine medicinal herbs from the Droṇa mountain[1] frequently and resuscitated the Devas who were killed in the war.

17. On seeing that the (resuscitated) Devas were coming up again in the battle, Jalandhara became furious and he spoke these words to Bhārgava:

Jalandhara said:

18. How is it that the Devas killed by me in the battle rise up again? It is well-known that your Vidyā named Sañjīvinī is not known to others.

Śukra said:

19. Aṅgiras brings divine herbs from the Droṇa mountain and resuscitates the Suras. Hence you remove the Droṇa mountain quickly.

Nārada said:

20. On being told thus, the Lord of Daityas carried the Droṇa mountain and cast it into the ocean. Then he returned to the battlefield quickly.

21. On seeing the Devas being killed, Guru (i.e. Bṛhaspati) went to the Droṇa mountain but the preceptor who was honoured by the Suras could not find the important mountain there.

22. On coming to know that the Droṇa mountain had been taken away by the Daitya, Dhiṣaṇa (Bṛhaspati) became frightened. He came to the battleground and spoke from a distance with all his body gasping for breath:

23. "Run away from the battle, O Devas. This (Daitya) cannot be vanquished because he is born of a part of Rudra. Remember the act of Śakra (such as striking the Bhīma Puruṣa with Vajra)."

24. On hearing his words the Devas became alarmed. On being killed and hit by the Daitya they ran to all the ten directions.

1. *Droṇa*: Identified with Mt. Doonagiri in Kumaun (De 58, 110). Local tradition in Satara District (Maharashtra) believes that the Jaraṇḍā hill in that District is a part of Droṇagiri.

25. On seeing that the Devas had been routed by the Daityas, the son of the Ocean entered Amarāvatī to the accompaniment of the victorious sounds of conchs and Bherī drums.

26. When the Daitya entered the city, the Devas with Śakra as their leader went to the cave of the Meru mountain and stayed there. They were excessively harassed by the Daityas.

27. Then the Asura employed Śumbha and other excellent Daityas severally in all the offices of Indra and others. Then he himself went to the cave of the Meru mountain.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

Nārada Visits Jalandhara

Nārada said:

1. On seeing the Daitya coming once again, all the Devas including Indra trembled with fear and they began to eulogize Viṣṇu:

2. "Obeisance to you who always are prepared to carry out the tasks of your devotees through (assuming) various forms such as that of the Fish, Tortoise and others; to the dispeller of agony, to the lord, the cause of creation, sustenance and annihilation of Brahmā and others, to the lord holding iron club, conch, lotus and discus in the hands.

3-4. Repeatedly we bow to the lover of Ramā, to the slayer of Asuras, to the lord whose vehicle is (Garuḍa) the enemy of serpents, to the yellow-robed lord, to the lord who gives the fruits of yajñas and other holy rites, to the bestower (or to the lord who is the cause of all the created beings), to the lord who is worthy of being sought refuge in. We bow down to him again and again. Like the thunderbolt which destroys mountains, the Lord dispels the (mountains of) miseries of the immortal ones tortured by the Daityas. Obeisance to you, to Viṣṇu, to the Lord who lies on the couch of the Lord of Serpents. We repeatedly salute the Lord whose two eyes are the Sun and the Moon."

Nārada said:

5. One who reads or recites this prayer named Saṁkaṣṭanāśa ('Destroyer of distress') is never afflicted with distresses and troubles due to the mercy of Hari.

6. By the time the Devas concluded the prayer to the Enemy of

the Dānavas, the calamity of the Suras had come to be known to Viṣṇu.

7. The Enemy of the Daityas got up suddenly with great fury. He was distressed in his mind. Mounting Garuḍa hurriedly he spoke to Lakṣmī:

Śrī Bhagavān said:

8. Great havoc has been played with the Devas by your brother Jalandhara. Called by them, I shall go hurriedly for fighting (with him).

Śrī said:

9. O Lord, if due to my perpetual devotion to you I am your beloved, O storehouse of mercy, how can my brother be worthy of being killed (by you) in battle?

Śrī Bhagavān said:

10. As he is born of a part of Rudra, because of the word (conferring boon) of Brahmā and because of my love to you Jalandhara is not worthy of being killed by me.

Nārada said:

11. After saying this, Viṣṇu bearing the conch, the discus, the iron club and the sword got on to Garuḍa and rushed to the place where the Devas stood praying to him. He went there in order to fight (with the Demon).

12. Afflicted with the dreadful gusts of wind from the wings of Garuḍa, the Daityas whirled about like clouds in the sky shattered and scattered by violent storms.

13. On seeing the Daityas afflicted with the violent gust of wind, Jalandhara rolled his eyes in fury and then rushed at Viṣṇu.

14. Then a fierce fight ensued between Viṣṇu and the king of Daityas. With their arrows they filled up the entire sky leaving no space void.

15. With volleys of arrows Viṣṇu cut off the top of the flagstaff, the umbrella, the bow and the horses of the Daitya. With an arrow he hit him in his chest.

16. Then seizing an iron club with his hand, the Daitya leaped up hurriedly. He hit Garuḍa on his head and made him fall on the ground.

17. Laughingly Viṣṇu split his iron club with his sword. Then the Daitya hit Viṣṇu on his chest with his (iron) firm fist.

18. Then both of the two highly powerful ones had a hand-to-hand fight (like wrestling and boxing). They made the earth reverberate the sounds produced by their arms, fists and knees.

19. Thus they fought for a long time. Then Viṣṇu, the valorous one, spoke to the king of Daityas in a voice as grave and majestic as that of rumbling clouds:

Viṣṇu said:

20. Choose a boon, O king of Daityas, I am pleased with your valour. I shall give whatever you wish in your mind, even if it should not be given.

Jalandhara said:

21. O Brother-in-law, if you are pleased, grant me this boon. Stay in my house today along with my sister and your groups of attendants.

Nārada said:

22. Saying, "So it shall be" the Lord went to the city of Jalandhara along with Ramā and all the groups of the Devas.

23. After establishing the Dānavas in the offices of the Devas, the mighty-armed Jalandhara came once again to the earth.

24. Whatever there was with the Devas, Gandharvas and Siddhas studded with gems was taken into his possession by the son of the Ocean.

25. After establishing Niśumbha, the exceedingly powerful Daitya, in the Pātāla region, that strong demon brought Śeṣa and others to the earth.

26. He made the Devas, Gandharvas, Siddhas and others, Serpents, Rākṣasas and human beings citizens of his capital and ruled over the three worlds.

27. After making the Devas subject to his control, Jalandhara protected his subjects righteously as though they were his bosom-born children.

28. No one was sick, miserable, or lean. While he was ruling over the kingdom virtuously no poor man was visible therein.

29. When the leading Dānava was ruling over the earth righteously thus, I wished to see him. I went there to see his glory as well as to serve the Lover of Śrī.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

Dialogue between Nārada and Jalandhara[1]

Nārada said:

1. He duly and devoutly worshipped me, O king, and laughingly spoke these loving words to me :

2. "O Brāhmaṇa, where are you coming from? Has anything been seen by you, O Lord, for which you have come over here? Command me (to comply), O sage."

Nārada said:

3-4. O leader of Daityas, I went to the peak of Kailāsa casually. There I saw Śaṅkara seated with Umā in the great forest of Kalpa-trees, which extends to ten thousand Yojanas, which is illuminated excellently with Cintāmaṇi jewels and is full of hundreds of Kāmadhenus (divine cows).

5. On seeing that great wonderful thing I was surprised. I thought that such a prosperity and glory may or may not be present (anywhere else) in all the three worlds.

6. At that time, O king of Daityas, your glory too was remembered by me. I wish to survey the same. Therefore, I have come here to you.

7. Well I have seen your glory that is certainly devoid of jewels among women. I conclude that in the three worlds there is no one more prosperous than Śiva.

8. Although the celestial damsels, Nāga maidens and others are within your control, certainly they are not like Pārvatī in beauty.

9. The Four-faced Lord himself got drowned in the ocean of her beauty and lost his courage once. Who can be compared with her?

10. The enemy of Madana is devoid of sensuous attachment. Still he was whirled formerly in the forest of beauty by her sportingly, in the form of a Śapharī[2] fish(?) [a Śabarī lass?]

11. At the time of creation, Brahmā frequently looked at her form

1. This chapter reveals the mischievous genius of Nārada, the partisan of Devas. He created enmity between Jalandhara and Śiva by misguiding him to bring the jewel-like consort (Pārvatī) of Śiva.

2. Probably misprint (for *Śabarī*).

and then created the celestial damsels. But among them there was none on a par with Pārvatī.

12. Hence the prosperity and glory (of Śiva) who enjoys the jewel among women is the most excellent one. Your glory is not like that, O king of Daityas, though you are the possessor of all jewels.

13. After saying this, I took leave of him and went away. The king of Daityas became afflicted with the fever of love on hearing about her (Pārvatī's) beauty.

14. Then, deluded by Viṣṇu's Māyā, he sent the son of Siṁhikā (Rāhu) as his messenger to the Three-eyed Lord too.

15. Rāhu went to Kailāsa that has the refulgence of the moon in the bright fortnight but, with the blackness arising from his own body, he made it (appear as though) it had the lustre of the moon in the dark fortnight.

16. On Īśa having been informed by Nandin, Rāhu entered. When he was urged by a gesture of the eyebrows of Śiva, he spoke these words :

Rāhu said:

17. O Bull-emblemed One, listen to the command of my lord who is worthy of being served by Devas and Serpents, who is the overlord of all the three worlds and is the possessor of all jewels.

18. "How can you have such a splendid wife as the daughter of Himavān, you who are a resident of cremation ground forever, who always bear the burden of bones and who are always naked?

19. I am the overlord of all *Ratnas* (jewels). She can be designated as a jewel among women. Hence she fits me and not you who beg for your own food."

Nārada said:

20. While Rāhu was saying this, a terrible person issued forth from the middle of the eyebrows of the Trident-bearing Lord.[1] His voice resembled the sound of the powerful thunderbolt.

21. He had a leonine face with a rolling tongue and blazing eyes. He was huge with hair standing upright and the body dry and rough. He was like another Nṛsiṁha.

1. This is the story of the creation of Kīrtimukha, the demon-like figure which is found at the entrance of Śiva temples. He is generally worshipped before Śiva, the reason of which is explained in v 30.

22. On seeing that person rushing at him in order to devour him, Rāhu became excessively frightened. He ran out quickly but the person caught hold of him (Rāhu).

23. With words as resonant and majestic as thunder, O mighty one, Rāhu said : "O lord of Devas, protect me. I have sought refuge in you.

24. (This fellow) has come here, O Mahādeva, to devour me, a Brāhmaṇa." On hearing the words of that Brāhmaṇa, Mahādeva spoke then:

25. "He does not deserve to be killed because he is (only) a messenger and hence he is dependent. Let him go." On hearing this, that person set Rāhu free in the open sky.

26a. After leaving off Rāhu, the person requested Rudra :

The person said:

26b-27a. Hunger afflicts me much. I am emaciated due to hunger utterly. O Lord, O Lord of Devas, what shall I eat? Command me.

Īśvara said:

27b. Eat the flesh of your own hands and feet. Be quick.

Nārada said:

28. On being commanded thus by Śiva, the person devoured the flesh of his own hands and feet till he was left with his head alone.

29. On seeing him left with his head alone, Śiva became highly delighted. Himself struck with wonder, he spoke to that person of terrible activities.

Īśvara said:

30. You are named Kīrtimukha. Be always present at my doorway. Those who do not worship you, are not liked by me.

Nārada said:

31. Ever since then Kīrtimukha is stationed at the doorway (of the temple) of the Lord. Those who do not worship (him) here at the outset, will find their worship futile.

32. Since Rāhu was set free by him at that desolate spot (Barbara) he became known on the earth as Barbarodbhūta.

33. Rāhu considered himself as if born again. He approached (the king of Daityas) and reported everything that happened to Jalandhara.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

Rudra's Army Defeated

Nārada said:

1. On hearing it, the whole body of Jalandhara became agitated with anger. Surrounded by a crore of Daityas, he quickly marched out (of his abode).
2. As he was going, Śukra and Rāhu came within the range of his vision in front.[1] His crown fell on the ground as he faltered in his steps due to the speed.
3. The sky was completely covered with hundreds of his aerial chariots filled with the army of Daityas. It shone as though covered with clouds during the rainy season.
4. On seeing his army, Devas with Śakra as their leader went to the Trident-bearing Lord without being noticed by anyone and informed him entreatingly.

The Devas said:

5. How is it that you are not aware of this calamity of the Devas, O Lord? Therefore, kill the son of the Ocean for the sake of protecting us.

Nārada said:

6. On hearing these words of the Devas, the Bull-emblemed Lord laughed. He called Mahāviṣṇu and spoke these words:

Īśvara said:

7. O Viṣṇu, how is it that Jalandhara was not killed by you in battle? Further you have gone over to his house after leaving off your own Vaikuṇṭha?

1. VV 2-3 indicate the ill omens predicting Jalandhara's defeat.

Viṣṇu said:

8. He is not killed in battle by me because he is born of a part of yours and because he is the brother of Śrī. You do kill this Dānava.

Īśvara said:

9. He is exceedingly refulgent. He cannot be killed by me through these (ordinary) weapons and missiles. Let a part of their splendour be given by the Devas for making my weapon. Let a part of your splendour too be given to me.

Nārada said:

10. Then the Devas including Viṣṇu gave their respective refulgences. On seeing them united together, Īśa released his own refulgence too.

11. With that (combined) splendour, Mahādeva created an excellent weapon, a discus named Sudarśana[1] which was extremely terrible with its clusters of flames.

12. With the remaining (splendour), Hari (?Hara) made the thunderbolt. By that time Jalandhara was seen on the grounds at the foot of Kailāsa.

13. He was surrounded by crores of elephants, horses, chariots and foot-soldiers. On seeing him, all the Devas slipped away unobserved in the manner they had come.

14. The Gaṇas (attendants of Śiva) got ready for the battle in a hurry. All of them with Nandin, Gajānana and Kārttikeya as leaders made preparations for the battle at the behest of Śiva.

15. Proud of their ability to fight, the Gaṇas descended from Kailāsa. Then a fight ensued on the lower slopes of Kailāsa between the chieftains of Pramathas and Daityas.

16-18a. The battle was tumultuous with (the sound) of terrible weapons and missiles. The whole of the earth reverberated with the sounds of Bherī and Mṛdaṅga drums, multitudes of conchs, shrill and joyous shouts of heroes and the sounds produced by elephants, horses and chariots. The whole earth shook. The sky filled with javelins, iron clubs, arrows, pestles, spears, lances having sharp edges etc. shone as though with firebrands.

18b-21. With the chariots, elephants, horses and foot-soldiers struck

1. This explains the extraordinary power of the discus Sudarśana. Originally it belonged to Śiva who used it against demon Jalandhara. He gave it to Viṣṇu later.

down or killed, the earth shone as though scattered with pieces of the tops of mountains struck by thunderbolts.

The ground became impassable because of the suet, blood and flesh that formed a mass of muddy heap with the groups of Daityas struck down by Pramathas and Gaṇas killed by the Daityas.

Śukra resuscitated the groups of Daityas killed by Pramathas in the battle by the power of the Mṛtasañjīvinī Vidyā. This happened frequently. On seeing this all the Gaṇas became bewildered and frightened. They reported all the activities of Śukra to the Lord of the Devas.

22-23. Then an extremely terrible Kṛtyā (female Ogress) came out of the mouth of Rudra. Her calves were as huge as palm trees. Her mouth resembled a huge cave. With her breasts she crushed tall trees.

She came to the battleground and began to devour the great Asuras. She put Bhārgava (Śukra) within her vaginal passage and vanished in the sky.

24. On seeing that Bhārgava had been abducted, the Gaṇas became delighted. Their faces ceased to be faded and pallid. Proud of their ability to fight, they killed the army of Daityas.

25. The army of Daityas frightened by the Gaṇas broke lose like a cluster of grasses scattered and tossed about by stormy winds.

26. On seeing that their army was being crushed due to the fear of the Gaṇas, Niśuṁbha and Śuṁbha, the generals, and Kālanemi, the powerful one, became furious and rushed (into the battlefield).

27. Showering volleys of arrows like clouds showering heavy rain in the rainy season, those three (Daityas) of great strength thwarted the army of Gaṇas.

28. Then the volleys of arrows of the Daityas overcast the sky and enveloped the quarters like swarms of locusts and made the army of Gaṇas tremble.

29. The Gaṇas were split by hundreds of arrows. Blood began to gush out from their bodies and they resembled Kiṁśukas (*Butea frondosa*). They were not aware of anything.

30. The Gaṇas who had dropped down or who were being struck down, those who were split and cut—all these abandoned the battlefield and turned their backs.

31. On seeing their army shattered Nandin, Gajānana and Kārttikeya hurriedly attacked the Daityas furiously and restrained them.

CHAPTER NINETEEN

The Fall of Vīrabhadra

Nārada said:

1. On seeing Nandin, Gajānana and Ṣaṇmukha, the leaders of Gaṇas, those Dānavas rushed at them angrily to engage them in duels.

2. Kālanemi rushed at Nandin, Śuṁbha at Laṁbodara (Gajānana) and Niśuṁbha rushed hurriedly at Ṣaṇmukha. He had his armour on.

3. With five arrows Niśuṁbha hit with force the peacock of Kārttikeya in its chest and it fell down unconscious.

4. By the time the infuriated lord holding the Śakti (i.e. Kārttikeya) took up his javelin, Niśuṁbha hurriedly made him fall down by means of his own javelin.

5. With volleys of arrows, Nandīśvara struck at Kālanemi. He pierced his horses and cut the flagstaff with seven arrows and the charioteer with three arrows.

6. Kālanemi became furious and he cut off the bow of Nandin. Discarding it, that powerful one hit him on his chest with his spear.

7. With his heart pierced by the spear, with his horses and the charioteer killed, Kālanemi uprooted the peak of a mountain and made Nandin, the son of Śilāda, fall down (with it).

8. Śuṁbha and Gajānana having a chariot and a mouse respectively for their vehicles, fought and hit each other with volleys of arrows.

9. Gajānana pierced the chest of Śuṁbha with an arrow and struck down the charioteer to the ground with three arrows.

10. Then Śuṁbha became extremely infuriated. He hit Gajānana with sixty arrows and his mouse with three and roared like thunder.

11. When his body was pierced with arrows, the mouse squirmed and writhed with excessive pain. Laṁbodara (i.e. Gajānana) fell down, O king, and became a pedestrian.

12. Then Laṁbodara struck Śuṁbha on his chest with his axe and felled him down to the ground and mounted on his mouse once again.

13. Kālanemi and Śuṁbha both simultaneously hit Laṁbodara furiously with arrows as they would a great elephant with goads.

14. On seeing him harassed, Vīrabhadra of great strength rushed immediately, accompanied by crores of Bhūtas (goblins).

15. The spirits such as Kūṣmāṇḍas, Bhairavas, Vetālas, groups of Yoginīs, Piśācas (ghosts) etc. and the Gaṇas followed him.

16. With the chattering noises, roarings like thunder, leonine shouts and the sounds of Bherī and Mṛdaṅga drums and cymbals the earth shook and quaked.

17. Then the goblins and spirits rushed at the Dānavas and devoured them. They jumped up and leaped down and began to dance on the battlefield.

18. Nandin and Kārttikeya composed themselves. Regaining confidence, they hurriedly hit and killed the Daityas with uninterrupted volleys of arrows on the battlefield.

19. With the Daityas killed, fallen or devoured the entire (Daitya) army became broken and scattered. The faces of all turned pale and the whole army became bewildered.

20. On seeing the army crushed, the powerful son of the Ocean rushed against the Gaṇas in a tall bannered chariot.

21. Then a tumultuous sound arose from both the armies inclusive of the trumpeting of elephants, the neighing sounds of horses, the rumblings of chariots, the sounds of conchs and Bherī drums and leonine roars of warriors.

22. The intervening space between heaven and earth became covered by clusters of the arrows of Jalandhara as though with layers of fog and mist.

23. After hitting Gaṇeśa (Gajānana) with five arrows, Nandin with nine arrows and Vīrabhadra with twenty, he roared like thundering clouds.

24. Kārttikeya then hurriedly pierced the Daitya with his Śakti (Javelin). Though split and rent with the Śakti, he fought on. He was only slightly agitated in his mind.

25. With eyes full of anger, Jalandhara struck Kārttikeya with his iron club and he fell on the ground.

26. Similarly he made Nandin too fall on the ground with force. Thereupon Gaṇeśvara became furious and struck his iron club with his axe.

27. With three arrows Vīrabhadra struck and pierced the Dānava in his heart and cut down his horses, flagstaff, bow and umbrella.

28. Then the Daitya king became excessively angry. He raised his terrible Śakti and struck down Gaṇeśa and got into another chariot.

29. He rushed at Vīrabhadra with great force and anger. Then both of them who shone like the Sun fought with each other.

30. Again Vīrabhadra struck down his horses with his arrows and cut down his bow. The Daitya king then leaped (forward).

31. He rushed at Vīrabhadra. The demon hit him on his head with his iron club. Vomitting blood profusely, the hero fell down on the ground with his head deeply wounded.

CHAPTER TWENTY

Fight between Śiva and Jalandhara

Nārada said:

1. On seeing Vīrabhadra fallen, the Gaṇas of Rudra left the battleground in great panic. Crying and lamenting, they went to Maheśvara.

2. On hearing the tumultuous sound of the Gaṇas, the Moon-crested Lord came to the battleground laughingly riding on his bull.

3. On seeing Rudra coming, the Gaṇas returned to the battlefield with leonine shouts. With showers of arrows they began killing the Daityas.

4. Just as sins run away out of fear on seeing a person observing the Kārttika Vrata, so also on seeing the terrible one (Śiva) all the Daityas fled.

5. On seeing those Daityas turning away from the battlefield, Jalandhara angrily rushed at the Lord of Caṇḍī discharging thousands of arrows.

6. Śumbha, Niśumbha, Aśvamukha, Kālanemi, Balāhaka, Khaḍgaromā, Pracaṇḍa, Ghasmara and others went to (i.e. attacked) Śiva.

7. On seeing the army of Gaṇas enveloped by the darkness caused by arrows, Śiva tore away the net (cluster) of arrows and covered the sky with his own arrows.

8. He afflicted the Daityas with stormy winds (in the form) of arrows. He made them fall on the ground by means of volleys of fierce arrows.

9. With his axe he severed the head of Khaḍgaromā from his body. With his Khaṭvāṅga (club with skull-shaped top), he split the head of Balāhaka into two.

10. He bound Daitya Ghasmara with noose and dashed him on the ground. Some (of the Daityas) were killed by the bull and some were struck down by means of arrows.

11-13. Like elephants tormented by a lion, the Asuras were unable to stand. Thereupon Jalandhara whose anger was aroused, chal-

lenged Rudra to fight in the battle in a voice as loud as the terrible thunderbolt.

Jalandhara said:

Fight with me. What do you get even if these are killed. O one with matted hair, show me what little strength you have.

After saying thus, he struck the Bull-emblemed Lord with seventy arrows.

14. As those arrows arrived, Śiva laughingly cut them off with sharper arrows. Then with his Śaktis he cut off the horses, flagstaff, umbrella and bow (of Jalandhara).

15. With his bow broken and himself deprived of his chariot, he (Jalandhara) speedily raised his iron club and rushed (at Śiva). By that time, Śiva cut off the iron club into two by means of his arrows.

16. Still he raised his fist and went up to Rudra with a desire to kill him. By that time he was pushed away a Krośa (3 Kms.) by Śiva by means of a volley of arrows.

17. Thereupon, thinking that Rudra was superior to him in strength, Daitya Jalandhara created his Gāndharvī Māyā, that mysteriously fascinated Rudra.

18-19. In front of him groups of Gandharvas and celestial damsels sang and danced. Others played on various musical instruments such as cymbals, flutes, Mṛdaṅga drums etc. On seeing that wonderful spectacle Rudra became enchanted. He was not even aware that the weapons had dropped down from his hands.

20. On seeing that Rudra was fully engrossed in it. Daitya Jalandhara who was afflicted with lust, went immediately to the place where Gaurī was present.

21-22a. Jalandhara had employed the two powerful Daityas named Śumbha and Niśumbha to continue the fight. He had then assumed the form of Śiva with three eyes, five faces and ten mighty arms and matted hair. He rode on a great bull.

22b-24a. On seeing Rudra coming the beloved one of Bhava came forward from the middle of her friends and chaperons and stood within the range of his vision.

No sooner did the lord of the Dānavas see Pārvatī of beautiful limbs, than he discharged his semen virile and all his limbs became stiff and benumbed.

24b-27a. On realizing that he was a Dānava, Gaurī became agitated with fear. She immediately vanished and went to Northern Mānasa. On seeing her vanished in a moment like the streak of lightning, the Daitya speedily returned to the battleground where the Bull-emblemed Lord was still present. Out of fear, Pārvatī mentally remembered Viṣṇu. Presently she saw that Lord firmly seated nearby.

Pārvatī said:

27b-28a. O Viṣṇu, Jalandhara the Daitya, has created something wonderfully mysterious. Was it not known to you? Were you not aware of the evil designs of that vicious fellow?

Viṣṇu said:

28b-29a. We too shall follow the path that has been pointed out by him. Otherwise he cannot be killed. He is protected by the chastity (of his wife).

Nārada said:

29b-30. After saying this Viṣṇu went once again to the city of Jalandhara. Rudra who was stationed in the battleground and followed the Gandharvas saw the Māyā vanish. Then he understood (everything).

31. Thereupon, Bhava who was mentally surprised (at his own perplexity) went once again towards Jalandhara furiously. On seeing that Śiva had come once again, the Daitya showered him with volleys of arrows in the battlefield.

CHAPTER TWENTYONE

Vṛndā's Self-immolation

Nārada said:

1. Viṣṇu went to Jalandhara, the city of that Daitya. He resolved to violate the chastity of Vṛndā.

2. In the meantime, the queen Vṛndārakā (Vṛndā) saw in a dream her husband seated on a buffalo.[1] He was anointed with oil. He was stark naked.

1. VV 2-6 describe ill-omens indicating Jalandhara's death.

3-6. He wore black flowers and ornaments. He was attended upon by carnivorous animals and demons. His head was completely shaven and he was proceeding towards the southern direction. She saw her own city enveloped in darkness and immersed in the sea suddenly along with herself. Then that young woman woke up pondering over that dream. She saw the rising sun with a hole in the middle without any lustre and saw this frequently.

Thinking that it foreboded evil, she began to cry. She was excessively frightened. She did not get happiness or mental peace anywhere in the ornamental arched gateways, attics, terraces etc. Then, accompanied by two friends, she went to the city park.

7. There also the young woman wandered but did not get happiness anywhere. She went from forest to forest without being aware of it herself.

8. While wandering thus she saw two Rākṣasas who were extremely terrifying.[1] They had leonine faces, extremely terrible on account of the curved teeth.

9. On seeing them she became much afflicted and ready to flee from there. She then saw a calm and tranquil ascetic who had resorted to the vow of silence. He had a disciple too.

10. Out of fear she put her tender arms round his neck and said : "O sage, protect me. I have sought refuge in you."

11. On seeing her agitated and closely pursued by the Rākṣasas, he angrily made a loud *hum* sound whereby he turned back those terrible demons.

12. On seeing them turned and gone due to the fear of that *hum* sound, Vṛndā prostrated before the sage like a rod on the ground and spoke these words:

Vṛndā said:

13-14. O holy one, storehouse of mercy, I have been protected by you from this terrible fear. I wish to submit to you something. Kindly listen to it.

Jalandhara is my husband. O holy lord, he has gone to fight with Rudra. How does he fare in that battle? O holy lord of good holy rites, tell me.

1. VV 8-ff describe how Viṣṇu deluded Vṛndā by his Māyā power and violated her chastity.

Nārada said:

15. On hearing her words, the sage kindly looked up. By that time two monkeys came there, bowed down to him and stood by.

16. Directed by the gesture from his eyebrows they went up into the sky. Within half a moment they came back, bowed to him and stood in front of him. They were holding a pair of hands, a head and a headless trunk.

17. On noticing that the head, the trunk and the hands were those of the son of the Ocean (Jalandhara), she fell on the ground unconscious, miserable due to the distress of her husband.

18. After sprinkling her with the waters from his water pot the sage consoled her. Placing her forehead upon the forehead of her husband, she cried piteously.

Vṛndā said:

19. O my lord, formerly during our happy dialogue you used to humour me and delight me. I am your beloved and innocent wife. Why don't you speak to me now?

20. You were the conqueror of the three worlds. Devas and Gandharvas along with Viṣṇu have been defeated by you. How did it happen that you have now been killed by a mere ascetic?

Nārada said:

21-22. After lamenting thus, Vṛndā spoke these words to the sage :

Vṛndā said:

O excellent sage, O storehouse of mercy, resuscitate this my lover and lord. You alone are capable of bringing him back to life, O sage, I believe.

Nārada said:

On hearing these words of hers, the sage said with a smile :

The sage said:

23. He has been killed in battle by Rudra. He cannot be made alive once again. Still, out of sympathy for you, I shall make him alive.

Nārada said:

24. After saying this, the Brāhmaṇa vanished. By that time, the son of the Ocean embraced Vṛndā and kissed her face with great mental pleasure and satisfaction.

25. Vṛndā too was extremely delighted in her mind on seeing her husband once again. Staying within the forest in his company for many days, she sported about.

26. Once at the conclusion of the sexual intercourse, she saw him in the form of Viṣṇu. Rebuking him angrily Vṛndā spoke these words :

Vṛndā said:

27. Fie upon your conduct, O Hari, you commit adultery! I know now well that you are a fake ascetic.[1]

28. The two, your own gatekeepers, who were shown to me by you by means of Māyā will be born as Rākṣasas. They will abduct your wife.

29. You will wander in forest, miserable due to the separation from your wife. Do wander along with this Lord of serpents, who has now been your disciple.

30. After saying this, Vṛndā entered fire, though Viṣṇu whose mind was attached to her, tried to prevent her.

31. Hari frequently remembered her. He was covered with the ashes to which Vṛndā was reduced. He stood there itself. Though he was pacified and advised by the groups of Suras and Siddhas, he did not get peace of mind.

CHAPTER TWENTYTWO

Jalandhara Attains Salvation

Nārada said:

1. On seeing Rudra with wonderful exploits, Jalandhara created (an illusory) Gaurī by means of his Māyā, as though to delude the Three-eyed Lord.

1. Abduction of Sītā and such other events are shown to be the consequences of the curse given by Vṛndā.

2. Śiva saw that Pārvatī was crying. She was bound above the chariot and was being struck and hit by Niśuṁbha and others.

3. On seeing Gaurī in that plight, Śiva too became agonized in his mind. With his face bent down, he stood motionless forgetting his own valour.

4. Then with great rapidity, Jalandhara pierced Rudra with three arrows which went deep into his head, chest and belly up to their tail-feathers.

5. Then enlightened by Viṣṇu, he (Śiva) understood that it was all Māyā (trickery). Thereupon he adopted a very terrific form, dreadful on account of the clusters of flames.

6. On seeing his excessively terrifying form, the great Asuras being incapable of standing in front of him (fled) and resorted to all the ten quarters.

7. Then Rudra cursed the two Rākṣasas Śuṁbha and Niśuṁbha thus: "You who fled away from the battle with me, shall be killed by Gaurī."

8. Again Jalandhara showered sharp arrows in quick succession. At that time the vast surface of the earth was covered by darkness due to the (numerous) arrows (so discharged).

9. By the time Rudra quickly cut off the mass of his arrows, that powerful demon immediately hit the bull with an iron club.

10. On account of that blow, the bull turned away from the battlefield. Though it was dragged and pulled by Rudra, it did not stay on the battlegrounds.

11. Thereupon Rudra became excessively infuriated. He adopted a highly dreadful physical form. With great velocity he hurled the discus Sudaraśana that had the refulgence of the Sun.

12. Burning heaven and earth, it rapidly descended on the earth and severed his (Jalandhara's) head with huge large eyes from his body.

13-14a. His body came with a thudding sound upon the surface of the earth when it fell from the chariot. A refulgence issued forth from his body and it merged in Rudra. The refulgence that had issued forth from the body of Vṛndā got merged into Gaurī.

14b-16. Then the Devas beginning with Brahmā, with eyes beaming like full-blown lotuses due to delight, bowed down their heads before Rudra and spoke of the action of Viṣṇu.

Devas said:

O Mahādeva, Devas have been rescued from the fear arising from the enemies. But a new development has taken place. What shall we do in that respect? Viṣṇu has become deluded by the beauty of Vṛndā. He stands enchanted.

Īśvara said:

17. O Devas, in order to dispel the delusion of Viṣṇu, go and seek refuge in Māyā, the Mohinī (Enchantress) worthy of being sought shelter in. She will do your work.

Nārada said:

18. After saying this the Lord vanished along with all the Bhūtas and the Gaṇas. The Devas then eulogized Mūlaprakṛti (Primordial Prakṛti) fond of her devotees.

Devas said:

19. We bow down to that Mūlaprakṛti from whom the guṇas, Sattva, Rajas, and Tamas, originate and then cause the creation, sustenance and annihilation (of the universe) and at whose will this universe extends and causes its existence and non-existence.

20. We bow down to that Prakṛti which has been said to have twenty-three different manifestations (evolutes or Tattvas?), which is the greatest being that is established in the entire universe, and whose form and activities are not known to even the three foolish Devas.

21. We bow down to that Mūlaprakṛti who is fond of her devotees. Those Puruṣas who have devotion to her do not meet with poverty, fear, delusion, defeat etc.

Nārada said:

22. Poverty, delusion and misery never touch that person who reads and recites this prayer with fully concentrated mind during the three junctions (i.e. morning, noon and at dusk).

23. Even as those Devas were eulogizing thus, they saw a mass of splendour spreading in the firmament. Flames spread in all the quarters and the intervening spaces.

24-25. -- From its middle all of them heard the speech spreading in (i.e. emanating from) the firmament.

Śakti said:

I alone stand in three different forms characterized by the three Guṇas. I am Gaurī, Lakṣmī and Svarā characterized by the Guṇas of Rajas, Sattva and Tamas respectively. Therefore go to them, O Suras, they will do your work.

Nārada said:

26. Even as the Devas stood listening to this, with surprise evident in their beaming eyes, that refulgence vanished, O king.

27. On being urged by those words (of Śakti), all those Devas went to Gaurī, Lakṣmī and Svarā and bowed down with great devotion.

28. On seeing the Suras bowing down, those deities, fond of devotees, gave them the seeds and spoke these words, O king.

The Devīs said:

29. Sow these seeds in the place where Viṣṇu is present. Then you will succeed in your work.

Nārada said:

30. The groups of Suras and Siddhas took those seeds and scattered them on the earth where Viṣṇu always stays (stayed) following Vṛndā without happiness (in misery).

CHAPTER TWENTYTHREE

The Origin of Dhātrī and Tulasī

Nārada said:

1. From the seeds sown there three plants grew up, viz. Dhātrī, Mālatī (Jasmine) and Tulasī.

2. Dhātrī is remembered as having been born of Dhātrī (the Earth); Mālatī is remembered as born of Mā (Lakṣmī) and Tulasī is born of Gaurī. These have the Guṇas—Tamas, Sattva and Rajas (respectively).

3. On seeing the plants in the form of women, O king, Viṣṇu got up with great excitement. His flurry and perturbation was mainly due to the excessive beauty of Vṛndā.

4. On seeing them he began to solicit due to fascination with a

passionate mind. Tulasī and Dhātrī looked at him with sincere love and attachment.

5. Since the seed was offered formerly by Lakṣmī with malice and jealousy, the woman originating therefrom became malicious and jealous with him.

6. Hence she (it) later received the despicable name Barbarī. But Dhātrī and Tulasī accorded great pleasure and delight to him always due to their attachment and love for him.

7. Then Viṣṇu forgot all his misery. Becoming delighted, he went to Vaikuṇṭha along with them. He was then bowed to by all the Devas.

8. Hence while concluding the Kārttika Vrata, Viṣṇu is worshipped at the root of the Tulasī plant, since it is remembered as very pleasant to him.[1]

9. The house in which there is a grove of Tulasī plants is a Tīrtha, O king. The servants of Yama do not come there.

10. Those excellent men who grow the Tulasī grove that is destructive of all sins and always grants all desired objects, never see the son of the Sun-god (Yama, the god of Death).

11. These three are said to be equal (in efficacy): seeing Narmadā, taking a holy bath in Gaṅgā and association with the grove of Tulasī plants.

12. If it is planted, guarded, watered, seen and touched, Tulasī burns down the sins of men accumulated through words, thoughts and physical activities.

13. He who worships Hari and Hara with bunches of Tulasī, is not reborn in any other womb. He shall certainly attain salvation.

14. Tīrthas including Puṣkara, rivers including Gaṅgā and Devas including Vāsudeva dwell on the leaf of the Tulasī plant.

15. Even Yama is incapable of looking at the person who gives up his life with a bunch of Tulasī (on his person), though he may have committed hundreds of sins.

16-18. He attains Sāyujya with Viṣṇu. O excellent king, this is certainly true. One who wears a twig of the Tulasī plant with sandal paste is never contaminated with sins even if they are committed. Wherever there is the shade of Tulasī grove, Śrāddha should be performed unto the Manes there. The Śrāddha thus offered is of everlasting benefit.

1. The whole episode of Vṛndā explains the rite of Viṣṇu-worship performed at the root of a Tulasī plant at the conclusion of Kārttika Vrata.

19-21a. One who takes his holy bath with the waters mingled with fruits of Dhātrī and with leaves of Tulasī attains the benefit of holy bath in Gaṅgā.

If a man performs the worship of the Lord with leaves and fruits of Dhātrī, he shall attain the benefit of a worship with gold, jewels and multitudes of pearls.

In the month of Kārttika, when the Sun is in the Zodiac Libra, all the Tīrthas, sages, Devas and Yajñas perpetually resort to Dhātrī.

21b-22. One who plucks the leaves of Tulasī on the twelfth day and those of Dhātrī in the month of Kārttika falls into the most despicable of all the hells.

Even the Four-faced Lord is not capable of recounting the greatness of Dhātrī and Tulasī as that of the Śārṅga-bearing Lord (Viṣṇu).

23. He who listens to or expounds devoutly the cause of the origin of Dhātrī and Tulasī becomes rid of all his sins. He goes to heaven along with his ancestors seated in superior aerial chariots.

