Ancient Indian Folk Cults

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ANCIENT INDIAN FOLK CULTS

CHAPTER ONE

यो हि यस्मिन् रतो धर्मेन स तं पूजयते सदा। (महाआध्याय यथीय पर्वः)

The Vedas have preserved a full and comprehensive account of the metaphysical and religious beliefs of the Aryan people very often cast in the language of Yajña-ritual which represented the practical side of religious observances. The Rigveda, Yajurveda and Sāmaveda are valuable documents of source material in this respect. Their detailed understanding especially of the metaphysical contents and of the cosmic symbolism of which an integrated system is implied in the Mantras, still remains a desideratum. We shall, for the present, not speak of this higher religion of the Veda, but pay attention to those popular cults which existed side by side and mostly were objects of interest of the common people. The Atharvaveda has casually recorded some of the deities which form the nucleus of such folk cults specialising in the worship of trees, goblins, demons etc. The Atharvaveda Samhita contains numerous hymns and verses from the Rigveda. It has no special aim to present the record of the folk cults, which appear to have received only casual mention. But whatever has been recorded there is enough to indicate the contents of the popular cults of which sometimes the symbolism was lifted to a higher plane to serve as a peg for hanging a metaphysical statement, e. g., the Tree was an object of worship but was accepted as a symbol for the cosmic Tree of Existence called the thousand-branched tree (Sahasra-valṣa Vanaspati) or the Aśvattha, i. e., the common Pipal tree symbolising the World Tree. The transference of meaning and epithets from Loka to Veda, i. e., from folk beliefs or cults to higher Vedic conceptions about the cosmos came in very naturally showing how well the folk-cults were understood and their implications invested with truthful meaning. As another example we may
refer to the Yaksha cult which was of the highest antiquity being mentioned at length both in the *Rigveda* and *Atharvaveda* by sublimation of meaning and significance. Yaksha became the symbol of the Great Being (Mahat), i.e., of Brahman himself, spoken of as the focal power permeating the vast expanse of space:

‘Mahad Yaksham bhuwanasya madhye tapasi kranta salilasya prishthe.’

In the first part of the verse Yaksha of the folk cult is lifted to the level of Brahman with whom he is identified. The second part still retains his aspect of the popular belief which connected Yaksha worship with water and with fire (*salila* and *tapas*). As in the case of the discourse between Yaksha and Yudhishthira in the *Āranyakaparva*, the Yaksha was the guardian deity of a pond of water which he would not allow to be touched without the formal ceremony of ‘Questions and Answers’ (*Brahmodya*, i.e., Discourse with a Brahman or Yaksha) which in their inception had more or less served as oracles. The above illustrations are enough to show how much popular religion had gone into the formal making of the Vedic symbols. But fortunately in the other religious texts of antiquity we have a much fuller record of the folk cults. The epics, viz., the *Mahābhārata* and the *Rāmāyaṇa*, some of the *Purāṇas* and above all the Buddhist Pali texts and the Jaina *Ardhamāgadhī Āgamic* texts contain an exceptionally rich documentation of the folk cults with respect to the deities and the formalities of worship as well as the nature of shrines and the details of the ritual and practices followed. We propose to concentrate on this evidence from a few chosen texts and try to understand them as religious cults which were once popular although many of them have become obscure. This last statement needs to be modified and taken with some reserve since a folk cult like that of the worship of Yaksha or Nāga or Tree still exists with us and the first at least survives from Kashmir to the Tamil land and from Kāmarūpa to Saurāshṭra in the form of
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Bhr-Barahm (Sanskrit, Vira-Brahma) worship. By systematic study of the folk-lore material ample data relating to such worship may be accepted but that is an aspect into which we may not probe in our present context.

The "Prithivi Sukta" of the Atharvaveda makes a significant statement:

'Janaṃ bibhratī bahudhā vivāchasanān nānādharmānāṃ Prithivi yathaukasam/Sahasram dharā dravīpasya me duhān dhruveva dhenuranapārṣpuranti' // (AV. XII. 1. 45)

The diversity of the peoples inhabiting the various parts of the country (yathaukasam bahudha janam), the variety of their dialects (vivāchasanam), and the multiplicity of their cults (nānādharmānām)—these were the three significant features of our racial life in the past as they are with us even to-day. But these distinctions did not operate to divide the children of the soil whose devotion to the Mother Earth served as an overall bond. Here we are especially concerned with the reverence to the multiplicity of religious beliefs which more particularly were folk cults, i.e., the diverse forms of worship and religious beliefs prevalent among the masses.

A commentary on the existence of these many cults is offered by the Atharvaveda itself in a unique hymn (XI. 5. 1–23: "Pāpamochana Sukta"), which contains an invocation to numerous divinities for deliverance from distress. The following list has a mingling of the names of Vedic gods and of folk deities:

1. Agni
2. Trees (Vanaspati)
3. Herbs (Oshaadi)
4. Plants (VirudhaHa)
5. Indra
6. Surya
7. Mitra
8. Varuna
9. Bhaga
10. Arsha
11. Vivasvan
12. Savitā
13. Pūshā
14. Tvashṭā
15. Gandharva
16. Apsaras
17. Aśvins
18. Brahmaṇaspati
19. Aryamā
20. Ahorātra (Day and Night)
21. Sun and Moon (Sūryachandrāmasau)
22. Viśve Ādityas (all the Ādityas)
23. Vāta
24. Parjanya
25. Antariksha (Firmament)
26. Diśaḥ (the Quarters)
27. Āśāh (the Regions of the Sky)
28. Ushā (Dawn)
29. Soma Deva (also called Chandramā)
30. Animals (both domestic and wild)
31. Birds
32. Bhava
33. Śarva
34. Rudra Paśupati (Lord of Beasts)
35. Nakshatra (Constellations)
36. Diva (Heaven)
37. Bhūmi (Earth)
38. Yakshas
39. Parvata (Hills)
40. Samudra (Sea)
41. Nadi (River)
42. Veśanta or Taḍāga (Lakes)
43. Saptarshi
44. Apo-Devīḥ (Divine Waters)
45. Prajāpatis
46. Pitris
47. Yama
48. Devāḥ Divishadaḥ (Gods of Heaven)
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49. Devāḥ Antarikshashadāḥ (Gods of the middle air)
50. Prithivi-śrīta-śakra Devāḥ (Mighty Gods of the Earth)
51. Ādityas
52. Rudras
53. Vasus
54. Divi Devāḥ (Gods in Heaven as Trayastrimśa, Tushita, etc.)
55. Atharvāṇaḥ (Sons of Atharva)
56. Āṅgirasāḥ (Sons of Āṅgiras)
57. Yajña
58. Yajamāna
59. Rīchaḥ
60. Sāma Songs (as Bṛihat, Rathantara, Raivata, etc.)
61. Bheshaja (Healing Charms)
62. Yajush formulas
63. Hotra (Litanies of the Hotri Priest)
64. Darbha
65. Arāya (Fiends)
66. Rakshas (Demons)
67. Sarpa (Snakes)
68. Punyajana (Kinnara)
69. Piṭris
70. Mṛityu
71. Ritus (Seasons)
72. Rītupati (Lords of Seasons)
73. Häyana (Quarters)
74. Samvatsara (Year)
75. Māsa (Months)
76. Samāh (Half-years)
77. Mighty Gods of the Four Divisions of Space (i. e., the Four Lokapālas of the East, South, West and North, also known as Chāturmahārajkadevas)
78. Viśve Devāḥ (All-Gods)
79. Their Consorts (*Viśva-pani*)
80. Sarva Deva (Collected Gods)
81. Collective Dames (*Sarva-pani*)
82. Bhuta (Spirits)
83. Bhūtapatih (Lord of Ghosts and Spirits)
84. Deviḥ Pañcha-pradīṣaḥ (Five Sky-Regions as Goddesses)
85. Twelve Seasons as Gods (Deva Duddāsa Ritauaḥ)

The above list includes a formidable array of names of deities, both high and low, who mingled in a common fraternity recognised and worshiped by the people at large. The list includes such names as Indra, Agni, Brihaspati, Mitra, Vishṇu, Bhaga, Savitā, Ushā, Tvashta, Aryama, Soma, Sūrya, Chandra, etc. whose rank and dignity were of highest order. On the other hand we find such names as Yaksha, Raksha, Sarpa, Bhūta, Punyajana, etc. whose worship was of an Austric character accompanied by offerings of blood (rakta-bali).