CHAPTER TWENTYFOUR

The Legend of Dharmadatta [1]

Pṛthu said:

1. The great benefit of the person of observing the Kārttika Vrata has been mentioned. Describe once again its efficacy. By whom was this observed? By whom has this splendid Vrata been performed?

Nārada said:

2. Formerly, in the city of Karavīra[2], in the country (around) Sahya mountain, there was a certain Brāhmaṇa well known by the name Dharmadatta.

3-7. He performed (all) Viṣṇu Vratas. He was always engaged in the proper worship of Viṣṇu.

Once, in the month of Kārttika, he went to the temple of Hari when a fourth of the night yet remained, for the purpose of Hari *Jāgaraṇa* (keeping awake at night along with prayers to Hari).

1. The legend of Dharmadatta is mentioned in 12.86 *supra*. The detailed legend is given in this chapter. This is obviously a later addition.

2. Modern Kolhapur. It seems that the author is probably a Maharashtrian.

As he went along taking all the materials of worship of Hari with him, a Rākṣasī (demoness) of dreadful appearance was seen coming by him. On seeing her, he became extremely frightened. All his limbs began to tremble. Out of fear he threw all the materials of worship and the holy waters upon her. The moment she was hit by that water which contained a Tulasī leaf after remembering Hari's names her sins perished. She remembered that her state was the result of her Karmas of the previous birth. She prostrated in front of the Brāhmaṇa and spoke these words:

Kalahā said:

8. I have attained this plight (of being an ogress) as a result of my own previous Karmas. How can I once again, O Brāhmaṇa, attain the excellent goal?

Nārada said:

9. On seeing her bowing down and clearly speaking about her own Karmas, the Brāhmaṇa was exceedingly surprised. Then he spoke these words:

Dharmadatta said:

10. What is that Karma as a result of which you have attained such a plight as this? Who are you? To which place do you belong? What had been your conduct? Tell me everything.

Kalahā said:

11. O Brāhmaṇa, formerly there was a Brāhmaṇa named Bhikṣu in a city in Saurāṣṭra. I was his wife Kalahā by name.[1] I was extremely cruel.

12-16. No auspicious rite was performed by me even at the instance of my husband. Nor did I ever offer him sweet food. He became dejected because I was fond of quarrel and habituated to speak (harsh) words to my husband. So my husband became inclined to marry another woman. Therefore, I took poison and gave up my life, O Brāhmaṇa. Then the servants of Yama bound me and carried me away even as I was being tortured. On seeing me Yama asked Citragupta:

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1. For the story of Kalahā and her redemption compare Pdl' VI (Uttara Khaṇḍa, Pūrvārdha), Chs. 106, 107, 108.

Yama said:

O Citragupta, see what acts have been performed by this woman. Let her experience the fruit thereof, food or otherwise.

Kalahā said:

17. Then Citragupta rebuked me and spoke these words:

Citragupta said:

No good act was done at all by this woman.

18. She used to eat sweet food but nothing was given to her husband. Hence let her be born of a *Valgulī* (a kind of bat or a species of nocturnal birds) and let her remain feeding herself on her own faeces.

19. She used to despise her own husband and regularly quarrelled with him. Hence, O Yama, let her be born in the womb of a *Sūkarī* (a sow, a female pig).

20. She used to eat straight from the vessel in which food was cooked. She was further in the habit of taking food by herself. Hence let her be born as a cat that devours her own young one.

21. With her husband in view, she had committed suicide. Hence she is highly despicable. So, let her remain as a ghost in the dead body, all alone.

22. Therefore, she has to be taken to a desert place by the soldiers (of Yama). Let her be a ghost there and remain there for a long time.

23. After that let her be born (as mentioned before) in the three wombs (species) as she had been a doer of evil acts.

Kalahā said:

24. I remained as a ghost in a dead body for five hundred years. Being afflicted with hunger and thirst I permeated the body of a merchant. Then I came to the southern land to the confluence where Kṛṣṇā and Veṇī meet.[1]

25. As soon as I came to the banks of that river, I was dragged out of the body of that merchant by the attendants of Śiva and Viṣṇu.

1. The confluence of Kṛṣṇā and Veṇī is at Māhulī near Satara (Maharashtra). River Kṛṣṇā is mentioned in old inscriptions (e.g. at Khidrapur) with the joint name Kṛṣṇā-Veṇī, though Koynā, a river equal to Kṛṣṇā, joins it at Karad (Satara Dist.).

26. Then, O excellent Brāhmaṇa, you were seen by me even as my body has become emaciated. Thanks to the contact with the Tulasī water sprinkled with your hand, all my sins have disappeared.

27. O eminent Brāhmaṇa, perform that holy rite whereby I shall attain liberation from this ghostly nature, as well as the three types of births destined to happen later.

28. The excellent Brāhmaṇa pondered over these words of Kalahā. He was afflicted with fear, surprise and misery at the turn of her Karmas. His mind was moved on seeing her agony. After meditating for a long time, he spoke these words out of distress :

CHAPTER TWENTYFIVE

Kalahā Attains Liberation

Dharmadatta said:

1. By performing charitable gifts and holy rites etc. in a Tīrtha, all the sins perish. But you are not authorized for it because you are a ghost in a dead body.

2. My mind is distressed on seeing your misery. Without redeeming you from the misery my mind will not be at ease.

3. Hence you do attain the good goal by means of half the merit that I have earned throughout my life from Kārttika Vrata.

Nārada said:

4. After saying thus, Dharmadatta sprinkled on her water mixed with Tulasī and repeated the twelve-syllabled Mantra (*oṁ namo bhagavate vāsudevāya*) :

5. Immediately she became liberated from ghosthood. She assumed a divine form comparable to the flames of blazing fire. In beauty she appeared like Indirā.

6. Then she prostrated flat on the ground like a rod and bowed down to that Brāhmaṇa. Then with words choked with delight, she spoke thus:

Kalahā said:

7. O excellent Brāhmaṇa, with your favour I have been redeemed

from hell. Certainly you have been like a boat unto me, as I was about to be drowned in the ocean of sin.

Nārada said:

8. As she was speaking thus to the Brāhmaṇa, she saw a sparkling aerial chariot coming from the sky accompanied by attendants who had assumed the form of Viṣṇu.

9. The gatekeepers Puṇyaśīla and Suśīla made her get into that excellent aerial chariot. She was (there) served by groups of celestial damsels.

10. Dharmadatta gazed at that aerial chariot with great wonder. On seeing those two in the form of Viṣṇu he prostrated flat on the ground.

11. Puṇyaśīla and Suśīla raised the Brāhmaṇa who was bowing down. After congratulating him, they spoke these righteous words:

The Attendants said:

12. Well done, well done, O excellent Brāhmaṇa. You are omniscient. You are merciful to the distressed. You are engaged in the holy rites of Viṣṇu.

13. Ever since your childhood you have been performing the excellent Kārttikavrata. Half of the merit thereof you have donated. Hence your merit has become doubled.

14. All the sins of yours that had accumulated in the course of hundreds of births have perished. The sin of this woman arising out of her previous Karmas has been destroyed through the holy baths (of yours, transferred to her).

15. Through the meritorious deeds of Hari Jāgaraṇa (vigil on the Ekādaśī day) etc. she has got into this aerial chariot and is being taken to Vaikuṇṭha. O gentle Sir, she will enjoy different kinds of pleasures.

16. By means of the merit of offering lamps she has attained the *Sārūpya* of the (Supreme) Refulgence. She has come to the presence of Viṣṇu through the auspicious worships of Tulasī and Kārttika Vratas, all given by you, O storehouse of mercy.

17. At the end of this birth you along with your two wives will go to the world of Vaikuṇṭha, reach the presence of Viṣṇu and attain *Sārūpya* (indentity of form with Viṣṇu).

18. O Dharmadatta, those people by whom Viṣṇu has been devoutly propitiated like you, are blessed and contented. They have accomplished their object. Their birth is fruitful.

19. What is it that Viṣṇu does not give to the embodied beings when (he is) perfectly propitiate? The son of Uttānapāda (Dhruva) had been established as Dhruva formerly by him.

20. Merely by remembering his name all the embodied beings attain beatitude.

21. The great elephant who had been caught in the jaws of a crocodile, became liberated formerly by remembering his name. He reached the presence of Viṣṇu and has become (the attendant) named Jaya.[1]

22. Since Viṣṇu has been worshipped by you, you will go to his presence accompanied by both the wives. You will stay there for thousands of years.

23-24. Then as the merits dwindle, you will go to the earth. Then you will become a famous king named Daśaratha[2] in the solar race. These two wives will be born as your wives then also. This woman who secured half of your merits will be your third wife then.

25. There also Viṣṇu will come to your presence on the earth for carrying out the task of Devas. He will be born as your son.

26. Neither Yajñas nor charitable gifts, nor Tīrthas are superior to the Vratas performed by you ever since your birth, as the Vratas give satisfaction to Viṣṇu.

27. O great Brāhmaṇa, you are blessed because this Vrata which causes satisfaction to the Sire of the universe has been performed by you. Through half of that merit this woman has become (redeemed and) successful. She is being taken to the world of Viṣṇu and she attains the salvation of *Sālokya* type.

CHAPTER TWENTYSIX

Dialogue between King Cola and Viṣṇudāsa[3]

Nārada said:

1. On hearing their words thus with great wonder Dharmadatta prostrated flat on the ground and spoke these words:

1. A reference to Gajendra Mokṣa.
2. An example of the use of rebirth to explain (a supposed) future event—the background of Rāma story.
3. *Vide* PdP VI (Uttara Khaṇḍa, Pūrvārdha, Chs. 108, 109).

Dharmadatta said:

2-3. All people worship Viṣṇu, the destroyer of the distress of devotees, by means of Yajñas, charitable gifts, Vratas, Tīrthas and penances in accordance with the injunctions. Is there anything which causes pleasure to Viṣṇu, which takes (the devotees) to his presence and by performing which all the (other) holy rites would have been performed?

The Attendants replied:

4. Well asked by you, O Brāhmaṇa. Listen with concentration of mind to the meritorious story that happened formerly.

5. Formerly Emperor Cola[1] ruled over his kingdom in the city of Kāñcī. The land also was famous by the name Colas after the name of the king.

6. While he was ruling over the earth no man was poor, miserable, sick or wicked in his mind.

7. He performed many big Yajñas on the banks of Tāmraparṇī where golden sacrificial posts were fixed. This heightened the beauty of the banks and made them resemble the garden Caitraratha (of Kubera).

8. Once, O Brāhmaṇa, that king went to Anantaśayana (modern Trivandrum, capital of Kerala) where the Lord of the worlds has resorted to Yogic slumber.

9. There the king duly worshipped the Lord Śrīramaṇa (Lord of Śrī) with jewels and pearls of divine (lustre) and splendid golden flowers.

10. After prostrating before the Lord he sat on the ground. By then he saw that a Brāhmaṇa had also come to the presence of the Lord.

11. For the purpose of the worship of the Lord he held in his hand Tulasī leaves and water. He was a Brāhmaṇa named Viṣṇudāsa, a resident of his own city.

12. That saintly Brāhmaṇa approached the Lord of Devas, bathed him with water mixed with bunches of Tulasī and worshipped repeating Viṣṇusūkta.

1. The author's information about the Cola country is approximately correct but he includes Kerala in it. Inclusion of Anantaśayana (mod. Trivendrum) and the Kerala custom of matriarchy in Cola Royal Dynasty shows that the author's information is vague (and probably hearsay).

13. On seeing that his worship performed with jewels earlier, had been covered by the worship with Tulasī leaves, the king became furious and spoke thus:

Cola said:

14. The worship that I had performed with rubies and gold was splendid. O Viṣṇudāsa, how is it that it has been covered up by Tulasī leaves?

15. You do not know (real) devotion unto Viṣṇu. You are, I think, very poor. Alas! You have covered up my excessively refulgent worship.

16. On hearing the king's words thus, the excellent Brāhmaṇa also became furious. Violating the majesty of the king he then spoke these words:

Viṣṇudāsa said :

17. O king, you do not know what is devotion. You are proud of your royal glory. How many Viṣṇuvratas have been performed by you earlier? Tell me.

The Attendants said:

18. On hearing the words of that Brāhmaṇa the excellent king laughed and haughtily spoke these words to Viṣṇudāsa, the Brāhmaṇa:

The king said:

19. If you say thus, O Brāhmaṇa, because you are too proud on account of your devotion to Viṣṇu, how much can your devotion be? You are an indigent fellow without wealth.

20. Yajñas, charitable gifts etc. which give satisfaction to Viṣṇu have not been performed by you. Nor has any temple been built by you anywhere, O Brāhmaṇa.

21. In spite of being like this you are proud on account of your devotion. Therefore, let all the Brāhmaṇas listen to my words now.

22. Who will directly perceive Viṣṇu first, this fellow or I? May all of you see. Thereupon you will come to know about our devotion.

The Attendants said:

23. After saying thus the king went back to his palace. He began a Vaiṣṇava Satra (sacrifice) after inviting Mudgala to be his preceptor.

24. It was the same Satra as was formerly performed elaborately by Brahmā at Gayākṣetra. It was graced with their presence by groups of sages. Much food was distributed and many monetary gifts were given.

25. Viṣṇudāsa continued to stay in the temple performing the Vratas. He performed all the austerities as laid down—those which cause satisfaction to Viṣṇu.

26. He observed the Māgha Vrata and Kārttika Vrata. He planted Tulasī groves and nourished them. On Ekādaśī (eleventh) days he performed the Japa of Hari repeating the twelve-syllabled Mantra.

27. All the sixteen services[1] were performed by him. There were auspicious songs and dances. He performed the worship of Viṣṇu regularly. He observed these Vratas.

28. Even as he walked about he remembered Viṣṇu. He used to sleep on the ground. He viewed all impartially. He saw Viṣṇu dwelling in all living beings.

29. During the months of Māgha and Kārttika he performed all special austerities for the propitiation of Viṣṇu and also the respective concluding rites.

30. Thus King Cola and Viṣṇudāsa propitiated the Lord of Śrī. Even as they performed their Vratas with all their activities and sense-organs dedicated to him (Viṣṇu), a long time elapsed.

1. *Upacāras* are ways of service (unto the Deity). They are: *Āvāhana* (invitation), *Āsana* (offering of seat), *Pādya* (offering water to wash feet), *Arghya* (water etc. offered at the respectful reception of a guest), *Ācamanīya* (water formally offered for sipping), *Snāna* (bath), *Vastra* (offering of clothes after bath), *Yajñopavīta* (offering of a sacred thread), *Anulepana* or *Gandha* (unguents and fragrant paste of sandal etc.), *Puṣpa* (flowers), *Dhūpa* (sweet smelling incense), *Dīpa* (waving of lamp), *Naivedya* or *Upahāra* (food, sweetmeats for eating), *Namaskāra* (bowing, prostration before the Deity), *Pradakṣiṇā* (circumambulation around the Deity), *Visarjana* or *Udvāsana* (bidddng adieu to the Deity).

For other varieties and additions vide HD II, ii, 729-730.

CHAPTER TWENTYSEVEN

King Cola and Viṣṇudāsa Liberated

Nārada said:

1. Once, O Brāhmaṇa, Viṣṇudāsa performed all his daily rites and then cooked his food. But someone stealthily took it away.[1]

2. Although he could not see cooked food, he did not prepare it once again, because he was afraid that it would create obstacles to his evening worship and thereby his Vrata would be broken.

3. On the second day also he cooked his food. By the time he went (to the temple) to dedicate the offerings, someone stole it once again.

4. In this way for seven days someone stole away his cooked food. He was struck with wonder and thought thus:

5. 'Oh! Who comes here everyday and takes away my food? This abode should not at all be abandoned by me who am a Sannyāsin (recluse). It is a holy spot.

6. If the food is to be cooked once again and eaten by me, the worship in the evening will have to be abandoned. How can it be?

7. Even if I cook again it cannot be eaten because, without offering to Hari nothing is to be eaten by Vaiṣṇavas.

8. I have observed fast for seven days. I shall remain here and maintan the Vrata. To-day let me protect the cooked food carefully.'

9. Thinking thus, he remained there itself hidden after cooking the food. Presently he saw a Cāṇḍāla stealing the cooked food.

10. He was emaciated due to hunger. His face was pale and gloomy. Only bones and skin remained (on his body). On seeing him the eminent Brāhmaṇa was moved with pity.

11. On seeing the thief of the cooked food the Brāhmaṇa said:

"Stop, stop. How can you eat that dry food without ghee? Take this ghee too."

12. Saying this the Brāhmaṇa hastened towards him. On seeing the Brāhmaṇa coming, (the thief) ran quickly due to fear. He fell down unconscious.

1. VV 1-14 narrate how the *Samabhāva* (attitude of equality towards all) of Viṣṇudāsa was tested by god Viṣṇu.

13. On seeing the frightened and unconscious Cāṇḍāla that eminent Brāhmaṇa rushed towards him compassionately and fanned him with the end of his cloth.

14. As he rose up Viṣṇudāsa saw that it was Lord Nārāyaṇa himself holding the conch, the discus and the iron club.

15. On seeing him, the excellent Brāhmaṇa had all the *Sāttvika Bhāvas* (the emotions and feelings along with horripilation, perspiration etc.). He became incapable of eulogizing or bowing down.

16. Then the Devas including Śakra came there. Gandharvas and celestial damsels sang and danced joyously.

17. The whole place became crowded with hundreds of aerial chariots and celestial sages. The place was full of the sound of songs and instrumental music.

18. Viṣṇu embraced his devotee of excellent holy rites. Granting him *Sārūpya* (identity of form), he took him to his abode in Vaikuṇṭha.

19. King Cola who was under initiation (for sacrifice) saw Viṣṇudāsa seated in an excellent aerial chariot and going to the presence of Viṣṇu.

20. On Seeing Viṣṇudāsa going to the world of Vaikuṇṭha, he hurriedly called his preceptor Mudgala and spoke these words:

Cola said:

21. Yajñas and Dānas were performed by me in order to compete with Viṣṇudāsa. That Brāhmaṇa has now assumed the form of Viṣṇu. He is going to the abode of Vaikuṇṭha.

22. In this Satra I have been initiated by you perfectly. In this Vaiṣṇava sacrifice Homa was performed in the sacred fire. With charitable gifts etc. Brāhmaṇas have been fully satisfied mentally.

23. But that Lord is not pleased with me till now. It is certain. It was due to the devotion of Viṣṇudāsa that Hari granted him direct vision.

24. Hence, Viṣṇu is never pleased with charitable gifts and Yajñas. Devotion alone is the greatest cause of the perception of the Lord.

The Attendants said:

25-26. After saying this he crowned his nephew as the king and made him sit on the throne. Ever since his childhood he was engaged in Yajñas and so he had no son.

Hence even today in that land (Tamil Nadu or rather Kerala?) the sons of sisters are the successors to the throne. They share the

kingdom.[1] They remain within the bounds and limitations imposed by him (i.e. the reigning king).

27. Then he went to the sacrificial chamber and stood in front of the sacrificial pit. Addressing Viṣṇu, he called thrice in a loud voice:

28. "O Viṣṇu, grant me steady devotion permeating my mind, speech and action."After saying this he threw himself into the fire even as everyone was watching.

29. Out of anger Mudgala plucked out his tuft of hair. Ever since then the Mudgalas belonging to his Gotra have remained tuftless.[2]

30. In the meantime Viṣṇu, fond of his devotees, appeared in the fire in the pit. Acyuta embraced him and got him into an excellent aerial chariot.

31. After embracing him and granting him his own form (*Sārūpya*), the Lord of Devas went to his abode in Vaikuṇṭha along with him surrounded by Devas.

Nārada said:

32. He who was Viṣṇudāsa became Puṇyaśīla. He who was King Cola was the one with the name Suśīla.[3] These two who had the same form as that of Viṣṇu were appointed as his gatekeepers by the Lover of Ramā.

CHAPTER TWENTYEIGHT

Dharmadatta Attains Salvation

Dharmadatta said:

1. I have heard that Jaya and Vijaya are the gatekeepers of Viṣṇu.[4] What holy rites have been performed by them, whereby they have assumed his (Lord's) form?

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1. This custom of Kerala is attributed to Cola Dynasty due to the lack of correct information of the Purāṇa writer.

2. A Purāṇic explanation of the then prevalent Tuft-lessness of persons belonging to the Mudgala Gotra.

3. This is the pre-history of Viṣṇu's attendants Puṇyaśīla and Suśīla.

4. This story narrates the previous birth of Jaya and Vijaya, the gatekeepers of Viṣṇu.

The Attendants said:

2. Two sons were born of Devahūtī, the daughter of Tṛṇabindu, O Brāhmaṇa, through Kardama's vision alone.

3. The elder was Jaya and the younger Vijaya by name. Afterwards, Kapila, the knower of Yogic rites, was also born to her.

4. Jaya and Vijaya were always engaged in devotion to Viṣṇu. They were virtuous in conduct and all their sense-organs were concentrated in him (Viṣṇu).

5. They used to perform the Japa of the eight-syllabled Mantra* regularly. Both of them observed the vow of Viṣṇu. During their daily worship, Viṣṇu always granted them his vision.

6. Once they were invited by (King) Marutta to his Yajña. Those two who were experts in the performance of Yajñas, went there. They were honoured by the celestial sages.

7. Jaya was the *Brahmā* (Presiding Priest) there and Vijaya was the *Yājaka* (one who actually performs the rites). Then they completely performed the Yajña.

8. After taking his *Avabhṛtha* bath (valedictory bath after a sacrifice) Marutta gave them plenty of wealth. Taking that wealth, they went to their hermitage.

9. They wanted to worship Viṣṇu separately. For the purpose of propitiating Viṣṇu, they wanted to perform sacrifice individually. While sharing that money those sages quarrelled with each other.

10. Jaya said: "Let the amount be shared equally". Vijaya said: "It shall not be so. The sum belongs to him who obtained it."

11. Thereupon Jaya cursed Vijaya who was covetous-minded: "You have taken the money but do not give. Hence be a crocodile."

12. On hearing his curse Vijaya too cursed him: "You have gone astray due to arrogance and cursed me. Hence be an elephant."

13. On seeing Lord Viṣṇu at the time of their daily worship, they told him what had happened. They requested the Lord of Ramā for the termination of the curses.

Jaya and Vijaya said:

14. O Lord, we are your devotees. How can we become a crocodile and an elephant, O ocean of mercy? Let that curse be terminated.

* *oṃ nārāyaṇāya namaḥ.*

Śrī Bhagavān said:

15. The words of my devotees should never be false. I too can never alter them.

16. Formerly I manifested myself through a pillar too due to the words of Prahlāda. Similarly at the instance of Aṁbarīṣa I myself was born of a womb (i.e. had to take birth).

17. Hence suffer the consequences of these curses uttered by yourselves. Then regain my region.

After saying this Hari vanished.

The Attendants said:

18. Then they were born as a crocodile and an elephant on the banks of Gaṇḍakī. Even then they could remember what happened in their previous birth. They remained steady in observing the vow of Viṣṇu.

19. Once in the month of Kārttika that elephant went to Gaṇḍakī for bathing. Suddenly that crocodile remembering the cause of the curse caught hold of him.

20. The elephant held by the crocodile remembered Śrīpati. Then Viṣṇu appeared before them with the discus, conch and iron club in his hands.

21. Hurling his discus he redeemed the crocodile and the elephant. The Lord granted them his own form (*Sārūpya*) and took them to Vaikuṇṭha.

22. Ever since then that spot is known as Harikṣetra. Due to having been rubbed by the discus the pebbles too had been marked with circular lines.

23. Those two are well-known in the world as Jaya and Vijaya. Those perpetual favourites of Viṣṇu became his gatekeepers, about whom you asked, O Brāhmaṇa.

24. Hence, O Brāhmaṇa conversant with Dharma, be stable in holy rites forever. Avoid malicious rivalry and hypocrisy. Be impartial in viewing others.

25. During the months of Tūlā, Makara and Meṣa take early morning bath regularly. Perform the holy rite of Ekādaśī. Keep a grove of Tulasī plants.

26. Always adore Brāhmaṇas, cows and Vaiṣṇavas. Do not consume Masūra pulse, Āranāla[1] (gruel from fermented boiled rice) and brinjals. —

1. It is called *Kāñjī* in Marathi.

27. Due to your devotion to him, O Dharmadatta, you will attain the greatest region of Viṣṇu like us after death.

28. Your stay in the world will be only till then. Neither Yajñas nor charitable gifts nor Tīrthas are superior to the Vrata that causes satisfaction to Viṣṇu.

29. O eminent Brābmaṇa, you are blessed because this Vrata which causes satisfaction and delight to the sirc of the universe, has been performed by you. This woman has attained half of the benefit thereof and hence is being taken to the world of Murāri by us.

Nārada said:

30. Advising Dharmadatta thus those two went to the abode of Vaikuṇṭha by means of the aerial chariot along with Kalahā.

31. Dharmadatta became convinced (of the efficacy of the Vrata) and observed it regularly. After death he went to the region of the Lord accompanied by his two wives.

32. One who listens to this ancient story or expounds this to others, acquires that mind which takes him to the presence of Hari by the mercy of the Sire of the worlds.

CHAPTER TWENTYNINE

The Story of Dhaneśvara

Śrīkṛṣṇa said:

1. On hearing Nārada's words thus, Pṛthu became surprised in his mind. Then, O beloved, he worshipped him duly and bade farewell to him.

2. Formerly there was a certain Brāhmaṇa named Dhaneśvara in the city of Avantī. He had deviated from all Brahminical rites. He was wicked-minded and sinful in activities.

3. For the purpose of buying and selling things he used to go from one country to another.

Thus once that Dhaneśvara went to the city of Māhiṣmatī.[1]

4. Formerly, this city had been built by Mahiṣa. Hence it is well-

1. Modern Maheshwar on the right bank of Narmadā, forty miles to the south of Indore (Madhya Pradesh). Relics of the Harappan period were excavated there and are kept in a museum there.

known as Māhiṣmātī. The river Narmadā, the destroyer of sins, forms a defensive ditch to this city.

5. Men who observed Kārttika Vrata had come there from different lands. He attended to them selling things (that they required). Thus he stayed there for a month.

6. For the purpose of selling things he used to move frequently on the banks of Narmadā everyday. On those occasions he saw Brāhmaṇas engaged in holy baths, Japas or worships of the Lord.

7. He saw some of them reading the Purāṇas, some engaged in listening to them, some eagerly interested in watching (religious) dances or hearing (devotional) songs and instrumental music or stories of Viṣṇu.

8. Some were engaged in the concluding rites of the Vratas; some were enthusiastic about keeping awake; engaged in the worship of the Brāhmaṇas and cows, some were ardently offering lamps.

9. Dhaneśvara saw these in different places very enthusiastically. As he moved in the region regularly he was fortunate enough to contact Vaiṣṇavas, seeing them, talking to them, touching them etc.

10-13. He listened to the names of Viṣṇu frequently uttered by them. Thus that Brāhmaṇa stayed on the banks of Narmāda for a month. (One day) he was bitten by a black serpent. Afflicted much he fell down (dead). After death the servants of Yama bound him and at the bidding of Yama threw that Brāhmaṇa Dhaneśvara into the hell Kumbhīpāka. But as soon as he was thrown into that place Kumbhīpāka became very cool like the fire into which Prahlāda was thrown formerly. On seeing this wonder Yama brought him out and questioned him.

14a. Presently Nārada who came there told him:

Nārada said:

14b-16. O son of the Sun-god, this (Brāhmaṇa) does not deserve to suffer in hells, since at the end of his life there occurred certain acts (done by him) that dispel hells.

If a person were to meet, touch or speak to persons of meritorious deeds, he gets one-sixth of their merits invariably. This Dhaneśvara not only contacted them but became their friend too.

17. He had contacted the Kārttikavrata-observers for a month. Hence he must get a share of their merit.

18. Since he has acquired merits unintentionally, let him be born in Yakṣa womb (species) after surveying all the hells that show how sinners fare there.

Śrīkṛṣṇa said:

19. When Nārada went away after saying this, Yama who came to know his meritorious deeds on hearing his words, desired to show him all the hells and asked a servant to take him round.

20. Then the servant of Yama took Dhaneśvara to those hells, desirous of showing him all. Then Pretapa (Head of the departed spirits) said:

Pretapa said:

21. O Dhaneśvara, see these terrible hells that instil fear (in everyone). In these the sinners are cooked and tortured continuously by the servants of Yama.

22. A sin that is committed without any intention is called *Śuṣka* (dry) and what which is committed with intention is known as *Ārdra* (wet). On the basis of *Ārdra* and *Śuṣka* sins, the hells are divided into two groups.

23-24. They are eighty-four in number, with separate locations. It is declared that sins are of seven varieties: (1) *Prakīrṇa*, (2) *Apāṅkteya*, (3) *Malinīkaraṇa*, (4) *Jātibhraṁśakara*, (5) *Upapātaka*, (6) *Atipāpa* and (7) *Mahāpāpa*.

25-26a. These sinners are cooked in these seven hells in order. Since you came into contact with those who had observed Kārttika Vrata, you acquired (a share in) their merits. Due to that you have been spared suffering in these hells.

Śrīkṛṣṇa said:

26b-27. After showing the hells to him thus, Pretapa took Dhaneśvara to the world of Yakṣas. There he became a Yakṣa and an attendant of Kubera. He became well-known as Dhana-Yakṣa.

Sūta said:

28-29. After saying this to his great beloved Satyabhāmā, Vāsudeva went to his mother's house to perform the evening Sandhyā rites.

Brahmā said:

This Kārttika Vrata has such efficacy. It gives worldly pleasures and salvation. Even the sins of persons who witness the Vrata perish and they too attain salvation.

CHAPTER THIRTY

Fasts and Austerities of the Month

Nārada said:

1. **Wonderful indeed is the efficacy of the Kārttika Vrata described by you. If one has no capacity to perform it, what shall one do about it?**

Brahmā said:

2-3. **If one has no capacity, the benefit is attained by certain (other) means. He can give some money to a Brāhmaṇa and get the excellent benefit. He can secure the same (fruit) from a disciple, servants or women. Or he can make some relative (or trustworthy person) perform the Vrata on his behalf. From him also he can take the benefit. Thus that man can be its beneficiary.**

Nārada said:

4. **Are merits obtained by anyone anywhere though not given? I wish to hear about this as I am very eager.**

Brahmā said:

5. **Though not given, merits as well as sins are obtained. To know by what means it happens, listen with concentration, O Brāhmaṇa.**

6-8. **Whether a good deed or an evil one, if one does it in Kṛta Yuga, the whole kingdom reaps the fruit thereof. If one does it in Tretā Yuga, the whole city gets it. If one does it in Dvāpara Yuga, the consequence extends to the whole family. And if one does it in Kali Yuga, only the doer is affected or benefited by it. If an action is performed unwittingly during childhood, the result thereof is experienced in dream; if it is committed unwittingly during youth, the result thereof is had as in childhood(?); if any action is performed knowingly, the result thereof lasts till the end of that life.**

9-10. **If a man is in close contact with a sinner for six months, he himelf becomes a sinner. If a man is in close contact with sinners or righteous men for ten months and if he takes food with them in the same row, the share of sin and merit is a twentieth part. If two men**

sit on the same seat, they get a thousandth of each other's (sin or merit).

11-12. If a man eats another man's cooked food, he gets a share in the latter's sin. Should a person come into contact with a sinner while performing Japa etc., a sixteenth (part) of his merit perishes. By eulogizing another man, by going in his vehicle, by taking food along with him from the same pot, by lying with him on the same bed, or by covering oneself with his shawl, one incurs a sixth of his sins or merits.

13. The husband takes away everything (i.e. sin as well as merit) from his wife and the father from his bosom-born son takes away half of his sins and merits and a fourth from his disciple.

14. A woman obedient and faithful to her husband takes away half his merit. A man takes away a tenth of the sin of another man, if he takes the food cooked by him.

15. If a man gives food to another man for a whole year, that man gets half the sin of the former (*defective text*) and the man who partakes of the food for one year, gets half the merits by eating food for one year (?) (*Rather* the former i.e. partaker of food should get half the sin of the latter.)

16. The sponsor of a sacrifice gets a sixth of the sin or merit of his priest and the priest gets a tenth of the former's sin or merit.

17. (Whatever may be the deed) the person actively engaged in it, the person who permitted or sanctioned it and the person who supplied the instruments thereof acquire a sixth of the result whether sin or merit and the onlooker a tenth of it.

18. If a person engages another person in a job, that person being other than a person hired by him or his disciple, and does not give him food, the person engaged so will take away a sixth of the merit of the employer.

19. By means of social dealings or by regular loving talks with another, one gets a tenth of the sins and merits of the other. There is no doubt about it.

20. Due to the merit of close association a base Brāhmaṇa Ekadanta saw different types of hells and ultimately attained heaven.

Nārada said:

21. The Kārttika Vrata of this type involves only a little effort,

but its benefit is enormous. Still some people do not perform it. Why is it so, O Pitāmaha?

Brahmā said:

22. It is to make his own creation flourish that the creator created Dharma and Adharma. Those who practise *Dharma* (Virtue) alone attain excellent goal.

23. Those men who resort to *Adharma* (evil) go deep down (to hell). Heaven is the fruit of meritorious deeds and the opposite thereof is hell.

24. Two persons were engaged by the creator to guard these two, viz. Indra and Yama. They attend to merits and sins (of the doers) respectively.

25. The sins of defiling the bed of the preceptor etc. are reputed on the earth as the sons of *Kāma* (Lust). Patricide etc. are the sons of *Krodha* (Anger). Listen to the sons of *Lobha* (Greed).

26-29. They are *Brahmasvaharaṇa* (Misappropriation of a Brahmin's wealth) etc. These are what lead to Narakas (Hells) at the instance of Yama. Men who are permeated by them do not perform Vratas and other holy rites. Those who are rid of them, do indeed perform.

Faith and intellect (of sinners) are always destructive on the earth. A man influenced by these two does not listen to (the stories) of Śrī Viṣṇu. He is a person of extremely wicked intellect. Thereby he falls into blinding darkness. I shall relate to you what was recounted to Satyabhāmā by Kṛṣṇa.

30. A man indirectly obtains a fourth of the merits and sins of another by teaching him, by performing Yajñas on his behalf or by taking food with him.

31. A man shall invariably incur a sixth of the merits and sins of another by sitting with him on the same seat, by travelling with him in the same vehicle and by getting into contact with his breath.

32. A man shall always get a tenth of the merits and sins by touching, talking to or eulogizing another person.

33. A man shall incur a hundredth of the sins and merits of another by seeing, hearing about and pondering over him.

34. If a person rebukes another, slanders him or rudely behaves towards him, he takes his sin and gives him his own merits.

35-36. – A man rendering service to one who performs meritorious deeds, gets the benefit of his merit in accordance with his service.

A man engages someone other than his wife, hired servant or disciple in a job but no wages are given to him befitting the job. Then the man who has been engaged thus, gets the benefit of his (employer's) merit.

37. While serving food to a number of persons sitting in a row, if the server passes over a person (without serving food) the man sitting there gets a sixth of the merit of the server.

38. If a person taking bath or saying Sandhyā prayers, touches or speaks to another person, he shall certainly give a sixth of the merit of his holy rite to him.

39. If a man requests another for monetary help for a righteous cause, the person who gives money shall get the fruit of that meritorious rite.

40. If a person steals another man's wealth and performs a meritorious deed (therewith), the person who performs, becomes a sinner and the owner of the amount stolen gets the fruit.

41. If a man dies before repaying his debt to another, the creditor gets the merit of the debtor in accordance with the value of the sum involved.

42-43. The person who advised, the person who permitted, the person who provided the instruments (to do an act) and the person who applied physical labour (in doing it) shall get a sixth of the merits and sins.

A king takes away a sixth of the merits and sins of his subjects. A teacher (does the same) of the disciple, a husband of the wife and a father of the son.

44. A woman shall get half the merit of her husband, if she has behaved in a manner pleasing to him and has carried out what he has wished.

45. If a person performs charitable gifts and other meritorious deeds through another person, not being a hired servant or a son, that another person gets a sixth of the merit.

46. A person who offers a job of livelihood, gets a sixth of the merit of that person who benefits by his offer, if he does not make him serve himself or others.

47. Thus though not given directly, the merits and sins accumulated by others pass on to oneself. But this rule is not applicable in Kali Age. It is the person who actually does anything that gets the benefit or adverse result of the act.

48. In Kali Yuga knowledge is not steady. People perform good

actions out of pride. Yogic exercise accompanied by hypocrisy in Kali Age does indeed perish.

49. Formerly a hypocrite named Taponiṣṭha[1] attained the greatest result through the pure influence of a chaste woman, by seeing the adoration of parents and by resorting to Kārttika Vrata.

Nārada said:

50. O Lord, I wish to hear about the most excellent of all Vratas, the procedure for performing the holy rite of a month-long fast and the suitable benefit thereof.[2]

Brahmā said:

51. Very good, O Nārada. O sinless one, I shall describe everything that you have asked about. O most excellent one among intelligent persons, listen even as I recount.

52-58. Just as Viṣṇu is the most excellent one among Suras, just as the Sun is the most excellent among those which blaze, like Meru among mountains, like Garuḍa among birds, so also the monthly fast is the most excellent one among all Vratas.

The merit arising from all the (other) Vratas, the merit of visiting all the Tīrthas, the merit arising from all charitable gifts, that by means of Yajñas with plenty of monetary gifts—all these merits do not get anywhere near the merit from fasting for a month.

One should observe the monthly fast after getting the permission of preceptor. He should first perform the expiatory rites of *Atikṛcchra*, *Pārāka* and *Cāndrāyaṇa* and then take up the monthly fast after fully realizing the physical strength or otherwise.

A forest-dweller, an ascetic, or a widow, O sage, should take up monthly fast with the permission of preceptor or (any) Brāhmaṇa.

One should take up this Vrata after fasting on the eleventh day in the bright half of the month of Āśvina. It shall be continued for thirty

1. This proud sage once killed a sparrow by his angry glance. Inebriated with spiritual power, he cast his glaring glance at a lady who was a bit late to give him alms due to her duties with her husband. When he gruffly refused to accept alms, she plainly told him that she is not a sparrow which he killed on the way. Surprised at her spiritual powers, he asked her the secret of her spiritual power. She told him it was sincere attendance to her duties and for further discussion she sent him to a butcher at Vārāṇasī.

2. VV 50-58 describe the procedure of observing fast in the month of Kārttika.

days. With great devotion, one should worship Hari three times a day in a temple of Acyuta.

59. One should worship by offering Naivedyas, incenses, lamps etc. and flowers of various kinds. One should worship the Garuḍa-emblemed Lord mentally, verbally and physically.

60. A man who is devoted to his virtuous duties, a married woman with perfect control over her sense-organs and a widow of excellent chastity should worship Vāsudeva.

61. (*Defective Text*) All the materials of worship should be surveyed properly. Sweet scents and flavours are forbidden. Other men's morsel (i.e. food) should be avoided and morsels of foods must be distributed(?)

62. The person observing the Vrata should abstain from anointing the body or the head with oil, (eating) betel leaves and application of unguents. Whatever is forbidden should be avoided.

63. The person observing the Vrata should not touch anyone engaged in forbidden activities, nor should he talk to him. A householder (too) shall observe the Vrata staying in a temple.

64-67. After observing the fast in accordance with the injunctions for thirty days, neither more nor less, the devotee should worship the Garuḍa-emblemed Lord on the twelfth day (i.e. Dvādaśī of the next month). After feeding excellent Brāhmaṇas and propitiating them by making gifts of clothes, he should give monetary gifts to them. He should prostrate before them and request them to forgive him (if at all there has been any omission). After that he should bid farewell to them with due veneration. At the end of the monthly fast he should observe fast on the eleventh day and then perform Vaiṣṇavayajña by inviting thirteen Brāhmaṇas.

68-69. Thereafter he should feed the Brāhmaṇas with due prostrations. He should give them betel leaves, pairs of clothes, food, coverings of the body, silken shawls, (sacred) threads, and bed with all necessary adjuncts. After giving these to the excellent Brāhmaṇas he should pay respect to them and bid farewell to them.

70-71. The procedure for the monthly fast has been duly recounted. Henceforth I shall describe the procedure for the rites to be performed in Tīthis beginning with Navamī (the ninth day). Listen to it, O Nārada, (as) it was described to the sages by Vālakhilyas.

CHAPTER THIRTYONE

The Rite of Kūṣmāṇḍanavamī

Vālakhilyas said:

1. The ninth day in the bright half of the month of Kārttika is the day on which Dvāpara Yuga commenced. For the purpose of charitable gift the Navamī must be present in the forenoon. For the purpose of fast the Navamī must be present in the afternoon.

2. On this day a Daitya named Kūṣmāṇḍa was killed by Viṣṇu. The creepers of pumpkin gourd (*Beninkasa cerifera*) grew from the hair of that Daitya.

3. Hence through a gift of Kūṣmāṇḍa one certainly attains the benefit. People should celebrate the festival of Kṛṣṇa on this Navamī day itself.

4. The festival of the marriage of Tulasī should be celebrated in accordance with the injunctions laid down in one's own branch of the Vedas. There is no doubt about this that he will earn the merit of giving away a virgin (in marriage).

5-8. On the ninth day in the bright half of the month of Kārttika, one should prepare a golden image of Hari along with Tulasī. With perfect control over the sense-organs he should worship that splendid image with great devotion and in accordance with the injunctions. He should observe the Vrata for three days. Similarly he should perform the rite of marriage as per injunctions. The three days should be inclusive of the Navamī. If the Navamī overlaps the previous Tithi of Aṣṭamī (eighth lunar day) it shall extend to the midday.

If anyone grows Dhātrī and Aśvattha trees in one place and then celebrates this festival, his merit will not perish even in hundreds of crores of Kalpas.

9-10. Formerly, Kiśorikā, the daughter of Kanaka, celebrated the marriage rite of Tulasī in the evening with great devotion. Then the beautiful one got free from the stigma of widowhood. Hence the rite of the marriage of Tulasī should be performed in the evening.

11. This rite shall necessarily be performed by Vaiṣṇavas every year. I shall describe its procedure so that the rite shall be complete with ancillary details.

12. One should make a splendid image of Viṣṇu with a *Pala* (25 grams) of gold. According to one's capacity the weight of gold can be half, one-fourth, one-eighth or one-sixteenth of what is said above.

13. The rite of *Prāṇapratiṣṭhā* (rite of infusing with life) of Tulasī and the idol of Viṣṇu should be performed after which the devotee should awaken the Lord by the prayers etc. mentioned before.

14. The worship should be accompanied by all the sixteen *Upacāras* (services) and repetitions of the *Puruṣasūkta*. Recollecting the time and place, he should perform Gaṇeśa's worship there itself.

15. After performing the rite of *Puṇyāhavācana* the rite of *Nāndī Śrāddha* should performed. Thereafter he should bring the idol of Viṣṇu near that of Tulasī to the accompaniment of the sounds of musical instruments and chantings of the Vedic Mantras.

16-17. The image of Viṣṇu should be placed there and covered with cloths. This Mantra shall be recited: "O Lord, come, O Lord Keśava, I shall worship you. I shall give Tulasī unto you. Be the bestower of all desires."

Arghya, *Pādya* and *Viṣṭara* (seat) should be offered three times.

18-20. Then *Ācamanīya* should be offered three times. Reciting the following Mantra the *Madhuparka* shall be offered:

"The *Madhuparka* consisting of curds, milk and ghee is placed in a pot of bell-metal. O Vāsudeva, accept this. Obeisance to you."

After performing the rites of smearing the turmeric paste and anointing with oil, Tulasī and Keśava should once again be worshipped at the time of *Godhūli* (about half an hour before sunset). The idols should be placed separately facing each other. Auspicious Mantras should be chanted.

21. When the sun is still visible slightly, the devotee should utter his Gotra, Pravara (line of ancestors) etc. up to three generations and begin the *Saṁkalpa* as follows:

22. "O Lord having no beginning, middle or end, O protector of the three worlds, accept this Tulasī with all marital rites.

23-24. I am giving you for wife this (Tulasī) born of the seed of Pārvatī, stationed in the ashes of Vṛndā, Tulasī which has no beginning, middle or end and which has been nurtured by me like my own daughter by means of waterpots and regular service. I am giving you your own beloved Tulasī. O Lord, accept her."

25. After offering Tulasī thus, he should worship both. At night, he should keep awake with all the festivities associated with a marriage ceremony.

26-28. Then early in the morning he should worship Tulasī and Viṣṇu after establishing fire while reciting the twelve-syllabled Mantra (viz. *oṁ namo bhagavate vāsudevāya*). One hundred and eight Homas

should be performed with milk-pudding, ghee, honey and gingelly seeds. Then after oblating offerings meant for sacrificial fire, the *Pūrṇāhuti* is offered. After duly honouring the preceptor, the remaining part of the Homa should be concluded.

After informing the Brāhmaṇas about the observances kept up in the course of the four rainy months in the manner they had happened, he should complete the other one too:

29. "O Lord, this Vrata has been performed by me for propitiating you. O Lord Janārdana, if it is deficient, let it be perfect and complete with your favour."

30. One should not carry out the rite of Pāraṇā in the fourth quarter of the constellation Revatī in conjunction with Dvādaśī (twelfth lunar day). If he does so, his Vrata shall be in vain.

31. Then he should give unto the Brāhmaṇas those substances (foodstuffs) which were eschewed in the course of the four rainy months or the month of Kārttika. Thereafter he should eat all those things given up by him when he was observing the Vrata.

32-33. Husband and wife should take food together in the company of Brāhmaṇas. After the meal they should eat the leaves of Tulasī that have fallen on the ground. Those who eat (Tulasī leaves) shall be rid of all of their sins.

34. At the end of a meal if one eats sugarcane, Dhātrī fruit or Koli-fruit (Jujube), he has no more *Ucchiṣṭa* (i.e. no necessity to rinse the month).

35. If anyone of these three has not been eaten, he must be known as a man of *Ucchiṣṭa* (impure due to not having rinsed the month) for the whole year. There is no doubt about it.

36. Then in the evening Tulasī and Vāsudeva have to be worshipped with the splendid sugarcane stumps. Thus he shall have fulfilled everything.

37-38. Then the devotee shall bid farewell to Hari after giving wedding gifts etc.:

"O Lord, go to Vaikuṇṭha along with Tulasī. Accepting the worship offered by me, be contented always. O most excellent one among Suras, O great Lord, go back to your own abode. O Janārdana, go to that place where Brahmā and other Devas are present."

39. After bidding farewell thus, the devotee should give the idol etc. to the preceptor. Then the man shall be contented and blessed.

40. He who performs this marriage rite of Tulasī every year with devotion, shall certainly be endowed with wealth and foodgrains. In this world as well as the other, he shall get wide renown.

CHAPTER THIRTYTWO

The Efficacy of Bhīṣmapañcaka Vrata

Vālakhilyas said:

1. On the eleventh day in the bright half of the month of Kārttika, one should take one's early morning bath and take up this Vrata which lasts for five days. He shall have proper restraint (on his senses).

2. The duties pertaining to a king, those conducive to salvation and those concerning charitable gifts were recounted by Bhīṣma, the noble soul, who had been lying on a bed of arrows. The Pāṇḍavas and Kṛṣṇa listened to them.

3. Then the delighted Lord Vāsudeva spoke: "Extremely blessed are you, O Bhīṣma. The pious and virtuous duties and rites have been recounted by you.

4. On the eleventh day in the month of Kārttika, you requested for water. With the speed of an arrow the water of Gaṅgā was brought by Arjuna.

5. Your body was rendered contented. Hence let all the people offer libations to you and propitiate you beginning from today and ending on the full-moon day.

6. Hence let them perform this Vrata named *Bhīṣma Pañcaka* with full exertion, which will give me satisfaction.

7. After performing the Kārttika Vrata, one should not perform the Bhīṣmapañcaka Vrata. His entire Kārttika Vrata may become futile.

8. If a man is incapable of performing or he has no means to perform the Kārttika Vrata, he can perform Bhīṣmapañcaka and obtain the merit of Kārttika Vrata.

9-10. Persons of all castes are eligible to offer libation with the sacred thread in the usual position. They will offer the same with this Mantra: 'I offer this *Arghya* (handful of water) to the noble-souled Bhīṣma who was the son of Gaṅgā, was steadfast in his vow of truthfulness and was a celibate throughout his life.'

11. The gift of *Pāpapuruṣa*[1] (i.e. idol representing his sins) should

1. *Pāpapuruṣa-dāna*: The idol has iron fangs, is sword-handed and terribly dressed. It is to be placed on gingelly seeds and covered with a black cloth. After offering red flowers and reciting the names of Dharmarāja the idol is to be given to a Brāhmaṇa.

be made, because it is an essential part of the Vrata. It is to be given on the full-moon day. At any cost, this Vrata should be performed by a person who has no son.

12. One who performs this Vrata, Bhīṣmapañcaka, for the sake of a son, shall do so along with his wife. After giving away the *Pāpapuruṣa*, he will get a son within a year.

13. Hence the Bhīṣmapañcaka Vrata should necessarily be performed. This Bhīṣmapañcaka has been mentioned by me as causing delight unto Viṣṇu."

Sūta said:

14. May all the sages listen to the special feature of Bhīṣmapañcaka. Formerly it was related to Kārttikeya in detail by Rudra.

Īśvara said:

15-16. O most excellent one among those who undertake Vratas, I shall explain a highly meritorious Vrata. This Vrata, lasting for five days, was received by Bhīṣma from Vāsudeva. Therefore, it is called Bhīṣmapañcaka[1] by him. Who except Keśava is capable of recounting the good qualities of this Vrata?

17-21. Listen. This ancient pious rite was performed in the bright half of the month of Kārttika by Vasiṣṭha, Bhṛgu, Garga and others in the earlier days of Kṛtayuga. With offerings etc. (to the Lord), this was performed in the earlier years of Tretāyuga by Aṁbarīṣa. This was performed by Brāhmaṇas observing the vow of celibacy, through Japas, Homas, holy rites etc., by Kṣatriyas and Vaiśyas who were devoted to truthfulness and cleanliness. It is very difficult to perform for those who are devoid of truthfulness. It is impossible for men of puerile minds. Since it is difficult to be performed they call it Bhīṣma (terrible). It cannot be performed by ordinary people. If a person (successfully) performs it, O great Brāhmaṇa(?), everything is achieved by him.

This Vrata is highly meritorious. It is destructive of great sins. Hence Bhīṣmapañcaka should be performed by men with great effort.

22. On the eleventh day in the bright half of Kārttika, one should take bath and take up this Vrata of five days' duration perfectly in

1. The etymology of the Vrata: (1) Vrata taken up by Bhīṣma; (ii) A Vrata which is terrible i.e. difficult for performance. VV 17-21 mention the important persons who performed this in ancient times.

accordance with the injunctions.[1]

23. The person who undertakes the Vrata should (at the outset) take an early morning bath. At midday he should smear himself with cowdung and then take bath in a river or in the waters of a stream.

24. He should duly offer libations to the Pitṛs successively with barley, rice-grains and gingelly seeds. After the bath, the man, steadfast in his Vrata, should wear a washed cloth silently.

25. He should offer libations and *Arghya* to Bhīṣma carefully. Worship of Bhīṣma should be performed and gifts should be made scrupulously.

26. Especially five precious stones should be given carefully. Lord Vāsudeva accompanied by Lakṣmī should always be worshipped.

27-28. By performing the worship in the course of the five (days), the devotee shall become contented for a crore of births.

If a man makes a gift of anything made of five metals, he gets the entire benefit of all the Vratas spread over a period of a year.

29-31. After offering libations, the man should offer *Arghya* with the following Mantra. He deserves to be liberated.

"I offer libations to issueless Bhīṣma whose Gotra was that of Vaiyāghrapāda, whose Pravara was Sāṅkṛtya, who was an incarnation of a Vasu, who was the son of Śantanu, to Bhīṣmavarman (a Kṣatriya named Bhīṣma) who was celibate throughout his life. I offer him *Arghya*".

This is the Mantra for *Arghya*.

32. He who concludes the Pañcaka (period of five days) in this manner, shall certainly attain merit equal to that of a horse-sacrifice.

33. The holy observances and restraints should be maintained on all the five days. A person of superior caste should never be without the restraints.

34. Bhīṣma was without Uttarāyaṇa (no span of life extending to Uttarāyaṇa?). But Hari gave it to him. He was highly pleased and so gave him a pure *Lagna* (auspicious hour) despite his not having Uttarāyaṇa.

35. Then the devotee should worship Lord Hari, the destroyer of all sins. Thereafter, the Bhīṣmapañcaka Vrata should be carefully performed.

36-37. He should bathe very devoutly Keśava with water, then with honey, milk and ghee. Similarly he shall bathe with Pañcagavya and then with scented sandal water. The Garuḍa-emblemed Lord should be anointed with sweet-smelling sandalpaste, saffron and camphor mixed

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1. VV 22ff describe the detailed procedure of this *Vrata*. It is called *Pañcaka* as its duration is of five days.

with Uśīra (a fragrant herbal root of *Andropogon muricatus*).

38. The devout man should worship the Lord with beautiful flowers along with sweet scents and incense. He should devoutly offer aromatic resin mixed with ghee.

39. There should be a lamp burning day and night on all those five days. The *Naivedya* to the Lord of Devas is *Paramānna* (rice boiled in milk and sugar).

40. He should worship the Lord thus meditating upon him and bowing down to him. Then he shall perform the Japa "Oṁ. Obeisance to Vāsudeva" one hundred and eight times.

41. He should perform Homa with gingelly seeds, rice-grains, barley etc. soaked in ghee while reciting the six-syllabled Mantra accompanied by the utterance of Svāhā. (Thus the Homa-mantra is: *oṁ namo viṣṇave svāhā.*)

42. After saying the evening prayers, the devotee should bow down to the Garuḍa-emblemed Lord. After reciting the Mantra as before he should always lie down on bare ground.

43. All these rites should be performed on all the five days. There is a special feature in this Vrata which should not be omitted. Listen to it.

44. On the first day the devotee who has undertaken the Vrata shall worship Hari's feet with lotuses. On the second day he should worship the knees with Bilva leaves.

45-46. Thereafter, he should worship the head of the Discus-bearing Lord with Mālatī (Jasmine) flowers.

On the eleventh day in the month of Kārttika he should worship Hṛṣīkeśa, the Lord of Devas, with great devotion with the mind fully centred on the Lord. Succinctly speaking, after taking in cowdung he should fast on the eleventh day.

47. On the twelfth day the devotee sitting on the ground and reciting the Mantra, should drink cow's urine, drink milk on the thirteenth day and curds on the fourteenth day.

48. He should eat or drink these things for the purpose of purifying the body. Apart from these, he should abstain completely from food for the (first) four days. On the fifth day he should take bath, duly worship Keśava and feed Brāhmaṇas with devotion. He should give them monetary gifts too.

49. He should eschew sinful thoughts and inclinations. He should take to celibacy. The intelligent devotee should abstain from liquor, meat and sexual intercourse—all causes of sin.

50-51. Only vegetables should be taken along with the cooked rice of sages. He should be devoted to the worship of Kṛṣṇa. Then he should take his meal at night beginning with *Pañcagavya*. Thus it should be concluded well. He should (thereby) attain the benefit as mentioned (before).

52. Even a drink-addict who has been drinking liquor from birth till death, shall attain the highest region by performing this Bhīṣmavrata.

53. This Vrata can be performed by women at the instance of their husbands. It should increase virtue and piety. This Vrata should be performed by widows for increasing the happiness of salvation.

54. Formerly in Ayodhyā there was a king named Atithi. At the suggestion of Vasiṣṭha he performed this rare Vrata. After enjoying all worldly pleasures here he went to the city of Viṣṇu in the end.

55. Thus one should always perform the Vrata called Bhīṣmapañcaka. He shall observe fast along with the restraints. Only *Pañcagavya*, milk, fruit and Haviṣya food shall be consumed by the person devoted to the Vrata.

56. On the full-moon day he should perform the worship as before, feed Brāhmaṇas with devotion and make the gift of a cow along with its calf.

57. The Vrata which is famous (on the earth) as Bhīṣmapañcaka has been described. It should be observed from Ekāḍaśī (eleventh day) till the full-moon day. It is not intended for one who is eager to take food. Taking food is prohibited in this Vrata. Viṣṇu grants auspicious fruit (reward) (to the observer of this Vrata).

CHAPTER THIRTYTHREE

Rules pertaining to Prabodhinī

Īśvara said:

1. Listen, O excellent one among Suras, to the greatness of Prabodhinī.[1] It is destructive of sins. It causes increase in merits and yields salvation to the knowers of truth.

2. O Senānī (i.e. Kārttikeya), Gaṅgā brought into the world by Bhagīratha roars on the earth only till the advent of Haribodhinī in the

1. Prabodhinī or Haribodhinī is the name of the eleventh day in the bright half of Kārttika. That is the last day of Cāturmāsa. This is regarded as one of the most auspicious days.

month of Kārttika that dispels sins.

3. All the Tīrthas including the oceans and lakes roar (boast) only till the advent of Prabodhinī Tithi of Viṣṇu in the month of Kārttika.

4. By one fast alone on the Prabodhinī day (the benefit of) thousands of horse-sacrifices and hundreds of Rājasūyas (can be had).

5. A thing may be very difficult to get. It may be inaccessible in all the three worlds consisting of mobile and immobile beings. But Pratibodhinī grants it, O Brāhmaṇa(?) if it is requested for.

6. If the fast is undertaken, O Brāhmaṇa, Haribodhinī easily grants all prosperity, progeny, knowledge, kingdom, happiness and riches.

7. By means of a single fast, Haribodhinī burns down sins equal (in size) to the Meru and Mandara mountains acquired (by the people).

8. He who fasts on the Prabodhinī day naturally and in accordance with the injunctions, O tiger among men(?), attains the benefit as mentioned.

9. The sin that has been acquired in the course of thousands of previous births is burned like a heap of cotton by keeping awake (in the night) on Prabodhinī day.

10. Listen, O Six-faced One, I shall describe the features of keeping awake (on Prabodhinī)[1] With its knowledge alone Janārdana ceases to be inaccessible.

11-15. There should be (devotional) songs, instrumental music, dance, readings from the Purāṇas, offerings of incense, lamps, food offerings, flowers, sweet scents, unguents, fruits, *Arghyas*, great faith, charitable gifts, restraint on the sense-organs, truthfulness, absence of censure, gaiety, good holy rites and wonderful (scenes etc.). People should be enthusiastic. They should not be lethargic.

The Lord should be bowed down to and circumambulated. The devotee should perform the Nīrājana rites of Hari every *Yāma* (3 hrs.) without any dejection in his mind, O highly fortunate one.

The Jāgaraṇa rite (keeping awake) of the Lord should have all these features. One who does so with full concentration of the mind is not reborn on the earth.

16. He who devoutly performs thus without any stinginess regarding the money to be spent, he who keeps awake on the day of Viṣṇu, merges into the Supreme Ātman.

17. If anyone worships Hari with the *Puruṣasūkta* everyday in the month of Kārttika, it is as good as worshipping Keśava for thousands of crores of years.

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1. The *Jāgaraṇa* rite is described in vv 10-30.

18. If a man worships everyday in the month of Kārttika in accordance with the injunctions as mentioned in Pāñcarātra (Āgama), he attains salvation.

19. He who worships Hari in the month of Kārttika uttering "Obeisance to Nārāyaṇa", shall become liberated from the miseries of hells and go to the region devoid of sickness and ailment (i.e. Vaikuṇṭha).

20. He who recites the thousand names of Hari, reads the story of Gajendra Mokṣa (the liberation of the great elephant) will not take rebirth.

21. He who keeps awake on the twelfth day in the month of Kārttika, lives in heaven for thousands of crores of Yugas and hundreds of Manvantaras.

22. Those who are born in his family, whether hundreds or thousands, attain the region of Viṣṇu. Hence one should observe the rite of Jāgaraṇa.

23. If a devotee eulogizes and sings songs in the last *Yāma* (of every night) in the month of Kārttika, O (son) of good holy rites, he resides in the Śvetadvīpa along with his ancestors.

24. O excellent sages(?), if the devotee offers Naivedya (food-stuffs) to Hari everyday at the close of the day in the month of Kārttika, he will reside in heaven for as many Yugas as there are (items or dishes in the Naivedya).

25. O tiger among sages(?), the worship with jasmine and lotuses brings about everlasting benefits. He who worships the Lord of the chiefs of Devas with them, attains the greatest region.

26. The man who fasts on the eleventh day in the bright half of the month of Kārttika and gives splendid water-pots in the morning, goes to my region.

27-28. On this day itself the awakening of Hari should be performed. Daitya Śaṅkhāsura was killed on the eleventh day in the bright half of the month of Śrāvaṇa. From that day Viṣṇu was asleep in the four rainy months in the Ocean of Milk. He woke up on the eleventh day in the month of Kārttika.

29-30. Hence the rite of *Prabodhana* (awakening) should be performed by Vaiṣṇavas on the Ekādaśī day:

"O Govinda, get up, wake up. O Garuḍa-emblemed One, get up. O Lover of Lakṣmī, get up. Make the three worlds auspicious." The devotee shall utter this (Mantra) in the morning, blow conch, play on musical instruments, beat Bherī drums etc. There should be flutes, lutes, Mṛdaṅgas, dances, songs etc.

31. After awakening the Lord of Devas, and after performing his worship, the rite of the marriage of Tulasī should be performed in the evening.

32-33. Ekādaśī is always meritorious and that in the month of Kārttika is particularly so. When the day of Hari arrives, all the sins of Brāhmaṇa-slaughter etc. resort to cooked food. Therefore, he who takes cooked food on the day of Hari, eats sins alone.

34-35. Hence, with all possible efforts one should undertake the Ekādaśī Vrata. If any base or vulgar man does not observe fast out of delusion, he will have invariably to remain in Naraka (hell) along with his Manes. The learned devotee should not give up the observance of fast during the days of post-natal or post-death pollution.

36-38. For the purpose of the holy rites Ekādaśī with Daśamī overlapping it in the morning, should be avoided.[1] Formerly, O Guha, fast was observed on such a day by Gāndhārī. So her hundred sons perished. Hence one should avoid that day (contaminated) by death.

One should observe fast on the Ekādaśī day with due performance of ablution, charity etc. The saintly king Rukmāṅgada performed it, but due to the association with Mohinī (Enchantress) (forgot it for a day. Despite that) he enjoyed pleasures in this world and in the end went to the city of Viṣṇu.

So ends (the description of) the festival of waking up.
Now the greatness of Dvādaśī (twelfth day)[2] (is being recounted).

39-42. Dvādaśī is mentioned as the bestower of merit. It is destructive of all the masses of sins. If Dvādaśī is served by one, of what use are these to him? Of what avail are charitable gifts, austerities, Vratas with observances of fasts, Yajña performances and dear sons? If even a single person is fed on Dvādaśī day, one gets that benefit which is obtained by feeding a crore persons everyday during famine on the (banks of) Gaṅgā.

If gift of food is made to a deserving person on the twelfth day in the bright half of a month, every lump of boiled rice so given is equal to the feeding of many Brāhmaṇas. How many, I do not know. O (son) of good holy rites, I do not know the greatness thereof.

1. VV 36-38 state what day should be observed for Ekādaśī in case of overlapping with other *Tithis*.
2. VV 39-[illegible]6 deal with details of celebrating the Dvādaśī day.

43. If a person makes the gift of a Śālagrāma stone on the Dvādaśī day, he gets that benefit which one gets by gifting away the whole of the earth consisting of the seven continents at the time of solar eclipse on Gaṅgā.

44. O Brāhmaṇa(?), he who devoutly bathes Viṣṇu with Pañcāmṛta, redeems the entire family. He is honoured in the world of Viṣṇu.

45. On the twelfth day in the bright half of the month of Kārttika, there shall be a great festival. Beginning in the morning, the devotee should perform ablution, charity and other rites (and should be continuously engaged in it). He attains salvation. There is no doubt about it.

46-47. On the twelfth day in the month of Kārttika the devotee should worship Dāmodara with great devotion and faith after completing the ablution, Sandhyā prayers etc. If he does not offer cooked pulse as Naivedya, he is a mean fellow. We have heard that he will ever have to remain in hell.

48. Hence, O Brāhmaṇa, one should offer cooked pulse as Naivedya with great devotion on the Dvādaśī day in the splendid month of Kārttika. Otherwise he may go to hell.

49. If a man feeds couples on that day (he will have immense merit). When his merit comes to an end, I cannot mention. (i.e. It is not possible for me to say when the store of his merit will become exhausted.)

50-51. The devotee should worship Hari on the Dvādaśī day under the shade of a Dhātrī tree. He must feed Brāhmaṇas there itself. He himself should eat cooked pulse and other foodstuffs there itself. If anyone does so, he does not return (to the earth) even in the course of hundreds and crores of Kalpas.

52. After completing the worship of Dāmodara in the morning the rite of worship of Hari should be performed again at night, O Brāhmaṇa.

53-54. An excellent pavilion should be made near the Tulasī plant. It should be rendered beautiful with flagstaffs and banners, garlands of flowers, various kinds of gems and pearl strings. There the devotee should worship Viṣṇu with full concentration and without any excitement at all.

55-57. According to the rules laid down in Pañcarātra Āgama, he should complete the worship duly. There should be sweet-smelling flowers, raw rice grains etc., butter, curds, milk, solid ghee, different kinds of foodstuffs as Naivedya and perfumed water. Everything should be offered to Viṣṇu including betel leaves, cloves etc. Flowers of various

kinds and sweet fragrance should be sprinkled with water and their splendid petals should be used for worship.

58. He should then worship with Dhātrī fruits and Tulasī leaves. After the Nīrājana rite, he should offer *Mantra Puṣpa* (flowers with utterance of Mantras).

59. The entire worship is performed without the rite of bathing but in accordance with the injunctions. After concluding the worship of Viṣṇu, the Brāhmaṇas should be honoured.

60-62. He shall worship them with devotion, O Brāhmaṇa, and give them fruits etc. After offering them betel-leaves, monetary gifts should be given in accordance with one's capacity. Thereafter the elders, ancestors, mothers etc. should be worshipped duly. Then the intelligent devotee himself along with his wives should eat the Naivedya.

If anyone undertakes Dvādaśī Vrata thus in accordance with the injunctions, his (heavenly) worlds do not perish even in hundreds and crores of Kalpas.

63. Surrounded by sons and grandsons, he will enjoy various pleasures of a fascinating nature. At the end of those worldly pleasures, he shall attain salvation along with seven preceding generations.

64. Hence, O Nārada, the greatness of Dvādaśī of the Kārttika month cannot be described by me. How can it be done by other men?

65. One who reads this excellent efficacy of the auspicious Dvādaśī, or listens to it, O excellent sage, attains the greatest goal.

66. The saintly king Aṁbarīṣa performed this splendid Vrata and engaged himself in penance in accordance with the injunction. Thereby he attained salvation.

CHAPTER THIRTYFOUR

The Procedure of Concluding the Vrata

Nārada said:

1-2. O Brahmā, it is heard that all Vratas have *Udyāpana* (concluding rites) too. No one shall obtain the benefit of the Vratas, if *Udyāpana* is not performed.

For the purpose of obtaining the benefit of the Vrata performed, the learned devotee should perform *Udyāpana* rite. Otherwise the excellent Vrata becomes futile.

3-4. In Kārttika too, O Lord, the most excellent one among Vratas

is performed. If it is not attended with its regular *Udyāpana*, one will not get the benefit of the Vrata, as has been mentioned.

Hence, O Lord, tell the procedure for the *Udyāpana* of the Vrata of the month of Kārttika. I am the greatest of your disciples, who resorts to you and follows you obediently.

Brahmā said:

5. I shall now describe the *Udyāpana* rite of the Kārttika Vrata succinctly along with the injunctions.[1] It is destructive of all sins. Listen to it with great devotion.

6. For the sake of completing the Vrata and for propitiating Viṣṇu, the person who has undertaken the Vrata should perform the *Udyāpana* on the fourteenth day in the bright half of Kārttika.

7. A splendid pavilion should be erected above the Tulasī plant. It should be rendered very gorgeous by means various metals. There shall be stumps of plantain trees.

8. Clusters and rows of lamps shall be placed in all the four quarters, rendering it very excellent. There should be four ornamental arched gateways rendered splendid by means of flowers and chowries.

9-10. At the doorways there should be gatekeepers made of clay (representing) Jaya, Vijaya, Caṇḍa, Pracaṇḍa, Nanda and Sunanda, Kumuda and Kumudākṣa. They should be devoutly worshipped in the four doorways.

11-14. At the foot of the Tulasī plant there should be the mystic diagram named *Sarvatobhadra* in four colours. It should be perfect, splendid and well-adorned. A pitcher full of gems should be placed on it. There the devotee should worship the Lord holding the conch, discus and iron club. He should be dressed in a yellow silken cloth and accompanied by Lakṣmī. The person undertaking the Vrata should worship Indra and other Guardians of the Quarters in the pavilion.

The devotee should be calm and reverential in attitude. He should fast on that day with great devotion. At night he should keep awake with auspicious songs and instrumental music.

15. Those who devoutly sing songs at the time of the Jāgaraṇa of the Discus-bearing Lord, become rid of masses of sins accumulated in hundreds of previous births.

16. Then on the full-moon day, he should invite thirty excellent

1. VV 5-36 describe the procedure of *Udyāpana* (the formal conclusion) of the Kārttika Vrata.

Brāhmaṇas along with their wives. Or (it is enough if) one Brāhmaṇa (is invited).

17. He should take bath early in the morning and worship the Lord. Then he should prepare a levelled ground or altar and kindle the sacrificial fire thereon.

18. He should perform Homa with gingelly seeds and milk-pudding along with the recitation of the Mantra *ato devā* etc. (*Ṛg*-Veda I.22.16) for the propitiation of the Lord of Devas as well as the Devas separately.

19. After concluding the remaining part of the Homa and honouring the Brāhmaṇas devoutly, he should give them monetary gifts in accordance with his capacity.

20. Then the devotee should worship a tawny-coloured cow there duly. Then he should give the cow with its calf to a Brāhmaṇa who has a large family.

21. He should then duly honour his preceptor and instructor in the Vrata along with his wife, by means of garments and ornaments. Then he should request those Brāhmaṇas for forgiveness.

22-24. "With your favour let the Lord of the Devas be always pleased with me. Let the sin that has been committed by me in the course of the last seven births be destroyed entirely by this Vrata. Let all my desires be realized and be fruitful. Let there be devotion to Hari. Let me have the association with good people in every birth."

After requesting for forgiveness thus, he should propitiate those Brāhmaṇas and bid farewell to them.

25. O eminent sage, he should give that image along with the cloth to the preceptor. Then the devout person undertaking the Vrata should take food himself accompanied by friends and the preceptor.

26. The Lord woke up on the twelfth day. He joined the Suras on the thirteenth day. He was worshipped on the fourteenth day, and so he was delighted then. Therefore, he is to be worshipped on this Tithi.

27-28. With the permission of the preceptor, he should worship the golden (image of the) Lord of the chiefs of Devas. A great procession should be taken on this full-moon day at Puṣkara.

Since after granting the boons Viṣṇu assumed the form of a fish, therefore what is given in charity, offered as Homa or repeated as Japa shall have everlasting benefit.

29-31. O Nārada, this procedure is to be followed in the month of Kārttika. One who performs well the Vrata of Kārttika in this manner obtains the stipulated benefit. Those who undertake this Vrata in the

month of Kārttika are blessed ones. They are always to be honoured. Their accomplishment is fruitful. If they are engaged in devotion to Viṣṇu and perform the Vratas in the month of Kārttika, all the sins in their bodies perish instantaneously.

32. All the sins cry out like this again and again: "Where shall we go today? This man is about to perform the Kārttika Vrata."

33. Hence there is nothing equal to the month of Kārttika. In the matter of burning down all the sins it is said to be like fire.

34. One who listens to the greatness of the *Udyāpana* rite of the Kārttika Vrata with full faith, or who expounds it, shall attain the Sāyujya of Viṣṇu.

Nārada said:

35. How can a person incapable of *Udyāpana* etc. attain Siddhi (the fruit of the Vrata)? How is a creature liberated from the miserable worldly existence?

Brahmā said:

36. The man should with purity (in the mind and body) listen to the efficacy of Kārttika Vrata. He shall then obtain the benefit of *Udyāpana* and reside in the world of Viṣṇu.

CHAPTER THIRTYFIVE

Vaikuṇṭha Caturdaśī Vrata

Brahmā said:

1. I shall relate succinctly the greatness of the Vrata called Vaikuṇṭha Caturdaśī.[1] It has been formerly described by Vālakhilyas. Listen to it.

Vālakhilyas said:

2. On the fourteenth day in the bright half of the month of Kārttika in Kṛtayuga the Lord of Vaikuṇṭha came to Vārāṇasī.

1. The episode how Viṣṇu plucked out one of his eyes as a substitute for the 1000th lotus to be offered to Lord Śiva on this day is indicative of the synthetic spirit of the day. The great Kārttika Vrata so dear to Viṣṇu is concluded by showing how that god Viṣṇu is a devotee of Śiva. We are required to worship Viṣṇu and Śiva both on that day (vv 26-31).

3-5. When the night still remained in the fourth quarter, he took his bath in Maṇikarṇikā (name of a bathing place on Gaṅgā). Taking a thousand golden lotuses with him, he went with great devotion to worship Śiva accompanied by Śivā.

After performing the worship of Viśveśa he (wanted to) worship (Śiva) with lotuses. He (counted) a thousand lotuses (to be placed on Śiva), one for one of Śiva's names. Afterwards, the actual worship was begun by him. Śiva (wanted to) test his devotion.

6. From among the lotuses, one lotus was secretly taken away by Hara. Then Viṣṇu began his worship. There was shortage of the lotuses by one.

7. He looked for it here and there, but there was no lotus anywhere. He thought within himself thus for a moment, 'Have I erred in counting the lotuses or reciting the names?'

8-10. Then he thought thus: 'There has been no mistake in reciting the names. The mistake is in counting the lotuses.'

Again he thought thus: 'I resolved at the outset for a worship with a thousand lotuses. How shall Mahādeva be worshipped when lotuses are short by one. If I go to fetch one, I will have to break the rule of continuous sitting. Now what should be done?' Thus Hari was worried with that thought then.

11-13. O great sages, a way out occurred to his mind: 'Great sages call me Puṇḍarīkākṣa (Lotus-eyed). My eye is similar to a lotus. I shall offer it in the place of the (missing lotus).' Mentally resolving thus, he dislodged the eye with his index finger. With that Mahādeva was worshipped by him. Then Maheśvara became pleased and spoke these words:

Mahādeva said:

14. In all the three worlds consisting of mobile and immobile beings, there is no one else so devoted to me like you. The entire kingdom of the three worlds is granted to you. Be the protector of the worlds.

15. Choose another boon whatever may be desired by you in your mind. Welfare unto you. Certainly I shall grant it. There is no doubt about it.

16. Those men who have recourse to my devotion but who hate Janārdana are inimical to me, O Viṣṇu. They shall certainly fall into hell.

Viṣṇu said:

17. O Maheśvara, the duty of protecting the three worlds has been assigned to me. Daityas are very haughty. They have enormous strength. How can they be killed by me?

Śiva said:

18-19. This discus Sudarśana is capable of cutting down the great Daityas. It is given to you by me. O Lord Viṣṇu, accept this. Work a havoc among Daityas with this, O Lord.

Thus he gave the discus to Hari and spoke these words:

Śiva said:

20-22. In the year named Hemalamba, on the fourteenth day in the bright half of the glorious month of Kārttika at the time of dawn, on the Tithi pertaining to *Mahādeva* (i.e. the fourteenth one) in the Brāhma Muhūrta (i.e. 48 mts. before sunrise) you took your bath in Maṇikarṇikā after coming here from Vaikuṇṭha. Then the Liṅga of Viśveśvara was worshipped with a thousand lotuses. Hence it will become a favourite of mine. It shall be famous in all the worlds as Vaikuṇṭha Caturdaśī.

23-24. Listen, O Viṣṇu, I shall grant you another boon. Listen to my words: In the earlier part of the nights your worship should be performed by persons of all castes. They shall observe fast during the day and perform your worship in the evening. Afterwards my worship is to be performed. Otherwise it (my worship) shall be futile.

25. For the purpose of the worship of Hari, the Caturdaśī extending to the night should be taken. The devotee shall worship Śiva at the time of dawn.

26. Those men by whom Viṣṇu is worshipped at the outset with a thousand lotuses and then Śiva is worshipped afterwards are indeed living-liberated souls.

27-31. After taking the bath in the evening in Pañcanada, the devotee should worship Bindumādhava. He who takes his bath in Viṣṇukāñcī shall worship Anantasena. Thereafter he shall take his bath in Rudrakāñcī and worship Praṇaveśa.

First the devotee should take bath in Vahnitīrtha and then worship Nārāyaṇa. Thereafter he should take bath in Retodaka and worship Kedāreśa.