A third class of deities refers to Time denoting gods like the Year, Half-year, Seasons, Months, Night and Day and the various Nakshatra-Devatās (Constellations). These were post-Vedic deities whose worship amongst the people is authenticated by the Ashtāclyyi of Pāṇini. In fact a new feature of the Pāṇimian pantheon is the emergence of the time denoting concepts raised to the status of divinities (Sūtra 4. 2. 34). For instance new words in the language had appeared to indicate such institutions, as Māṣika denoted the oblation prepared to worship the deity named Māṣa. Similarly for the Devatā called Sāmvatsara the oblation was noted as Sāmvatsara-rīka. There was also worship offered to the deities presiding over the seasons, e. g., Vasanta or Spring, the oblation to it known as Vāsanta Haviḥ. In a Sūtra Pāṇini has mentioned Ritu or Season as a deity (4. 2. 31) in whose honour some ritual of worship was prescribed. This process of deification had gone far enough and was applicable to the names of stars comprised in a long list of Nakshatra Devatās. Pāṇini has mentioned Proṣṭhapada, a synonym of Bhādrapada, as a Devatā (4. 3. 35). Each asterism was presided over by its divinity who was invoked and worshipped for beneficent result. Belief in their worship had considerably modified the system of personal names. At one time in Vedic literature there is no trace of a single star-name applied to a person but in the
time of the Grihyasūtras, Pāṇini and the Jātakas star-names as the names of persons had become order of the day. A child born under a particular asterism like Tishya, Pushya or Rohini was believed to be sheltered by the Devatā of that Nakshatra and thus named after him. This feature of religious life finds support from the above list of Atharvaveda and we may be justified in pushing back the introduction of personal names after stars to a period of several centuries anterior to Buddha and Pāṇini, i. e., to about 1000 B. C.

In the Atharvavedic list we also find reference to deities such as Bhūmi, Parvata, Nadi, Samudra, Sarovara, Trees and Plants which as we shall see later form part of widely distributed folk cults and almost all of these have survived up to our own time.

**Maha**

The word Maha is of great importance in connection with the popular worship of these cult deities. Communal worship generally took the form of a fair or a common gathering at an appointed time of the year when those who had avowed to worship the deities assembled and participated in the ritualistic ceremony involving dance, music, feasting, oblations and offering of flowers, incense, catabales, and lighting of lamps, etc. This mode of worship essentially differed from that of the Vedic Yajña. In the words of the Gitā it may be called the ‘Patram pushpam phalam toyam’ manner of offering worship as distinct from the performance of the Yajñas. Of course, there were certain elements common to both, viz., festive merriment and feasting which were also the accounting factors of the Vedic and household Yajñas.

The Vedic Yajña was also known as Makha. The two words Yajña and Makha are now taken as synonymous but the word Makha occurs about twenty times in the Rigveda, whereas Yajña occurs several hundred times and is the normal word for the institution of sacrifice derived from the ancient root yaj of very wide application meaning, to worship or to sacrifice. There is no clear etymology of Makha. According to the
**Vedic Index, Makha** appears to have been the name of a person probably a demon of some kind and in the later *Samhitās* mention is also made of the ‘Head of Makha’ (*Vedic Index, Vol. II, p. 116*).

The celebration of these festivals to deities was known as MAHA and it took the form of fairs. For example, the big fair of a ceremonious bath in the Gaṅgā on the 15th bright day of Kārttika or Kārttikī Pūrṇimā was known as Gaṅgā-Maha (*Kāśikā* commentary on *Ashṭādhyāyī* 5. 1. 109). The word Maha seems to have been derived from the Vedic *Makha* which was more or less a folk-lore institution and took the form of a combination of folk elements and assemblage of which developed into a fair. Such fairs continued in popular tradition and once begun they persisted through the ages. If a survey of the surviving fairs now known as *Melā* was made it would be found that this centred mostly round some shrine or holy place of a god or goddess. In ancient times they were also known as *Deva-Yātā* or simply *Yātā* from which was derived the Prakrit term *Jattā* or the Hindi word *Jāt*.

We have extensive evidence in ancient literature of the existence of such Maha festivals which were transformation of *Makha*. In the *Harivanaśa* the festival of the Raivataka mountain was known as *Maha* but in several manuscripts we find the variant reading as *Makha* (also *Harivanaśa* 2. 15. 5). In the Buddhist and Jaina traditions, the word *Maha* was preferred. It appears that the Maha festivals occupied the same high place in the life of the common people as was taken by Yajña amongst the higher classes. The *Harivanaśa* styles the lifting of Govardhana by Krishna as *Giri-Yajña* and *Giri-maha* (sthitaḥ Śakramahastāta Śrīmān girimahastvayam. *Harivanaśa* 2. 17. 11; Tanma hyam rochate gopā giriyajñaḥ pravartatām, *Hari*. 2. 16. 10). It has been clearly stated that just as the Brāhmaṇas perform their Yajña with Vedic mantras similarly the tillers of the soil perform their Sītā-yajña and the cowherds their Giri-yajña in the form of growing their herds:
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Mantrayajñaparā vipraḥ Sītāyajñāscha karshukāḥ/
Giriyaṃjñās tathā gopā iṣyōśmābhīr girīr vane//
(Harivamsa 2. 16. 9).

This is in reference to different economic and religious patterns at various levels of life.

List of Folk Deities. We propose to discuss the several lists of folk deities in the form of Maha celebrations as available in Jaina and Buddhist literature supplementing them from Brāhmanical texts also :

1. Indamaha=Indra-maha (Festival of Indra)
2. Khandamaha=Skanda-maha (Festival of Skanda)
3. Ruddajattā=Rudra-yāṭrā (Festival of Rudra)
4. Sivajattā=Śiva-yāṭrā (Festival of Śiva)
5. Vessamaṇaṃjattā=Vaiśravaṇa-yāṭrā (Festival of Vaiśravaṇa)
6. Nāgaṃjattā=Nāga-yāṭrā (Festival of Nāga)
7. Jakkhajattā=Yaksha-yāṭrā (Festival of Yaksha)
8. Bhūyajattā=Bhūta-yāṭrā (Festival of Bhūta)
9. Naljattā=Nadī-yāṭrā (Festival of Nadī)
10. Talājajattā=Tāḷāga-yāṭrā (Festival of Taḷāga)
11. Rukkhaṃjattā=Vṛksha-yāṭrā (Festival of Tree deity)
12. Cheiyajattā=Chaitya-yāṭrā (Festival of Chaitya)
13. Pavvayajattā=Parvata-yāṭrā (Festival of Mountain deity)
14. Ujjānaṃjattā=Udyāna-yāṭrā (Festival to Garden deity)
15. Girijattā=Giri-yāṭrā (Festival of Mountain deity)\(^1\)

—Nāyādhammahahā.

Another list which is even bigger is found in the Rāyapa-

seniya Sutta :

1. Indamaha (Festival of Indra)

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1. Ajjarāyagīhe nagare Indamahe i vā Khandamahe i vā
evam Rudda-Siva-Besamaṇa-Nāga-Jakhkha-Bhūya-naī-
talāya rukkhha-cheiya-pavvaya-ujjāna-giri-jattā i vā jao
naṃ bahave uggā bhogā jāva e gadi sim e gāmimuhā
2. Khandamaha (Festival of Skanda)
3. Ruddamaha (Festival of Rudra)
4. Maundamaha=Mukundamaha (Festival of Mukunda)
5. Sivamaha (Festival of Śiva)
6. Vessamanamaha (Festival of Vaiśravaṇa or Kubera)
7. Nāgamaha (Festival of Nāga)
8. Jakkhhamahā (Festival of Yaksha)
9. Bhūyamahā (Festival of Bhūta)
10. Thūkhamahā=Stūpamahā (Festival of Stūpa)
11. Cheiyamahā=Chaityamahā (Festival of Chaitya)
12. Rukkhhamahā=Vṛikshamahā (Festival of Tree)
13. Girimahā (Festival of Mountain)
14. Darīmahā (Festival of Mountain cave)
15. Agaḍamahā=Avaṭamahā (Festival of the Water well)
16. Nalmahā=Nadimahā (Festival of River)
17. Saramahā (Festival of Pool)
18. Sāgaramahā (Festival of Ocean).

Besides the above, two important lists are found in Buddhist literature. One in the Niddesa commentary of Suttaniṇīpāta and the other in the Milinda paññā. The Niddesa styles the worshippers of these deities as Vatika (equal to Sanskrit Vratika). The list is as follows:

1. Haththivatika (worshippers of the elephant deity)
2. Assavatika (worshippers of the horse deity)
3. Govatika (worshippers of the bull deity)
4. Kukkuravatika (worshippers of the dog deity)
5. Kākavatika (worshippers of the crow deity)
6. Vāsudevatika (worshippers of God Vāsudeva)
7. Baladevavatika (worshippers of God Baladeva)
8. Pūrṇabhaddavatika (worshippers of Pūrṇabhadra)
9. Maṇibhaddavatika (worshippers of Maṇibhadra)
10. Aggivatika (worshippers of the Fire God)
11. Supanḍavatika (worshippers of Suparna or Bird)
12. Yakhkhavatika (worshippers of Yaksha)
13. Asuravatika (worshippers of Asura)
14. Gandhabbavatika (worshippers of Gandharva)
15. Mahārājāvatika (worshippers of Mahārāja god or gods)
16. Chandimavatika (worshippers of Moon god)
17. Sūriyavatika (worshippers of Sun god)
18. Indavatika (worshippers of Indra god)
19. Brahmavatika (worshippers of Brahmā)
20. Devavatika (worshippers of Deva)
21. Disāvatika (worshippers of Disā or Quarters or regions of Space).1