At the outset the devotee should take bath in Yamunā and worship

Veṇīmādhava. Then he should take bath in Gaṅgā and worship Saṅgameśa. All riches and prosperity shall be under his control. O Viṣṇu, the truth is spoken by me.

After granting him boons thus Śiva vanished. Hence both Hari and Hara are to be worshipped with all efforts.

32. In Kaliyuga Viṣṇu abandons the earth for (after?) ten thousand years, the waters of Gaṅgā for half that period and the rural deities for half of the latter.

33. On the full-moon day in the month of Kārttika Traipura[1] festival is to be celebrated. In the evening lamps must be lighted in a Śiva temple.

34. A prominent Daitya named Tripura performed a penance at Prayāga. Pleased with his penance, Brahmā granted him a great boon.

35-36. "Your death will not be at the hands of Devas, Asuras or human beings." This was the boon that the Daitya got. He got into the aerial chariot named Tripura, made by Viśvakarmā. When he harassed the three worlds riding in it, Hara was eulogized by the Devas.

37. The slayer of enemies killed Tripura with a single arrow on the full-moon day in the month of Kārttika. All the Devas eulogized him.

38. On that day lamps were offered to Hara by all the Devas. By all means, lamps should be offered for propitiating Śiva.

39. One who offers a lamp with seven hundred and twenty lighted wicks on the full-moon day, shall be liberated from all sins.

40-43. The Tripura festival is to be celebrated at dusk on the full-moon day. Reciting this (following) Mantra, lamps should be lighted in the temple:

"May worms, locusts, mosquitoes, trees and the living beings that move about in water or on land, all cease to have re-birth on seeing the lamp. Let Cāṇḍālas become Brāhmaṇas."

Therefore, the great festival of Tripura should be celebrated on the full-moon day.

He who sees the Lord on the full-moon day in conjunction with Kṛttikā constellation, shall for seven births be a Brāhmaṇa very rich and master of the Veda.

1. Illumination on the full-moon day of Kārttika is done to celebrate of the killing of demon Tripura by Śiva. It is called *Tripurī Pūrṇimā* and all important places are illuminated with hundreds of lamps. The writer follows *Pūrṇimānta* calendar in which a month ends with the full-moon day. The Kārttika Vrata ends with Kārttika Pūrṇimā.

On this day if one performs the rite of *Vṛṣotsarga* (setting a bull free to roam about freely) at night, shall go to the city of Śiva.

CHAPTER THIRTYSIX

The Efficacy of Listening to the Purāṇa[1]

Brahmā said:

1-5a. The three holy Tithis (Lunar days) towards the end of the bright half of the month of Kārttika, O great Brāhmaṇas, ending with the full-moon day are very auspicious. They are (collectively) called Antipuṣkariṇī. They are destructive of all sins. He who has been taking the holy bath throughout the month of Ḳārttika, shall get the full benefit by taking bath during these three Tithis.

On the thirteenth day all the Vedas go into it and sanctify the creatures. On the fourteenth day the Devas along with Yajñas sanctify the creatures. On the full-moon day the good Tīrthas are present along with Viṣṇu. They sanctify all the creatures, even slayers of Brāhmaṇas or drink-addicts (etc.).

5b-11. If anyone takes bath in hot water on the first three days of the month of Kārttika, he falls into the Raurava hell and stays there for the period of the reign of fourteen Indras.

One who is incapable of maintaining the observances for the whole of the month shall do so during these three days.[2] Thereby he attains the full benefit and rejoices in the region of Viṣṇu.

He who does not take the holy bath etc. with Devas, Pitṛs, Viṣṇu or the preceptor in view shall certainly go to hell.

The householder who feeds a family during these three days, shall redeem all the Pitṛs and attain the greatest region (Mokṣa).

He who reads the Bhagavad-Gītā during the last three days, attains the benefit of a horse-sacrifice everyday.

He who reads the *Thousand Names* (of the Lord) during the last three days, is never contaminated by sins like a leaf of lotus that is not touched by water. Devahood has been attained by some men and Siddhahood by some.

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1. This chapter is an important evidence to show that this Māhātmya is an independent work incorporated later in the *Skanda Purāṇa*.

2. The importance of the observance of the last three days of this month. It is a concession to weak and old people.

12. In heaven or on the earth, who is competent to recount the merit of that person who listens to the sacred *Bhāgavata* text for these three days?

13-16. By resorting to these three days some have attained the state of Brahman. Salvation can be attained through the knowledge of Brahman, or by dying in Prayāga, or by resorting to these three days in the month of Kārttika.

He who performs the worship of Hari during these three days in the month of Kārttika, does not return (to the world) even in hundreds and crores of Kalpas.

O great Brāhmaṇa, everything connected with these three days in the month of Kārttika is meritorious. O sinless one, there is further excellence in Rākā (full-moon with all the sixteen digits). The devotee should get up early in the morning and carry out the cleansing rites, holy ablution etc.

17. After concluding all these routine duties, he should perform the worship of Viṣṇu on that day in the month of Kārttika either in a garden or within the house. He should be devoted to Viṣṇu.

18-20. He should erect a pavilion there, decorated with stumps of plantain trees, mango blossoms and tender leaves as well as sugar-cane stems.

He should worship the Lord after embellishing him with garments of various colours. He should worship Hari with fruits etc. including mango bloosoms and tender leaves.

The man must remain invariably pure and listen to the greatness of Kārttika either completely, or one chapter or at least one verse thereof.

21-22. Everyday he should listen to the meritorious discourse at least for a Muhūrta (48 minutes). If he is not in a position to listen to it everyday, the man should listen to it at least during the holy month (i.e. Kārttika) or on the holy Tithi (Lunar day of Caturdaśī). By the power of the merit thereof the man shall be liberated from sins.

23. The man conversant with Purāṇas should be an expert, clean, calm and devoid of malice.[1] He should be a good man, kind-hearted, intelligent and fluent in speech. He should expound the meritorious story.

24. When the expounder of the Purāṇas has occupied the seat of Vyāsa (i.e. the pulpit), he should not bow down to anyone till the portion for the day or session is completed.

1. The eligibility of the propounder of the Purāṇa and the norms to be observed while hearing the Purāṇa.

25. This learned expounder should not deliver his speech in a place infested with bad characters, Śūdras or beasts of prey, or in a gambling house.

26. The listeners should be endued with faith and devotion. They should not be interested in other affairs (at that time). They should be pure, clever and reticent in speech. Then they shall attain merit.

27. Those vile and base men who listen to the meritorious story without any faith shall meet with misery in every birth. They will never get the benefit of the merit.

28. The devotee should honour the Paurāṇika (expounder of Purāṇas) devoutly with sweet scents, garlands, clothes, ornaments and cash presents.

29. Those who listen to the story with devotion shall never become sinners or impoverished.

30. If men go elsewhere while the discourse is going on, their wives and riches will perish in the midst of their enjoyment of pleasure.

31. If any man in the audience is seated on a high pedestal and is not humble, he shall be reborn as a poisonous tree. If anyone (from the audience) goes to sleep, he shall be reborn as a python in a forest.

32. Even as the discourse is going on, if people make noise and disturb everyone, they will suffer the tortures of hells for a crore years (ten million years) and are reborn as rural pigs.

33. Those men who expound the Paurāṇic story of great excellence stay in the region of Brahmā for more than a hundred crores of Kalpas.

34-35. Those men who give the expounder of the Purāṇas a blanket, a deer skin, clothes, plank or a raised platform for sitting, those men who give him clothes to wear or ornaments etc. shall reside in the abode of Brahmā.

36. If the expounder is satisfied, all the Deities are satisfied. Hence a man endowed with devotion and faith should please him devoutly. He will fully enjoy the fruit of his merit undoubtedly.

37. By listening to the Purāṇas once a man obtains that benefit which is derived from all the Yajñas and all the charitable gifts.

38. In Kaliyuga there is no greater and more specialised holy rite than listening to a Purāṇa; there is no greater path of salvation than listening to a Purāṇa. There is nothing greater than the glorification of the name of Viṣṇu.

39. He who listens to or expounds this greatness of Kārttika Vrata

shall obtain the benefit of a visit to Badarī, the chief among the Tīrthas.

40-41. It dispels all ailments. It is the cause of the destruction of all sins. It is auspicious. If a person is engaged in carnally approaching forbidden women or in selling a daughter or a sister, listening to this Purāṇa portion simultaneously liberates both.

42. After listening to this greatness the devotee should worship the expounder with presents of cows, plots of grounds, gold and garments, because he is on a par with Viṣṇu.

43. A book of ethics or Dharmaśāstra, Purāṇa, Vedavidyā etc. should be presented to the expounder by a person having a desire for merit. The donors of Purāṇavidyā enjoy infinite benefit.

44. He who reads this with devotion, listens to it and retains it in his mind is liberated from all sins. He goes to the world of Viṣṇu.

45. This should not be divulged to anyone who has no faith or who has a vicious mind.

46. If a person does not worship and revere his preceptor who has expounded Dharma, he suffers tortures in Narakas and then meets with misery in the next birth.

47-48a. He should worship the preceptor with the greatest reverence without turning his attention to anything else. So one shall devoutly revere the preceptor who gives him knowledge of truth.

O sinless one, only a small portion of the Māhātmya has been spoken to you by me. It cannot be explained completely even in hundreds of years.

48b-49. Formerly, Śiva spoke this to Pārvatī on the summit of Kailāsa, narrating the greatness of Kārttika for a hundred years. Still it did not come to a close. Incapable of doing it, he desisted from it.

50. A person who seeks a son, a person who seeks wealth, one who seeks kingdom—all these shall attain their respective objectives. Why should much be said? One who seeks salvation shall attain salvation.

Sūta said:

51. Nārada who had been addressed thus by Brahmā, became filled with love and devotion. The sage who moves about at will (in a carefree manner) bowed down frequently to him and went away.

52. It was spoken by Śaṅkara to his son with a desire for welfare. On hearing those words of his father, the Six-faced Lord became highly delighted.

53. The greatness of Kārttika was recounted to Satyabhāmā by Kṛṣṇa. Delighted thereby, Satyā performed the Vrata.

54. After hearing about the greatness from Vālakhilyas, the sages became devoted to the Vrata of Kārttika. Hence this Kārttika Vrata is a great favourite.

55. After learning all the scriptures, this has been taken out like the essence from milk (i.e. butter). There is no other scripture which is auspicious and conducive to the pleasure of Viṣṇu.

Vyāsa said:

56. After saying thus to all those sages, Sūta, the most excellent one among those conversant with Dharma, stopped (his narration). Then they revered him.

57. Those great sages went back to their hermitages with great delight. They performed the auspicious Vrata in the manner Sūta had instructed them.

58. Those who perform Kārttika Vrata according to this procedure, shall become liberated from all sins. They shall go to the world of Viṣṇu.

:: *End of Kārttikamāsa-Māhātmya* ::

SECTION V: MĀRGAŚĪRṢA-MĀHĀTMYA

CHAPTER ONE

Fruit of the Holy Bath in the Month of Mārgaśīrṣa (Obtained by Gopīs)

Obeisance to Śrī Gaṇeśa

Here begins (the narration of) the greatness of the month of Mārgaśīrṣa.[1]

Sūta said:

1. I salute Mādhava, Kṛṣṇa, who is the son of Devakī, the cause of delight to all the worlds, and the bestower of worldly pleasures and salvation and who is fond of his devotees.

2. After bowing down to his progenitor (Viṣṇu), the consort of Ramā, the Lord of Devas, who was comfortably seated in Śvetadvīpa,[2] the Four-faced Lord (god Brahmā) asked him thus:

Brahmā said:

3. O Hṛṣīkeśa, the creator of the universe, O Lord of Devas, listening to whose glorification is meritorious, O omniscient lord of all, tell me what is being asked (presently).

4. Formerly this was declared by you: "Among the months, I am Mārgaśīrṣa." I wish to know succinctly the greatness of that month.

5-6. Who is the Lord (Presiding Deity) of that month? What is to be given as gift? How is the holy bath to be performed? What is its procedure? What should be done by men on that occasion? O Lord

1. As noted in KM (Kārttika-Māsa-Māhātmya, Ch. 1, Ftn. 1), Mārgaśīrṣa is Viṣṇu's favourite month. But unlike KM this Māhātmya deals with the various details of Viṣṇu-worship (*vide* the titles of the chapters of the Mārgaśīrṣa-Māhātmya), the story element being practically absent.

2. *Śvetadvīpa*: A mythical island in the Milky Ocean to the north of the world. It is the resting place of Mahā-Viṣṇu. (Mbh, *Śānti* 335.8-12, 336. 27-59).

of Ramā, what should be eaten? What should be spoken? What are the rites to be performed by way of worship, meditation, Mantras etc.? Speak everything to me, O Acyuta.

Śrī Bhagavān said:

7-8. Well-asked by you, O Brahmā, the benefactor of all the worlds. When the holy rite of Mārgaśīrṣa is performed every other rite (may be deemed as) performed including *Iṣṭāpūrta* etc. (i.e. sacrifices, works of public utility like building of rest houses, digging of wells and tanks). O son, if any holy rite is performed in Mārgaśīrṣa, one gets that merit which is obtained by ablutions in all the Tīrthas, and by performance of all Yajñas.

9. By listening to the greatness (of Mārgaśīrṣa), O son, that benefit is obtained which a man obtains by the gift of *Tulāpuruṣa*[1] etc.

10-11. I have never been won over by men by means of Yajñas, study of the Vedaś, charitable gifts etc., by taking bath into all the Tīrthas, by renunciation or by means of Yoga (practice). In other months I am not as easily won over as in the month of Mārgaśīrṣa by holy bath, charitable gifts, worship, meditation, vow of silence, Japa and other things. (Hereby) a secret has been revealed.

12. Thinking that it is the means of attaining me, Devas have created other Dharmas etc. and thus (the efficacy of) Mārgaśīrṣaka has been rendered a well-guarded secret by Devas, the residents of heaven.

13. Mārgaśirṣa is the month that is conducive to attain me. Holy rites should necessarily be performed in it by those people of meritorious deeds who are devoted to me.

14. Those men in the region (land) of Bhārata who do not perform holy rites in Mārgaśīrṣa should be known as sinners. They are deluded by Kali Age.

15. O dear one, in the month of Māgha, when the Sun is in Capricorn, one gets that benefit which a man obtains in the eight months.

16. In the month of Vaiśākha hundred times the merit of Māgha is obtained. Thousand times that merit is obtained when the Sun is in Libra.

17. A crore times that merit is obtained when the Sun is in Scorpio. Hence Mārgaśīrṣa is superior (to all). So I always love it.

18. If a man gets up early in the morning and duly performs the

1. *Tulāpuruṣa*:Weighing of a person (donor) against gold or precious metals etc. and distributing them to Brāhmaṇas as *Dāna*. For the procedure see MtP, Ch. 274.

holy bath according to injunctions, O my son, I am delighted with him and I give him even my own self.

19. In this regard, they cite the following anecdote. Listen to it, O son. Nanda,[1] the cowherd, was a noble soul who became very famous on the earth.

20. In his colony named Gokula there were thousands of cowherd lasses. O sinless one, their mind became attached to my form formerly.

21. I gave them the idea of taking holy bath in the month of Mārgaśīrṣa. Thereupon, holy bath was duly undertaken by them in the morning.

22. Worship was performed. *Haviṣya*[2] rice was consumed by them and they bowed down. When this procedure was followed I became delighted.

23. Verily a boon was granted to them by me as I was delighted. My own self was granted to them by me. Hence (the rites in) Mārgaśīrṣa should be performed by men in accordance with the injunctions.

CHAPTER TWO

The Application of Tripuṇḍra[3]

Brahmā said:

1. It has been said by you that Mārgaśīrṣa (rite) duly performed in accordance with the prescribed procedure is conducive to attaining you. O Lord of Devas, what is the procedure therein? O Keśava, tell me everything.

Śrī Bhagavān said:

2. The devotee should get up towards the close of the night and duly perform the daily routine of duties such as rinsing the mouth,

1. The cowherd chief who protected Kṛṣṇa in his childhood. Kṛṣṇa's childhood sports and pranks described in BhP X, Part i, took place at Nanda's place.

2. *Haviṣya*:Worthy of being oblated in a sacrifice ten materials such as rice, clarified butter etc. are enlisted as such (vide HD II,1, p. 681).

3. *Tripuṇḍra*:It is a mark on the forehead. Among Śaivites, it consists of three horizontal parallel lines of sacred ash on the forehead. Their procedure is given in HD II,i,673-74. As prescribed in the next chapter, vv 2-13, Vaiṣṇavas use Gopīcandana, clay from roots of Tulasī or Haricandana, for a vertical three-lined mark on the forehead—the whole procedure is described in this chapter.

teeth etc. He should then bow down to his preceptor and remember me without any slackness (with concentration).

3-8. He should restrain his speech and remain pure. Then he should glorify me devoutly by reciting my Thousand Names[1] (called *Viṣṇu-sahasranāma*). He should go out of the village to discharge faeces and urine duly. After cleansing the parts in the manner stipulated, he should perform the rite of *Ācamana* (sipping the water). Cleansing his teeth he should duly take his bath. Then he should take some clay from the foot of a Tulasī plant along with a few of its leaves. While plucking the leaves he should utter the *Mūlamantra—oṁ namo nārāyaṇāya* (i.e. *Oṁ. Obeisance to Nārāyaṇa*) or the Gāyatrī Mantra (RV III.62.10), O highly intelligent one. He should apply the clay all over his body reciting the Mantra and then take bath in water. He should recite the *Aghamarṣaṇa Mantra* (RV X.190). It is laid down that while taking bath, the devotee may take water and pour it over his body or he may immerse himself under water.

The learned devotee conversant with the Mantras should convert the (ordinary) water into a Tīrtha by the following Mantra. "Oṁ. Obeisance to Nārāyaṇa" is cited as the Mūla Mantra. With great purity he should at the outset perform the rite of *Ācamana* and then take up Darbha grass in his hand. All round him the clever person should make a square with sides of four Hastas each and then invoke Gaṅgā by means of these Mantras.

9. "O Jāhnavī, you are born of the feet of Viṣṇu. You are a Vaiṣṇavī (devotee of Viṣṇu). Viṣṇu is your deity. Save us from the sins committed from birth till death.

10. Vāyu (Wind-god) has said that there are thirty-five million Tīrthas in the firmament, earth and heaven. O Jāhnavī, all these are present in you.

11. Your names among the Devas are Nandinī, Nalinī, Dakṣaputrī and Vihagā. For Yogins you are Viśvagā.

12. You are Vidyādharī, Suprasannā, Loka-prasādinī, Kṣemā, Jāhnavī, Śāntā and Śāntipradāyinī."

13. At the time of bath he should recite all these names always. Gaṅgā that flows in three streams will always be present there.

14. The Mantras shall be repeated seven times. Joining the palms together and placing them over the head he should take three, four, five

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1. *Viṣṇusahasranāma*: For the list of 1000 names of Viṣṇu and its meritoriousness see Mbh, *Anuśāsana*, Ch. 149.

or seven plunges and bathe. Similarly after reciting the following Mantra he should take bath with clay in accordance with the injunctions.

15. "O Vasundharā, traversed by horses, traversed by chariots and measured by Viṣṇu[1], O clay, dispel my sin; dispel the misdeeds (done by me).

16. You were lifted up by the hundred-armed Kṛṣṇa (in the form of a Boar); obeisance to you, the source of origin of all living beings, O pious one."

17. Thus he should take bath and thereafter perform the *Ācamana* rite in accordance with the injunctions. He shall then come out of the water and wear white clothes on the bank.

18. After the *Ācamana* rite he should offer libations to Devas, Pitṛs and Sages. After squeezing out the water from the wet clothes, he should perform the *Ācamana* rite and put on washed garments.

19. O excellent Brāhmaṇa, he should take beautiful pure clay and charge it with the Mantras. Then the Vaiṣṇava should apply vertical sacred marks on the forehead and other parts of the body in the proper order and number carefully.

20. O Brāhmaṇa, a Brāhmaṇa should always have twelve Puṇḍras.[2] O son, Kṣatriyas should have four. It is prescribed (in Smṛtis) that Vaiśyas should have two Puṇḍras. It is laid down that women and Śūdras should have only one Puṇḍra.

21. The following are the parts of the body where a Brāhmaṇa should have his twelve sacred marks: forehead, belly, chest, hump of the neck, arms, ears, back, right side and lower part of the spine, and head, O sinless one.

22. A Kṣatriya should have the sacred marks on his forehead, chest and the arms; a Vaiśya on his forehead and chest and a Śūdra and women should wear the sacred mark on the forehead.

23-25. He shall have *Nyāsa*[3] rite as follows: Keśava on the forehead, Nārāyaṇa is to be meditated on the belly, Mādhava on the chest,

1. This refers to Viṣṇu's Vāmana incarnation when he measured (covered) the whole earth in one step. (Mbh, *Sabhā*, 38.29)

2. VV 20-22 prescribe the caste-wise numbering of Puṇḍra-marks and the parts of the body to be so marked.

3. *Nyāsa* is the mental assignment of the various parts of the body to one's deities. VV23-29 prescribe the caste-wise *Nyāsa* procedure. Puṇḍra is to be marked along with the *Nyāsa*.

It should be noted that there must be some gap in the Ūrdhva-Puṇḍra-mark for applying *Tilaka* therein (vide vv 30-35).

Govinda on the hump of the neck, Viṣṇu on the right side of the belly, Madhusūdana on the right arm, Trivikrama at the root of the ears. Vāmana on the left side, Śrīdhara on the left arm, Hṛṣīkeśa on the ear, Padmanābha on the back and Dāmodara on the lower spine.

26-29. With the water for washing, Vāsudeva should be installed on the head. This is to be done by a Brāhmaṇa.

Know what is to be done by a Kṣatriya. He should meditate on Keśava on his forehead and on Mādhava in the chest. O dear one, he should remember (for Nyāsa) Madhusūdana on both the arms. The procedure for a Kṣatriya has been spoken.

Listen to the duty of a Vaiśya. He should meditate on Keśava on the forehead and on Mādhava on the chest.

Women and Śūdras should remember Keśava on the forehead.

The devotee should apply the Puṇḍra marks in accordance with this procedure for propitiating me.

30. A dark-coloured *Tilaka* is said to be conducive to peace; a red one is the cause of winning over others. They say that a yellow one is conducive to prosperity and glory. A white one brings about salvation and is auspicious.

31. Those fortunate persons who are exclusively attached to Viṣṇu (or the followers of Pāñcarātra sect) and are engaged in the welfare of all the worlds should make their Puṇḍra in the shape of the foot of Hari with a gap in the middle.

32. It must leave a hole (blank space) in the middle. Indeed this is the abode of hari. Above, it is straight and gentle. It is subtle, very charming, with well-defined sides.

33. He is a base Brāhmaṇa who makes (applies) the Puṇḍra mark devoid of any gap (in the middle). For he drives me away along with Lakṣmī who reside there (in the gap of the Puṇḍra mark).

34. The base Brāhmaṇas who make the vertical Puṇḍra mark without gap within, really place (the imprint of the) the foot of a dog on their foreheads. There is no doubt about this.

35. Hence, for the achievement of *Sālokya* with Hari (residence in Hari's world) a Brāhmaṇa should always have a Puṇḍra with a gap in the middle. The Puṇḍra mark with a big gap within is very auspicious.

CHAPTER THREE

Imprinting Marks of Conch etc.

Brahmā said:

1. **Explain to me, O Keśava, how many varieties of Puṇḍra marks are there. I have great curiosity to hear about Puṇḍras.**

Śrī Bhagavān said:

2-4. **Listen, O son, I shall recount.[1] Puṇḍras are proclaimed to be of three varieties: that marked with the clay from the root of a Tulasī plant, that with Gopīcandana (yellow-coloured clay from Dvārakā) and that with Haricandana (yellow sandal). These Puṇḍras have to be marked by wise devotees.**

If a devout man takes the clay from the root of a Tulasī plant (a favourite) of Śrīkṛṣṇa and makes the vertical Puṇḍras, Hari becomes pleased with it.

I shall now speak to you the greatness of Gopīcandana.

5. **If a man takes up in his hand the clay that comes from Dvārakā and applies it on his forehead as a vertical Puṇḍra, the value of his holy rites shall enhance crore-fold.**

6. **If he fails to perform holy rites with prescribed procedure or if the Mantras are not uttered, or if he has no faith in it or the rites are not performed in time, he can still always attain the benefit of the holy rites, provided he applies Gopīcandana on his forehead.**

7-8. **If a Brāhmaṇa wears everyday a fine sacred mark of Puṇḍra on his forehead with Gopīcandana always, whether it is night or day, he attains that benefit which one obtains (by bathing) at Kurujāṅgala[2] during a solar eclipse or at Prayāga during Māgha. More than that, he dwells in my house like a Deva.**

O Four-faced One, accompanied by Śrī I always stay in the form of the Slayer of Kaṁsa in that house in which there is Gopīcandana, provided the man (the house-owner) devoutly applies it on his forehead.

9. **If a man always wears on his forehead the clay which originates from Dvārakā, the clay that is very sacred and a dispeller of all**

1. VV 2-13 describe the materials used for Puṇḍra marks and the efficacy of each material.

2. Kurujāṅgala:A forest-country situated in Sirhind NW of Hastināpura. At the time of Mbh Hastināpura was its capital (Mbh. *Ādi* 94.49 also 108.1-16).

the sins of Kali, and is inspired by my Mantra, Yama shall not see him even if he is full of sins.

10. Dear son, even if one happens to be a slayer of cows and children or even of Brāhmaṇas, he goes to the world that belongs to me, the Lord of Kamalā, if at the time of death he has Gopīcandana (marks) on his forehead, arms, chest and head.

11. Evil spirits do not harass (him) nor groups of Rākṣasas, Yakṣas, Piśācas, serpents and leaders of ghosts and goblins inflict pains, O dear son, on that person on whose forehead there is Gopīcandana mark. By my power he is not affected by them.

12. If the vertical Puṇḍra, straight and gentle, is visible in the forehead of any person, he is undoubtedly a pure soul. Even if he is a Cāṇḍāla, he is worthy of being honoured.

13. A sinful person devoid of purity may have performed holy rites without taking bath. But, should he have contact with Gopīcandana, he becomes sanctified instantaneously.

14. A man may be unclean. He may be guilty of misconduct. He may have committed many great sins. But if he is marked with the vertical Ūrdhvapuṇḍra[1] mark, he shall always be pure and clean.

15. For the purpose of pleasing me, or for the sake of auspiciousness or for protecting himself, O Four-faced One, my devotee should always have Ūrdhvapuṇḍra that is destructive of worldly existence, at the time of my worship or Homa, whether it is performed in the evening or in the morning. He should have purity and concentration of mind.

16. If a man having the vertical Puṇḍra mark dies anywhere, he shall go to my world riding in an aerical chariot. Even if he is a Cāṇḍāla, he is honoured in my world.

17. When a man having the Ūrdhvapuṇḍra mark takes the food offered by any person, I redeem twenty generations of that person from hell.

18. O highly fortunate one, a person who looks into a mirror or into water and carefully applies the Ūrdhvapuṇḍra mark, attains the greatest goal.

19. (The benefit accruing from the application of Gopīcandana with different fingers.) The ring finger is said to be the bestower of peace. The middle finger shall be conducive to longevity. The thumb is said to be the bestower of nourishment. The index finger yields salvation.

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1. VV 14-22 describe importance of Ūrdhva-Puṇḍra mark.

20. If a person gives a piece of Gopīcandana to a Vaiṣṇava, one hundred and eight generations of his family are redeemed thereby.

21. Yajña, charitable gift, penance, Homa, study of the Vedas, water libations to the manes—all these become fruitless, if performed without the vertical Puṇḍra mark.

22. If the body of a man is devoid of Ūrdhvapuṇḍra, I shall never see that face as it is like a cremation ground.

23. One should necessarily apply the Ūrdhvapuṇḍra mark . Besides it, he should have the imprints of (incarnations of Viṣṇu such as) fish, tortoise etc. for the sake of winning the favour of Viṣṇu. It is highly pleasing to Mahāviṣṇu.[1]

24-25. If at the time of Kali Age a man takes the clay originating from my city (Dvārakā) and makes imprints of fish and tortoise (on his own person), know, O most excellent one among Devas, that I have entered his body. There is no difference between him and me. This must be done by one who wishes for welfare.

26. If the symbols of my incarnations are visible on a man's body, he should not be deemed a man. Certainly he (his body) is my body.

27. The sin of that embodied soul becomes a meritorious deed in Kali Age, on whose body my weapons are seen drawn.

28. He who is marked by both the symbols, i.e. the symbol of fish and that of tortoise, has my splendour infused into his body.

29. He by whom the conch, the lotus, the iron club, the discus, the fish and the tortoise—all these are marked on the body, increases (his) merits and destroys the sins acquired in the course of hundreds of births.

30. What (harm) can Yama do to that person whose body is always marked with Nārāyaṇa's weapons, even if he has committed crores of sins?

31. If the symbol of the conch is imprinted on the right arm everyday, he attains that benefit which is obtained by one who resides in the holy place Śaṅkhoddhāra[2] in the course of a crore of births. He attains the benefit that has been mentioned.

1. The devotee should identify his person with that of the Lord. Hence imprints (with Gopīcandana etc.) of Viṣṇu's weapons, incarnations etc. are recommended in vv 23-66. The special importance of Sudarśana (discus) print is given in vv 55-61.

2. The island Bati (Byet) on the extremity of the gulf of Cutch in Gujarat. Viṣṇu is said to have destroyed demon Śaṅkhāsura here. (De 177)

32. If the symbol of the lotus is imprinted above that of the conch, one attains crore times the benefit that has been proclaimed for visiting the Lotus-eyed Lord at Puṣkara.

33. Gadādhara (Viṣṇu) grants everyday the merit of (visiting the sacred place) Gayā, to that person on whose left arm the (form of the) iron club is seen imprinted in Kali Age.

34. If the (symbols of) iron club and the discus are imprinted, the benefit is the same as that which is mentioned for visiting the Liṅga near Cakrasvāmin in Ānandapura (Vadnagar in North Gujarat).

35. If the body of anyone is marked with my weapons with Gopīcandana clay, what will he do by going to Prayāga and other Tīrthaṡ?

36. Whenever a body marked with the conch etc. is seen, I get delighted and I burn his sins.

37. If the imprints of the conch, discus, iron-club and lotus are present on anyone's body every day and night, he is identical with me.

38. In Kali Age, if anyone imprints himself with the weapons of Nārāyaṇa and then performs any meritorious deed, it becomes equal to Meru; there is no doubt about it.

39. If anyone is marked with the weapon Śaṅkha, O son, and he performs a Śrāddha, what is offered to the Pitṛs has everlating benefit. Even if the Śrāddha is deficient in its procedure, it becomes perfect and complete.

40. Just as fire burns wood on being strongly impelled by the wind, so also on seeing sins my weapons burn them.

41-42. Especially in Kali Age, he who wears a gold or silver seal inscribed with my name of eight syllables (*viz. oṁ nārāyaṇāya namaḥ*) and with conch and my other weapons, should be known as one equal to (my ideal devotee) Prahlāda. Otherwise, he is not dear unto me.

43-44. A Brāhmaṇa who has the seal of Nārāyaṇa, whose body is marked with conch etc., who has a garland made of Dhātrī fruits or Tulasī twigs, who (has recited) the twelve-syllabled mantra and on whose body the weapons have been imprinted is equal to me. He is a Vaiṣṇava.

45. If a Brāhmaṇa whose body is imprinted with the conch takes food in any person's house, O my son, I too eat his food along with (his) Pitṛs.

46. If on seeing a person marked with Kṛṣṇa's weapons one does not honour him, his merit acquired in the course of twelve years will go over to Bāṣkaleya (descendant of demon Bāṣkala).

47. If a person marked with Kṛṣṇa's weapons dies in a cremation

ground, O bestower of honour, his goal is the same as is proclaimed for one who dies in Prayāga.

48. In Kali Age, if anyone's body is always embellished with my weapons, the Devas including Vāsava resort to him.

49. If a man is marked with my weapons and performs my worship, I always dispel his thousands of offences.

50. If a man makes a wooden seal well-marked with my weapons and puts imprints thereof on his body, there is no other Vaiṣṇava who is equal to him.

51. If a man has in his hand a metal seal marked with the eight-syllabled name (Mantra) along with (the imprints of) conch, lotus, etc., he is worshipped by Suras and Asuras.

52-53. The seal of Nārāyaṇa was formerly worn in his hand by Prahlāda, (it was also worn) by Vibhīṣaṇa, Bali, Dhruva, Śuka, Māndhātṛ, Ambarīṣa and by Mārkaṇḍeya and other Brāhmaṇas. O bestower of honour, after making their bodies imprinted by the conch and other weapons they have propitiated me and the great desired reward has been obtained by them.

54. I stay in that body of a person which is imprinted with Gopī-candana-clay and is marked with conch, discus, lotus, etc.

55-59. The intelligent devotee should get a discus made of gold, silver, copper, bell metal or iron and wear it. It must have twelve spokes and six angles. It must be embellished with three folds. The clever devotee should make the Sudarśana discus like this. The conch, the discus and the iron-club are to be worn like the sacred thread always, particularly by Brāhmaṇas and still more particularly by Vaiṣṇavas.

As is the sacred thread or the tuft, so is the discus along with the imprints. (Everything done by) a Brāhmaṇa devoid of the discus and the imprints shall be futile.

The Vedas ever declare that the body marked with my discus is sanctified. *Havya* and *Kavya* should be offered to one who is marked with the discus. The coat of mail marked with my discus cannot be broken or pierced by Devas or Dānavas. He is invisible to all living beings, enemies and Rākṣasas too.

60. If the coat of mail (or amulet) marked with my discus is present on anyone's body, no inauspicious thing will occur to him or to his house, sons and others.

61. Those who know the Vedas know that a Brāhmaṇa should wear Sudarśana on his right arm and the conch on the left arm.

62-66. The different weapons shall be separately consecrated with their respective Mantras and installed; the iron club is to be worn (imprinted) on the forehead; the bow and the arrows on the head; the Nandaka (sword) in the middle of the chest; the conch and the discus on the two arms. One should always wear the discus etc. After wearing them the excellent Brāhmaṇa shall say thus: "Whatever sons, friends, wife, etc. I possess is dedicated to the satisfaction of Viṣṇu along with my body." Thereafter he should live the whole of his life sincerely doing the duties of his own (caste and stage). He will always obtain his desired things through my unswerving devotion.

67. One should look at the sun after seeing faces of base men who censure a person on seeing him marked with the conch and discus. He must also utter the name of Śrīkṛṣṇa. Otherwise he does not become pure.

CHAPTER FOUR

Worshipping the Conch

Brahmā said:

1. If one marks oneself with red hot discus and gets initiated, O Keśava, tell me, of what benefit are garlands of seeds of lotus and of Tulasī twigs.

Śrī Bhagavān said:

2. The Brāhmaṇa who wears the garland of Tulasī twigs undoubtedly attains me, even if he is unclean and devoid of good conduct.[1]

3. The man on whose body the garland made of Dhātrī fruits or Tulasī twigs is visible is indeed a Bhāgavata (devotee of the Lord).

4. He who wears the garland of Tulasī leaves particularly the ones taken off from me (i.e. my idol), is worthy of being bowed to even by the heaven-dwellers.

5. The garland made of Tulasī leaves or of Dhātrī fruits grants salvation even to sinners. All the more so in the case of my devotees who serve me.

6. He who wears the garland of Tulasī leaves (worn by me) attains

1. VV 2-16 describe the efficacy of wearing garlands of Tulasī and Dhātrī.

the merit of ten horse-sacrifices for every leaf (of it).

7. If a man wears a garland of Tulasī twigs, O dear one, I grant him the merit arising from (visit to the holy town) Dvārakā everyday.

8. After dedicating it to me with devotion, if a man wears a garland of Tulasī twigs devoutly, he has no sin at all.

9. I am always pleased with him who wears a garland of Tulasī twigs. He is (as dear to me) as (my) excellent vital air. It is not necessary that he should perform any expiatory rite. There is nothing unclean or polluted in his body.

10. He in whose body Tulasī twigs form ornaments for the head, arms and hands, is dear to me.

11. One should do meritorious acts after adorning oneself with a garland of Tulasī twigs. The auspicious rites of Manes and Devas (performed by him) shall have crores of times the benefit.

12. On seeing a garland of Tulasī twigs, the messengers of Yama disappear from far like a leaf shaken off by wind.

13. In Kali Yuga, sin does not contaminate that house where a Tulasī twig or leaf, whether dry or green, is present.

14. If anyone, embellished with a garland of Tulasī twigs, moves about on the earth, he will not see bad dreams or ill omens or any danger from enemies.

15. If rationalists or heretics with sinful intentions refuse to wear a garland (of Tulasī), they will never return from hell. They will be burnt by the fire of my anger.

16. Hence a garland made of Tulasī twigs, seeds of lotus or Dhātrī fruits should be worn carefully and devoutly. It bestows excellent merit.

17. Hence a devotee should have the Ūrdhvapuṇḍra, and the imprints of conch etc. With Darbha grass in his hands he should remember me and perform Sandhyā prayers etc. at the root of a Tulasī plant.

18. A devotee who has concluded the Sandhyā prayers etc., should worship me thereafter. If the preceptor is present there, he should first go to him and bow down to him.

19. After giving him something as present, he should joyfully prostrate himself before him. After performing the *Ācamana* rite, he should enter the pavilion of worship.

20. After occupying a beautiful seat with deerskin or Kuśa grass spread over it, he should sit properly in the posture of "Lotus".[1] He should perform the rite of *Bhūtaśuddhi* (purification of the elements).

1. VV 20 ff describe the procedure of Viṣṇu-worship which is strongly influenced by *Āgamas*.

21. Reciting the Mantra and subduing the sense-organs, he should perform three Prāṇāyāmas (holding the breath) facing the North. By means of the sun of perfect knowledge he should cause the excellent lotus of the heart to bloom.

22. On the pericarp (of that lotus) he should fix the Sun, the Moon and Fire. The devotee of Viṣṇu should conceive the three in that which consists of three (petals). Above them he should place a pedestal studded with different kinds of jewels.

23. On it he should fix the lotus of eight petals each representing the eight *Aiśvaryas*[1] (super-human excellences) of the Lord. The Lotus consists of the (eight) syllables of the Mantra (*oṁ na mo nā rā ya ṇā ya*). The lotus is soft, glossy and has the splendour of the morning sun.