The Millindaềna styles the followers of the teachers of these cults as Gaña, and the implication is to refer to the same cults as specified in the other list, viz., minor religious cults centring round the worship of folk deities. The list of the Millindaềna is as follows:—

1. Pabbatā (followers of the Mountain)
2. Dhammagiriya=Dharmagiriya (followers of Dharmagiri or the Hill cult)
3. Brahmagiriya (followers of Brahmagiri)
4. Pisachchā (followers of Piśācha or goblin cult)
5. Maṇibhaddā (followers of Maṇibhadra cult)
6. Puṇṇabhaddā (followers of Pūrṇabhadra cult)
7. Chandimā (followers of Moon cult)
8. Sūriyā (followers of Śūrya cult)
9. Kālīdevatā (followers of Kālī cult or Kālakarṇi godless)
10. Śivā=Śaiva (followers of Śiva cult)
11. Vāsudevā (followers of Vāsudeva cult).2

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2. Mallā atoṅa pabbatā dhammagiriṅa brahmagiriṅa naṭakā nachchakā langhakā pisāchā maṇibhadda puṇṇabhaddā chandimaṅsriṅa siridevatā kālādevatā Śivā Vāsudevaṅgāṅka asipāṅga bhaddiputta tesam tesam rahassam tesu tesu ganesti yeva charanti avasesāmnaṁ pihitam. (Millinda-paṅṇa, Vadekar edition, p. 190.)
There is a shorter list in the *Mānava Grihyasāstra* (2. 15) with the following names:

1. Yaksha
2. Jambhaka
3. Virūpāksha
4. Lohitāksha
5. Vaiśravana
6. Mahāśena
7. Mahādeva
8. Mahārāja

Some other names are also found in different places—

1. Ajjāmaha = Āryā-maha, Festival of Āryā, mother of Skanda
2. Koṭṭakiriyāmaha = Festival of Koṭṭakriyā or goddess Koṭṭavai, Mother-goddess of South India
3. Dhanurmaha—Festival of the Bow
4. Kāmamaha — Festival of the God of Love
5. Brahmamaha—Festival of Brahma or Yaksha (Virā-ṭaparvan 12; Ādiparvan 152. 18)
6. Raivatakamaha—Festival of mount Raivataka in Saurāshṭra (Ādiparvan 211. 2).

The *Majjhimaṇikāya* mentions Govrata and Kukkuravrata, cult of the Bull and Dog respectively, which are included also in the list of the *Nīddesa*. The followers of the Govrata cult fastened a pair of horns on their heads and moved about with the herd of cows, imitating them in grazing grass. Similarly the adherents of the Dog cult followed the routine of Dog’s life.¹

Belief in such folk deities was known as ‘*Vrata*’ or ‘*Bhakti*’. As the followers of Buddha and Mahāvīra and Maṅkhkhaligosāla

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were organised in their respective Gaṇas and Gachchhas similarly the followers of these folk cults were organised under their Gaṅachārya or religious teachers. They believed that in their next life they would become merged in the deity of their belief (Devo vā bhavissati devaṁfiataro vā, Majjhimanikāya 1. 388)

Folk Deities in the Bhagavadgītā. The above folk deities are also mentioned in the Bhagavadgītā where their cults are mentioned as ‘Vrata’:

Yānti devavrata devān pitrin yānti pitrivrataḥ
Bhūtāni yānti bhūteyyā yānti madyājino'pi mām|| (9. 23)

The adherents of the cult of the deities were known as Vratika, Bhakta, or observers of their Yāstrā, all implying the same thing. In the Gītā these deities come under the general name of Vibhūsi or special Manifestation of Divine Power. The Vibhūti doctrine was specially promulgated by the Bhāgavata teachers but if we scrutinise the list closely there hardly remains any doubt that the list of the Gītā in Xth chapter of Vibhūti Yoga is in virtual agreement with the older lists in Buddhist and Jaina literature. That list of Vibhūtis is as follows:

1. Viṣṇu
2. Ravi=Sūrya
3. Marīchi
4. Chandra (Śaśi)=Moon God
5. Indra (Vāsava)
6. Rudra
7. Vaśravaṇa
8. Agni=Pāvaka
9. Meru=Mountain God
10. Skanda
11. Sāgara=Sea God
12. Himālaya
13. Aśvattha Viśkha (God of Tree=Rukhkhha devatā)
14. Gandharva
15. Uchchāṁśravā (Horse deity)
16. Airāvatā (Elephant deity)
17. Kāmadhenu (Divine Cow)
18. Kāma (God of Love)
19. Vāsuki (Serpent god). The followers of this cult are still known as Kāla-Beliya
20. Nāga named Ananta (=Nāgamaha)
21. Varuṇa
22. Pitara
23. Yama
24. Śimha (the mythical Lion)
25. Garuḍa=Suparna
26. Vāyu
27. Makara
28. Nādi Gaṅgā
29. Vāsudeva
30. Dhanañjaya Arjuna

The author of the Gītā has compiled into a single list the scattered folk deities like the beads of a necklace and has given a new interpretation to them as glorified powers of Mahānārāyaṇa Vāsudeva, the supreme God of the Bhāgavatas. This was the new presentation of the discrete religious materials at the hands of the Bhāgavata teachers who brought all the local gods and goddesses to a focus or a central rallying point in the form of Bhagavān Vishnū. The Bhāgavatas did not reject any one of them but accepted all as emanations of the Thousand-selfed (Sahasradhātmā) Great Being, Mahāpurusha, who is Vishnū.

Folk Deities in the Vishvudharmottara Purāṇa.

We are indebted to the author of the Vishvudharmottara Purāṇa for a still more comprehensive list of folk gods and goddesses under the title of Rochēśa deity. A deity is the outcome of self-choice for each one and that is the exact significance of Rochēśa, viz., the god (Īśa) of one's choice (rocha). Whatever one chooses that becomes his deity and becomes the object of all his heart devotion and power of the mind. The
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Bhāgavatas coined a new term ‘Rocha’ for a god selected in this manner, according to one’s individual liking:

*Brahmansvīyasya cha ruchau devalāyāśchā pūjanam/(Vishnudharmottara, 3. 222. 28)*

(O Brahman, it is one’s desire according to which one selects the deity for one’s worship.)

The meaning of this term ‘Rocha’ was made very liberal as shown by the following list of the Rocha deities:

1. Brāhmara Rocha (This is based on the worship of Prajāpati Brahmā and confers on its worshipper the merit of obtaining the Brahma-loka and the fruit of Ásvamedha sacrifice).
2. Svargarocha (Heaven as the chosen deity).
3. Chakrarocha (Worship of the Chakra of Vishṇu bestows victory over the internal and external enemies).
4. Vānaspatyarocha (Bestows the fruit of possessing gardens).
5. Annarocha (Gives the fruit of agricultural fields and food).
6. Ahatavāsararocha (By getting up in the last part of the night (Brāhma-muhūrta) one obtains health, beauty, youth and prosperity).
7. Kālarocha (Time as Rocha deity makes a person vigilant towards the inevitable course of Kāla or Mortality and he concentrates his mind on Dharma).
8. Āgneyarocha (Agni as Rocha deity confers the fruits of all the Yajñas).
10. Sūryarocha (It gives health and freedom from disease in all forms).
12. Goroch a (By devotion to this many cows come into one’s possession like the Kāmadhenu or the wish-fulfilling cow of Indra’s heaven).
15. Rudrarocha (Confers the merit of obtaining the world of Rudra).
16. Kumārarocha (Makes one's household rich in sons and grandsons).
17. Pitrirocha (It fulfils one's desire by the homage paid to ancestors).
18. Varuṇarocha (The worship of Varuṇa makes one rich in horses).
19. Anantarocha (By worshipping God Ananta, Support of the Earth, one obtains the fruits of Infinity).
20. Vāyurocha (It gives bigger profit in trades and commerce).
21. Yamarocha (Worship of Yama removes the fear of death).
22. Sārasvatarocha (Worship of the goddess Sarasvati gives to one the desired learning and makes the person master of speech and eloquence).
23. Śrīrocha (Worship of goddess Śrī-Lakṣmī makes one master of Śrī or glory in all form).
24. Vaiśravanarocha (Worship of Kubera makes the person master of riches in each life).
25. Śailarocha (It corresponds to the Girimaha of other lists. The worship of the mountain makes the person happy and he earns health and happiness).
26. Bhūrocha (By worshipping the Earth deity one becomes master of land).
27. Vedarocha (By cultivating an attitude of faith and respect for the Vedas one obtains Vedic Knowledge).
28. Paurusharocha (It means the worship of Purusha or the Great Being, Nārāyaṇa Purusha, Mahānārāyaṇa Viṣṇu, the Supreme Reality and Ultimate Cause of this universe, which confers Moksha).

It is stated that after having selected the Rocha deity or the Divinity of one's choice one should eat only once a day at night time and continue this vow for one year, and not take even water after the meal time.
Introduction

This Purāṇa lays down two kinds of religious observances, one Antarvedi, i.e., Yajñas performed on the altar, and the other Bahirvedi involving the worship of gods in the temples. The Antarvedi worship can be performed by rich persons only whereas the Bahirvedi worship can be fulfilled by persons not having opulent means. The question is raised again as to the number of the gods (devatāḥ kāścha kasminnu kāle sampūjayet sadā/Vishyudharmottara, 3. 221. 7), and the time proper for their worship. This list is as follows:

1. Brahmā
2. Daksha Prajāpati
3. Nāsatya, the two Āśvin gods
4. Bālachandra or Śiva
5. Dwādaśa Śādhyadevatā (12 Śādhyā gods)
6. Triloka (Three Lokas, Earth, Sky and Heaven)
7. Vishnu
8. Dwādaśa Bhṛgudevatā (Twelve gods of the Bhṛgu sect)
9. Yama
10. Gaṇeśa
11. Nidrā Devī (Goddess of Sleep)
12. Rati (wife of Kāmadeva)
13. Śraddhā (Faith)
14. Kīrti (Fame)
15. Medhā (Intellect)
16. Sarasvasti (Goddess of Learning)
17. Prajñā (Wisdom or higher intelligence)
18. Tūshṭi (Contentment)
19. Kānti (Beauty)
20. Devamātrikās (Divine Mothers)
21. Chandramā (Moon God)
22. Prīthivi Devī (Earth)
23. Daśa Viśvedeva (The Ten Viśvedeva gods)
24. Gandharvas and their king Chitraratha
25. Devapatnī (Wives of Devas)
26. Apsaras or celestial Nymphs
27. Nāgadevatā (Nāga deity)
28. Pushkara (Water)
29. Nala and Kubara the two sons of Kubera
30. Śrī-Goddess (Śrī-Lakṣmī)
31. Pṛiti (Goddess of Love, wife of Kāmadeva)

The above lists some names of goddesses and the rest are given below making a total of them about thirty-six.

32. Umā
33. Menā
34. Bhadrakāli
35. Kātyāyanī
dri
37. Swāhā
38. Svadhā
dhi
40. Anasūyā
41. Kshamā
dmā
43. Devasenā
44. Vēlā
45. Jyotsnā (Moonlight)
46. Śachi
47. Gaurī
48. Varuṇānī
49. Yama-patnī (wife of Yama)
50. Dhūmornā
51. Sumahābhāgā
52. Mrityuchchhāyā.

A worshipper was free to select for worship any one of the divine mothers or the female counterpart of a god (Devapatnī). After this it is said that any one of the four great auspicious animals could be offered worship as a deity, viz.,

53. The Elephant Airāvata
54. The Horse Uchchaḥśravā
55. Śiva’s Nandī Bull, and
56. Vishṇu’s vehicle the Great Bird Garuḍa.
Introduction

It should be noted that these four auspicious animals (Lion in place of Garuḍa) are depicted on the round drum of the Sārnāth Lion Capital of Asoka. These four animals as deities were worshipped in the very beginning of Indian civilisation as found in the Indus Valley and that tradition continued through the ages for about 5000 years as we have shown from literature, art and tradition in our book entitled Chakra-dhvaja or the Wheel-Flag of Indā (Varanasi, 1961). The list is taken much further to 108 deities as shown below:

57. Nāgadevatā
58-61. Kumāra-Skanda-Visākha-Guha (These four forms of Skanda are styled as Chaturātmā, i.e., the four forms of a single deity)
62. Rītus the Seasons
63. Attendants of Skanda
64. Attendants (Pārśvachara) of Rudra
65. Attendants (Pārśvachara) of Yama
66. Kāla (Time or Death)
67. Dvīpas (Signifying oceanic islands. This reference was particularly apt as having in its background the oceanic commerce and colonising activity of the Gupta time when different merchants selected any particular Dvīpa as the object of their desire or Rocha. These islands were situated in the eastern and western oceans and known as Dvīpāntara. Any one who had trade relations with one or more islands brought the same within the purview of one’s activities. This shows how widely the Rocha conception was developed.)
68. Pāśa (Noose: Noose of Varuṇa or Nāgapāśa)
69. Jvara-Vyādhīśvara (Lord of Diseases going under the name of fevers)
70. Vāyu (Wind)
71. Agni (Fire)
72. Sūrya-patnī (Wife of Sūrya named Suvarchalā, seems to be same as Vedic Saranyā or Sajñā)
73. Ths Marut gods numbering 49 (Unapanchasa Marut-devatā)
74. Parvata-devatā (Mountain deity)
75. Abhīshṭa Nadi-devatā (River deity of one’s choice)
76. Saptarshi (The Seven Sages)
77. Samudra (Ocean worshipped as god by sea-fairing merchants)
78. Saptapātāla (Seven Nether worlds)
79. Saptaloka (Seven worlds)
80. Saptagaṅgā (Seven streams of Gaṅgā)
81. Saptasarasvatī (Seven streams of Sarasvatī, either in Kurukshetra or one each in different places as in Prayāga, Pushkara, Saurāshṭra, etc.,
82. Saptayajña (Seven-fold sacrifices, viz., Seven Pākasaṁstha, Seven Havirsaṁstha and Seven Homasaṁstha, Mārkaṇḍeya P.23. 38)
83. Āditya
84. Jayanta, son of Indra
85. Ashṭavasu (the Eight Vasus)
86. Ekānamāśā (Goddess of that name, said to be the sister of Kṛishṇa and Balarāma)
87. Mahādeva
88. Virabhadra, an incarnation of Śiva
89. Nandīśvara (Nandi, the Lord of Gaṇas)
90. Laguḍeshā or Lakulīśvara
91. Dharma
92. Ekādaśa Rudra (Eleven Rudras)
93. Dvādaśa Āditya Jalādhipas
94. Varuṇa
95. Devēśvara (Indra)
96. Vīṣṇu
97. Kāmadeva
98. Yaksha
99. Rākshasa
100. Saṅkha (Conch)
101. Padma (Lotus)
102. Maṇibhadra
103. Pitṛigaṇa
104. Navagraha (The Nine Planets)
105. Nakshatra (The Stars)
106. Dvādaśamāsa (Twelve Months)
107. Kaṛtṭikeya
108. Vanaspati (Trees)

Any one of these deities was selected and offered worship for a year in the form of a vow (Vrata) and the worshipper expected the fulfilment of his desire (ishtām devamathā-abhyarchya yatheshṭam phalamaśnute/Vishnudharmattara 3.222. 1–107).

List of 200 Female Deities in the Matsya Purāṇa

A comprehensive picture of the folk deities is available in the Matsya Purāṇa (Ch. 179. 10-82) in which some intelligent Purāṇa writer has brought together a list of about 200 female deities after spending much labour and time, which is as follows:

1. Māhesvarī
2. Brāhmī
3. Kaumārī
4. Mālinī
5. Sauparṇī
6. Vāyavyā
7. Śākṛī
8. Nairṛiti
9. Saurī
10. Saumyā
11. Śivā
12. Dūtī
13. Chāmuṇḍā
14. Vārunī
15. Vārāhi
16. Nārasimhī
17. Vaishṇavī
18. Chalachchhikhā (Goddess of the dangling crest)
19. Satānandā (Goddess of the hundred blisses)
20. Bhagānandā (Goddess of amorous bliss)
21. Pichchhilā (Goddess with peacock’s feather)
22. Bhagamālinī
23. Balā
24. Atibalā
25. Raktā
26. Surabhi (Cow)
27. Mukhamaṇḍikā
28. Mātrinandā
29. Sunandā
30. Viḍālī (Cat Goddess)
31. Śakunī (Bird)
32. Revati
33. Mahāraktā
34. Pilapichchhikhā (Goddess with a young attendant holding a bunch of peacocks feathers)
35. Jayā
36. Vijayā
37. Jayantī
38. Aparājītā
39. Kālī
40. Mahākali
41. Dūṭī
42. Subhagā (The beautiful Goddess)
43. Durbhagā (The Ugly Goddess, with deformed or grotesque form)
44. Karālī (Dreadful Goddess)
45. Nandinī
46. Aditi (Mother of gods)
47. Diti (Mother of Daityas)
48. Mārī
case
case
49. Mrityu
50. Karṇamoṭī
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>51</td>
<td>Grāmyā</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52</td>
<td>Ulūkf (Owl Goddess or Mother of owlets)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>53</td>
<td>Ghaṭodari (Goddess with prolapsus of belly)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54</td>
<td>Kapālī</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55</td>
<td>Vajrahastā (Goddess holding thunderbolt in her hand)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56</td>
<td>Piśāchī</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>57</td>
<td>Rākshasī</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>58</td>
<td>Bhuṣunḍī</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>59</td>
<td>Śarikarī</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60</td>
<td>Chaṇḍā</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61</td>
<td>Lāṅgalī (Goddess with a plough)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>62</td>
<td>Kuṭabhi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>63</td>
<td>Kheṭā</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>64</td>
<td>Sulochanā</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65</td>
<td>Dhūmrā</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>66</td>
<td>Aikavirā</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>67</td>
<td>Karālinī</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>68</td>
<td>Viśāladashtripī</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>69</td>
<td>Śyāmā</td>
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<tr>
<td>70</td>
<td>Trijaṭī</td>
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<tr>
<td>71</td>
<td>Kukkuṭī</td>
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<tr>
<td>72</td>
<td>Vaināyakī</td>
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<tr>
<td>73</td>
<td>Vaitāli</td>
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<tr>
<td>74</td>
<td>Unmattodumbari</td>
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<tr>
<td>75</td>
<td>Siddhi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>76</td>
<td>Lelihānā</td>
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<tr>
<td>77</td>
<td>Kekari</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>78</td>
<td>Gardabhi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>79</td>
<td>Bhṛikuṭī</td>
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<tr>
<td>80</td>
<td>Bahuputri</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>82</td>
<td>Viḍambinī</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>83</td>
<td>Krauṇchā</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>84</td>
<td>Šailamukhi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>85</td>
<td>Vinatā</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>86</td>
<td>Surasā</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
87. Danu
88. Ushā
89. Rambhā
90. Menakā
91. Sallā
92. Chitrarūpinī
93. Svāhā
94. Svadhā
95. Vashaṭkārā
96. Dhṛiti
97. Kapardini
98. Māyā
99. Vichitrarūpā
100. Kāmarūpā
101. Saṅgamā
102. Mukhebilā
103. Maṅgalā
104. Mahānāsā
105. Mahāmukhi
106. Kumārī
107. Rochanā
108. Bhīmā
109. Sadāhā
110. Madoddhatā
111. Alambākshi
112. Kālakarṇi
113. Kumbhakarṇi
114. Mahāsurī
115. Keśinī
116. Śaṅkhinī
117. Lambā
118. Piṅgalā
119. Lohitamukhi
120. Ghanṭāravā
121. Damśhṭralā
Introduction