24-28. Then he should meditate on me, the Lord (comfortably) seated thereon, having four arms, holding the great lotus, conch, discus and iron club. The Lord resembles a crore of moons. His eyes are as large as the petals of a lotus. He is characterized by all good features (or symbols on the body). Śrīvatsa and Kaustubha shine on his chest. He is dressed in yellow robes. He is endowed with wonderful ornaments. He is embellished with divine decorative things. His body is smeared with divine sandal-paste. He appears splendid with divine flowers. He is adorned with garlands of tender leaves of Tulasī and of sylvan flowers. He shines with the splendour resembling that of a crore of rising suns. His body is embraced by the divine Goddess Śrī who has all good characteristics. He is auspicious. After meditating thus, he should recite the Mantra with great concentration and purity.

29-32. He should repeat the Mantra a thousand or hundred times, according to his capacity. After doing the worship mentally, he should do it in accordance with the injunctions.

As the convention[2] requires, he should place the conch in front of me. The vessel filled with scented water, Dūrvā sprouts and flowers should be placed by the preceptors to the right of sandalpaste and flowers. The waterpot should be placed on the left side. It should be sanctified with a cloth and be well-scented. The bell should be placed in front of me and the lamps be placed in the (different) directions. The

1. The *siddhis* in Yogaśāstra such as *aṇimā, laghimā* etc. are named here *aiśvaryas*. MW 234C gives another list of such supreme powers such as of vision, audition, cogitation, discrimination, omniscience and active powers like swiftness of thought, power of assuming forms at will, faculty of expatiation.

2. VV 29-38 give the details of different *Upacāras* in Viṣṇu worship followed by *Nyāsa* (vv 39-40) and the worship of the conch Pāñcajanya (vv 41-46).

other materials too should be placed in their proper positions.

33. Four vessels should be placed in front of me for keeping *Arghya, Pādya, Ācamanīya* and *Madhuparka.*

34. O Four-faced One, white mustard, raw rice grains, flowers, Kuśa grass, gingelly seeds, sandalpaste, fruits and barley grains should be kept in the vessel for *Arghya.*

35. For my satisfaction, the preceptor should place Dūrvā grass, Viṣṇupadī (Gaṅgā water), Śyāmā and lotus in the vessel for *Pādya*, O son.

36. In the vessel for *Ācamanīya* he should, with great faith, place, O son, *Kaṅkola*, clove and nutmeg.

37. The worshipper should, with great faith, place cow's milk, curds, honey, ghee and sugar-candy in the vessel for *Madhuparka.*

38. When the above-mentioned articles are not available, an expert in the procedure of worship should always place leaves and flowers with the idea that they are the articles required (in the procedure).

39. Thereafter, he should perform the Nyāsa of the hand as well as that of the limbs. He should, in accordance with the convention, perform the Nyāsa rite on five or six limbs.

40. I should be remembered. The devotee should consider himself on a par with me. At the beginning of the worship, O Four-faced One, the man should recite the auspicious Mantras.

41. Then he should worship Pāñcajanya, my favourite conch. O dear one, by worshipping it he causes great delight unto me. During the worship of the Śaṅkha, O dear one, he should recite the following mantras:

42. "O Pāñcajanya, formerly you were born of the ocean. You have been held by Viṣṇu in his hand. You have been made by all the Devas. Obeisance to you.

43. On account of your sound, clouds and Suras and Asuras become afraid. Obeisance to you, O Pāñcajanya of the bright lustre of ten thousand moons.

44. The foetuses of the womenfolk of demons perish in thousands in the nether worlds, O Pāñcajanya. Obeisance to you."

45. Merely at the sight of the conch sins perish like mist disappearing at sunrise. All the more so when it is touched.

46. If the Vaiṣṇava devotee bows to and holds in his hand the conch and bathes me repeating these Mantras devoutly, his merit is infinite.

47. Thereafter he should anoint the idol with well-perfumed oil

and rubbing and cleansing etc. should be done by means of sandalpaste and musk.

48. I should be bathed with the perfumed water of great holiness along with mantras. Then, O dear one, he should offer *Arghya, Pādya, Ācamanīyaka* and *Madhuparka*. Thereafter, he should offer all the requisite services.

49-50. The *Pīṭha* (Pedestal) should be adorned with divine garments and ornaments in accordance with the injunctions. Then he should worship the pedestal with flowers.

After placing the Lord there, garments, ornaments, scents etc. should be devotedly offered to me. Then he should duly offer *Naivedya* of various kinds along with milk-pudding and sweet pie. It should be offered devoutly along with camphor and betel leaves.

51-52. He should then earnestly offer fragrant flowers with devotion. Incense with ten substances and lamps with eight charming ancillaries should be offered. He should then circumambulate and bow down. Then with great respect he should eulogize with hymns. After laying down the Lord in the cot, he should offer the auspicious *Arghya*.

CHAPTER FIVE

The Fruit of Conch Worship

Brahmā said:

1. O Acyuta, the unconquered one, tell me what fruit is obtained by bathing Hari with Pañcāmṛta and what by bathing with conch-water?

Śrī Bhagavān said:

2. If men bathe me by pouring milk over the head, it is declared that for every drop the merit is that of a hundred horse-sacrifices.

3. If the bathing is done with curds, the fruit is ten times that of the milk-bath; that with ghee has ten times this; that with honey has ten times this still. If the bathing is done with sugar[1] the fruit is still better. Water mixed with sweet-smelling flowers accompanied by Mantra recitation is praised as superior to all.

1. VV 2-3 describe *Pañcāmṛta-snāna*. When separate ingredients are used, 'Sugar-bath' is the application of sugar to the idol. When the mixture of these ingredients is used, the liquefied sugar in that mixture can be used for 'bathing'.

4. Bathing me with cow's milk on the twelfth and fifteenth (lunar) days is destructive of great sins, O tiger among Devas.

5. Just as the products, curds etc., develop from milk, so also all the remaining desires (are realized) through bathing me with milk.

6. Good fortune and felicity are obtained by bathing me with milk; sweet food by means of curds. One who bathes me with ghee shall go to my region (Vaikuṇṭha).

7. He who bathes me with honey and sugar in the month of Mārgaśīrṣaka (goes to heaven and) coming back from heaven, he is born as a king in this world.

8. He who bathes me in milk in the month of Mārgaśīrṣaka obtains on the earth a kingdom full of elephants, horses and chariots.

9. In the heavenly world, he conquers the Moon, Indra, Rudra and the Wind-god. O son, bathing (me) with milk in the month of Mārgaśīrṣa is most excellent.

10. The efficacy of bathing with milk gives splendour. It causes increase in nourishment. All ill-luck perishes by bathing me in milk, O my son.

11. He who bathes me in Pañcāmṛta in Mārgaśīrṣa never falls into a pitiable condition to be bewailed by kinsmen on the earth, O bestower of honour.

12. The man who takes the milk of a tawny-coloured cow and bathes me, obtains the fruit of the gift of a hundred tawny-coloured cows.

13. If a preceptor takes Tīrtha-water in a conch[1] and bathes me in the month of Mārgaśīrṣa even with a drop of it, he will redeem his family.

14. The men who takes the milk of a tawny-coloured cow in a conch and bathes me devoutly, obtains the fruit of (visiting) all the Tīrthas.

15. The man who takes water along with raw rice grains and Kuśa grass in a conch and bathes me (with it) in the month of Mārgaśīrṣa, shall obtain the fruit of (visiting) all the Tīrthas.

16. He who devoutly bathes the Lord with eight conchfuls of water in Mārgaśīrṣa becomes an excellent man. He is honoured in my world.

17. He who bathes me with sixteen conchfuls of water, O my son, shall be liberated from sins. He is honoured in the heavenly world for a very long time.

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1. VV 13-25 describe efficacy of the use of conch in Pañcāmṛta-snāna.

18. He who bathes me with twenty-four conchfuls of water dwells in the world of Indra for a long time and is born on the earth as a king.

19. He who bathes me with one hundred and eight conchfuls of water in the month of Mārgaśīrṣa attains the fruit in the form of (a) gold (coin?) for every conchful (of water).

20. If a devout man blows a conch and bathes me in Mārgaśīrṣa, his Pitṛs pass on towards heaven.

21. He who bathes me with a thousand and eight conchfuls of water, shall become a Gaṇa (attendant) and attain salvation until all the living beings are annihilated.

22. O most excellent one among Suras, he who bathes me with conch everyday obtains the fruit of bathing in Gaṅgā and is always joyful like Devas.

23. O son, he who takes water in a conch, utters "Obeisance to Nārāyaṇa" and bathes me, is absolved of all sins.

24. He who takes the water with which my feet are washed, puts it in a conch and gives it to noble-souled Vaiṣṇavas after mixing it with gingelly seeds shall obtain the fruit of Cāndrāyaṇa.

25. Whether the water is taken from a river or a lake, or a well or a tank etc., if it is kept in a conch it becomes Gaṅgā water.

26. The Vaiṣṇava who takes my *Pādāmbu* (water with which Viṣṇu's feet are washed) in a conch and carries it on his head always, is a sage and the most excellent one among those who blaze (i.e. perform penance).

27. At my behest, O son, all the *Tīrthas* in the three worlds reside within the conch. Hence Śaṅkha is remembered as the most excellent.

28. The Vaiṣṇava who holds a conch filled with water in his hand and bathes me repeating these Mantras in the month of Mārgaśīrṣa causes delight to me:

29. "In the first portion of the conch the Moon (Candra) is the deity. In the belly Varuṇa is the deity. On the back it is Prajāpati and at the tip Gaṅgā and Sarasvatī."

30. Their names should be uttered and I must be bathed. Suras are not competent to reckon his merits.

31. In front of me, O Lord of Devas, let the conch[1] be worshipped along with flowers, water and raw rice-grains. Its splendour is unlimited and on all sides.

1. VV 31ff describe the importance of conch-worship and its efficacy in dispelling evil.

32. One should worship me after filling a conch fully with unguents. Thereby my pleasure becomes very great extending to a hundred years.

33. If one takes drinking water in a conch with flowers, water and raw rice-grains and offers me *Arghya*, his merit is infinite.

34. If a man circumambulates taking *Arghya* in a conch himself, it is as good as though the earth consisting of the seven continents is circumambulated.

35. If a man whirls the conch (with water) above my head and sprinkles the temple with the water from the conch, there shall be nothing inauspicious in his house.

36. If the *Pādodaka* (the water with which the feet are washed) is taken in a conch and applied to the head, neither anxieties nor exhaustion nor the fear of hell shall torment him.

37-38. On seeing the conch-water on the head, evil spirits, Rākṣasas, Kūṣmāṇḍa devils, ghosts, serpents and Dānavas run towards all the ten quarters.

He who devoutly bathes me to the accompaniment of the sounds of musical instruments and the loud sounds of auspicious songs, shall become a man liberated while living.

CHAPTER SIX

The Fruit of Offering Tulasī Twigs and Sandalpaste

Brahmā said:

1. O Lord, tell me everything accurately. O Lord Acyuta, what is the efficacy of sounding a bell[1] and of (applying) sandalpaste? Tell me the fruit thereof.

Śrī Bhagavān said:

2. O Lord of Devas, listen to the fruit obtained by that person who sounds a bell at the time of performing ablution and worship.

1. VV 1-30 describe the importance of bells in Viṣṇu worship, of which they form an integral part. Bells are embellished with the figures of Viṣṇu's weapons like Sudarśana and Garuḍa, each having some specific efficacy and as such deserving worship in their own capacity.

3. For thousands of crores of years, for hundreds of crores of years, he resides in my world, attended upon by bevies of celestial damsels.

4. Since bell is identical with all the musical instruments and all Devas, one should make all efforts to sound a bell.

5. Bell that is identical with all the musical instruments, is always dear to me. By sounding it one acquires the merit arising from (performing) hundreds of crores of Yajñas.

6-8. Bells must be sounded always especially at the time of worship. O son, by the sound of bells, I become delighted always for hundreds and thousands of Manvantaras.

O Lord of Devas, my worship bestows salvation on men always, if it is accompanied by the sounds of Bherī drums and conch, together with bells, and of Mṛdaṅga and conchs along with the sound of Oṁkāra (*Praṇava*).

9. Where a sounding bell stands in front of me, where it is worshipped by Vaiṣṇavas, O son, know me to be there.

10. I dispel the sin of that person who fixes a bell marked by the figure of Vainateya (Garuḍa) or the discus Sudarśana.

11. If anyone rings a bell at the time of my worship, his sins perish, though they may have been acquired in the course of hundreds of births.

12. At the time of (my) sleep one should devoutly ring a bell to accompany my worship. The fruit is crores of times more.

13-14. If devotees worship me, the Lord of Devas seated on Garuḍa, holding a conch, a lotus and an iron club as well as a discus and accompanied by Śrī, what will they do with Tīrthas, visiting (other) deities, (performance of) Yajñas, holy rites, (donating) charitable gifts and observance of fasts? (They are not necessary.)

15. Those who install my Nārāyaṇa idol seated on Garuḍa in Kali Age, go to my region and stay there for a crore of Kalpas.

16. If anyone installs that idol in front of me, or in a palace or in a house, thousands of crores of Tīrthas and deities stand there.

17. He who is blessed and worships my form riding on Garuḍa on the eleventh day and at night sings songs and performs dance with respectful regard, shall redeem his manes from hell.

18-22. Again I shall recount the (the greatness of a) bell. Listen, O my son.

Where a bell with my name inscribed therein is kept in front, and where the idol of Viṣṇu is worshipped, know, O my son, that I am present there.

He who sounds a bell with the Garuḍa symbol engraved therein at the time of (burning) incense, waving of lights, ablution, worship or application of unguents in front of me, shall attain the merit, O dear one, of ten thousand sacrifices, donation of ten thousand cows (as a religious gift) and a hundred observances of Cāndrāyaṇa for each of those rites.

Even if the worship does not conform to the procedural injunctions, it shall be fruitful to those men. Delighted with the sound of the bell, I grant them my own region.

23. If the bell that is marked with Garuḍa and the discus is sounded, it destroys the fear of crores of births.

24. Everyday, when I see a bell marked with Garuḍa, O Lord of Devas, I become joyful like a poor man who gets wealth.

25. If anyone fixes on top of the pole holding a bell an excellent discus or my favourite Garuḍa, all the three worlds have been (as if) fixed by him.

26. A man may be contaminated by crores of sins; but, if at the time of death he hears the sound of a bell (imprinted) with discus, the servants of Yama are frustrated.

27. O son, all the defects and sins perish by the sound of a bell. Devas, Rudras and Pitṛs all become gay celebrating a festival as it were.

28. Even if Garuḍa and discus (symbols) are not present, I grant my favour to the devotees on account of the sound of a bell. There is no doubt about it.

29. If there is a bell fitted (imprinted) with Garuḍa, there is no fear of serpents, or fire or lightning in that house.

30. If there is no bell in anyone's house nor conch in front of me, how can he be known as a devotee of the Lord? How can he be (my) favourite?

31. O son, I shall recount to you the efficacy of sandalpaste. When it is prepared, I become extremely delighted. There is no doubt about it.

32-36a. An offering unto me along with sandalpaste, flowers. camphor, agallochum, musk, nutmeg and Tulasī causes great happiness unto me.[1]

The excellent man who always offers to me twigs of Tulasī plant, stays in heaven for infinite number of Yugas.

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1. VV 32ff describe the sanctity of Tulasī twigs or leaves and sandalpaste, but it is the Tulasī plant which is most appreciated by Viṣṇu.

If in Kali anyone devoutly offers Tulasī and sandalpaste to Mahāviṣṇu and worships him with flowers of Mālatī (jasmine), he will never suck breasts (of any mother) again (i.e. is liberated).

If anyone offers me sandalpaste along with (paste of) Tulasī twigs, I burn all his sins committed in the course of hundreds of previous births.

36b-37. Tulasī twigs and sandalpaste are always liked by all Devas and by Pitṛs in particular.

38. As long as Tulasī twigs and sandalpaste are not offered to me, Śrīkhaṇḍa, sandal and black agallochum can be considered excellent.

39. The fragrance of musk and sweet smell of camphor (are excellent), so long as the Tulasī twigs and sandalpaste are not offered to me.

40. Those who offer me Tulasī twigs and sandapaste in Kaliyuga in the splendid month of Mārgaśīrṣa, have their desires accomplished and are blessed. There is no doubt about it.

41. If anyone professes to be a devotee of the Lord in Kali but does not offer Tulasī and sandalpaste in the month of Mārgaśīrṣa, he is not a real Bhāgavata (devotee of the Lord).

42. If anyone applies the paste of saffron, agallochum and sandal on my body in the month of Mārgaśīrṣa, he shall stay in heaven for a crore of Kalpas.

43. The devotee should apply sandalpaste mixed with camphor and agallochum. Musk in particular is always my favourite.

44. If anyone takes sandalpaste in a conch and applies it over my body in the month of Mārgaśīrṣa, I am delighted with him for a hundred years.

45. He who serves me devoutly with Tulasī leaves and emblic myrobalan always during Mārgaśīrṣa, obtains his desired objective.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Superiority of Jāti Flower[1]

Brahmā said:

1. O Lord of Devas, recount the efficacy of the different varieties of flowers and the respective benefits obtained by men (through them).

Śrī Bhagavān said:

2. Listen, O my son. I shall recount the efficacy of flowers as well as the names of flowers which undoubtedly give me great delight.

3-5. They are Mallikā, Mālatī, Yūthikā and Atimuktakā (all varieties of Jasmine), Pāṭala (Trumpet flower), Karavīra (Oleander), Jayantī (*Seshania aegyptiace*), Vijayā (a variety of the former) (*Terminalia chebula*), Kubjaka Stabaka (*Trapa bispinosa*), Karṇikāra (*Cathartocarpus fistula*), Kuraṇṭaka (Yellow Amaranth), Campaka (*Michelia campaka*), Cātaka (?), Kunda (Jasmine), Bāṇa (*Saccharum sara)*, Karcūra (Turmeric mallika) (*Jasminum zambae*), Aśoka, Tilaka (*Clerodendrum phlomoides*) and Aparayūthikā (a variety of Jasmine). These flowers are auspicious in my worship, O son.

6. The following cause immediate pleasure to me: Ketakī flowers and leaves (*Pandanus odoratissimus)*, Bhṛṅgarāja and Tulasī leaves and flowers.

7. Lotuses growing in water, red and blue lilies and white lily—all these are my great favourites in the month of Mārgaśīrṣa.

8. Only those flowers which have good colour, taste and fragrance are excellent (for me), O my son.

9. Those without fragrance are also considered by me (tolerably) good. Other fragrant flowers except Ketakī (are also good).

10-11. Bāṇa, Campaka, Aśoka, Karavīra, Yūthikā, Pāribhadra (*Erythena fulgens*), Pāṭalā, Bakula (*Mimusops elengi*), Giriśālinī, Bilva leaves, Śamī leaves, Bhṛṅgarāja leaves, Tamāla and Āmalakī leaves (*Emblic myrobalan*)—all these are excellent for my worship, O son.

1. BhP and manuals on the procedure of worship like *Pūjā-Prakāśa* regard *Puṣpa* or offering of flowers and leaves of sacred plants like Tulasī as *sine qua non* of the worship of the deity. As our Text states (7.33) 'being propitiated with flowers, the deity grants wealth, sons and all desires.'

Though the title of the chapter proposes to emphasize the importance of Jāti flowers (*Jasminum grandiflorum*), the author recommends a rich variety of flowers (and leaves) liked by Viṣṇu (vv 3-13).

12. I should be worshipped with forest flowers or leaves from mountains. They should not be stale (i.e. much time should not have elapsed after plucking). They must not have holes in them. No insect should stick to them. Before worship they must be sprinkled with water.

13. I can be worshipped with flowers from parks and gardens too. If I am worshipped with flowers of excellent quality, the merit shall be greater.

14. By offering flowers in the month of Mārgaśīrṣa, a man obtains that merit which people get by giving ten gold pieces to a deserving person endowed with good conduct, penance and mastery over the Vedas.

15. If a single Droṇa flower (probably of *Leucas linifolia*) is offered to me, one gets more than the merit obtained by giving ten gold pieces, O son.[1]

16-19. Know from me the difference between flower and flower. Khādira (*Acacia catechu*) is better than thousands of Droṇa flowers. Śamī flower is better than a thousand Khādira flowers. Bilva flower is better than thousands of Śamī flowers. Baka flower (*Sesbana grandiflora*?) is better than thousands of Bilva flowers. Nandyāvarta is better than thousands of Baka flowers. Karavīra (oleander) is better than a thousand Nandyāvarta flowers.

20-24. Śveta flower (white bignonia? MW) is better than a thousand Karavīra flowers. Palāśa flower is better than a thousand Śveta flowers. Kuśa flower is better than a thousand Palāśa flowers. Vanamālā (wild Jasmine?) is better than a thousand Kuśa flowers, Caṁpaka is better than a thousand Vanamālā flowers. Aśoka flower is better than a hundred Caṁpaka flowers. Śevantī flower is better than a thousand Aśoka flowers. Kujaka flower is better than a thousand Śevantī flowers. Mālatī flower (Jasmine) is better than a thousand Kuja flowers. Sandhyā flower (*Jasminum grandiflorum*) is better than a thousand Mālatī flowers.

25-28. Trisandhyā flower (*Hibiscus rosa sinensis*) is better than a thousand Sandhyā flowers. Trisandhyā Śveta flower is better than a thousand Trisandhyā red flowers. Kunda flower (*Jasmine, Jasminum multiflorum*) is better than a thousand Trisandhyā Śveta flowers. Jāti flower (*Jasminum grandiflorum*) is better than a thousand Kunda flowers.

1. VV 15-28 give the gradation of flowers in importance as liked by Viṣṇu. Though these are said to be pleasing to Viṣṇu in the month of Mārgaśīrṣa, works on *Pūjā* recommend them in other months as well.

Jāti flower is better than all other flowers. Listen to the merit of the man who duly offers to me a very splendid garland having a thousand Jāti flowers.

29-33. He lives in my city thousands of crores of Kalpas and hundreds of crores of Kalpas. He will have the power and valour equal to that of mine. If the flowers are excellent for my worship, their leaves too are good. If they are not available, the fruits (can be used). By worshipping me with these flowers, leaves, and fruits one obtains the benefit of offering ten gold pieces. If people worship me in the Mārgaśīrṣa month with these flower varieties, I grant them devotion on being pleased. There is no doubt about it. Propitiated by these flowers, O Lord of Devas, I grant them wealth, sons, wives, and whatever they may desire.

CHAPTER EIGHT

The Greatness of Tulasī

Brahmā said:

1. O Lord, describe the greatness of the glorious Tulasī[1] accurately, whose mere presence makes you very much happy.

Śrī Bhagavān said:

2. Jewels, gold-flowers and pearls (when offered) do not give even a sixteenth part of the merit that the offer of a Tulasī leaf gives.

3. One who worships me with Tulasī sprouts does not enter the womb (a new birth). He attains salvation.

4. One should grow Tulasī and worship me with its leaves. He shall rejoice in heaven as well as in my abode in Śveta Dvīpa.

5. If a man worships me at least once with the pure, fragrant and unbroken leaves of the glorious Tulasī, Yama wipes off the sin of that man which he sees written in his record.

6. If people do not gather together Tulasī leaves for the sake of my worship, fie upon their youth, life, wealth and progeny! Their

1. Tulasī (Basil plant) is the special favourite with god Viṣṇu. The glorification of Tulasī in Kārttika-Māhātmya (KM) Ch. 8 and the legend of Jalandhara and Viṣṇu's illicit love to his wife Vṛndā (KM Chs. 14-23) explain Viṣṇu's special attachment to Tulasī. VV 2-20 glorify Tulasī implying that it is liked by Viṣṇu both in Kārttika and Mārgaśīrṣa.

happiness is not seen here and hereafter.

7. By seeing my idol worshipped with a mass of Tulasī leaves in the month of Mārgaśīrṣa, one is rid of the sin of Brāhmaṇa-slaughter.

8. If anyone always worships me, the Lord of Ramā, with Tulasī, his major sins perish. What to say of minor sins!

9. A flower is to be discarded if a long time has passed after plucking it. Water should be discarded if it is long since drawn (from a well etc.). A Tulasī leaf need not be discarded at all (even if stale). Gaṅgā water need not be discarded at all.

10. As long as the holy Tulasī, my favourite leaf, is not available, O son, so long Mālatī and other flowers roar (i.e. boast of their efficacy).

11. A man who worships me, at least once, with Bilva leaf shall be free from agony. He will come to me and attain salvation.

12. Tulasī leaf is a greater favourite of mine than Bilva leaf, Śamī leaf, Jāti leaf, lotus and (even) the Kaustubha jewel.

13. A cluster of Tulasī blossoms with unbroken leaves is dear to my heart like this Padmā (Goddess Lakṣmī) who has come out of the Ocean of Milk.

14. Just as Dvādaśī (twelfth day), whether of the dark half or the bright half (of a lunar month), is my favourite, so also Tulasī leaf, whether black or not, is my favourite.

15. If a man takes up a Tulasī leaf and worships me devoutly, all including Devas, Asuras and human beings is worshipped by him.

16. As long as a dark sprout of the black variety of Tulasī is not available, so long an infinite number of precious stones and jewels like Kaustubha roar (i.e. boast of their efficacy).

17. One who devoutly worships Kṛṣṇa with Kṛṣṇatulasī, attains the bright world where Viṣṇu is present along with Śrī.

18. People who give Tulasī leaves to mendicants and other devotees for the purpose of worshipping me, go to the immutable region (*Mokṣa*).

19. One who worships me with Tulasī of dark and white (colours) attains the perpetual Vaiṣṇava goal after abandoning the body.

Brahmā said:

20. O Keśava, tell me truly the efficacy of offering incense[1] and the benefit obtained by offering lamps.

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1. Offering of incense and waving of lamps before the deity are the next important *Upacāras* in worship. VV 21-33 describe the importance of incense-burning.

Śrī Bhagavān said:

21. Listen, O son, I shall tell you the benefit of offering incense and the efficacy of offering lamps. It is extremely delightful to me.

22. By offering me incense with agallochum, camphor and fragrant divine sandalwood in the month of Mārgaśīrṣa, the devotee shall redeem a hundred generations of his family.

23. The Vaiṣṇava who fumigates my temple with the incense originating from black aloewood is liberated from the sea of Narakas (Hells).

24. If a person offers me incense of aromatic gum-resin mixed with buffalo-ghee and sugar-candy, I grant him whatever he wishes.

25. Gum-resin when fumigated dispels all calamities. Black aloewood gives different kinds of cherished desires.

26. The incense of black agallochum sanctifies the body and the abode. The incense from the resinous exudation of a Sāla tree (*Vatica robusta*) destroys Yakṣas and Rākṣasas.

27. *Dhūpa* has ten units or ingredients. They are: Jāti flower, cardamom, gum-resin, Harītakī (*Terminalia chebula*?), Kūṭa (a kind of sandal, MW 1089), exudation of a Sāla tree, jaggery, Saila (Benzoin?) and Acchaḍa(?) along with Nakha (*Unguis odoratus*?).

28. If anyone offers me the incense with all the ten ingredients in the month of Mārgaśīrṣa which I like very much, I grant him even very rare things, strength, nourishment, sons, wives and devotion.

29. Men like the incense from Mustā (a kind of grass, *Cyperus rotundus*); that of jaggery is conducive to auspiciousness and winning over others. One who offers this in front of me in the Mārgaśīrṣa month gets rid of all the sins and attains me.

30. One whose limbs are wiped (smeared) with the remnants of the incense offered to me, has no fear whatsoever coming from heaven, earth or the atmosphere.

31. If the incense is offered in front of me ceaselessly with great faith in the month of Mārgaśīrṣa, the man will have no calamities. He will have all kinds of riches.

32. Incense accords handsome features. Incense is highly sanctifying. The exudation of a tree is divine. It is extremely pure and sanctifying.

33. Henceforth I shall recount the excellent-efficacy of Lamps.[1]

1. VV 33-43 describe the efficacy of offering lamps to the deity; the last two verses state the imprecation for violators of this service.

If they are offered, the man undoubtedly goes to Vaikuṇṭha.

34. He who ceremoniously waves a lamp of many wicks profusely filled with ghee, shall reside in heaven for one crore of Kalpas.

35. He who witnesses the waving of light in front of me in the month of Mārgaśīrṣa, shall be born as a Brāhmaṇa for seven births and in the end shall attain the highest region.

36. He who waves devoutly lighted camphor in front of me, O excellent Brāhmaṇa, shall enter me, the infinite one.

37. If Nīrājana is performed, O son, all is accomplished to the full even if the worship done for me is devoid of Mantras and (prescribed) rites.

38. He who offers a lamp of camphor in the month of Mārgaśīrṣa, shall attain the fruit of a horse-sacrifice. He shall redeem his family.

39. One who offers a lamp in front of me, or of Brāhmaṇas and in a crossroads, becomes highly intelligent, full of perfect knowledge and of keen eyesight.

40. Listen to the merit of that person who lights a lamp with ghee or oil in front of me in the month of Mārgaśīrṣa.

41. He gets rid of all his sins. He becomes as resplendent as a thousand suns. In a luminous aerial chariot he goes to my world where he will be honoured.

42. Hence a clever devotee should by all means offer lamps. He who puts it out after it has been offered shall certainly fall into hell.

43. A sinner who removes the lamp, O excellent Brāhmaṇa, out of greediness or hatred, becomes blind and dumb on account of that removal of lamp.

CHAPTER NINE

The Procedure for Naivedya[1]

Brahmā said:

1. **O Lord, tell me the procedure for *Naivedya* (food-offering) as it is actually practised. State fully how many kinds of cooked food are desired and what are the side dishes etc.?**

Śrī Bhagavān said:

2. **Well asked by you, O dear one. It is extremely liked by me. I shall state fully the (varieties) of food, drinks etc. and side dishes as well.**

3. **The first thing is a gold plate.[2] If it is not available a silver one can be used. If that is not available, a Pālāśa plate that is large and beautiful should be used.**

4. **Hundreds of *Kacolas* should be made and placed all round in the vessel, O sinless one. In its middle the side dishes must be placed. They should be splendid and must consist of different kinds of fruits.**

5. **In the vessel there must be milk-pudding resembling the moon (in colour) with sugar adequately added to it.**

Rice should resemble white lilies. *Mudga* pulse should be splendid and crystal like.

6-7. **Different kinds of pickles and condiments must be placed in between. The foodstuffs should be arranged in three rows. There must be various kinds of side dishes with fruits and roots mixed with lemon**

1. Offering of food, fruits and other eatables to the deity is an important *Upacāra*. Generally, 'whatever food a man (devotee) eats, the same food is to be offered to his deities' (VR, *Ayodhyā* 103.30, 104.15 as quoted by Medhātithi on Manu V.7). The list of vegetarian dishes as given here in vv 5-30 are hypersanskritised forms of the names of dishes still current in Mahārāshtra, e.g. *Maṇḍaka* for Marathi (M) *Māṇḍe*, *Laḍḍu* for (M) *Lāḍu*; *Polikā* for (M) *Poḷī*, *Modaka*, the same in (M), *Pūrikā* for (M) *Purī*, *Parpaṭa* for (M) *Pāpaḍ*, *Kathikā* for (M) *Kaḍhī* (both are derivable from SK √ *kvath* 'to boil'); *Vaṭaka* for (M) *Vaḍā*, *Pheṇikā* for (M) *Pheṇī*, to mention a few. The cuisine is the same as found in Maharashtrian kitchens. This shows the Purāṇa-writer's intimate familiarity with Mahārāshtra.

It is to be noted that this Naivedya is 'as it is actually practised' (v1) at the time of this Purāṇa.

2. *Padma P.* as quoted in *Smṛti-Candrikā* states that Naivedya should be offered in a vessel of gold, silver or Pālāśa leaves but adds vessels of bronze, copper, clay or a lotus leaf.

juice. There must be hundreds of such varieties of side dishes in the food offered to me. Grapes should be mixed with good mango and Karamarda (*Carissa carandas*).

8. Pepper, long pepper, ginger and cardamom should be mixed. They should be boiled and Kathikās*(?) should be prepared in hundreds for my food (Naivedya).

9. *Pralehanas* (broths or articles for licking) should be made along with hundreds of Kacolas(?). They should be rendered fragrant by means of many flowers. During the month of Mārgaśīrṣa they are very much liked by me.

10. Maṇḍakas (a thin flat circular cake-like dish) beautiful, circular, even and symmetrical everywhere like (the arithmetical figure for) zero, along with boiled milk mixed with sugar should be kept therein.

11-12. In that foodstuff of mine (mixed) with the milk of cow, having the colour of honey, sweet-smelling ghee must be affectionately and devoutly poured, O dear one, the ghee that is kept in a lustrous *Kacola* (vessel of wheat flour). It must be sparkling with cardamom.

13. He should prepare Pūrikās (thin pan-cakes fried in edible oil or ghee) mixed with (sufficient quantity) of asafoetida (each) having a hundred holes and with Veṣṭikās (savouries made of ground flour of rice, gram etc. and shaped in many coils and fried in oils). He also should get prepared Apūpa (small pies) and varieties of milk-preparations.

14. These sweet pies should be strung together like jewels and beads or Mālatī flowers etc. There must be *Parpaṭas* and *Varpaṭas* (circular cake-like stuff made of flour and dried in the sun to be fried in oil i.e. *pāpaḍs* and Varpaṭas are other stuffs similarly prepared in coils, cones, globular ones etc. made of flour or vegetables dried—all to be fried) beautifully prepared from Māṣa pulse or Kūṣmāṇḍas (ash gourds).

15. In the month of Mārgaśīrṣa nine kinds of Vaṭakas should be beautifully prepared and offered to me. (They are made of dough of pulse and prepared like cutlets.) Two types of Vaṭakas are prepared with Jātī (nutmeg), Maricī (pepper) etc. and put in big wooden troughs.

16. One type is prepared in highly refined oil. Salt is put (in the dough before preparing the Vaṭakas). The other type is devoid of *Sneha*

* Hyper-sanskritization of *Kaḍhī*.

(oil, love) like wicked people. They have the colour of saffron. They appear to be full of holes.

17. Some are put in curds and milk; some in tamarind or mango juice. Some are put in grape juice and some in sugarcane juice.

18. Others are put in black mustard water. Some with sugar along with the four kinds of juice mentioned before. These are considered the nine kinds of Vaṭakas.

19-22. The following things should be mixed together and boiled well in a big cauldron: very small seeds of *Buchanania latifolia* lustrous like diamonds and Sukhārikas (?), bits of coconut kernels and a hundred cloves, ghee, milk, sugar etc. (This foodstuff is also one of the Naivedyas.) There must be glossy smooth Pheṇikās (sweetmeats with wheat flour fried in ghee in the form of coils). These Pheṇikās must be served along with the dark-coloured Kṛsaras (sweet balls made of white gingelly seeds). Polikās *(Pāpaḍ*-like cakes deep-fried) with cardamoms and camphor must be cooked (i.e. fried) in Parākikās (? large circular cauldrons).

Modakas (a variety of sweetmeats) must be made with Cārabījas (seeds of *Buchanania latifolia*).

Others must be made with sugar and soaked in milk. Other varieties should be made with coconut fruits (i.e. kernels) and still others with exudations of trees.

23. Other sweetmeats are to be prepared with almond seeds and splendid sweets with gingelly seeds and cummin seeds. These sweetmeats and still others (not mentioned here) should be made for propitiating me.

24-29. Pickles of the following fruits etc. should be made for propitiating me in the month of Mārgaśīrṣa: (The fruits mentioned below can be used separately or in groups of two, three or four as mixed pickles.) the bulbous root of Mocanī (*Solanum jacquine*, a species of plant which cures piles), ginger, Karamardaka (*Carissa carandas*), orange, tamarind, Kaṁkola (?), Daśāra (?) Tripurījāta (? originating from that city), the splendid lemon fruit, lotus stalk, Tindu fruit (*Diospyros embryopteris*), clove, Tilaka (*Syplocos racemosa*?), Bilva (*Aagle marmelos*), Luti (?) Valkala (bark of Cassia), Vaṁśakarīra (sugarcane manna), Kāyaphala (*Emblica officinalis*), Bala (*Crataeva roxburghie*), grape fruit, mango fruit, beautiful Kaṇṭakinī fruit (*Vanguiera spimosa*?), Dhātrī fruit, fruit of Tamarindus indica (?) and Aṁbādava fruit (?), plantain, long pepper and chillies. These should be soaked in pure mustard oil and salt must be added to taste. They should be seasoned with mustard.

They must be put in an earthen pot and kept for three years before use. Such pickles, bestower of honour, should be offered to me in the month of Mārgaśīrṣa. They are pleasing to me.

30. If the devotee is incapable of offering all these foodstuffs, he should do as follows. I shall state it succinctly.

31. The devotee who offers one Laḍḍū (sweetmeat) and one Pūra (Pūrī or circular pan-cakes deep-fried in ghee), two Pheṇas (coiled and deep-fried in ghee) three Kokarasas (wild date fruit extract), sixteen Māṇḍakas (pastries, soaked in ghee) and eight Vaṭakas will never see a hell.

32-33. Half an Āḍhaka (a measure) of milk kept over for a long time, sixteen Palas of sugar-candy resembling the moon in lustre, one Pala of ghee, one Pala of honey, two Karṣas of pepper and half a Pala of dried ginger (the last mentioned four may each be half a Pala)—all the above-mentioned ingredients should be well-mixed and ground into a paste in a smooth soft cloth with her slender hands by a woman. They should then be put into a pot rendered white (glittering) by means of camphor powder. He who makes this juicy stuff, may wish for anything. I will grant that man all he wishes for.

CHAPTER TEN

The Concluding Rites in the Lord's Worship

Brahmā said:

1. O dear father, what should be done after the Naivedya (food offering) by men, O Lord? Mention everything accurately whatever is to be done in the month of Mārgaśīrṣa.

Śrī Bhagavān said:

2-5. *Ācamana* should be offered to one who has taken food with water rendered fragrant with camphor. Then betel leaves, sandalpaste and water for washing the hands (and wiping it off with a cloth) should be offered.

Afterwards the devotee should offer a handful of flowers with devotion. Then he should show the mirror. Thereafter, the Nīrājana rite should be performed with camphor if one has the capacity for it.

The intelligent devotee should then offer a crown and other ornaments.

Thereafter, O highly fortunate one, an umbrella and chowries should be offered.

The dark-coloured handsome personality of the Lord with a pleasant face ready to grant favour should be meditated upon. He should perform the Japa one hundred and eight times and eulogize the Lord with hymns.

6-12a. The rosary for japa[1] may be of shells strung together by a silver wire or gold wire in particular. The beads may be beautiful lotus seeds, corals, jewels, pearls or artificial Indrākṣas (? Sapphire). Japa can be performed on the joints of fingers (i.e. for counting purposes). A necklace made of Putrajīva (*Roxburghii*) is also recommended for the purpose of Japa.

The learned devotee should not repeat my Mantras while walking about, laughing, looking over the sides, keeping one foot over the other, keeping the hands over the head or standing up. He shall not repeat the (god's) names with an excited mind. At the time of Japa, Vrata, Homa, worship etc. the devotee shall not speak.

The merit of Japa performed at home is of one unit; that in a cowpen has ten times that merit; on the banks of a river the merit is hundredfold; in the sacred fire-chamber the merit is ten times more. In Tirthas etc. the merit is a thousand times and in my presence it is infinite.

After doing all these in the month of Mārgaśīrṣa if one circumambulates,[2] he attains for every step the merit of the gift of the earth consisting of the seven continents.

12b. While circumambulating the devotee should repeat the thousand names (of god) or repeat a single name several times.

13. A single circumambulation performed with devotion always dispels the sin of the day. It is as good as though the entire earth consisting of the seven continents has been circumambulated.

14. Three circumambulations of mine will dispel the sin committed in the course of a week, instantaneously; they dispel the sins of the body committed in ten days.

15. If twenty-one circumambulations are completed with devotion, sins of killing a foetus in the womb and similar sins are destroyed instantaneously.

16. If one hundred and eight circumambulations are performed by

1. Different materials for preparing beads are mentioned here but the Śaivite Rudrākṣa-seed is excluded from the list. The gradation of the places for performing *Japa* is interesting.

2. VV 12-17 describe the sanctifying effect of circumambulation.

anyone, it is on a par with the performance of all sacrifices and concluding them with excellent monetary gifts.

17-22. It is as though he has circumambulated the earth as many times.

The circumambulations of the mother, of the earth, and of the Śālagrāma stone—these three are known to be on a par with one another.

One full prostration in the month of Mārgaśīrṣa is equal to seven circumambulations, or one prostration is rather superior (to the circumambulations).

He who always prostrates at the time of circumambulation especially in the month of Mārgaśīrṣa, shall reside in heaven till the end of the Kalpa. After the Kalpa has passed, O dear one, he is born as an emperor.

He shall have longevity, shall enjoy all pleasures. He shall become rich and shall be extremely interested in virtue and piety. By repeating the thousand names sins committed in three ways (i.e. mentally, verbally and physically) will perish.

Well, of what avail is much talk? Listen to this secret from me, O son. By the (utterance of the) name Dāmodara I will have unparalleled delight.

23-30. This name signifying a quality has been given to me by my mother Yaśodā when the pot of curds was broken by me in Gokula (the cowherds' colony). At that time Yaśodā tied me tightly to a mortar by means of *Dāman* (a rope). Ever since I became famous by the name Dāmodara.[1]

With great concentration and purity of mind the devotee should repeat the Mantra "Obeisance to Dāmodara" at sunrise at the rate of three thousand per day. When it reaches three hundred and fifty thousand, the learned devotee should perform the *Udyāpana* rite. The libation, Homa and feeding of Brāhmaṇas should be a tenth of this. If anyone does like this with devotion, I grant him everything wished for, viz. wealth, food grains, wife, sons and other desired objects. This has been stated by me with the utterance of "This is truth" three times. O highly intelligent one, believe it. This great Mantra has been revealed by me out of favour, O son.

After repeating (Mantra), "(Obeisance) to Dāmodara" the devotee should always circumambulate and prostrate, O son, with all the eight

1. The etymology based on the story mentioned here from BhP X, Part 1 is confirmed in Mbh, *Udyoga* 70.8.

limbs of the body (*Aṣṭāṅgas*). Prostration with feet, hands, knees, chest, head, mind, words and eyes, is called *Aṣṭāṅga*.

31. He should keep the head near my feet and joining the palms together, should request thus: "O Lord, I am afraid of the ocean in the form of clutches of Death. I have resorted to you. Save me."

32. Thereafter, the devotee should take upon his head the remnant given by me and should say with great respect as follows, O dear one, in order to complete the worship:

33. "The worship performed by me, O Janārdana, may be deficient in the mantras, or in holy rites or in devotion. But O Lord, let it be complete."

34. During the month of Mārgaśīrṣa dancing programme must be staged along with drums, Mṛdaṅgas and Paṇavas. It yields merit unto men.

35. Songs, instrumental music, dance and the reading of books at the time of the worship—all these are always pleasing to me, O Four-faced One.

36-37. If songs and instrumental music are not available *Pañcastava* (a group of five prayers[1]) is highly delightful unto me, O highly fortunate one. It consists of *Viṣṇu-Sahasra-Nāma* ('A Thousand Names of Viṣṇu'), *Bhīṣma-Stavarāja* ('The Eulogy of Kṛṣṇa by Bhīṣma'), *Gajendra-Mokṣa* ('The Liberation of the Elephant'), *Anusmṛti* and *Bhagavad-Gītā*. These five together constitute the *Pañcastava* ('Five Prayer-hymns').

38. If any devotee drinks the *Pādodaka*[2] (the water with which feet are washed) issuing from the Śālagrāma, of what avail is the drinking of thousands of *Pañcagavyas* (five milk products)!

39. Even if a man drinks a drop of the water from the Śālagrāma stone, he will never drink the breast milk of a mother. He shall attain salvation.

40. Those who keep the *Pādodaka* on their heads, those who sip it, will not have the pollution due to birth or death (of relatives).

41. A man may have been excluded from the society of people of good conduct. But if he is given the *Pādodaka* at the time of death, he shall attain the best state (hereafter).

42-43. One who drinks forbidden beverage, eats forbidden food-stuffs and carnally approaches a forbidden woman, one who commits sinful activities, becomes immediately sanctified by resorting to the

1. These are still read by us everyday.
2. VV 38-45 extol the sanctifying effects of *Pādodaka*.

Pādāmbu (i.e. *Pādodaka*). The water from the feet is superior to expiation rites of *Cāndrāyaṇa* or *Pādakṛcchra*.

44. Black aloewood, saffron, camphor and unguent—each one of these mixed with *Pādodaka* is the sanctifier of all sacred things.

45. The water that is sanctified by mere sight dispels sins of man, O excellent Brāhmaṇa. The water from the feet does so all the more!

46. You are my favourite. You are my eldest son. Particularly you are devoted to me. Hence everything, even the greatest of secrets, has been communicated to you.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

The Story of Ekādaśī

Brahmā said:

1. O creator of living beings, O Lord, kindly narrate fully to me the greatness of Ekādaśī and the procedure pertaining to the idols.

Śrī Bhagavān said:

2. O tiger among Brāhmaṇas, listen to the story that is destructive of sins. On hearing it the (great) sins like Brāhmaṇa-slaughter etc. perish.

3-4a. There was a king in the city of Kāmpilya* known by the name Vīrabāhu. He was truthful in speech, had conquered anger. He had realized Brahman and was devoted to me. He was of good disposition. He was merciful. He was a strong handsome man.

4b-5a. He was ever devoted to the devotees of the Lord (Viṣṇu) and was always interested in stories about me and was always engaged in listening to the episodes about me.

5b-8. He was always fond of *Jāgaraṇas* (sacred vigils at night). He was a donor and a learned man. He had forbearance and valour. He had conquered his sense-organs. He was victorious and was fond of fighting battles. In prosperity he was on a par with Kubera. He was endowed with sons, cattle and wealth. He was devoted to his own wife.

His wife Kāntimatī was unrivalled on the earth in beauty. She was

* Kampil in Farrakhabad District of Uttar Pradesh.

a highly chaste and faithful lady and was a great devotee of mine. The young king of large eyes enjoyed the earth in her company. Excepting me, O mighty one, he did not recognise another deity.

9. One day, O son, the great sage Bhāradvāja (? Bharadvāja) came to the abode of that noble-souled Vīrabāhu.

10-11. On seeing Bhāradvāja, the great sage, who had come from far, the king himself welcomed him by offering *Arghya* duly. He himself offered him a seat. After bowing down to him with great devotion he stood in front of the excellent sage.

The king said :

12. Today my life has become fruitful. This is my most fruitful day. Today my kingdom has become fruitful. Today my abode has become fruitful.

13. O saintly Brāhmaṇa, Janārdana, the great Ātman, has become pleased with me, since you, an excellent Yogin, have come to my abode today.

14. I am rid of crores of sins, since I have been seen by you. My kingdom, prosperity, glory, elephants and horses have been dedicated to you.

15. You are a Vaiṣṇava, O excellent sage. There is nothing which I cannot give you. Even a Varāṭikā (cowrie, a small conch-shell, the smallest coin) given to a Vaiṣṇava becomes as big as Meru.

16. Brāhmaṇas have told me: "If an excellent Brāhmaṇa, a Vaiṣṇava, does not come to anyone's house on a day, that day is futile unto him."

17. This has been stated to me by Gārgya, Gautama and Sumantu that Vaiṣṇavas, whoever they may be, the devotees of Viṣṇu, are all Brāhmaṇas by caste.

18. Men who are not devotees of Hṛṣīkeśa are Piśācas (ghosts). Those who take food on Hari's day Ekādaśī are tainted with great sins.

19. Through a single day of Hari (i.e. observing one day of Hari, the Ekādaśī day) is obtained what is stated by wise men as the fruit of (observing) thousands of Śiva-vratas[1] and crores of Saura Vratas or of Brahmā's Vratas.

20. O Brāhmaṇa, as long as Dvādaśī (the twelfth lunar day) mostly liked by me does not arrive, the Tithis of Brahmā and Śaṅkara are boastful.

1. This fanatic statement is against the syncretic trend and tolerant spirit of Purāṇas. For identity of Śiva and Viṣṇu vide VāP 1.25.14-29 and Kūrma 1.15.89-91.

21. The power and lustre of the stars is only as long as the moon does not rise. The same is the case with the other Tithis, O great Brāhmaṇa, as long as Dvādaśī does not arrive.

22. This has been formerly stated in my presence by Nārada and Vasiṣṭha. O great sage, you are conversant with all the holy rites of Vaiṣṇavas.

Bhāradvāja said:

23. Well asked, O highly fortunate one, since you are a devotee of Viṣṇu. The earth that you protect, O king, is blessed. The subjects (governed by you) are good (blessed).

24. One shall not stay in that kingdom where the king is not a Vaiṣṇava. Better to stay in a forest or in a Tīrtha but not in a realm where there are no Vaiṣṇavas.

25. That realm where the king ruling the earth is a Bhāgavata (loyal devotee of the Lord) should be considered Vaikuṇṭha. That kingdom is devoid of sins.

26. A kingdom without Vaiṣṇavas is like the body without the eyes, or women without husband or Dvādaśī with Daśamī overlapping it.[1]

27. A kingdom without Vaiṣṇavas, O king, is like a son who does not feed and protect his parents or Dvādaśī overlapped by Daśamī.

28. A kingdom without Vaiṣṇavas is like a king not giving charitable gift, or like a Brāhmaṇa selling juices and beverages or Dvādaśī with Daśamī overlapping it.

29. A kingdom without Vaiṣṇavas is like an elephant without tusks or a bird without wings or Dvādaśī overlapped by Daśamī.

30. A kingdom without Vaiṣṇavas is as futile as using the Vedas etc. for monetary gifts or merit for worldly wealth or like Dvādaśī with Daśamī overlapping it.

31. A kingdom without Vaiṣṇavas is like Sandhyā (prayer at junctions of night and day) without Darbha grass, or Śrāddha without monetary gifts or Dvādaśī with Daśamī overlapping it.

32. A kingdom without Vaiṣṇavas is like a Śūdra with a tuft feeding himself on the milk of a tawny-coloured cow or Dvādaśī with Daśamī overlapping it.

1. The Twelfth Tithi (Dvādaśī) overlapped by the Tenth Tithi (Daśamī) is regarded inauspicious. The burden '*dvādaśī daśamī-yuktā*' (*Dvādaśī* overlapped by *Daśamī*) in vv 26-36 strongly deprecates such a *Dvādaśī*.

33. A kingdom without Vaiṣṇavas is like a Śūdra who carnally approaches a Brāhmaṇa woman, or a person who destroys gold, or a person who defiles Dharma or Dvādaśī with Daśamī overlapping it.

34. A kingdom without Vaiṣṇavas is like felling of the trees of Hari, Sun-god etc., O excellent one among men, or Dvādaśī with Daśamī overlapping it.

35. A kingdom without Vaiṣṇavas is like offering of *Āhuti* (oblations to gods) without Mantras or like milk of a cow with a dead calf or Dvādaśī with Daśamī overlapping it.

36. A kingdom without Vaiṣṇavas is like a widow with tresses of hair not removed[1] or like Vrata (without taking) holy bath or like Dvādaśī with Daśamī overlapping it.

37. He who is a devotee of the Slayer of Madhu is called a king by good people. His kingdom flourishes always. Along with his subjects he remains happy.

38. My sight is fruitful, O king, that you have been seen by me. Today my speech is fruitful because I converse with you.

39. Even if it is far off, one should go to that place if it is heard that a Vaiṣṇava is present there. By seeing him one will attain the merit that arises from a holy bath in a Tīrtha.

40. So, O king, you have been seen by me—you who are pure and engaged in devotion to Viṣṇu. Hail unto thee! I shall go now. Be happy, O king.

41. In the meantime, Bhāradvāja, the most excellent one among sages, the leader of all the Yogins, was bowed down to by the queen Kāntimatī.

42. (The sage blessed her:) "O beautiful lady, let there be absence of widowhood (May your husband be alive during your life time). Be loyal and devoted to your husband. O splendid lady, may your devotion to Keśava be always steady."

43. Thereafter the king spoke to Bhāradvāja, the great sage, delighting him with his voice majestic like the thundering sound of clouds.

The king said:

44. O excellent sage, if you are kindly disposed towards me, say

1 Reference to the custom of widow-tonsure.

everything as to what I have done in the previous birth that my fortune has been large and flourishing?

45. How was this kingdom with all the enemies killed acquired by me? My son is very excellent with decent qualities and my wife is amiable and beautiful.

46. She always thinks about me. She likes me as though I am her very vital air. She meditates on Janārdana. Who am I, O sage? How did she (come to me)? What righteous action was performed by me?

47. What has been done by this lady of fascinating limbs, who is my wife? O sage, by what merit (have I acquired) this extremely rare fortune in the world of mortals?

48. All the kings are under my control. My valour is irresistible. My body is free from illness.

49-50a. O sage, none can bear my splendour like this praiseworthy (uncensured) lady. I wish to know today what meritorious deeds have been performed by me in the previous birth.

50b-51. On being asked thus by the king about his acts of the previous birth, the acts of his wife and the reason for his affluence, (the sage spent) some time in Yogic meditation. Then he came to know about this.

Bhāradvāja said:

52-54. O king, the act of the previous birth both of yours and those of your wife have been known. O saintly king, listen, I shall tell you.

Listen, O king, to everything about the Karma of which all these are the fruits.[1]

You were a Śūdra by caste. You were engaged in injuring animals. You were an atheist of vicious conduct. You used to violate the chastity of other men's wives. You were ungrateful and rude. You were devoid of good behaviour.

55. This lady of large eyes was your wife in former birth too.

1. *Karmavāda* is a factor common to Brahmanism, Buddhism and Jainism. Hence re-birth as a motif is used by Buddhists and Jains in stories for propagation of their faiths (*vide* the Buddhist Jātaka stories). Here the same motif is used to extol *Ekādaśī Vrata* in vv 52 ff of Ch. 11 and Ch. 12 and an atheist Śūdra is shown to have become a highly fortunate king like Vīrabāhu of Kāmpilya due to his observance of this Vrata.

Without you she did not have anything to do mentally, verbally and physically (with anything else).

56. Though you were of that (vicious) nature, she did not have any bad feelings towards you. She was loyal to you. She was of noble and exalted nature. She worshipped you constantly.

57. Since you committed evil actions you were forsaken by your friends and relatives. The wealth that had been acquired and accumulated by your ancestors dwindled.

58. When the wealth perished, O king, you expected better results (from other sources) but as a result of the previous Karmas even agricultural operations became fruitless.

59. Thereafter you were completely abandoned by your kinsmen as the wealth became exhausted. Though your resources dwindled, this chaste and beautiful lady did not leave you.

60. Thus frustrated in your hopes and ambitions you went to a solitary forest. After killing many animals, you sustained yourself.

61. O king, along with your wife you were thus engaged in sinful activities on the earth and many years elapsed in this manner.

62-63. One day, O king, an excellent Brāhmaṇa Devaśarmā, a great sage, lost his way. He was in a dilemma as to the directions. He was excessively afflicted with hunger and thirst. When the midday sun blazed, the sage who had lost his way, fell down in the middle of the forest, O king.

64-65. On seeing that unknown old Brāhmaṇa afflicted with misery, you pitied him. Grasping the hand of that Brāhmaṇa you raised him who was fallen to the ground. Then it was spoken by you: "O Brāhmaṇical sage! Be pleased and come to my hermitage.

66-70. There is a lake full of water and adorned with clusters of lotuses. (The banks) abound in excellent trees laden with nice and luscious fruits and fragrant flowers. Take your bath in the cool water and perform your daily routine of duties. O Brāhmaṇa, you can eat the fruit and drink the cool water. Guarded by me take rest peacefully. O eminent Brāhmaṇa, stay in my hermitage till you are fully contented. Get up, O excellent Brāhmaṇa. It behoves you to do this favour."

On hearing the words of the Śūdra then, the Brāhmaṇa regained his consciousness. He caught hold of the hand of the Śūdra and went to the lake. O mighty one, he sat on the banks under the shade.

71. He took his holy bath duly and worshipped Keśava. After offering water-libations to the manes and Devas, he drank the cool water.

72-74. Devaśarmā, an excellent Brāhmaṇa, took rest at the root of a tree. With great devotion, the Śūdra prostrated at the feet of the sage in the company of his wife. He then spoke to the sage: "You have come as our guest to uplift us both. O saintly Brāhmaṇa, by your sight our sin has perished. O my beloved, give this Brāhmaṇa tasty, tender and juicy fruits which are ripe and pleasing."

The Brāhmaṇa said:

75. I do not know you. Tell me about your caste. O son, one should not take food from a completely unknown person even if he be a Brāhmaṇa.

The Śūdra said:

76-80. I am a Śūdra, O tiger among Brāhmaṇas. You need not have any suspicion at all, O Brāhmaṇa. I have been abandoned by my own kinsmen who are wicked and vicious.

While those two were conversing thus, fruits were offered to the Brāhmaṇa by the wife of the Śūdra. They were eaten by him. After drinking the cool water, the Brāhmaṇa became delighted in his mind. After getting pleasure (thereby), the sage took rest at the foot of the tree.

That Śūdra and his wife took their meal and returned (they said) : "Welcome, O excellent sage. Where are you coming from? Why did you come to this desolate forest, O excellent Brāhmaṇa, to the forest full of danger from wicked wild animals, devoid of men, full of miseries and extremely terrible both by day and night?"

The Brāhmaṇa said:

81. I am a Brāhmaṇa, O noble one, on my way to Prayāga. As the way was unknown, I entered this terrible forest.

82-83. Due to the power of my merit, you have become my excellent kinsman. My life has been saved by you. Tell me what shall I do for you. Tell me first how you came to stay in this dreadful and lonely forest. Who are you? What is the reason? Tell me.

The Śūdra replied:

84-89. The city of Vidarbha is being protected by King Bhīmasena.

My residence is in the great realm Mahārāṣṭra: I am a Śūdra of sinful activities. O excellent Brāhmaṇa, duties pertaining to my caste have been abandoned by me. I have been forsaken by my kinsmen. Hence I have come to the forest. I sustain myself along with my wife by killing animals everyday.

Now, O great sage, I have become completely disgusted with my sinful deeds. Be kind to me a bit, though I am sinful, O holy lord. O excellent Brāhmaṇa, it is due to my merit that you have come here. It behoves you to favour me with your advice so that my wife and I will not see Yama (the son of the Sun-god). I do not at all desire anything except Lord Janārdana. O excellent sage, bless me. Grant me this favour.

Bhāradvāja said:

90. **On being requested and asked thus by that Śūdra with great devotion, Devaśarmā, the excellent Brāhmaṇa said these words laughingly:**

CHAPTER TWELVE

Uninterrupted Ekādaśī Vow

Devaśarmā said:

1. **Your mind has thus suddenly turned towards Keśava. Hence my (? your) sins accumulated during hundreds of previous births have perished.**

2. **Without (performing) holy rites, without (visiting) Tīrthas (holy places), you have been liberated from crores of sins. Since you welcomed me with hospitality and devotion, you have attained the region of Hari.**

3. **. It is on account of the power of that merit that your mind is thus inclined. I meditated and mentally pondered over it. Therefore, the acts of your previous births[1] have been known.**

1. This is the second previous birth of King Vīrabāhu. As remarked on p. 240, fnt 1, rebirth has been again used as a motif. But here it is used to describe the evil effects of observing Dvādaśī vow overlapped by Daśamī (v. 5) despite all the piety and religious behaviour of the Brāhmaṇa.

4. Once, in a previous birth, you were a Brāhmaṇa at Avantī. You were devoted to virtue and piety. You were in the habit of always studying the Vedas. You were of good conduct. You performed holy rites always.

5. Once you performed the Dvādaśī vow of Viṣṇu even though Daśamī overlapped it. As a result of that sin, all (your) merits perished.

6. Everything became futile like a Brāhmaṇa who is husband of a Śūdra woman. You underwent the tortures in hells for many thousands of years.

7-12. Hence many sinful things were committed by you for a long time. The Tithi of the noble-souled Viṣṇu was celebrated by you even when it was overlapped by Daśamī. Therefore you were born as a Śūdra and your mind was turned towards sinful activities. The mind that is defiled by the Daśamī overlapping Dvādaśī does not feel interested in virtue and piety.

O dear one, your daughter's son is in the city of Vidarbha. The Ekādaśī vow of Hari has been performed by him as laid down (in the scriptures).

The merit of the Akhaṇḍa Ekādaśī Vrata (uninterrupted Ekādaśī vow) was given (to you) by him. Therefore, your mind turned towards virtue and the sins were destroyed.

By the power of that merit as well as of the Ekādaśī vow, the sin of the overlapping Daśamī was written off by Yama. All the sins committed in the course of ten thousand births and the sin of this birth have been wiped off by Yama himself now.

13-16. Even as they both were conversing thus, Viṣvaksena came there: "O inferior one in caste, welcome to you. I, Janārdana, am pleased with you. As a result of your hospitality towards the Brāhmaṇa, your sin has been destroyed. By the merit offered by another resulting from the Ekādaśī Vrata, O Śūdra, your sin due to the overlapping of Daśamī has been destroyed. After performing the Vrata your grandson has offered you the merit. Therefore you have been redeemed. Along with your wife, O highly fortunate one, mount this Garuḍa."

After saying thus, you were placed on the aerial chariot by the Lord of the Devas.

17-18. From there you went to heaven on account of your Śūdrahood, O excellent king. Devaśarmā, the Brāhmaṇa, went to the great Tīrtha Prayāga. Thus everything that had been asked by you has been

recounted to you. Due to the merit of the Akhaṇḍa-Ekādaśī as well as to that of the hospitality, you got this wife endowed with devotion to Viṣṇu and the kingdom wherein all the enemies have been killed.

The king said:

19. O Brāhmaṇa, instruct me in the procedure of Akhaṇḍa-Ekādaśī for the sake of propitiating Viṣṇu. It behoves you to grant me your favour.

The sage said:

20. Listen, O tiger among kings, to the splendid procedure of Ekādaśī. This was formerly narrated by Lord Viṣṇu to Nārada.[1]

21-25. I shall narrate that to you. I shall describe that splendid *Udyāpana* rite (valedictory rite after a Vrata). This splendid Vrata (named) Akhaṇḍa Ekādaśī Vrata should be performed on the Dvādaśī days, O excellent one among men, in Mārgaśīrṣa and other months.

On the Daśamī day he should have *Naktabhojana*. He should fast on the Ekādaśī day. On the Dvādaśī day he should take a single meal. This is called Akhaṇḍa. By the word *Nakta* we mean the eighth part of the day when the sun becomes very dim. Food is taken then and not at night.

One who is a devotee of Viṣṇu should avoid the following ten[2] on the Daśamī days: (meal in) bell-metal vessels, meat, Masūra pulse, Caṇakas (chickpea), grain called Kodravas (*Paspalum scrobiculatum*), greens, honey, other men's food, subsequent meal and sexual intercourse.

26-27. This procedure is for the Daśamī day. Listen to that of Ekādaśī. The devotee of Viṣṇu should avoid these ten on the Ekādaśī day: frequent drinking of water, violence, unclean habits, untruthfulness, chewing of betel leaves, twigs for brushing teeth, sleeping and having sexual intercourse during the day, playing game of dice, sleeping during night and conversation with fallen persons.

28. (He shall repeat this Mantra:) "Today I am not going to enjoy my wife, O Keśava. I will not be taking my food today. For the sake of propitiating you, O Lord of Devas, I maintain restraints day and night.

1. VV 21-66 describe in details the Akhaṇḍa Ekādaśī Vrata.
2. VV 25-27 and 31 give the list of restrictions to be observed on the Daśamī, Ekādaśī and Dvādaśī days.

29. With the sense-organs asleep, there is grief and distress. There is (restraint of) meal and sexual intercourse; food particles may stick to the space between the teeth. Forgive, O Puruṣottama."

30. The word Upavāsa is usually interpreted as *Observance of fast.* But really it means: 'He has refrained from sins and his stay is with (i.e. abides by) good qualities'. It should not be taken to mean withering away of the body.

31. Viṣṇu's devotee should avoid on the Dvādaśī day the ten things mentioned before as well as *Parānna* (other men's food) and *Madhu* (honey or liquor). He must avoid *Mardana* etc. (application of unguents etc.).

32-33. (He shall repeat this Mantra:) "Today I am observing the meritorious and sanctifying Dvādaśī. It is holy and destructive of sins. I shall break my fast; O Garuḍa-emblemed Lord, be pleased. In order to propitiate Viṣṇu, I have resorted to restraints and observances. With your favour I shall feed an excellent Brāhmaṇa today."

34. He should perform the holy rite in accordance with this procedure till the year is complete. When a year is completed the wise devotee should perform the rite of *Udyāpana*[1] (ie. conclusion of the Vrata).

35. It is to be remembered that the *Udyāpana* of the *Vrata* is at the beginning, middle as well as at the end. He who does not perform *Udyāpana* will become blind and leprous.

36-37. Hence the devotee should perform *Udyāpana* in accordance with his capacity and affluence. It is performed in the bright half of the splendid month of Mārgaśīrṣa after inviting twelve Brāhmaṇas who are experts in the procedure. The thirteenth one should be the *Ācārya* (Preceptor) who is also an expert in the injunctions. He should be invited along with his wife.

38. The sponsor of the Vrata should take his holy bath. He should be pure (in body and mind). He should have faith. He should have conquered his sense-organs. By washing their feet and offering them *Arghyas*, garments etc. he should duly honour the Ācārya and others.

39-41. The Ācārya then makes a mystic diagram of the shape of a discus, lotus or Sarvatobhadra, with splendid colour powders. He places there a pot covered with a white cloth. It should be full of water rendered fragrant with camphor and black aloewood. Five (different kinds of) precious stones and five tender sprouts are put into the pot.

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1. VV 34-66 describe the procedure of *Udyāpana* (conclusion) of this Vrata. The Āgamic influence is obvious.

A copper pot is wrapped with a red cloth and flower garlands are also put round it. It is then placed upon the *Maṇḍala* (mystic diagram).

42-43. Above it the idol of Lakṣmīnārāyaṇa should be placed, O king. The idol should be made of gold weighing one *Karṣa* (about half an ounce). It should have the vehicle and weapons. The height should be four *Aṅgulas*. Or it may be made according to one's capacity, but it should not involve any financial fraud.

44. Then the *Mūrti* (idol) should be installed in the *Maṇḍala*. The overlord of all the twelve months should be worshipped for keeping the Vrata unbroken.

45. To the east of the Maṇḍala the Ācārya should place a splendid and auspicious conch: "O Pāñcajanya, formerly you were born of the ocean and were held by Viṣṇu in his hand. You had been created by all the Devas. Obeisance to you."

46. Thereafter he should make a raised ground as Altar to the north of the Maṇḍala. After the rite of *Saṅkalpa Havana* (oblations) should be offered along with Vaiṣṇava Mantras occurring in the Vedas.

47. He should install Viṣṇu in his own place. He should install Hari and worship him with *Puruṣasūkta* and the auspicious Mantras from Purāṇas.

48. Many kinds of sweetmeats should be made to be offered as Naivedya. After presenting *Dhūpa* (incense) and *Dīpa* (lights) and other offerings he should perform the rite of Nīrājana.

49. After worshipping with *Yakṣakardama* [a mixture of camphor, agallochum, musk and *Kakkola* (a kind of plant the berry of which has a waxy and aromatic interior)] he should perform circumambulation along with the Brāhmaṇas reciting auspicious Mantras for the sake of welfare. Then, O king, prostration is to be done.

50. Thereupon, the Brāhmaṇas should perform Japa, the Ācārya doing it first, followed by others in the order. The Sūktas for Japa are *Pavamānīya, Madhusūkta* and *Maṇḍalabrāhmaṇa*.

51-52. The following Mantras should be repeated: '*tejosi* etc.', '*śukraja* etc.', '*vācam* etc.' after Brahmasāman. Then the following too: '*pavitravantam* etc.', '*sūryasya viṣṇor mahas* etc.'

At the end of the Japa, he should place Viṣṇu upon the pot along with the ancillaries. At sunrise the Homa should be performed in due order.

53. At the outset the pot should be placed. After the worship in accordance with the injunctions, the Lord should be eulogized. Thereafter the Homa should be performed with the requisite *Caru*.

54-56. The sacrificial fire should be kindled and the rites pertaining to the Fire (god) should be performed in the manner laid down in one's own *Gṛhyasūtra* Texts. The devotee should make two types of *Carus*, i.e. milk-pudding and Vaiṣṇava Caru.

Thereafter, for the realization (of the objective) of the rite (Karman), twigs of Palāśa (*Butea frondosa*) a span in length and soaked in ghee should be consigned to fire while reciting the Mantra '*idam viṣṇu . . .*'. Then taking ghee four times, the most excellent *Āhuti* is to be offered.

57. The Homas should be one hundred and one in number. The offerings with gingelly seeds should be twice that number. After the Vaiṣṇava Homa, he should begin *Grahayajña.*

58. *Caruhoma* should be performed with sacrificial twigs and thereafter *Homa* with gingelly seeds. On both the occasions the rite of *Svastivācana* (recitation of the holy Mantra for the sake of welfare) should be performed and then he should worship.

59. Thereafter the devotee should offer cows etc. and monetary gifts to the Ṛtviks. Gifts are made to a Brāhmaṇa in accordance with the injunction for the propitiation of the Lord.

60-63. A milch-cow is to be offered and/or a splendid bull too. Thereafter thirteen *Padas* (? plots of land) are to be given to the Brāhmaṇas. He should make the Ācārya and his wife contented by offering clothes. After making them satisfied by great gifts (of 16 kinds such as Tulā Puruṣa) he should make the followers too contented (?) and dedicate twenty-five pots filled with water and wrapped with cloths.

When the *Pāraṇaka* (breaking the fast) is performed he should make more gifts at night. To the kinsmen the food liked by them is to be given. Then he should give the full pot to the Ācārya along with monetary gifts.

64-66. By offering the full pot one's task becomes fulfilled. He should obtain the benefit of the *Upavāsa Vrata* as well as bath in the Tīrtha.

He has conversed with the Brāhmaṇas. He shall, therefore, get the full benefit thereof.

If he has already performed the Ekādaśī Vrata but he has not sufficient funds in the house, then the *Udyāpana* and other rites should be performed in accordance with one's capacity.

Thus the *Akhaṇḍa Ekādaśī Vrata* has been completely narrated to you.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

Importance of Jāgaraṇa in Ekādaśī Vrata

Śrī Bhagavān said:

1. Listen, O son, I shall describe the nature of *Jāgaraṇa* (keeping awake). Merely by knowing it, I become easily accessible always in the Kali Age (to a devotee).

2-6. The *Jāgaraṇa* (to be done) on the Ekādaśī day has twenty-six characteristics[1] (activities) as follows: There shall be vocal and instrumental music, dance, readings from the Purāṇa, (burning of) incense, lamp, (offering) Naivedya, flower offerings, scents and unguents, dedication of fruits, faith, charitable gifts, control over the sense-organs, truthfulness, absence of sleep, gaiety, my worship, wonderful shows, enthusiasm, avoidance of sinful actions, idleness etc., circumambulation, prostrations (before god), the rite of Nīrājana with an extremely delighted mind and, O highly fortunate one, the devotee should perform Ārārtika[2] (waving of lights with devotional hymns) after every three hours (at the end of a Yāma).

A man who performs the Jāgaraṇa rite devoutly with all these twenty-six characteristics is not reborn on the earth.

7. He who does like this devoutly without being overstingy about the money spent, he who performs the rite of Jāgaraṇa with great devotion, gets merged into me.

8. Those who sleep during the day pertaining to me (i.e. Ekādaśī) are bitten by the serpent of the Kali Age. They do not observe Jāgaraṇa because they are deluded (and fettered) by the noose of Māyā.

9. Those who observe Ekādaśī Vrata in Kali Age without Jāgaraṇa are ruined. There is no doubt about it, because life is transitory.

10. Those sinners who do not observe my Jāgaraṇa have placed their foot on my chest and taken away both the eyes.

11. If there is no expounder (of the Purāṇas), the devotee should organise music and dance programme. O Lord of Devas, if there is an expounder, he should read the Purāṇa at the outset.

12. O my son, if my Jāgaraṇa is observed, the devotee obtains a crore of times the benefit of a thousand horse-sacrifices and a hundred Vājapeya sacrifices.

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1. VV 2-6 enumerate the 26 activities on the *Jāgaraṇa* night. The details of these activities are discussed in the course of the chapter.

2 Called *Ārati* in Hindi, Marathi etc. *Ārārtika* is a hyper-Sanskritization.

13. If my Jāgaraṇa is observed the devotee redeems generations in the families of his father, mother and wife, O bestower of honour.

14. If there happens any obstacle on the fast day when the Jāgaraṇa has started, I will curse that place, leave it and go away.

15. If people perform *Jāgaraṇa* on the day pertaining to me, the day without the overlapping (of any other Tithi), I joyously dance among them.

16. The devotee stays in my abode as many ten thousand Yugas as the number of days on which he observes Jāgaraṇa in my presence.

17. Without the observance of Jāgaraṇa on the Ekādaśī day the ancestors do not get salvation by offering rice-balls to them at Gayā or by visiting Tīrthas or performing many sacrifices.

18. While observing Jāgaraṇa, if a man worships me with flowers, he will attain the benefit of a horse-sacrifice for every flower.

19. If a man offers lamp at night during the Jāgaraṇa of mine, O son, he obtains the benefit of (donation of) ten thousand cows for every moment.

20. If during Jāgaraṇa anyone offers as Naivedya food fit for oblation, he obtains the merit arising from (the gift of) a mountain of paddy.

21. If a man offers well-cooked, well-dressed food and different kinds of fruits, O Four-faced One, during the observance of Jāgaraṇa of mine, he obtains the benefit of (giving away) a hundred cows.

22. If my devotee gives betel leaves along with camphor on the day of my Jāgaraṇa, he shall become overlord of the earth consisting of the seven continents.

23. The man who makes a pavilion of flowers, O Lord of Devas, during the observance of my Jāgaraṇa, sports about in my world in the aerial chariot Puṣpaka.

24. If a man offers incense along with camphor and aromatic gum-resin during the observance of my Jāgaraṇa, he burns the sins arising from a hundred thousand births.

25. He who bathes me with curds, milk, ghee and water during the observance of my Jāgaraṇa, will enjoy all pleasures here and in the end attain the greatest goal.

26. He who offers divine garments and different kinds of fruits, stays in heaven for a long time depending on the number of threads (in the garment).

27. He who offers ornaments of gold and precious stones to me, stays in my lap for seven Kalpas. He is a favourite of mine.

28. If, at night, during the observance of Jāgaraṇa, the devotee

offers me a lamp with ghee, particularly that extracted from cow's milk, and lights it, he attains for every moment (lit. eye-wink) the benefit of (giving away) ten thousand cows.

29. If, O Four-faced One, the devotee lights a lamp along with camphor during the observance of my Jāgaraṇa and performs the Nīrājana rite, he obtains the benefit of gifting away a tawny-coloured cow.

30. He who offers lamp, organises song and dance programmes and worships me, attains the benefit on a par with that of a hundred sacrifices along with Vratas and hundreds of charitable gifts.

31. He who composes songs himself and sings and dances too without shyness, shall attain in half a moment the benefit of performing ten million Yajñas.

32. He who forbids songs and dances during the observance of my Jāgaraṇa is cooked (and tortured) in Raurava and other (hells) for sixty thousand Yugas.

33. Those who go near the man who dances (at Jāgaraṇa) are let off by Dharmarāja (god of death). They become liberated and attain my region.

34. He who makes fun of the man who dances during the observance of Jāgaraṇa falls into hell and stays there for a period of fourteen Indras.

35. He who devoutly reads the (holy) book (Purāṇa) during the observance of my Jāgaraṇa, shall stay in my presence for as many Yugas as the number of verses (read).

36. The benefit that has been mentioned by learned men, of circumambulations, is not attained even by four crores of sacrifices.

37. O son, he who lights a series of lamps in front of me during the observance of my Jāgaraṇa, is endowed with ten million aerial chariots and he stays in heaven till the end of the Kalpa.

38. The man who reads the stories of my boyhood activities (as in the tenth Skandha *of Bhāgavata*) during the observance of my Jāgaraṇa, shall stay in Śveta Dvīpa for thousands and crores of Yugas.

39. Hence Jāgaraṇa should be observed in both bright as well as dark fortnights.

40. He who reads the (*Bhagavad*) *Gītā* or the Thousand Names (i.e. *Viṣṇu-sahasra-nāma*) at night (during the observance of the holy Jāgaraṇa) shall attain the benefit mentioned in Vedas and Purāṇas.

41. He who makes the gift of a cow during the observance of my Jāgaraṇa, O my son, obtains the benefit of (gifting away) the whole of the earth (with seven continents). There is no doubt about it.

42. The greatest meritorious act of all on the earth, O my son, is the Jāgaraṇa on the Dvādaśī day. It is well known in all the three worlds.