122. Rochanā
123. Kākajāṅghikā
124. Gokarṇikā
125. Ajamukhikā
126. Mahāgrīvā
127. Mahāmukhi
128. Ulkāmukhi
129. Dhūmasīkhā
130. Kampinī
131. Parikampinī
132. Mohanā
133. Kalpanā
134. Kshvelā
135. Nirbhayā
136. Bāhusālinī
137. Śarpakarṇī
138. Ekākṣhi
139. Viśokā
140. Nandinī
141. Jyotsnāmukhi
142. Rabhasā
143. Nikumbhā
144. Raktakalpanā
145. Avikārā
146. Mahāchittā
147. Chandrasenā
148. Manoramā
149. Adarśanā
150. Haratpūpā
151. Mātaṅgī
152. Lambamekhalā
153. Abalā
154. Vañchanā
155. Kālī
156. Pramodā
157. Lāṅgalavati
158. Chitrā
159. Chitrājalā
160. Koṇā
161. Śāntikā
162. Aghavināśini
163. Lambastantī
164. Lambasaṭā
165. Vīṣaṭā
166. Vāsachārṇīṇī
167. Skhalantī
168. Dirghakeśī
d. Suchira
170. Sundari
171. Subhā
172. Ayomukhi
173. Kaṭumukhi
174. Krodhini
175. Aṣani
176. Kuṭumbikā
177. Muktikā
178. Chandrikā
179. Bālamohini
180. Sāmānyā
181. Hāsini
182. Lambā
183. Kovidāri
184. Savāsavī
185. Śaṅkukarna
186. Mahānandā
187. Mahādevī
188. Mahodari
189. Huṅkāri
190. Rudrasusaṭā
191. Rudresī
d. Bhūtaḍāmar
193. Piṅḍalajihvā
Introduction

194. Chalajjvālā
195. Śivā
195. Jvālāmukhi
197. Jyesṭhā (Alakshmī)

The list of tutelary Goddesses is also found in the Āraṇyaka Parva as follows:

1. Kāki
2. Halimā
3. Rudrā
4. Bṛihalī
g. Āryā
6. Palālā
7. Mitrā

These are said to be the mothers of children. A son was born to them by the grace of Skanda and was named Lohitāksha (Āraṇyaka P. 217. 9. 10).

Several other lists are preserved in the Purāṇas. Sometimes they are described as the deities, sometime as object of Vrata or Bhakti and at other time as indicated above they were termed as Rocheśa deities. A list is found in the Vāmana Purāṇa under the caption ‘Pravarānukirtana’, i.e. a description of the Excellent ones giving the names of the best or highest deity or object of each class (Vāmana Purāṇa, Ch. XII). Many of the names are the same as in the Vibhūti Yoga Adhyāya of the Gītā recording the names of folk deities. This Prāvana-sūchī was the work of some well-informed writer who must have taken the great pain in compiling the list which is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Objects</th>
<th>The best one</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Deities</td>
<td>Vishṇu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Mountain</td>
<td>Himālaya</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Weapons</td>
<td>Sudarśana Chakra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Birds</td>
<td>Garuda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Serpents</td>
<td>Ananta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Elements</td>
<td>Earth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name of Objects</td>
<td>The best one</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>--------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Rivers</td>
<td>Gaṅgā</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Water-born objects</td>
<td>Lotus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Asuras</td>
<td>Devotee of Śiva</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Kṣetras</td>
<td>Kuru-Jāṅgala</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Tirthas</td>
<td>Prthūḍaka (modern Pehōā in Kuruśēatra)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Lakes</td>
<td>Mānasarovara</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Forests</td>
<td>Nandana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Lokas</td>
<td>Brahma Loka</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Dharma Vidhis</td>
<td>Satya</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Yajñaś</td>
<td>Aśvamedha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Dear Ones</td>
<td>Son</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Rishiś</td>
<td>Agastya</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. Āgamas</td>
<td>Veda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. Purāṇas</td>
<td>Matsya Purāṇa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. Smṛtis</td>
<td>Manu Smṛti</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. Tithis</td>
<td>Amāvāsyā</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. Gods</td>
<td>Indra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. Shining Ones</td>
<td>Sūrya</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25. Nakashtra</td>
<td>Chandramā</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26. Reservoirs of Water</td>
<td>Ocean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27. Rākshasas</td>
<td>Sukheśi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28. Bonds</td>
<td>Nāga-pāśa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29. Cereals</td>
<td>Rice (Śāli)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30. Men</td>
<td>Brāhmaṇa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31. Animals</td>
<td>Cow and Lion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32. Flowers</td>
<td>Jāṭī</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33. Cities</td>
<td>Kāṭchīpurf</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34. Women</td>
<td>Rambhā</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35. Four Āśramas</td>
<td>Householder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36. Cities</td>
<td>Kuśasthali</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37. Country</td>
<td>Madhyadeśa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38. Fruits</td>
<td>Mango</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39. Buds</td>
<td>Aśoka</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40. Herbs</td>
<td>Haritīki</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Introduction

Name of Objects

41. Roots
42. Diseases
43. White objects
44. Cloths
45. Arts
46. Sciences
47. Vegetables
48. Flavours
49. Fruits
50. Lotus ponds
51. Foresters
52. Trees
53. Learned Men
54. Sati women
55. Cows
56. Fertilizing Males

The best one

Bulbous root
Indigestion
Milk
Cotton cloth
Arithmetic
Indra-Jāla
Kākamāchī
Salt
Tāla fruit
Pampū
Jāmbavān
Banian
Śiva
Pārvatī
Kapilā

The Prakrit text Aṅgaviṣṭā compiled about the end of the Kushāṇa period (circa 3rd century A. D.) also furnishes two lists of ancient folk deities. The first list has been given in Chapter 51 (pp. 204–6) under the heading Devatā-vijaya as follows (names are sanskritised by us):

1. Yaksha
2. Gandharva
3. Pīṭara
4. Pṛeta
5. Vasu
6. Āditya
7. Āśvin
8. Sārasvata
9. Apsarā
10. Vaiśravaṇa
11. Nakshatra
12. Graha

(Vāmana Purāṇa, Ch. XII).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Chandra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Tārā</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Baladeva</td>
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<tr>
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<td>18</td>
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<td>Airāṇī</td>
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<td>Ekaṇāṭā (Ekāṇāṭā)</td>
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<td>38</td>
<td>Navamrigā</td>
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<td>39</td>
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<td>Nāgī</td>
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<td>Agnikumāra</td>
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<td>48</td>
<td>Stanitakumāra</td>
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49. Vidyutkumāra
50. Piśācha
51. Bhūta
52. Yaksha
53. Rākshasa
54. Chandra-Sūrya
55. Grahagāṇa
56. Nāgī
57. Senāvatī
58. Vahni
59. Rākshasī
60. Piśāchī
61. Bhūtakanyā
62. Gandharvakanyā
63. Kinnara
64. Kinnari
65. Yakśīṇī
66. Vanaspatikanyā
67. Parvatadevatā
68. Samudra-nadi-kānya
69. Taḍāga-palvaladevatā
70. Śrī
71. Buddhi
72. Medhā
73. Latā-devatā
74. Vāsu-devatā
75. Nagara-devatā
76. Smaśāna-devatā
77. Varchas-devatā
78. Ukkuruḍika-devatā
79. Uttama-Majjhima-Pachchavara (Pratyavara or lower class Devatā)
80. Ārya-devatā
81. Mlechchha-devatā
The second list in the Chap. 58 is as follows:

1. Vaiśravana
2. Vishnu
3. Rudra-Siva
4. Viśākha
5. Skanda
6. Kumāra
7. Brahmā
8. Baladeva
9. Vāsudeva
10. Pradyumna
11. Parvata
12. Nāga
13. Suparṇa
14. Nadi'
15. Āryā
16. Airāṇi
17. Mātrikā (Māu)
18. Śakuni (Saunl)
19. Ekānāmśā
20. Śri
21. Buddhī
22. Medhā
23. Kṛtī
24. Sarasvatī
25. Yakṣī
t
26. Rākshasi
27. Apsaras
28. Girikumāri
29. Samudra
30. Samudrakumāra
31. Samudrakumārī
t
32. Dvīpakumāra
33. Dvīpakumārī
t
34. Vyāghra
35. Simha
Introduction

36. Hasti
37. Vṛishabha
38. Brahmā
39. Chandra
40. Āditya
41. Graha
42. Nakshatra
43. Tārāgaṇa
44. Marut
45. Vātakanyā
46. Yama
47. Varuṇa
48. Soma
49. Indra
50. Prīthivī
51. Diśākumārī
52. Śrī
53. Medhā
54. Buddhi
55. Kuladevatā
56. Vāstudevatā
57. Varchas-devatā
58. Smaśānadevatā
59. Pitṛidevatā
60. Vidyādharā
61. Vidyāsiddha
62. Chāraṇa
63. Vidyādharī
64. Sarvavidyā-devatā
65. Deva-vidyā
66. Deva-vidyādhipati
67. Maharsхи

The deities in the above two lists of the Aṅgavijjā may be classified into three categories, namely, Divya or Major, Minor and Human (Aṅgavijjā, p. 223-24).
A list of goddesses occurs in the \textit{Vāyu Purāṇa} (Chap. IX) as given below:—

1. Svāhā  
2. Svadhā  
3. Mahāvidyā  
4. Medhā  
5. Lakshmi  
6. Sarasvatī  
7. Aparṇā  
8. Ekaparnā  
9. Pāṭalā  
10. Umā  
11. Haimavatī  
12. Shashṭhī  
13. Kalyāṇī  
14. Khyāti  
15. Prajñā  
16. Mahābhāgā  
17. Gaurī  
18. Āryā  
19. Prakṛiti  
20. Niyatā  
21. Raudrī  
22. Durgā  
23. Bhadrā  
24. Pramāthinī  
25. Kālarātri  
26. Mahāmāyā  
27. Revatī  
28. Bhūtanāyikā  
29. Gautamī  
30. Kauśikī  
31. Chaṇḍī  
32. Kātyāyani  
33. Sati  
34. Kumārī
35. Yādavī
36. Varadā
37. Barhidhvājā
38. Śūladharā
39. Paramabrahmachārini
40. Māhendrī
t
41. Indrabhagini
42. Vṛishakanyā
43. Ekavāsasā
44. Aparājitā
45. Śīmhavāhinī
46. Ekānarāśā
47. Māyā
48. Mahishamardinī
49. Bhadrakāli.

Here it is clearly stated that in spite of the multiplicity of the goddesses there are only two Great Goddesses (Mahādevīs), viz., (i) Prajñā or Sarasvatī and (ii) Śrī or Lakṣmī:—

Mahādevikule dve tu Prajñā Śrīścha prakīrt Yates/ Ābhyyām deviśahasrāṇī yairvyāpyamakhīlam jagat//

(Vāyu. 9. 85-88).

Although the goddesses may appear under a thousand names there are in fact two of them invoked by each individual, viz., the goddess of wisdom, intelligence and mind known as Sarasvatī, Prajñā or Medhā and the other the goddess presiding over prosperity and wealth, namely Śrī-Lakṣmī. These two were universally worshipped.

List of Goddesses in the Revati Kalpa of the Kāśyapa Samhitā.
The Kāśyapa Samhitā is a valuable text of the period of transition between Kushāṇa and Gupta times and in its chapter entitled ‘Revati Kalpa’ it presents an unparalleled record of the goddesses worshipped in the society of its time. The list is as follows:
1. Revati
2. Jātahārini
3. Pilipichchhikā
4. Raudrī
5. Vāruṇī
6. Ugrarevatī
7. Śushkārevatī
8. Kaṭambhārā
9. Vikuṭā
10. Dārunā
11. Mohinī
12. Stambhanī
13. Poshanā
14. Nākini
15. Piśāchī
16. Yakshi
17. Vāruṇī
18. Shashṭhī
19. Bhūrākā
20. Yāmyā
21. Mātaṅgī
22. Bhadrakālī
23. Raudrī
24. Vardhikā
25. Asādhyā
26. Puṇyajani
27. Paurushādini
28. Saṁdaṁsinī
29. Karakoṭakī
30. Indravaḍavā
31. Vaḍavāmukhī

The whole pantheon of these goddesses in the Revatī Kalpa was organised under the general heading of Jātaḥārini who was the same as Hārīti, the presiding goddess of children. Each caste, community or tribe worshipped its particular Jātaḥārini goddess under a different name, for example:

1. Sūta
2. Māgadha
3. Vena
4. Ambashṭha
5. Prāchya ka
6. Kukkasa
7. Cāṇḍāla
8. Mushtika
9. Meda
10. Daumba
11. Uvāka
12. Dramiḍa
13. Simhala
14. Oḍra
15. Khasha
16. Śaka
17. Yavana
18. Pahlava
19. Tushāra
20. Kamboja
21. Āvantya
22. Nemaka
23. Ābharika
24. Hūṇa
25. Pārshaka
26. Kirāta
27. Śabara
28. Śambara.

Thus we have a record of goddesses of orthodox Hinduism, of the Austric Nishādas and of the mixed castes and both indigenous and foreign female deities that were being worshipped under a diversity of names and forms. The foreigners who came and settled amongst the Indian population continued to worship their own goddesses as was quite natural. Similarly members of different castes and followers of different professions worshipped their own minor goddesses. Some of them named as follows:

1. Ayaskari Jātahārini (Goddess of the blacksmiths or workers in iron)
2. Takshiṇī (Goddess of carpenters or woodwrights)
3. Kulālī (Goddess of the potters or clay-workers)
4. Padakarī (Goddess of the leatherers or shoe-makers and tanners)
5. Mālakārī (Goddess of garland-makers or gardeners)
6. Kuvindī (Goddess of weavers or cloth-makers)
7. Sauchaki (Goddess of tailors or drapers)
8. Rajakī (Goddess of dyers or pigment-makers)
9. Nejikā (Goddess of washermen or cleaners)
10. Gopi (Goddess of milkmen or cowherds).

Thus each profession worshipped its own goddess for which the general title was Kāruḷī Jāṭahārīṇī. Up to this day these professions have their own Mātrikā goddesses (Kāśyapa Samhitā, Revati Kalpa, pp. 153-162).

Besides, five more classes of goddesses are mentioned under the name of Ākunī (birds), Chatuspadī (animals), Sarpā (serpents), Matsyī (fish), Vanaspatī (trees), and each one of these had many other names and forms.

Such folk deities exist almost in all countries and there was no dirth of them in India, and the above records present only a sampling of them. Both art and literature testify to their existence. For example, the inscriptions on the Bharhut Stūpa mention the following:

Supavasa yakho, Viruḍhaka yakho, Gāmgita yakho, Suchilom Yako, Sudasanā yakhti, Chā(n)dā yakhti, Sirimā devatā, Chulakokhā devatā, Mahākokhā devatā.

In the present book we have taken some Maha deities from ancient literature and presented here a study of them.
II Dhanurmaha (Festival of the Bow)

CHAPTER TWO

Dhanurmaha was a special festival in which practised bowmen gave a demonstration of their skill in archery. In the dim past ages of history we may imagine of such an institution to give proof of personal valour amongst aboriginal or wild tribes making use of the bow. We learn from literary references that the Yadava tribes established in the region of Mathurā also practised the Dhanurmaha festival. When Karna wanted Krishna to come to his court he announced the holding of Dhanurmaha festival and commanded Akrūra as follows: “O Akrūra, you go and tell the people of Vraja that the king is organising a special festival of Dhanurmaha to which he invites Krishna and Balarāma”.¹

Akrūra went to the house of Nanda Gopa and in the presence of the honourable cowherds delivered this message to Krishna and Balarāma: “O dear ones, all the cowherds of the Vraja will proceed tomorrow to Mathurā to pay their annual tributes. Such is the command of king Karna, your king, who has organised with great celebration the festival of Dhanurmaha which you should go and see.”²

It appears that the Dhanurmaha festival was connected with Śiva-worship. In ancient times this festival was organised as part of Śiva cult. It has been made explicit in this description that Karna had organised the Dhanurmaha with the object of worshipping god Śiva.³

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1. Rājā Dhanurmakham nāma kārayishyatī vai sudhi//Hari-vanīka 2. 22. 91.
2. Samṛiddhashattra Kaṁśasya bhavishyati dhanurmahah//
   Tam drakshyathā samṛiddham cha svajanaiścha same-
   shyatha//Hari. 2. 26. 4.
3. Kasyachīt tvatha kālasya Mathurāyāṁ mahotsavam//
   Pīnākināṁ samuddhiśya' chakre Kaṁso nārādhīpaḥ//Hari. 2. 101. 64.
Such festivals were also known as ‘samāja’ and the place where such gatherings took place was known as Raṅga-vāṭa. Seating arrangements for the Paura-Jānapada people were made in the Raṅga-vāṭa or amphitheatre in the form of maṅchātimāṣṭica, i.e., rows of seats upon seats. On one side in a raised portion of the ground was placed a seat for the king called Vimāna (Hari. 2. 101. 54-58). On the occasion of the Samāja gatherings many other kinds of public entertainments and shows, dance and music performances, wrestling matches and dramas were held.¹

The Samāja festival of Kāṁsa included these manifold items but the principal item was the Dhanurmasa. There was also another aspect of Samāja gatherings in which the lower nature of men found an unrestrained play leading to the drinking of wine, eating meat, the company of courtesans and animal fights. This must have been the nature of Samāja which were interdicted in the edicts of Aśoka:

No pi cha samāje kaṭaviye babukā hi dosā samājasā devānam piyadasī lājā dakhati/athi pi chā ekatiyā samāja sāḍhu-matā devānam piyasā piyadāsisā lājine/ (Kālī rock-edict No. 1).

There were two kinds of Samāja festivals in the time of Aśoka. One were marked with great evil as said above but the others were of a pure nature, sāḍhu-samāja, designed for noble entertainments only. Scholars have held different views regarding the meaning of Samāja. On the authority of the Mahābhārata, Harivamśa and Buddhist literature, Bhandarkar had shown that the nobler kinds of Samāja festivals took the form of dance, music, games, joust and tournaments whereas in the lower kind of Samājas there was an occasion for violent demonstrations (Indian Antiquary, 1913, p. 255). According to Thomas, the Samāja was an arena for demonstration of animals’ fight (J. R. A. S. 1914, p. 392). Shri N. G. Majumdar

¹. Tatra mallāḥ samājagmur nāṇādeṣyā viśāmpate/nartanā gāyanāśchaiva kuśalā nṛityakarmasu//Hari. 2. 101. 55.
thought that the Samāja festival were restricted to dramatic shows (Prekshaṇaṇaka), a peculiarity described in the Jūtahās and the Kāmasūtra of Vātsyāyana (Indian Antiquary, 1918, p. 221). In fact, all the above views about the nature of Samāja festivals were valid since the scope of Samāja festivals was quite varied which included all the above forms. Sometimes the Samāja was organised for pure entertainments but at other times it centred round the religious worship of a deity.

Kaṁsa styled his Samāja a Dhanurmaha or Bow Festival, which centred round the worship of Śiva. It shows that in the background of the Dhanurmaha festival some kind of Śaiva worship was the principal item, and there was close connection between the two. Primitive tribes using bow and arrow as weapons of war held them in great sanctity. They believed that the bow was a gift to them from some high ancestor god which was given to their forefathers and the same had descended in their royal family as an heirloom preserved with great care. The bow preserved in the family of Kaṁsa has been styled as divya or Divine1.

That bow was of much bigger size in comparison to others. The Harivamśa states that it was like a pillar of stately dimension (Hari. 2.27. 44). It was placed in a special hall (Dhanurgrīha or Dhanurśāla) adjacent to royal armory (rājākiya Ayudhāgāra, Hari. 2.27.40; 51.54). Special guards (Dhanurpāla) were posted for guarding it. In the Dhanurmaha of Kaṁsa occasion did not arrive for Krishṇa and Balarāma to bend or string this bow before public gathering as happened in the case of the Dhanurmaha of king Janaka by Rāma. Krishṇa entered the Dhanurgrīha one day in advance and broke the bow as an elephant would deal with a piece of sugarcane (Hari. 2.27. 61). As soon as Kaṁsa learnt about it he gave command for a wrestling match with Mushṭika and Chāṇūra.

1. Drasṭhum dhanurmahāṁ divyam rāṣṭra chaiva mahardhit/ Hari. 2.27. 32
This motif of Dhanurmaha associated with the life-story of Kṛṣṇa is also found in the Rāmāyaṇa in connection with the life of Rāma. The Dhanur-yajña organised by Janaka at the time of Sītā’s marriage was in fact a festival of Dhanurmaha. That special Bow was given to Janaka’s ancestors by the gods².

To string that bow was a demonstration of one’s personal valour. None of the Devas, Asuras, Yakshas, Kinnaras, Mahoragas, Rākshasas succeeded in stringing that bow (Bālakāṇḍa 31.9; 67.9). That was the bow of Śiva, the Supreme God amongst gods (66.8; Śaivism dhanuḥ, 66.12). When at the time of Daksha’s sacrifice the Devas did not allot a share to Śiva in the sacrifice then Śiva became enraged, and filled with indignation he punished the Devas with a bow which had been made over to the ancestors of Janaka and which had come down in the family as an heirloom (56.10). It is called a Divine Bow (diyuva-dhanuḥ) in the Rāmāyaṇa (67.14.), which received regular worship with incense in the family of Janaka of Mithilā. It formed the object of Āyāga worship implying that the Dhanurmaha celebration was organised round it. Rāma strung that bow with his physical strength and thereby earned his right for wedding Sītā. It is possible that in more ancient times the offering of a beautiful girl to, the hero of the Bow formed part of the festival. For instance in the Svayamvara of Draupadī the offering of a girl formed an essential feature of shooting at a target with a bow. The Dhanurmaha ceremony may be traced in the background of all these three celebrations described in the Rāmāyaṇa, Mahābhārata and Harivansha.

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2. Taddhi pūrvar naraśreṣṭha dattaṁ sadasi daivataiḥ/ Aprameyabalarāṁ ghorāṁ makhe paramabhāsvarasam// Bālakāṇḍa 31.8.
III. GIRIMAHĀ (FESTIVAL OF THE MOUNTAIN)

CHAPTER THREE

In a study of beginnings of social institutions we find communities living in a stage in which they depended on cattle-breeding, and rearing of milk animals. This was followed by agriculture and tilling of the soil. The Harivamāṇa Purāṇa clearly refers to the Śṛīyajñā or agricultural sacrifice of the cultivators and the cow-breeding sacrifice of the cowherds.1

The Śṛīyajñā or the sacrifice connected with agriculture was connected with the Indra-maha, as we shall see below. But Girimaha or the festival of the mountain was connected with pastoral life in which the people subsisted mostly on cattle-breeding. The Harivamāṇa gives a relevant explanation of the lifting of the Govardhana-Mount by Kṛṣṇa. There this exploit of Kṛṣṇa has been explained in the back-ground of a folk cult.

When Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma were living in the forest of Vraja they learnt that the cowherds were preparing with eagerness for a festival known as Śakra-maha. Kṛṣṇa became interested and he enquired about the nature of Śakra-maha, for which they were all so intent and eagerly preparing.

One of the cowherds of advanced years told him, “My darling, this is a festival in which the Flag-staff of Indra (Indra-dhoja) is worshipped. Indra is the lord of all gods and this is a festival in his honour held every year. He sends rains through the clouds for agriculture. Therefore, the kings and all the people including ourselves pay homage to Indra in every monsoon season through Indramaha festival.2

1. Śṛīyajñāscha karshukāh giriyajñāstathi gopīḥ/Hari. 2. 16. 9

Knowing fully well the importance of these folk festivals, Krishna wanted to wean away his companions from them and said, "We are cowherds and make a living by our cattle wealth. For us the cows are our deities. The Mountain is our deity. The Forest is our deity where our cattle graze. For the cultivators of the soil agriculture is the profession. For merchants and traders the profession is the sale and purchase of goods. For us the cows are all in all. We should honour and worship them. The bounds of agricultural fields is a point beyond which are the jungles and beyond the jungles are the mountains. For us these hilly areas are real areas of pasture for our cattle. The Brahmanas perform their yajnas with Vedie mantras, the tillers of the soil perform their sacrifice of agriculture by ploughing their fields but for us cowherds the festival of the mountain (Giri-yajña) is the main thing. Therefore, I have a special liking for the Giri-yajña. Let us, therefore, come together and worship the mountain deity. Our prosperity lies in paying homage to the cows. Therefore perform the festival of the mountain (Giri-yajña). May the gods worship Indra, we shall devote ourselves to the worship of the mountain. If you hold me in regard I shall make a fervent appeal to you all in favour of holding a Giri-yajña."

1. Gopavriddhasya vachanam śrutvā śakraparigrahe / prabhāvajño'pi śakrasya vākyam dāmodaro, bravīta //

Harivaṇaśa, 2. 16.1.