43. Those who observe Jāgaraṇa mentally, verbally and physically do not return at all from my world.

44. He who encourages people (to observe) and (himself) observes Jāgaraṇa at night, attains emperorhood. What has been said by me is true, O son.

45. Those who observed Jāgaraṇa at night were honoured by Kakutstha with charitable gifts in accordance with his capacity. Rare kingdom was obtained by him.

46. The Brāhmaṇa singers, those who play on the musical instruments and those who dance, go to my eternal world along with the female dancers.

47. By observing Jāgaraṇa, those who were desirous of benefits among all those who were born of evil and wicked wombs, attained lordship of the earth, O excellent sage.

48. (Even) Cāṇḍālas and others who were free from desires attained salvation through Jāgaraṇa. There is no caste-distinction among those who observe my Jāgaraṇa.

49. In Kali Age meditation is not sanctifying; in Kali Age the water of Gaṅgā (is not sanctifying); in Kali Age excepting my Jāgaraṇa alone, no *Jāpya* (Mantra for repetition) is sanctifying.

50. When the Dvādaśī day has come, those who observe Jāgaraṇa are the blessed ones undoubtedly in Kali Age. They have accomplished their duties.

51. In this world of men, no man should be averse to the observance of Dvādaśī. (Else) he is sure to make past and future (generations of his family) fall into hell.

52. Of what avail is it if many sons are born? It is better to have one son who is endowed with good qualities and who will redeem all the ancestors through Jāgaraṇa on the Dvādaśī day.

53. If a man reads devoutly the greatness of the rite of Jāgaraṇa described by me, his son born on Dvādaśī day shall redeem a hundred generations of his family.

54. If the Jāgaraṇa rite is observed, O son, the sin of carnally approaching forbidden women and that of eating forbidden food perish.

55-56. If the rite of Jāgaraṇa is performed on Dvādaśī day at night, O Four-faced One, the sin committed unknowingly, the sin committed knowingly, the sin acquired in the previous births, and the sin

acquired in this birth—all these perish, all his tasks are realized, everything thought of by him is accomplished.

57. By the Jāgaraṇa alone on the Dvādaśī day, men attain salvation.

58. The benefit that is obtained through Dvādaśī is not attained by people who reside in Kurukṣetra or in Prayāga in Kali Age.The men who stay there do not have this greatness.

59. O son, neither by thousands of horse-sacrifices nor by plunging into a crore of Tīrthas does one get the benefit which one gets when the Jāgaraṇa is performed on Dvādaśī day.

60. He who reads or listens to the greatness of Dvādaśī shall attain the eternal place. He shall be absolved and purified of all sins.

61. All the wicked Planets always become gentle towards him. He will never have separation from his progeny. Dvādaśī is the cause thereof.

62. He who is always interested in my glory, will never have any mishap. In battle and in the royal household, he will be victorious always.

63. His mind will always be inclined towards virtue. His devotion to me will be devoïd of impurities. As a result of the devotion to Dvādaśī, no sin will affect that man.

64. He will never become a ghost if Jāgaraṇa is observed by him. One who is without Ekādaśī will never have good status in the next world. Hence with every effort that day has to be observed in Kali Age.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

The Greatness of the "Matsya" Festival[1]

Śrī Bhagavān said:

1. Then in the morning on Dvādaśī day, in the bright half of the month of Mārgaśīrṣa, the Matsya festival is to be celebrated by the wise, with due offerings and services in accordance with the injunctions.

1 This chapter is a part of 'Dvādaśī Kalpa' in which it is laid down that a fish of gold should be worshipped with due formalities (vv 23-38) and is to be given to one's preceptor (v 33). The 'fish' comes in this Kalpa as probably fish was the first incarnation of Viṣṇu.

2-7. On the tenth day in the month of Mārgaśīrṣa, with due self-control, the devotee should perform worship of the Lord. The intelligent devotee then should perform the sacred rites in the holy fire in accordance with the injunctions.

Clad in clean clothes, he should, with a delighted mind, cook the consecrated *Havya* rice and walk five steps. Then he should wash his feet. He should then take a twig eight Aṅgulas long from a *Kṣīravṛkṣa* (a tree that exudes milky juice) and brush his teeth. Thereafter, he should perform the *Ācamana* rite carefully.

He then surveys the entire sky and meditates on me, the Lord holding the iron club. He meditates on me as one who is clad in yellow robes, who wears a crown, who has the conch, the discus and the iron-club in his hands, whose lotus-like face is delighted and who is characterised with all distinctive features.

After meditating thus the man takes water in his hand, meditates on the Lord as one present in the middle of the Sun and offers the *Arghya* with the water in his hand. At that time, O Four-faced One, he should utter these words:

8. "O Puṇḍarīkākṣa (Lotus-eyed One), I shall remain without food on the Ekādaśī day and take food on the next day. Be my refuge, O Acyuta."

9. After saying this, he should, on the night (of the same day) repeat the words "(obeisance) to Nārāyaṇa" himself in accordance with the injunctions, in the presence of my idol.

10-11. Then in the morning he should go to a river that joins the sea or any other one, or a lake, or remain in the house itself and take the pure clay therefrom. The man should salute the Lord after taking the clay with the following Mantra and he shall become pure:

12-16. (The Mantra for taking the clay) "O Goddess (Earth), it is by you that all the living beings are always sustained and nourished. By that truth, O auspicious one, remove my sin.

All the Tīrthas within the Cosmic Egg have been touched with their hands by Devas. Therefore, I handle this clay touched (by them) and taken from you.

O Varuṇa, all the *Rasas* (liquids, juices) are perpetually present in you. Therefore, flow on this clay and sanctify it. Do not delay."

After propitiating the clay and water thus, he should apply the same on himself three times by means of the entire lump of clay. It is then washed off in the water. The man shall always take his bath only in

this water. Away from the crocodiles and tortoises, he should take his bath, perform the necessary rites, and go to my abode then.

17-22. There, O great Yogin, he should propitiate Lord Nārāyaṇa, Hari. "Obeisance to Keśava"—(he should worship) the feet. "Obeisance to Dāmodara"—the waist. "Obeisance to Nṛsiṁha"—the pair of knees. "Obeisance to one having Śrivatsa"—the chest. "Obeisance to one having Kaustubha in the navel"—the neck. "Obeisance to Śrīpati"—the bosom. "Obeisance to the conqueror of the three worlds"—the arm. "Obeisance to the soul of everyone"—the head. "Obeisance to the holder of the discus"—the face. "Obeisance to Śrīkara"—(he should worship) the conchshell. "Obeisance to Gaṁbhīra"—the iron club. "Obeisance to Śāntamūrti"—the lotus.

After worshipping Lord Nārāyaṇa, Lord of Devas, thus, the wise devotee should place four pots in front of the Lord. They should be filled with water and smeared with white unguents and sandalpaste. Flower-garlands should be put upon them. The tender leaves of a mango tree must be kept upon them. They should be wrapped in white cloth. Copper vessels with gold pieces in them and filled with gingelly seeds should be placed upon them.

23-24. The four pots are glorified as the four oceans. In the middle of those pots the devotee should keep a pedestal with a cloth in the centre. Upon it a vessel made of gold, silver, copper or wood shall be placed. If a vessel of the kind mentioned before is not available, a cup of the leaf of Palāśa (*Butea frondoza*) is recommended.

25-28. The vessel should be filled with water. A replica of Lord Janārdana in the form of a fish should be made in gold and put in that vessel. It should be fitted with all the ancillaries of the Lord of Devas. It should be adorned with Vedas and Smṛtis. There should be many kinds of foodstuffs, fruits and flowers enhancing the splendour thereof. The Lord should be duly worshipped with scents, incense and cloths: "Just as, O Lord in the form of fish, all the Vedas that had been taken to the nether worlds were lifted up by you, so also, O Keśava, redeem me up from the ocean of the worldly existence." After uttering this he should perform the rite of Jāgaraṇa in front of it.

29-32. (The festival shall be celebrated) in conformity with one's affluence.

When the day has dawned clear, the four pots should be given to four Brāhmaṇas.

The vessel kept in the East shall be given to a Bahvṛca (one who

is conversant with Ṛgveda); that in the South shall be given to a Chāndogya (Sāmavedin); the devotee should give the excellent vessel kept in the West to a person well-versed in Yajurveda. He should give the vessel in the North to anyone he pleases. This is the prescribed procedure.

While giving the vessels away, he should utter thus: "May Ṛgveda be pleased in the East. May Sāmaveda be pleased in the South. May Yajurveda be pleased in the West and may Atharvaveda be pleased in the North."

33. The golden replica of fish should be given to the preceptor after honouring him duly and in the proper order, with scents, incense etc. and cloths.

34. The *Ācārya* should conduct everything including the secret (method of worship) by me s of (the requisite) Mantras. After giving the gifts duly, the donor shall have a crore times the benefit.

35. A base man who, even after getting the preceptor, acts in contravention due to delusion, is cooked (i.e. tortured) in hell in a crore of births.

36. He who offers injunction is called *Guru* by the wise. After giving everything in accordance with the injunction on the Dvādaśī day, he should worship me.

37-39a. He should feed the Brāhmaṇas and present them with monetary gifts according to his capacity. There must be plenty of well-cooked, well-dressed food. Afterwards the man himself should take food along with Brāhmaṇas. He should have full restraint upon his speech and sense-organs. O most excellent one among truthful persons, listen to the benefit and merit of that man who celebrates the Matsya festival in accordance with this procedure.

39b-41. If one has one million mouths and the longevity equal to that of Brahmā, O performer of great holy rites, one can describe (adequately) the benefit of this pious activity.

He who devoutly expounds or listens to this excellent Dvādaśīkalpa shall be liberated from all sins.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

*Efficacy of the Name of Kṛṣṇa**

Śrī Bhagavān said:

1. O excellent interlocutor, I shall decisively and in the proper order describe and explain those questions you have put before. Listen.

2. The Lord of the month of Mārgaśīrṣa is Keśava accompanied by Kīrti. His worship is to be performed as stated before.

3. Considering the Brāhmaṇa as Keśava and his wife as Kīrti, the couple should be duly honoured with clothes, ornaments and cows.

4. O dear one, if the couple is honoured and worshipped, I too am worshipped undoubtedly. Hence the couple should be necessarily honoured. That will give me satisfaction.

5-7. Different kinds of charitable gifts must be made, which will gratify me. They are: the gifts of cows, lands and especially gold, clothes, bed, ornaments, and houses. These should be given. They cause satisfaction to me. Out of all (kinds of) gifts three are proclaimed to be most excellent, viz. land, cow and learning.

8. If these three are given, O dear one, I shall have immeasurable pleasure. Hence in the month of Mārgaśīrṣa these three splendid gifts should be made by men.

9. O sinless one, the procedure of the holy bath has been clearly described by me before. This is undoubtedly the procedure of worship, holy bath and charitable gifts.

10. One who takes but one meal (everyday) and devoutly feeds Brāhmaṇas during the whole month of Mārgaśīrṣa, shall be liberated from sickness and sins.

11. He shall become a great agriculturist and shall have abundant wealth and foodgrains. Of what avail is much talk in this connection? Listen to my great secret.

12. Fire-god and Brāhmaṇa, these two represent my mouth, O bestower of honour. The mouth named Brāhmaṇa is the most excellent one and not so Fire-god.

13. That which is offered as Homa in the mouth named Brāhmaṇa,

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* Purāṇas (especially the later ones) glorify the name of God (be it Śiva or Viṣṇu). But here the glorification of the name Kṛṣṇa comes after describing the importance and the worship etc. of a Brahmin couple who are supposed to represent Viṣṇu and his consort Kīrti in the month of Mārgaśīrṣa and of feeding Brāhmaṇas.

O dear son, shall become a crore of times meritorious. That which is named Fire is dependent upon Brāhmaṇa. Brāhmaṇas are free.

14. Milk-pudding resembling the moon (in whiteness) with plenty of sugar and ghee should be offered as Homa in the mouth of a Brāhmaṇa. It causes delight to me, O son.

15. O son, if you wish for the happiness of wife and sons etc., worship the mouth of Brāhmaṇa with splendid *Modakas*, circular pan-cakes, juice of wild date tree and Pheṇikā sweet fried in ghee. It causes delight to me.

16. In the month of Mārgaśīrṣa, perform *Havana* in the mouth of a Brāhmaṇa with splendid cooked rice that has the lustre and fragrance of (white) lilies, that is served along with Mudga pulse (green gram) and plenty of ghee with good flavour.

17. *Sīkaraka* (a variety of sweet delicacy) that is boiled in milk and ghee with plenty of dried date fruits (called *Khāriks*) and Cāra fruits (*Buchanania latifolia*?), sugar, camphor and coconut kernels causes auspiciousness.

18. Splendid and attractive side-dishes and pickles should be prepared in the month of Mārgaśīrṣa, O Four-faced One, for the sake of Brāhmaṇas.

19. The pleasant Śikhariṇī (a dish with curds, sugar, spices etc. called Śrīkhaṇḍ in Marathi) and other things pleasing to them should be prepared. After making all these things, he should feed Brāhmaṇas with great respect, O son.

20. The more they relish (the sweet) things served and eat them, the greater is my delight. It is a rare thing in the world.

21. Hence the different things should be prepared in such a way that the Brāhmaṇas are pleased. If they are pleased, I am also pleased undoubtedly.

22. Believe, O Four-faced One, I am not speaking untruth to you. This secret has been stated by me for the sake of your welfare, O bestower of honour.

23. Even if they shout rebuke and beat, they are worthy of being bowed to, O bestower of honour, because of my love (for them).

24. This should be done in this manner always, O son, particularly in the month of Mārgaśīrṣa. You had asked, "What should be eaten?", O Brahmā; hear that.

25. My *Ucchiṣṭa* (remnants after taking food) should be eaten by those who are devoted to me. O son, it is sanctifying. It bestows salvation even on sinners.

26. If anyone eats the leavings of my food everyday, he should attain the merit of a hundred Cāndrāyaṇa rites for every lump thereof.

27. The devotees will have two types of food: *Avaśiṣṭa* (that which is not partaken and so left over) and *Ucchiṣṭa* (partially consumed and left over). They do not have any other types of food. Should they take (anything else) they shall perform the expiatory rite of Cāndrāyaṇa.

28. If anyone takes food, drink etc. without dedicating it to me, the food is as bad as the faeces of a dog and the drink just like liquor.

29. Hence, O son, food, drink and medicine should be dedicated to me first and then taken with great devotion. They make what is impure into one that is pure.

30. My *Ucchiṣṭa* yields the benefit of Tīrtha, Yajña etc. It destroys the evils of Kali. It bestows good status even on persons of vicious deeds.

31. No devotee should partake of the food offerings to other deities. By eating the cooked rice of non-devotees one shall fall into hell.

32. Listen attentively to what should be stated about which you have asked. I shall state it out of love for you, though it is a great secret of mine.

33. My name should be uttered particularly in the month of Mārgaśīrṣa.[1] The name Kṛṣṇa should be repeatedly uttered. It is exceedingly pleasing to me.

34-35. This is my vow. Even Suras and Asuras do not know this, O my son. Only he who has sought refuge in me mentally, verbally and physically attains all the worldly desires. He will attain Vaikuṇṭha which is greater than everything and (will have) even my beloved Kamalā (the goddess of fortune).

36. If anyone remembers me everyday uttering 'Kṛṣṇa', 'Kṛṣṇa' continuously, I redeem him from Naraka in the manner in which the lotus comes up breaking through water.

37. He who worships me just for fun, or out of hypocrisy, or due to foolishness, greediness or even fraudulently is my devotee. He does not have to repent.

38. When death is imminent, if people repeat "Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa", O dear son, they will never see Yama even if they are sinners.[2]

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1. As it is the glorification of Mārgaśīrṣa, the name of Kṛṣṇa is recommended—not that this *Japa* is restricted to this period only.

2. The belief in the efficacy of uttering the name of God at the time of death still persists in India. The great reverence for God's name expressed in vv 38-68 is re-echoed and repeated by saints all over India since then.

39. Earlier in his life a man might have committed all sorts of sins. But at the time of death if he remembers (to utter the name) Kṛṣṇa, he shall undoubtedly attain me.

40-41. If a helpless miserable man utters the words "Obeisance to Kṛṣṇa, the great one" he attains the immutable (eternal) region.

When death is imminent, if a person utters "Śrīkṛṣṇa" and gives up his life even as he utters it, the leader of ghosts (i.e. Yama) stands far off and sees him going to heaven.

42. Whether in a cremation ground or in a street, if a person utters "Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa" and dies, O son, he attains me alone. There is no doubt about it.

43. If any man dies anywhere within the sight of my devotees, he shall attain salvation even without remembering me.

44. O son, do not be afraid of the blazing fire of sins. It shall be sprinkled (and put out) with the drops of water issuing from the cloud named Śrīkṛṣṇa.

45. Why should there be any fear of the serpent of Kali that has very sharp fangs? He will perish on being burned by the fire issuing forth from the wood of the name of Śrīkṛṣṇa.

46. Excepting remembering Śrīkṛṣṇa there is no other medicine for men who are burned by the fire of sin and who are separated(?) from performance of Karmas.

47. Just as there is Gaṅgā in Prayāga, Narmadā in Śuklatīrtha and Sarasvatī in Kurukṣetra, so also is the glorification of Śrīkṛṣṇa.

48. Without the remembering of Śrīkṛṣṇa there is no redemption of men who are immersed in the ocean of worldly existence and who are submerged in the waves of great sins.

49. Excepting the remembrance of Śrīkṛṣṇa, there is no other viaticum (provision for a journey) to those who go (to the other world), to the sinning people who do not wish for it (even) at the time of death.

50. There is Gayā, Kāśī, Puṣkara and Kurujāṅgala, O son, in mansions wherein there is the glorification (of the Lord) with the repetition "Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa" everyday.

51. If the tongue of anyone prattles "Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa" always, his life is fruitful, his birth is fruitful, his happiness alone is fruitful.

52. If the two syllables *HA* and *RI* are uttered by anyone at least once, he has girt up his loins for proceeding towards salvation.

53. Sinning people cannot commit as many sins as my name is competent to burn down.

54. If anyone glorifies the Lord by repeating "Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa",

neither his body nor his mind are pierced (by sin). (One will not be touched by) sin and affliction if one glorifies the Lord by saying "Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa".

55. There shall be no ailment or sin in the mind of that man who never forsakes the wholesome and beneficial word *Śrīkṛṣṇa* in Kali Age.

56. On hearing a man repeatedly uttering "Śrīkṛṣṇa" the Lord of the Southern Quarter (Yama) wipes off his sin acquired in the course of hundreds of births.

57. The sin that is not dispelled by hundreds of *Cāndrāyaṇa* (expiatory rites) and thousands of *Parāka* rites, is removed by repeatedly uttering "Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa".

58. I have no pleasure at all (in hearing) crores of other names. When the name *Śrīkṛṣṇa* is uttered, I get more and more delight.

59. The benefit that is proclaimed (as resulting from) performing the rites during crores of lunar and solar eclipses is obtained by uttering "Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa".

60. Such (great) sins as carnally approaching the wife of the preceptor or stealing gold etc. are dispelled by glorifying Śrīkṛṣṇa like snow heated by sunshine.

61. If a person is contaminated with the great sins beginning with carnally approaching forbidden women, he is liberated from them if he glorifies Śrīkṛṣṇa at least once, even at the time of his death.

62. A man may be of impure mind. He may not strictly adhere to the code of good conduct. Even he does not become a ghost, if he glorifies Śrīkṛṣṇa in the end.

63. If, in Kali Age, the tongue does not glorify the good qualities of Śrīkṛṣṇa, let it not exist in the mouth. Let that unchaste one go to the nether worlds.

64. O son, the tongue that glorifies Śrīkṛṣṇa is to be respected by all means whether it is in one's own mouth or in another man's mouth.

65. If it does not glorify the good qualities of Śrīkṛṣṇa day and night, the tongue is a creeper of sin, though called (by the designation) tongue.

66. Let that tongue which is in the form of a disease fall shattered into hundred pieces, if it does not utter "Śrīkṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa, Śrīkṛṣṇa".

67. If a man gets up in the morning and repeats aloud the greatness of the name of Śrīkṛṣṇa, I shall be the bestower of welfare on him. There is no doubt about it.

68. He who recites the greatness of the name of Śrīkṛṣṇa at the time of the three junctions (morning, noon and dusk) shall attain all desires. On death he attains the greatest goal.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

*The Greatness of Śrīmadbhāgavata**

Śrī Bhagavān said:

1. Listen, O Four-faced One, to (the description of) meditation. I shall give it with a delighted mind. By listening to it, a man obtains good fortune on the earth.

2. (The form to be meditated upon)

The Lord is to be meditated upon as follows:[1] The Lord is seated on a lotus-like pedestal placed in a spot paved with and illuminated by precious stones. The Kalpa trees shine nearby. The bejewelled spot shines within a pavilion with golden background surrounded by a glorious park.

3-4. He has the dark-blue lustre of sapphire. He is in the form of a very small child. His tresses, glossy like molasses, are scattered over his face. His face is handsome like the beautiful full-blown lotus surrounded by swarms of bees. His eyes resemble blue lotus.

His cheeks gleam on account of the moving ear-rings. The nose is shapely and beautiful. The lips are red. The whole face is full of smiles. Many ornaments scatter their refulgence round his neck. He holds his nail(?) His eyes resemble a lotus.

5. His chest is soiled and grey-coloured due to the dust particles raised by the cows. His limbs are well-nourished. They gleam like gold. Strings of tinkling bells are tied round his hips and the pairs of beautiful calves and thighs.

6. He shines with the excellent lustre of the lotus-like pairs of hands and feet having the splendour of a Bandhujīva flower. He is

* The next section deals with Bhāgavata Māhātmya, but this chapter is a part of Mārgaśīrṣa Māhātmya and is not related to the next section.

1. For meditation on God some form must be conceived for concentration of the mind. Here vv 2-7 give a beautiful description of Kṛṣṇa as a child. It will appeal to all devotees for meditation.

laughing. There is milk-pudding in his right hand. He holds fresh, pure butter in his left hand.

7. He is fire (that burns down) multitudes of demons who have become a burden to the earth. He is engaged (in the task of) killing Pūtanā and others. The Lord is surrounded by groups of cowherdesses and cowherds. The Lord of Devas is bowed down to by Indra and others.

8. Humble with devotion, he should worship Kṛṣṇa after remembering him early in the morning, along with the Lord of Serpents as well as Vajra (thunderbolt) etc. The devotee should please him with butter like white lotus and with milk mixed with curds.

9. The man who is always endued with faith and piety and who always worships Acyuta in the morning itself, shall ere long attain fully the goddess of fortune and after death he shall go to the purest great abode (Vaikuṇṭha).

10. The Mantra, O son, has previously, at the outset, been mentioned, named Śrīmad-dāmodara.[1] It is fascinating to the entire world. Listen to those who are entitled to its use.

11. O son, this most important Mantra should not be given by you to an undeserving person. The secret that yields Siddhi quickly should be guarded with great effort.

12-16. The preceptor should not accept a disciple who is idle, dirty, distressed and characterized by hypocrisy and delusion. He (the pupil) shall not be indigent, sickly, infuriated, lecherous and lustful. He should not be jealous and malicious, roguish and harsh in speech. He should not be one who has earned wealth unjustly or who is always devoted to other men's wives. He should not be inimical to the learned. He should not be a perpetually ignorant fellow or one who professes to be a scholar. He should not be one who has deviated from his vow or one who is of obscure (or irregular?) means of livelihood. He should not be slanderous or vicious in mind. He should not be voracious, cruel in his activities, or a leader of wicked-minded men. He should not be miserly, sinful, dreadful or one who terrorises persons who seek refuge in him. The preceptor should not accept a disciple who has all (any of) these evil characteristics. If he accepts him, his defects (sins) will affect the preceptor.

17. Just as the defect (mistakes) of a minister affects the king,

1. The author of this section emphasizes *Dāmodara* as the Mantra for meditation and Japa. The qualifications of a disciple to whom the Mantra is to be imparted are given in vv 11-22.

just as the defect of wife affects the husband, so also the defect of disciple passes on to the preceptor undoubtedly.

18-21. Hence the teacher should always test the disciple and only then should he accept him. The disciple should be one who is devoted to the service of the preceptor mentally, verbally and physically. He should not stoop to thieving. He should be endowed with pious qualities (faith, etc.), should endeavour to attain salvation. He should be devoted to the vow of celibacy. He should always be steadfast in the performance of holy rites. He should be cheerful (optimistic) in his mind. He should be pure and not be knavish. His mind shold be free from impurities. He should be devoted to helping others. He should be disinterested. He should be one who causes delight to the preceptor with his mind, body (personal service) and wealth. He should cause delight, O son, to all who depend upon him and shall be pure.

22. (The preceptor) should impart the Mantra to a disciple of only such a nature and not otherwise. If he were to instruct otherwise, the curse of Devas will fall on him.

23. Listen, O son, I shall describe the characteristics of the preceptor too.[1] Only that person who is endowed with these characteristics should be a preceptor to people.

24. He who is impartial in mind, calm and quiescent, devoid of anger, friendly to all men, good in behaviour, great and magnanimous and accords equal treatment to all in the world, is glorified as the (ideal) preceptor.

25. He must always observe my holy rites and vows. He must be one honoured by Vaiṣṇavas. He must be interested in episodes pertaining to me. He must be ever devoted to my festivals.

26. He must be an ocean of mercy and must be perfectly contented. He should be one who helps and obliges all living beings. He must be devoid of desire. He must be an all-rounder and accomplished gentleman. He must be an expert in all lores.

27. He must be capable of dispelling all doubts. He must not be lazy. Such a preceptor is a respected Brāhmaṇa. He knows what happens at different times. He should bless all.

28. The disciple having the characteristics mentioned before should receive that Mantra, O son, from a preceptor of this type, in the month of Mārgaśīrṣa which is my resort.

1. Qualifications of the preceptor are detailed in vv 23-27.

29. A wise man should perform all the Vaiṣṇava Vratas. He should always listen to the great (holy scripture) *Śrīmadbhāgavata* that is my favourite.[1]

30. The Purāṇa named *Śrīmadbhāgavata* is renowned throughout the world. The devotee should listen to it with faith. It causes my satisfaction and pleasure.

31. A man who reads the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* continuously gets the merit of gifting a tawny-coloured cow for every syllable (so read).

32. He who reads or listens to half or even one-fourth of a verse quoted from *Bhāgavata* everyday, shall obtain the merit of (the gift of) a thousand cows.

33. O son, a man who reads with (mental and physical) purity a verse from *Bhāgavata* everyday, attains the merit of (reading) all the eighteen Purāṇas.

34. Vaiṣṇavas stay there where my story is continuously (told). Those men are unaffected by Kali, who always honour my (favourite Purāṇa).

35. Those men who honour in their abode the scriptures of Vaiṣṇavas[2] become rid of all their sins and they are saluted by Suras.

36. If people always honour the scripture *Bhāgavata* in their houses in the Kali Age, if they clap their hands (in praise thereof) and if they shout in joy, I become delighted with them.

37. The Manes drink milk, ghee, honey and water for as many days, O son, as their descendants keep the *Bhāgavata* text in their abodes.

38. Those who devoutly present the *Bhāgavata* scripture to a Vaiṣṇava, reside in my world for thousands and crores of Kalpas.

39. Devas are propitiated till the universal annihilation of all living beings by the men who honour the *Bhāgavata* scripture in their abodes always.

40. If one has in one's abode half of a verse or even one-fourth of it from the excellent *Bhāgavata*, of what use are the collection of hundreds and thousands of other scriptural texts?

41. If, in Kali Age, anyone has no *Bhāgavata* text in his abode, he will never return from the noose of Yama.

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1. The importance of listening to or reading *Śrīmadbhāgavata* is shown in vv 29-34 and in vv 47ff.

2. VV 35-46 describe the efficacy of the *Bhāgavata* if one copy of it is kept in the house.

42. If there is no *Bhāgavata* text in anyone's house in Kali Age, how can he be known as a Vaiṣṇava? He is worse than a Cāṇḍāla.

43. O Lord of the worlds, scriptural texts must be collected even at the cost of all that one possesses. For the sake of propitiating me, O my son, a Vaiṣṇava must do so always.

44. Wherever there is *Bhāgavata*, the holy scripture, in Kali Age, I always stay there along with Devas.

45. All the Tīrthas, (West-flowing and East-flowing) rivers and lakes, Yajñas, the seven cities and all the meritorious mountains are present there.

46. O Lord of the worlds, my scripture should be listened to by one who seeks fame, virtue and victory, for the sake of dispelling sins and by the pious-minded one for the sake of salvation.

47. *Śrīmadbhāgavata* is meritorious. It yields longevity, health and nourishment. By reading or listening to it, one is liberated from all sins.

48. If people do not listen to the great (scripture) *Śrīmadbhāgavata*, O Lord of the worlds, their perpetual master is Yama. It is indeed the truth, the truth (positively).

49. If a man does not go to listen to *Bhāgavata*, O son, particularly on the Ekādaśī day, there is no greater sinner than he.

50. I stay in that house where a verse from *Bhāgavata*, or half of it or even a quarter of it is kept written.

51. Approaching all the hermitages and taking a holy plunge in all the rivers is not as sanctifying unto men as *Śrīmadbhāgavata*.

52. Wherever there is *Śrīmadbhāgavata*, O Four-faced One, I go to that place like a cow fond of her calf.

53. I never abandon that man who is a reader and expounder of my stories, who is always engaged in listening to my stories and who is delighted in his mind (on hearing) my stories.

54. If a man does not stand up on seeing *Śrīmadbhāgavata*, the meritorious scripture, O son, his merit for the whole year perishes.

55. If a man honours *Śrīmadbhāgavata* on seeing it by standing up and bowing down to it, by seeing him I derive matchless pleasure.

56. If on seeing *Bhāgavata* from a distance a person (gladly) proceeds towards it, he shall undoubtedly attain the merit of a horse-sacrifice for every such step.

57. If a man gets up and bows down to *Śrīmadbhāgavata*, I grant to him wealth, sons, wives and devotion.

58. If men devoutly listen to *Śrīmadbhāgavata* offering royal reception and reverence to it, I am won over by them (easily).

59. O righteous one, men who listen devoutly to the great *Śrīmadbhāgavata* during all my festivals give me great delight.

60. I am won over by them through clothes, ornaments, flowers, incense, lamps and presents like a good husband by a good wife.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

*The Greatness of Mathurā**

Brahmā said:

1. O Lord of Devas, which is that holy place in which the month of Mārgaśīrṣa is most celebrated? What is the benefit thereof? O Lord, state everything.

Śrī Bhagavān said:

2. There is a great sacred place of mine well-known as Mathurā. It is very beautiful and well-honoured. It is the place of my birth and is very much loved by me.

3. At Mathurā, O Four-faced One, a devotee obtains the merit of a Tīrtha at every step. Wherever the man may take his holy bath, he is liberated from terrible sins.

4. O son, Mathurā is destructive of sins. It dispels the agony suffered in hells by men of wicked souls devoid of all piety and virtue.

* This Sthala-purāṇa of Mathurā has a tenuous relation with this Māhātmya—only that the month of Mārgaśīrṣa is favourite with Viṣṇu and Viṣṇu-Kṛṣṇa happened to live in Mathurā region in the early part of his life.

In spite of this far-fetched relation, the city of Mathurā had, however, a glorious past since 6th cent. BCE. It is mentioned in the Pāli canon (*Aṅguttara-ṇikāya* I.167, *Majjhima Nikāya* II.84), indirectly in Pāṇini (Varaṇādi gaṇa IV.2.28), Megasthenes, in connection with Heracles (Kṛṣṇa). VāP II.185 records the establishment of Mathurā at Madhuvana by Śatrughna. Hiuen Tsang (7th cent. CE) notes that Brahmanism and Buddhism were equally prominent here. Apart from its historical importance, Varāha Purāṇa devotes about 1000 verses (Chs. 152-178). Bṛhan-Nāradīya (Chs. 79-80), BhP X and Viṣṇu Purāṇa V,VI write a great deal about Mathurā and Kṛṣṇa's association with it. This chapter does not include Tīrthas at Mathurā as has been done in the Badarikā or Ayodhyā-Māhātmya. It is in a way an Appendix to this Māsa-Māhātmya.

5. An ungrateful one, a drink-addict, a thief and a man whose holy vow is interrupted in the middle and broken, is liberated from terrible sins on reaching Mathurā.

6-7. Just as darkness disappears at sunrise, just as mountains run away out of fear of the thunderbolt, just as serpents perish on seeing Garuḍa, just as clouds are scattered on being tossed by wind, just as (worldly) misery is dispelled by the knowledge of reality, just as elephants run away on seeing a lion, so also sins perish at the sight of Mathurā, O son.

8. On seeing Madhupurī a man endowed with faith and devotion becomes purified even if he is a slayer of a Brāhmaṇa. What need one say of other sinners?

9. Sins become desperate and go away from the body of one who is desirous of taking his holy bath in Mathurā and goes there step by step.

10. Even if people go to Mathurā casually or for any business dealings or for service, they rid themselves of sins merely due to their holy bath in Mathurā and go to heaven.

11. Even those who utter the name of this (city) shall undoubtedly attain salvation. There is perpetual Kṛtayuga there; there is Uttarāyaṇa (period of the northern transit of the Sun) there always.

12. He who hears about my temple at Mathurā on being mentioned by another, is liberated from sins.

13. On being seen or touched the particles from the feet of those men who stay there for three nights, O son, sanctify (everything).

14. Just as flames of fire burn clusters of grass, so also the city of Mathurā burns great sins.

15. It is said that the holy bath in all the zones of Mathurā is more efficacious than, and the merit thereof is superior to, the merit earned by bath in all the Tīrthas.

16. Men who remember Mathurā acquire that merit which accrues from a study of the four Vedas.

17. A sin committed elsewhere perishes on approaching a Tīrtha; a sin committed in Tīrthas becomes permanent like adamantine cement.

18. A sin committed at Mathurā perishes at Mathurā itself. By staying there a man obtains (all the aims of life) namely virtue, wealth, love and salvation.

19. Sin that takes ten years elsewhere to be consumed completely, O Four-faced One, takes only ten days in the holy spot of Mathurā.

20. There is nothing in heaven, in nether worlds, in firmament or in the mortal world as dear to me always as Mathurā.

21-23. The holy spot of Mathurā is greater than all other Tīrthas (taken together). It is the place where thirty-three thousand years were spent (by me) in sports in childhood with the cowherds. By remembering Mathurā one attains the same merit as in the whole of the Bhārata sub-continent.

O son, everyday, one attains in Mathurā more merit than that obtained at the river Sannihatī when there is a solar eclipse.

24. In the city of Madhu, O son, one obtains in the Mārgaśīrṣa month that merit which is obtained in Tīrtharāja Prayāga in the course of a full thousand years.

25. In the course of a day in the month of Mārgaśīrṣa, O son, one obtains in Mathurā that merit which is obtained at Vārāṇasī in the course of a full millennium.

26. By (spending) a day in Mathurā one obtains the same merit as is obtained by a man who gifts a plot of land near Godāvarī, in Dvārakā or in Kurukṣetra or who spends six months at Gayā.

27. Neither Dvārakā, nor Kāśī nor Kāñcī can be a Tīrtha (like Mathurā) where Māyāgadādhara (i.e. Viṣṇu) is the deity. If libations are offered to them by means of Yamunā-water, Pitṛs do not desire the offerings of balls of rice.

28. Those men who view Mathurā as though it is an ordinary city should be known as those contaminated with masses of sins.

29. If Mathurā is not seen by one, but one had the desire to visit it, one is reborn in Mathurā wherever one dies.

30. O Four-faced One, one may even count the dust particles of the earth in course of time. But there is no limit to the number of Tīrthas in Mathurā.

31. Oh, do stay! Oh, do stay in the city of Mathurā! I stay there continuously surrounded by cowherd lasses.

32. O ye who are immersed in the ocean of worldly existence, O my other disciples, listen. If you desire for intense and excellent happiness, stay in my city.

33. Alas! People of the world are exceedingly blind; though they have eyes they do not see. Although the holy place of Mathurā is present, they undergo the ordeal of births and deaths.

34. Despite the fact that by good luck they have obtained the incomparable birth in human womb (species), their life has gone in vain. The city of Mathurā was not seen by them.

35. Alas, the weakness of the intellect! Alas, adverse fate and bad luck! Alas, the powerful influence of delusion! Mathurā is not resorted to.

36. He who is inclined towards another place after ignoring Mathurā is deluded by my Māyā. He is stupid and he wanders in the vast expanse of worldly existence.

37. If even after reaching Mathura anyone craves for any other place, how can that evil-minded one acquire perfect knowledge? He displays his ignorance!

38. My city is the goal and refuge unto those who are abandoned by their parents and kinsmen and who have no other go.

39. My city is the goal and refuge unto those who have been overwhelmed by masses of sins, those who have been vanquished by poverty and those who have no other place of resort.

40. It is the most excellent of all spots. It is the greatest secret. Mathurā is the greatest goal unto those who are in search of a worthy goal and refuge.

41. That cannot be obtained through merits; that cannot be acquired through charitable gifts. That cannot be obtained through austerities nor through eulogies. It cannot be secured by means of different kinds of Yogic exercises. It can be obtained only through my grace.

42. At Mathurā, good status can be achieved only by those blessed ones who have steadfast devotion to me, and on whom I have ample favour.

43. One who gives up his life at Mathurā attains that goal which a learned man endowed with Yogic power, who has realized Brahman, attains.

44. There are cities like Kāśī etc. But the most blessed one is Mathurā alone which yields the fourfold salvation (*Sālokya* etc.) through four ways (viz.) of taking birth there, performing the rite of sacred thread-ceremony, observing many vows, and making charitable gifts.

45. With my favour good goal is easily attained here, the goal which cannot be attained even in the course of hundreds of Manvantaras by means of Yogic exercises.

46. Who will not resort to that holy place where there is no fear from sins, where one need not be afraid of Yama and where the fear of stay in a womb (i.e. rebirth) ceases to exist.

47-49. Listen to the merit acquired from Mathurā and the fruit thereof. Those worms, locusts, moths etc. which come to Mathurā and die there become four-armed ones (i.e. having the same form as that

of Viṣṇu i.e. *Sārūpya* type of liberation). Those trees which fall from the banks attain the greatest goal. Dumb, sluggish, blind and deaf people devoid of penance and holy observances and those who die in course of time go to my world.

50. Those who are bitten by serpents, who are killed by animals, those who perish in fire and water and those who die prematurely or accidentally in Mathurā go to my world.

51. Truth! It is the truth, O excellent sage, that I say on my honour. There is nothing else like Mathurā anywhere yielding all that one desires.

52. Which learned man will not resort to Mathurā which bestows on persons who desire the three aims of life (Virtue, Wealth and Love)? It bestows salvation on those who are desirous of salvation and it bestows devotion on one who desires for devotion.

53. The city of Madhu of all these characteristics and good features should be resorted to in the month of Mārgaśīrṣaka. If that is not available, Puṣkara is to be resorted to in accordance with the injunctions.

54. The oldest Kuṇḍa (well) is that of Brahmā, the middle Kuṇḍa is that of Viṣṇu and the youngest one is that having Rudra for its deity. O intelligent one, know this.

55. In all these, O son, one should perform all these rites—holy ablution, charitable gift and Śrāddha in accordance with the injunctions. A splendid worship shall be performed. It is conducive to my delight.

56. The full-moon day, O son, in the month of Mārgaśīrṣa is a great favourite of mine. Whatever meritorious rite is performed on that day shall be pleasing to me.

57. On the full-moon day, O son, one shall perform all these rites of charitable gifts, viz. gift of cows, gift of food, gift of gold and gift of land.

58. On the full-moon day in the month of Mārgaśīrṣa one should make gift of a house. Whatever is done shall be perfect, yielding everlasting merit.

59. Feeding of Brāhmaṇas should be done in accordance with one's affluence. Festival on the completion of a religious observation should be celebrated on the full-moon day itself.

60. O son, Tīrtharāja etc. are not as pleasing to me in the month of Mārgaśīrṣa as Mathurā. If it is not available, Puṣkara (is to be resorted to).

61. At Puṣkara and Mathurā the full-moon day is to be celebrated by intelligent devotees. Wherever it is celebrated it shall be celebrated in accordance with the injunctions.

62. He who does not take holy bath, make charitable gifts and perform worship on the full-moon day is cooked (tortured) in Raurava and other hells for sixty thousand years.

63. Hence by all means, the full-moon day should be honoured by intelligent people. That in the month of Mārgaśīrṣa bestows infinite merit.

64. Listen to the fruit of the merit of that man who devoutly performs all the rites as mentioned by me in the month of Mārgaśīrṣa, of which I am fond.

65. He shall attain that merit which is obtained in ten thousand Tīrthas or by means of crores of holy rites or all the Yajñas.

66. A man without a son obtains a son; a poor man obtains wealth; one who seeks learning shall get learning and one who seeks beauty shall become beautiful.

67. A Brāhmaṇa shall get all Brahminical splendour; a Kṣatriya shall be victorious; a Vaiśya shall acquire lordship over wealth; and a Śūdra shall become purified of all his sins.

68. A man shall attain in the Mārgaśīrṣa month whatever is very difficult to get or inaccessible in the three worlds, O bestower of honour. There is no doubt about it.

69. Although men who are attracted by these desires, O son, are satisfied in the end, O Four-faced One, they do not deserve(?) those desires, O mighty-armed one.

70-71. Very rare indeed is good devotion, the splendid devotion that wins me over. That is attained in the month of Mārgaśīrṣa which is famous (if the glory of the month is heard). This month is conducive to my great pleasure; O Four-faced One, everything is obtained from this through my grace.

:: *End of Mārgaśīrṣa-Māhātmya* ::

SECTION VI: BHĀGAVATA-MĀHĀTMYA

CHAPTER ONE

The Greatness of Vrajabhūmi

Obeisance to Śrī Gaṇeśa

Now begins the glorification of *Śrīmadbhāgavata.*

Vyāsa said:

1. For the perpetual attainment of the bliss of devotion we bow to Kṛṣṇa whose form (accompanied by Śrī Rādhā) is constituted of existence, knowledge and bliss; who incessantly showers infinite happiness and who is the cause of the origin, sustenance and annihilation of the universe.

2. After bowing down to the highly intelligent Sūta who was seated in Naimiṣa forest, sages who were experts in enjoying the nectarine juice of narratives said:

The sages enquired:

3. The king (Yudhiṣṭhira) went away (abdicating his throne) after crowning Vajra (nābha) in the glorious country of Mathurā and his grandson (Parīkṣit) at Hastināpura.[1] What did those two (kings) do?

Sūta replied:

4. After bowing down to Nārāyaṇa, Nara, Narottama[2] the most excellent among men (i.e. Arjuna), Goddess Sarasvatī[2] and Vyāsa, one should uttter (recite) the Purāṇa.

5. When the king (Yudhiṣṭhira) went along the great path (the

1. *Vide* Mbh, *Mahāprasthāna* Ch. 1.
2 Narottama=Kṛṣṇa; Sarasvatī = Rādhā (Commentary)

northern direction), Parīkṣit, the king, went to Mathurā, O Brāhmaṇas, with a desire to see Vajranābha.

6. On knowing that his uncle[1] had come, Vajra was overwhelmed with affection. He approached (to receive) and saluted him and took him to his mansion.

7. That hero whose mind was solely devoted to Kṛṣṇa embraced him. He went inside the abode and bowed down to Hari's wives, Rohiṇī and others.

8. Parīkṣit, the king, was ardently honoured by them. He took rest and after seating himself comfortably said to Vajranābha:

Śrī Parīkṣit said:

9. O dear one, our father and grandfathers were redeemed from great mass of miseries by your predecessors. I too was protected.

10-11. I cannot adequately repay (help) you in return, O dear one. Hence I request you to be engaged happily in (enjoying your) kingdom. You need not have any worries about finance (treasury) and defence (army). Nor need you have any anxiety regarding suppression of enemies. None of these worries should bother you at all.[2] Only the mothers (elderly relatives) should be served well.

12. Avoid all anxieties after leaving them to me.

On hearing this, Vajra was exceedingly pleased. He replied to him:

Śrī Vajranābha said:

13. O king, what you say to me is but proper. I have been obliged by your father by imparting to me the science of archery.

14. Hence I have not the least worry at all, as I firmly uphold my Kṣatriyahood (military expertise). But I have a great worry. Give some thought to it.

15. I have been crowned in Mathurā, yet I am staying in a desolate forest.[3] Where have the subjects of this place gone? I like a kingdom inhabited by subjects.

1. Vajra was the great-grandson (Aniruddha's son) of Kṛṣṇa while Parīkṣit was Subhadrā's (=Kṛṣṇa's) grandson.

2. At the time of Mahāprasthāna Yudhiṣṭhira instructed Subhadrā to protect Vajra who was then quite a junior king (Mbh, *Mahāprasthāna* 1.8-9). Hence this solicitude on behalf of Parīkṣit.

3. Both *Varāha* (Ch. 153 and 161.6-10) and *Nāradīya* (Uttarārdha 79.10-18) record that there were twelve forests near Mathurā. But Mbh is not clear about the desolateness of the region.

16. On being told thus, Viṣṇurāta (i.e. Parīkṣit) invited Śāṇḍilya, the priest of Nanda, and others in order to dispel the doubt of Vajra.

17. Śāṇḍilya immediately left his cottage and came there. Duly honoured by Vajranābha, he occupied an excellent seat.

18. Parīkṣit made some introductory remarks. Then (the sage) who was exceedingly delighted, said thus consoling both of them:

Śrī Śāṇḍilya said:

19. Listen attentively to me (as I recount) the secret of the land called Vraja. The root √*vraj* means 'to spread'. As the land spread extensively, it is called Vraja.[1]

20. Supreme Brahman is beyond Guṇas. It is pervasive and is called Vraja. It is the greatest splendour and of the nature of perpetual bliss. It is the immutable region of the liberated ones.

21. In that (land) Kṛṣṇa, the son of Nanda, is seen by the people immersed in love, as one whose form is of perpetual bliss. He is one who has realized all his desires. He sports within his Ātman. He is seen by those full of love (devotees like Nārada).

22. His Atman is Rādhikā. Since he sports with her, he is said to be 'one sporting and rejoicing in the soul', by learned men who know mysterious things.

23. His desired ones are the cows, the cowherds and the cowherdesses. They are always present near him for sport. Therefore, he is *Āptakāma* ('one who has realized his desires').

24. This is his secret. He is said to be beyond Prakṛti. As he sports with Prakṛti, his sport (with Prakṛti) is experienced by others.

25. His sport consists of creation, sustenance and annihilation by means of Rajas, Sattva and Tamas Guṇas. This sport is of two kinds: the real and the ordinary or customary.

26. The real sport is worthy of being known by Himself alone (with the experience of bliss along with his devotees—*Commentary*). The customary one is that which is understood by the individual souls. The second one cannot take place without the first and the second one does not reach as far as the first anywhere.

27-30. His *Vyāvahārikī Līlā* (ordinary sport) is within the range of our experience where the worlds, Bhūmi etc. exist. The region of Mathurā is on this earth and it is here that the land of Vraja too exists.

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1. The etymology of Vraja is understandable. But the esoteric explanation in vv 20 ff is for the consumption of staunch believers.

It is there that the truth is well concealed. At times it is revealed to those who are full of love (for him). It is wholly revealed to them.

Some time at the end of Dvāpara, those who are knowers of the secret sports (of the Lord) gather together as now. At that time Hari shall incarnate along with his (folk) in order to assimilate his desired ones into himself and his (folk). Then the Devas and others too incarnate all round (him).

31-34. After fulfilling the desires of everyone, Hari vanished. Therefore, three types of people remained here undoubtedly. They are *Nityas* (permanent folk). *Tallipsus* (those who desire to obtain him) and *Devādyas* (Devas and others). *Devādyas* were formerly taken to Dvārakā by Kṛṣṇa. Again through the means of the *Muśala* (Pestle used in the fratricidal fight among the Yādavas) they were assimilated into himself.

Tallipsus who are always in the form of love and bliss were converted into *Nityas* belonging to himself and merged within them. All the *Nityas* being undeserved to be seen by ordinary unworthy people attained invisibility.

35. Ordinary people (lit. people in the ordinary sport of the Lord) who came to see the people authorized (to participate in the secret sports of the Lord) did (could) not see them. Hence they departed rendering Vraja desolate all round.

36. Hence, O Vajranābha, you need not worry at all. At my behest colonize many villages here. You will achieve *Siddhi* (success in the undertaking).

37. In accordance with the sports of Kṛṣṇa, you should name the villages you establish. Thereby you shall serve this great earth.

38. You must establish your realm in Govardhana, Dīrghapura, Mathurā, Mahāvana (Great Forest), Nandigrāma and Bṛhatsānu.

39-42. As you resort to the river, mountains, water-troughs, holy pits and groves, the subjects in your land shall be very affluent and you will be delighted.

This earth of Brahman consisting of existence, knowledge and bliss should be served by you carefully. With my blessings let Kṛṣṇa's regions be prosperous here. By serving this, O Vajra, Uddhava will meet you. Thereupon you and the mothers shall know the secret (doctrine) from him.

After saying this Śāṇḍilya went away remembering Kṛṣṇa. Viṣṇurāta and Vajra attained great delight.

CHAPTER TWO

Parīkṣit and Others Meet Uddhava

The glorious sages asked:

1. When Śāṇḍilya returned to his hermitage after instructing them thus, O Sūta, how and what did those two kings do? Narrate it.

Śrī Sūta said:

2. Thereafter thousands of Śreṇimukhyas (leaders of the guilds of traders, artisans etc.) were brought to Mathurā from Indraprastha by Viṣṇurāta.

3. After knowing (from scriptural texts) that the Mathurā Brāhmaṇas were monkeys (? of Rāma) formerly, the Emperor conferred on them special honour and respectability.

4-6. With his help and the blessings of Śāṇḍilya, Vajra came to know the various spots of the sports of Govinda, the cowherdesses and cowherds. He named them duly and established them. He made many village settlements and colonies. Ponds, wells, lakes and other amenities for the public were constructed. Idols (and Liṅgas) of Śiva and other deities were installed. The images of Govinda, Hari (? Indra) and other Devas were installed. He propagated exclusive devotion to Kṛṣṇa in his realm and rejoiced.

7. The subjects were joyous. His subjects were eagerly engrossed in glorifying Kṛṣṇa. They were endued richly with the greatest bliss. They eulogized his kingdom.

8. Once the wives of Kṛṣṇa who were distressed due to separation from him, saw Kālindī rejoicing. Without any jealousy or malice they asked her:

Śrīkṛṣṇa's wives asked:

9. Just as we were the wives of Kṛṣṇa, so you too were, O splendid lady. We are agitated and distressed due to the separation from him, while you are not. Tell (us the reason thereof).

10. On hearing those words and noticing their jealousy, Kālindī mentally pitied them. She smilingly spoke these words:

Śrī Kālindī said:

11. Kṛṣṇa is Ātmārāma (i.e. one who rejoices in the Ātman). Certainly Rādhikā is his Ātman. As a result of being her servant, the pangs of separation will not afflict us.

12. All the heroines (beloved ones) of Śrīkṛṣṇa are the extensions of her own parts. There is perpetual union (with Kṛṣṇa) due to our perpetual presence (attendance) near her.

13. She is he (Kṛṣṇa) himself. He is she (Rādhā) herself. The Vaṁśī (flute) is the form of their love. It is known as Candrāvalī, because it has contact with the moon-like nails of Śrīkṛṣṇa.

14. Being ardently desirous of serving them (Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa) both, Rukmiṇī (and other chief queens) assumed another form and entered and got identified with it (the flute, the symbol of the love of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa). I have been witness to it.

Or

(Rukmiṇī and other chief queens were the parts of Rādhā. Where have they gone?) The queens being extremely desirous of serving them (Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa) assumed another form and merged themselves in Rādhā. I have witnessed their merger.

15. In your case too there is absolutely no separation from Kṛṣṇa at all. But you do not realize it. Hence, you have become agitated and distressed.

16. Formerly, at the time of the arrival of Akrūra the cowherdesses too experienced an apparent separation. But it was dispelled (and the Gopīs) were pacified by Uddhava.

17. If you come into contact with him alone here, you can have perpetual sport with your lover.

Śrī Sūta said:

18. On being told thus, those wives (of Śrīkṛṣṇa) became eager to come into contact with their lover after seeing Uddhava. They spoke again (to Kālindī) who was delighted.

Śrīkṛṣṇa's wives said:

19. Blessed are you, O friend, since you have no separation from your lover. We would have become the servants of (that lady) through whom you have achieved your purpose.

20. But, should we meet Uddhava, all our objects will be realized. Hence, O Kālindī, tell that means whereby we can meet him (Uddhava).

Śrī Sūta said:

21. On being told thus, Kālindī remembered the sixteen Kalās of Kṛṣṇa resembling the Moon and then replied to them:

22. "While going (to Vaikuṇṭha) Kṛṣṇa said to his minister (Uddhava) that Badarī (Badarikāśrama) was the land of preparation (penance) for obtaining an object. He stays there in the visible form imparting knowledge (about Kṛṣṇa).

23. The land of Vraja is the land of fruition (enjoying fruits) of the penance. It has been formerly given to him along with its secrets. The fruit (i.e. Kṛṣṇa) is invisible (regarding place of Rāsa etc.). So Uddhava stays here invisible now.

24. Near the Govardhana mountain, in the Sakhīsthala (? in the spot of Kṛṣṇa's friends—Gopīs) Uddhava is indeed present in the form of sprouts and creepers, because he is desirous of their dust particles.

25-27. The form of his own festival has been definitely transferred to him by Hari. Hence all of you, along with Vajra should stay in the neighbourhood of Kusumasaras (Flower-Lake). You must bring together all the persons ardently attached to Hari and the festival should be begun (celebrated), with recitation (of Hari's glory), sweet songs and musical instruments like lute, flute and Mṛdaṅga drums.

When the great festival is being elaborately celebrated, you will definitely meet Uddhava. That meeting will surely result in the complete attainment of your desired objects."

Śrī Sūta said:

28. On hearing this they became delighted. They saluted Kālindī and returned. They reported everything to Vajra and Parīkṣit.

29. On hearing it, Viṣṇurāta (i.e. Parīkṣit) became pleased. Accompanied by them he went to that place and got everything performed immediately.

30. The festival of the glorification of Kṛṣṇa began at the Flower-Lake in the spot Sakhīsthala in the Vṛndāvana forest not far from Govardhana.

31. When the actual dance (and other sports) of the lover of the daughter of Vṛṣabhānu revived once again on account of the power of Kṛṣṇa (glorification of Kṛṣṇa), all had their eyes (fixed on him only) turned to nothing else.

32. Then, even as all of them were watching, Uddhava emerged from the cluster of grasses, creepers and hedges. He was dark in complexion with garlands (round his neck) and was clad in yellow robes.

33-34. He had garlands of Guñjā (a red and black berry). He was repeatedly singing the glory of the lover of the cowherd lasses. When he came, the festival of glorification became very much graceful like the crystals on the attics and terraces when the moon rises. All of them were immersed in the ocean of bliss. All of them forgot (everything else).

35. On seeing Uddhava in the form of Śrīkṛṣṇa, they gained perfect knowledge instantaneously. Having realized their desires they worshipped Uddhava.

CHAPTER THREE

Dialogue between Parīkṣit and Uddhava

Śrī Sūta said:

1. On observing them eagerly engaged in glorifying Kṛṣṇa, Uddhava received them ardently, embraced Parīkṣit and said:

Uddhava said:

2. O king, you are full of devotion solely to Kṛṣṇa. You are continuously engrossed in the festival of the glorification of Śrīkṛṣṇa. Indeed you are blessed!

3. O dear one, the power of your limbs was granted to you by Kṛṣṇa (Kṛṣṇa resuscitated your life). Hence this is befitting unto you. Fortunately you have evinced your affection for the wives of Kṛṣṇa and also for Vajra.

4. Among all those residents of Dvārakā, blessed are all those who were asked to migrate to Vraja by the Lord by instructing Pārtha (to settle them there).

5. Like the moon, the mind of Śrīkṛṣṇa, accompanied by the refulgence of the face of Rādhā, always shines, beautifying that forest of sports by means of its rays.

6. Lord Kṛṣṇa, the Moon, is always full. His sixteen digits are non-different from the refulgence of thousands of *Cits* (Gopīs or Kṛṣṇa's queens). Here his form and likeness exist.

7. Thus, O eminent king, Vajra is the dispeller of the fear of those who resort to him. His place is at the right foot of Śrīkṛṣṇa. (This suggests the Vajra mark on Kṛṣṇa's sole.).

8. In this incarnation, the Yogic Māyā was very much displayed by Kṛṣṇa. On account of its power all these are undoubtedly languishing with self-oblivion (forgetting their own nature).

9. Without the light of Kṛṣṇa no one shall have self-enlightenment. That light is always hidden by Māyā in the case of the individual souls.

10. Towards the end of the twenty-eighth Dvāpara, when Hari himself would remove his own Māyā, that light could be manifested.

11. That time has passed off. Therefore, listen to this other suggestion. On other occasions, that light can issue forth from *Śrīmadbhāgavata.*[1]

12. Certainly Śrīkṛṣṇa is present at that place and time where and when the scripture *Śrīmadbhāgavata* is expounded and listened to by Bhāgavatas (devotees, followers of the Lord).

13. Lord Kṛṣṇa graces that place also along with the cowherd lasses—the place where a verse of *Śrīmadbhāgavata* or half of it is present.

14. If, after being born as human beings in Bhārata, people have not heard about *Bhāgavata*, self-murder has been committed by them.

15. The lines of families of their father, mother and wife have been redeemed by the people who have continuously resorted to the (study, recitation of or listening to) the scripture *Śrīmadbhāgavata.*

16. From *Śrīmadbhāgavata* Brāhmaṇas will derive the enlightenment of learning, kings victory over their enemies, Vaiśyas plenty of wealth and Śūdras good health.

17. Women and other people shall obtain the realization of their desires. So which fortunate man will not continuously resort to *Bhāgavata*?

18. It is only after fruition of the merits of many births that a person can obtain *Śrīmadbhāgavata.* Enlightenment and devotion to God result therefrom.

19. Formerly *Śrīmadbhāgavata* was obtained by Bṛhaspati through the grace of Sāṁkhyāyana. Bṛhaspati imparted it to me. Therefore, I am a lover of Kṛṣṇa.

20. O Viṣṇurāta, know the anecdote told by him. In it the traditional (mode) of listening to *Bhāgavata* (is also obtained).

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1. From this verse onwards the glorification of *Śrīmadbhāgavata* and its recitation follows.

Śrī Bṛhaspati said:

21-23a. When Kṛṣṇa who had assumed the form of *Māyāpuruṣa* was beholding, three Puruṣas, viz. Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva rose up with the Guṇas Rajas, Sattva and Tamas. (The Lord) then employed them in the work of creation, sustenance and annihilation respectively.

Brahmā who was born of the lotus at his navel, submitted to him:

Brahmā said:

23b-24. O Nārāyaṇa, O Primordial Being, O Supreme Ātman, I offer obeisance to you. I have been engaged in the work of creation by you. Take pity on me lest the evil Rajas Guṇa should obstruct me while remembering you.

Śrī Bṛhaspati said:

25-27. Formerly the Lord imparted *Śrīmadbhāgavata* to him and advised him in the following words:[1] "O Brahmā, resort to this for the sake of your Siddhi." Thereupon, Brahmā became exceedingly pleased. Therefore, in order to attain Kṛṣṇa permanently and to break through the seven *Āvaraṇas* (coverings) (viz. two of auspicious and inauspicious Karmas plus five of Avidyā), he spent seven days. By resorting to (reading) *Śrīmadbhāgavata* for seven days he realized his desire. He continues to create again and again resorting to the *Saptāha* (i.e. study/reading/expounding spread over seven days) of *Bhāgavata.*

28. Viṣṇu too requested the Puruṣa for the accomplishment of his purpose, since the work of protecting the subjects had been allotted to him by the Puruṣa.

Śrī Viṣṇu said:

29-32. O Lord, I shall carry on the protection of the subjects in a suitable manner by means of Pravṛtti (active engagement) and Nivṛtti (renunciation) of Karma as well as *Jñāna* (perfect knowledge).

In course of time, whenever there is decline of Dharma, I shall

1. VV 25ff prescribe different periods of recitation:
   (1) God Brahmā—work creation—period of Bhāgavata recitation—seven days.
   (2) God Viṣṇu—work protection—period of Bhāgavata recitation 30 days—when Viṣṇu is the expounder.
   (2A) When Lakṣmī is the expounder—period of recitation of BhP—two months.
   (3) God Rudra—work annihilation—period of recitation one year.

reestablish it by means of incarnations (such as Divine Fish, Tortoise). I shall certainly grant the benefit of Yajñas to those who seek worldly pleasures. To those who are devoid of attachment and who seek salvation, I shall accord salvation of five types, viz. (1) stay in the same region, (2) similarity of power, (3) vicinity to God, (4) similarity of form, (5) identity with God. But, how shall I protect those people who do not desire salvation too? How shall I protect myself and Śrī (goddess Lakṣmī)? Tell me.

33. The primordial Being imparted *Śrīmadbhāgavata* to him too and said: "Read this for the sake of realizing all your objectives."

34-35. Thereupon, Viṣṇu became delighted in his mind. Remembering *Bhāgavata* every month (i.e. reading fully once) along with Śrī, he became capable of protecting (the subjects) genuinely.

When Viṣṇu himself is the expounder and Lakṣmī is engaged in listening, the duration of the process is one month.

36. When Lakṣmī herself expounds and Viṣṇu is engaged in listening, the duration of enjoying its contents is two months.

37. Viṣṇu is officially engaged in his duty; but Lakṣmī is mentally carefree. Hence her exposition of *Bhāgavata* is better.

38. Rudra too who was formerly engaged in the duty of annihilation, requested that Lord Puruṣa for the sake of enhancing his ability.

Śrī Rudra said:

39-40. O Lord of Devas, O my Lord, I have ample power in the case of the annihilation of *Nitya* (daily), *Naimittika* (occasional) and *Prākṛta* (pertaining to Prakṛti) types. But I do not have any power in regard to *Ātyantika* (ultimate) annihilation. On account of this, I am very unhappy; therefore, I request you.

Śrī Bṛhaspati said:

41. Nārāyaṇa imparted *Śrīmadbhāgavata* to him also. By resorting to it, he conquered the Tamas Guṇa.

42. The story of *Bhāgavata* was resorted to (read) by him for a period of one year. Thereby Sadāśiva obtained the power (to manage) the ultimate annihilation as well.

Uddhava said:

43-44. On hearing this narrative in regard to the greatness of

Śrīmadbhāgavata from my preceptor (from Bṛhaspati) and on getting the *Bhāgavata* text, I rejoiced much and I bowed down to him. Therefore, I adopted the procedure of the Vaiṣṇavas and for full one month *Śrīmadbhāgavata* was ardently resorted to by me.

45-46. By that alone I became the beloved companion of Kṛṣṇa. Then I was sent with an errand to Vraja to the group of his beloved ones.

The Lord continued to be perpetually sporting even while the cowherd lasses were in agony due to the separation. The message of *Śrīmadbhāgavata* was sent over to them through me.

47. After receiving it in accordance with their intellectual capacity, they became free from the pangs of separation. I could not know the secret thereof. But the miracle was seen.

48. After requesting Kṛṣṇa for his stay in heaven, Brahmā and others went away. Then Śrīkṛṣṇa himself gave me that secret in *Bhāgavata.*

49. In front of the root of *Aśvattha* (Pippla tree) he made it firmly fixed in me. Therefore, having gone to Badarī I stay here in the creepers of Vraja.

50. So I stay always as I please in the Nārada Kuṇḍa here. Devotees will get the knowledge of Kṛṣṇa from *Śrīmadbhāgavata.*

51. Therefore, for the sake of these, I shall expound *Śrīmadbhāgavata.* In this matter you should assist me.

Śrī Sūta said:

52a. On hearing it, Viṣṇurāta bowed down to Uddhava and said:

Śrī Parīkṣit said:

52b-53a. O servant of Hari, *Śrīmadbhāgavata* must be glorified by you (expounded by you). I may be commanded to assist you in any task that can be done by me.

Śrī Sūta said:

53b. On hearing this Uddhava was delighted in his mind. He spoke these words:

Uddhava said:

54-56. When the earth is left behind by Śrīkṛṣṇa, the powerful Kali will create great obstacles whenever any good work is started.

Hence proceed on a campaign of conquest of the quarters. Restrain and subdue Kali. I shall adopt the procedure of the Vaiṣṇavas and in the course of a month spread the gospel of *Śrīmadbhāgavata* with your assistance. Thereby, I shall enable these to attain the permanent abode of the Slayer of Madhu.

Śrī Sūta said:

57. On hearing his words, the king was joyous as well as worried (a little). Then he intimated to Uddhava his own opinion.

Śrī Parīkṣit said:

58-59. O dear one, at your behest I shall restrain and subdue Kali. But how will I attain (the benefit) of *Śrībhāgavata*? I have resorted to your feet. I am to be blessed.

Śrī Sūta said:

On hearing these words Uddhava said to him once again:

Uddhava said:

60. O king, no anxiety or worry need to entertained by you at all, since the most important person authorized in the scripture of the Lord is you yourself.

61. Till this time men devoted to Karma have not even news whatsoever of the holy text of *Bhāgavata*.

62. With your favour in the region of Bhārata many men will attain permanent happiness after the acquisition of (hearing) *Śrīmadbhāgavata*.

63. The great holy sage Śrīśuka who is in the form of Lord Kṛṣṇa himself will undoubtedly recount to you *Śrīmadbhāgavata*.[1]

64. Thereby, O king, you will attain the eternal abode of the Lord of Vraja. Thereafter, *Śrīmadbhāgavata* will begin to spread on the earth.

65. Hence, O great king, go. Restrain and subdue Kali.

Śrī Sūta said:

On being told thus, the king circumambulated him and went for the conquest of the quarters.

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1. **The historical fact of Śuka's recitation of *Bhāgavata* to Parīkṣit is expressed in a prophetic vein.**

66. Vajra made Pratibāhu the lord of his own kingdom. Hoping to secure *Bhāgavata*, he remained there itself along with the mothers.

67. Then in Vṛndāvana near Govardhana the joyful exposition of *Śrīmadbhāgavata* lasting for a month was inaugurated by Uddhava.

68-71. While the gospel (of *Bhāgavata*) was being enjoyed, Hari's *Līlā* (sport) in the form of existence, knowledge and bliss manifested everywhere. So also Kṛṣṇa. All people saw themselves stationed within him. On seeing himself in the lotus-like right foot of Kṛṣṇa, Vajra was rid of the pangs of separation from Kṛṣṇa. He shone on that ground. The mothers were amazed on seeing themselves as refulgence of the digits in Kṛṣṇa, the moon shining on the night of Rāsa dance. Liberated from the ailment of separation from their dearest beloved, they went over to their own region.

72-73. Others too who were there entered the eternal Līlā (graceful sports). Immediately they became invisible to the ordinary world of everyday life.

They rejoice continuously with Kṛṣṇa in the bowers of Govardhana, in the (middle of the) cows, in Vṛndāvana etc. They are seen by persons who love and who are devoted to them.

Śrī Sūta said:

74. He who listens to and glorifies this attainment of the Lord shall attain the Lord himself. His miseries will be dispelled.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Recitation of Bhāgavata

The glorious sages said:

1-2. Well done! O Sūta, live long! Guide us like this for a long time. The unprecedented greatness of *Śrībhāgavata* has been heard directly from your mouth.

Tell us its form, its extent and the mode of listening to it. O Sūta, tell us the qualification of its expounder as well as of the listener now.

Śrī Sūta said:

3. Identical is the form of *Śrīmadbhāgavata* as well as of the glorious Lord. It is characterized by existence, knowledge and bliss.

4. Know that *Bhāgavata* is that statement which spreads out and expands, manifesting to the devotees of Śrīkṛṣṇa the sweetness of (the devotion to or the life of) Śrīkṛṣṇa.

5. Know that statement to be *Bhāgavata* which treats of the four (topics), viz. (scriptural) knowledge, experience or realization thereof, devotion (characterised by Love of God) and its auxiliaries (viz. *Śravaṇa*–hearing, *Kīrtana*–glorification of God etc.) and is capable of suppressing Māyā.

6. Who can know the extent of *Bhāgavata*, the form of which is characterised by infinity and imperishability? Its direction was shown to God Brahmā in four verses by Viṣṇu.

7. O Brāhmaṇa, only those, i.e. Brahmā, Viṣṇu, Śiva etc. are capable of realizing their desires by plunging deeply into his infinite nature (and not people like us).

8-9. In the case of human beings of limited intellectual and other capacities, the dialogue between Śuka and Parīkṣit, as described by Vyāsa, is conducive to their welfare. It is a sacred text of eighteen thousand verses as composed by Vyāsa. It alone is the greatest support to those who are caught by the crocodile in the form of Kali.

10. The listeners of the holy anecdotes of Viṣṇu are now ascertained. The listeners are considered to be of two types: the *Pravaras* (the superior ones) and the *Avaras* (the inferior ones).[1]

11. The *Pravaras* are Cātakas (ruddy geese), swans, parrots, fish etc. Wolves, Bhūruṇḍa birds, bulls, camels etc. are said to be *Avaras*.

12. If a person discards all other sacred works and takes to the vow of listening to Kṛṣṇa Śāstra (scriptural texts belonging to Kṛṣṇa), he is Cātaka (like the ruddy goose) which is solely dependent on the water released by clouds.

13. The Haṁsa (Swan) variety of listener is he who takes the essence from the different kinds of (scriptures) heard by him, just like a swan which takes up pure milk from a mixture of water and milk.

14. A well-trained parrot delights the trainer as well as the bystanders. In the same manner, the Śuka type of listener speaks very well and in limited words also and delights the expounder (of *Bhāgavata* etc.) as well as other listeners.

15. The listener of the *Mīna* (fish) type never makes any sound. He is winkless and he appreciates the excellence of the exposition. He

1. VV 10-20 give an interesting classification of the listeners. Birds and animals symbolize certain characteristics.

is affectionate also. He is like the glossy fish in the ocean of milk.

16. The listener who shouts and inflicts pain on *Rasikas* (those who have good taste and who appreciate excellence or beauty in literature etc.) and other listeners and who is also very ignorant is the *Vṛka* type. He is like the wolf which inflicts pain on deer in the forest eagerly listening to the sound of the flute.

17. The bird named Bhūruṇḍa is found on the peeks of the Himālaya mountain. The listener of the Bhūruṇḍa type may teach others but he himself does not act according to (the advices) heard by him.

18. The listener of the Vṛṣa (Bull) type is intellectually blind to both the essential and the inessential. He takes in everything heard by him just like the bull which indiscriminately swallows the tasty grapes as well as the oil cake.

19. The Uṣṭra (Camel) type of listener leaves off the sweet things and takes delight in the opposite ones like the camel which grazes the (bitter) margosa fruit setting aside the (sweet) mango mixed with it.

20. There are many other sub-divisions of the two types, viz. *Bhṛṅgas* (Bees), *Kharas* (Mules) etc. They should be known from their respective behaviours originating from their inborn nature.

21. He who has the following characteristics is spoken as a genuine listener by the expounders[1]: He duly bows down and sits face to face. He forsakes discussion about other things. He desires to listen (more and more) about the graceful sports of Hari. He is very clever (in understanding things). He is humble. He keeps his palms joined in reverence. He is (like) a trustworthy disciple. He is interested in reflecting upon the problem and the question under discussion. He is clean (in body and mind). He is always a favourite of Kṛṣṇa's men.

22. The expounder of (*Bhāgavata)* with the following characteristics is honoured by sages[2]: His mind dwells in the Lord. He does not expect (any special reward etc.). He is good at heart. He takes pity on the poor people. He is very clever in making others understand things in diverse ways.

23. Then, O Brāhmaṇas, listen to the procedure of and the injunctions regarding the rite of serving (i.e. listening to) *Śrībhāgavata* in any place in the land of Bhārata. Thereby there shall be continuous happiness.

24. It should be known that resorting (listening) to *Bhāgavata* is

1. Qualifications of the listeners to BhP.
2. Characteristics of the expounder of BhP.

of four types,[1] viz. Rājasa, Sāttvika, Tāmasa and Nirguṇa (devoid of Guṇas).

25. The Rājasa type of listening to *Bhāgavata* is of seven days duration. It is celebrated like a Yajña. Elaborate and strenuous preparations are made. There is haste (to conclude the function). There is gaiety of course. It is splendid with much adoration and worships.

26. The Sāttvika type of listening to it is of a month's or a *Ṛtu's* (season of two months) duration. It is unblended (i.e. it is not connected with any elaborate festival etc.). It does not involve much strain. It increases the delight of everyone.

27. The Tāmasa type is a protracted one taking a year for completion. It is slack and slothful without much of religious faith and ardour. The listeners may forget (much) and remember (only a little). Even this type of listening yields happiness.

28. Eschewing all tenacious insistence on the observance of limiting the duration (of listening to *Bhāgavata*) to stipulated number of days, months or years, if the devotee continues to listen forever with loving devotion, it is considered to be Nirguṇa.

29. In regard to the dialogue of Parīkṣit (and Śuka) the *Sevana* (serving i.e. listening to) is glorified as Nirguṇa. The fact that there is a mention of seven days' duration therein is due to the number of (remaining) days of king's life.

30. Elsewhere the listening shall be of any of the three Guṇas or Nirguṇa according to one's own will. (The main point is that) Somehow one should listen to the holy text of the Lord.

31. *Bhāgavata* is an asset (wealth) unto those people who eagerly relish the worship and glorification of Śrīkṛṣṇa's divine sports and who do not desire even salvation.

32. This is an antidote against all the ills of worldly existence unto those persons who wish for salvation and who are disgusted with the distress of mundane existence. This should be resorted to in Kali with all care and efforts.

33-34. There are many persons who take delight in sensuous pleasures. They desire worldly happiness. By means of the path of Karma, it is not possible for them now, in Kali, to realize their desires. It is very difficult for them to achieve their ends due to their lack of ability, wealth and the specialized knowledge thereof. So the holy story of *Śrīmadbhāgavata* should be resorted to by them also.

35. The holy tale of the Lord shall yield wealth, sons, wives,

1. VV 24-28 describe four types of listening to BhP.

vehicles etc., fame, abodes and a kingdom free from enemies.

36. After enjoying all mentally desired excellent worldly pleasures here in this world, they attain the region of Śrī Hari through the contact of *Śrībhāgavata.*

37. By means of physical body and wealth one should render service to the place where the exposition of the story of *Bhāgavata* takes place, and to the persons who are eager to listen to it.

38-40. One shall thus have the benefit of resorting to *Śrībhāgavata* by their kindness.

Everything other than Śrīkṛṣṇa is termed *Dhana* (wealth). The listener as well as the expounder is considered to be of two types, viz. *Kṛṣṇārthī* (one who seeks Kṛṣṇa) and *Dhanārthī* (one who seeks wealth i.e. everything other than Kṛṣṇa). If the expounder and the listener are of the same type the happiness there increases. If both of them belong to different categories there shall be *Rasābhāsa* (failure of enjoyment).

In that case there shall be deprivation of the benefit. But the achievement of the benefit of *Kṛṣṇārthīs* shall definitely take place though it may be delayed.

41. The achievement of the results by *Dhanārthīs* is on account of the completion of procedure. Ardent love alone is the excellent method in the case of a *Kṛṣṇārthī*[1] though he may be devoid of good qualities.

42-43. If a devotee has any desire, he has to follow the following procedure till the end. He should take his bath and perform the daily round of duties after sipping the *Pādodaka* (water with which the feet are washed) of Hari. He should then worship the text (the book *Śrīmadbhāgavata*) and the preceptor with all the requisite offerings and services. Only then should he expound or listen to *Śrīmadbhāgavata* joyously.

44. He should take in Haviṣya or milk as his food. He should take it silently. He should sleep on the floor. He should observe the vow of celibacy and avoid anger, greed etc.

45. Everyday at the end of the discourse there should be *Kīrtana* i.e. glorification of the Lord. On the conclusion he should keep awake at night. He should feed Brāhmaṇas and make them delighted by means of monetary gifts.

46-47. After giving clothes, ornaments etc. to the preceptor he should give him a cow too. If these injunctions are carried out, he shall

1. VV 41-47 describe procedure for Kṛṣṇārthin types of listeners.

obtain the desired benefit, wives, abodes, sons, kingdom, wealth etc., whatever is desired. But having such desires is not good in the case (of a Bhāgavata). It (i.e. to entertain desires) is a ridiculous and vexatious thing.

48. The holy text *Śrīmadbhāgavata* expounded by sage Śuka is conducive to the attainment of Kṛṣṇa. It yields the benefit of permanent love and bliss in the Kali Age.

:: *End of Bhāgavata-Māhātmya* ::

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