Vayaṁ vanacharā gopāḥ sadā godhanajīvinaḥ / gāvo'smaddaivataṁ viddhi girayaścha vanāni cha // 2 // Karshukānaṁ krishirvijitīṁ panyāṁ vipaiśijīvinaṁ / gāvo'smākaṁ parāvṛttiretat traividyamuchyate // 3 //

Krishyantā prathitā śīmā śīmāntaṁ śrūyate vanam / vanāntaṁ girayaḥ sarve sā chāsmākaṁ gatirdhruva // 5 //

Mantrayajñaparā viprāḥ sītāyajñāsaḥ karshukāḥ /

giriyajñāstathā gopaṁ ījyo'smābhigirvane // 9 //

Tanmahyaṁ rochate gopā giriyaṁ pravartatām // 10 //

Archayāmo girim āvaṁ gāschaiva cha viśeṣataḥ // 41 //

Śivāya gāvaḥ pūjyantām giriyajñāḥ pravartyatām /

pūjyatāṁ triḍaśaṁ śakro girirasmābhirijyatām // 43 //

Kāraiyāśyāmi goyajñāṁ balādāpi na samśayaḥ /

yadyasti mayi vah pritiryadi-vā suhṛido vayaṁ // 44 //
The cowherds supported this proposal of Kṛiṣṇa saying, "Dear sir, your suggestion is in, the interest of the cows and the cowherds. We shall carry out your wish. Let Śakra-maha be relegated to one side, we shall organise Girimaha for the welfare of our cows as you have suggested" (Hari. 2. 17.2, 10-11).

As part of the Girimaha festival huge quantities of food preparations including sweet and meat were arranged, and for three days the cowherds observed continuous merriment. Many kinds of musical instruments were played. The Giriyajña festival was observed on an auspicious day with garland, incense, perfumes etc. That food was first offered to the mountain deity and then the Brāhmaṇas were fed with it.

There are three elements in the above description of the Giri-yañja. Firstly, a kind of Samāya-festival, secondly worship of the mountain deity, and thirdly the cowherds taking care of their cattle wealth. Of these the first element of an excursion to mountaineous spot and the second namely worship of the mountain deity also form part of the Raivataka-maha described in the Mahābhārata.

During his wandering in the four directions Arjuna at the end reached Dvārakā in the western direction and became a guest of Kṛiṣṇa. There, after some time a big festival of the Andhakas and the Vṛiṣṇis was celebrated on the Raivataka mountain. There huge quantities of food stuff were made with which the Brāhmaṇas were fed. A number of temporary abodes were put up on all sides of the Raivataka in which the young princes of Bhojas, Andhakas and Vṛiṣṇis took their residence. The area was embellished with a number of chandeliers with branched support for many lights (āśpa-vrīkhas). Musical instruments were sounded, dancers began to perform their

1. Yattvāyābhīhitām vākyām giriyajñāṃ prati prabho / kastallāṅghayitum sakto velāṁiva mahodadhiḥ // 10 // sthitaḥ śakramahastāta śrīmaṇ girimahastvayam / tvatprapito'dya gotāṇāṃ hetoḥ pravartyatām // 11 //
dances and musicians became engaged in music and song. Young Vṛṣṇīs, gay-gaily dressed and decorated, began to assemble outside. The citizens also with their wives came to the spot for taking part in the festival. Some came there on their vehicles and others walked on foot. Balarāma accompanied by Revatī and followed by his troupe of musicians came there. King Ugrasena, Pradyumna, Sāmba putting on new clothes and garlands reached there. Rich persons taking part in such festivals decorated themselves with clothes, garlands and perfumes. When Krishṇa went to the Dhanurmaha festival of Kaṁsa at Mathurā these features had been described. He obtained new clothes from the washerman of Kaṁsa, flower reeds from the garland-maker and perfumes from Kubjā. Akrūra, Sāraṇa, Gada and other princes accompanied with their wives added beauty to Raivataka-maha. They were accompanied by their parties of musicians (gandharvas). On all sides a wave of festivity and rejoicing filled the atmosphere. Just then Krishṇa and Arjuna also reached there. Subhadrā, sister of Sāraṇa and cousin of Krishṇa was also present there. She worshipped with great devotion the Raivataka mountain. She also worshipped other deities and invited the Brāhmaṇas to recite the Svastivāchana mantras and then performed the Pradakṣiṇā of the Raivataka mountain.1

Then Arjuna with the connivance of Krishṇa forcibly took away Subhadrā. The Sabhāpāla officer announced danger beating the war-drum (sāṇnabhīḥ bherī) which attracted all the Bhoja, Andhaka and Vṛṣṇi heroes to their assembly (Ādiparva 211-212).

When the Mahābhārata battle was over then Krishṇa taking leave of the Pāṇḍavas returned to Dwārakā, and he found that a Maha festival was being celebrated on the Raivataka

1. Subhadrā tvatha śailendra-mabhayarchya saha raivatam / daivatāṇi cha sarvāṇi Brāhmaṇān svati vāchya cha // pradakṣiṇāṁ girim kṛtvā prayayau dvārakāṁ prati // (Ādiparva 212. 6, 7).
mountain (Āśvamedhīkāparva 59. 4). The Vṛishnīs were enjoying themselves with many pleasures in the form of the Raivataka-maha.\(^1\)

In this account a vivid picture of the Girimaha festival has been drawn. The mountain was decorated with many kinds of bejewelled masks (kosha), incensed garlands and perfumes, clothes of many kinds and golden Kalpavṛṣṭa trees and chandeliers. Its deep caves and waterfalls were shining with the light of day. Flags with jingling bells were hoisted. Men and women were immersed in making music. The beauty of the mountain was worth-seeing. A whole market with shops full of manifold objects was set up on the slopes of the hill. Large quantities of eatable and wines and drinking were stocked in heaps. Clothes, garlands, lutes, flutes, small tabors and other objects of enjoyment were brought together. Poor men, beggars and orphans were receiving charitable distributions of many a kind. Thus that Giri-maha festival was looking glorious in many ways.\(^2\)

In the above description of Girimaha its excursion side (Vana-vihāra) has been stressed whereas information is also given of its having been made beautiful with masks (59. 5)

The question arises as to the offering of a mask on the physical form of a deity. Bāṇa in the Harshacharita had referred to such masks (mukha-kosha) offered to cover the Śiva Liṅgas (Nirṇayasāgara edition, p. 100). Commentator Śaṅkara says that these masks were marked with a human face\(^3\).

In Mathurā art we actually find Śiva Liṅgas with one face (Eka-mukhī), four-faced (Chaturmukhī) and five-faced (Pañcha-mukhī) from the very beginning of the Kushāṇa period. In the Gupa period it became a common religious practice to install Eka-mukhī Śiva Liṅgas. In these cases the

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2. Babhau paramakalyāṇo mahastasya mahāgireḥ / 59. 18.
III. Girimaha (Festival of the Mountain)

stone Śiva Liṅga was carved with a human face. In imitation of this a mask in gold or silver was offered by devout worshippers to cover the stone images.¹

The offering of such masks made of clothes called cholā is a religious practice that has come down to our own times; possibly it was such an offering made to the Raivataka mountain. This appears to have been an old feature of the worship of the mountain deity. In worshipping the river goddess as part of Nadi-maha such offering of clothes is a practice followed to this day. In Varanasi this is known as Piyari, i.e., the sārī of yellow colour which is of such measurement as to suffice for covering the span of the river from one side to the other. In ancient times the monumental Stūpas were also covered with such fabrics known as Deva-dūshya in Buddhist literature. In the Mahāvamsa these are known as Śilāmaya-kaṇṭhuka. What we find on the body of Dhamekh Stūpa in the form of carved stones with many designs, actually to be found in textile manufacture, is the Deva-dūshya or Pāshāya-kaṇṭhuka which must have involved an expenditure of big sums of money.

In the list of the Nāyōdhāmmakahā Parvata-yātṛā and Giriyātṛā are mentioned separately, and their distinction is not clear now. Probably the festivals of big mountains like Raivataka and Himalaya were known as Parvata-maha and of low hillocks like Govardhana as Girimaha.

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¹ Harshacharita: Eka Sāṁskritika Adhyayana, p. 56.
IV. INDRA-MAHA (FESTIVAL OF INTRA)

CHAPTER FOUR

In the list of Maha festivals Indra-maha, also known as Śakra-maha, was considered to have been an important one. In the quotations cited above from the Harivamśa there is mention of Indra-maha. It is stated there that the king and the people both worshipped Indra during the rainy season. As to the nature of the Indra-maha festival the elderly cowherds told Krishṇa that Indra, king of the gods, was worshipped by means of the Indra-maha festival.¹

The Indra-maha festival appears to have been connected with what in the Harivamśa has been stated to be the Sitā-Yajña of the cultivators which was literally the sacrifice with plough as its deity. This was the condition in the evolution of the society. Firstly, there was the stage of the food-gathering community by means of hunting and secondly the pastoral stage in which man lived on cattle wealth moving from place to place in search of new pasture. This was followed by the third stage in which men settled down on land as agriculturists, i.e., when they began to produce their own food.

In Indian literature Indra-dhvaja is specially described in the story of Uparichara Vasu in the Mahābhārata. A king of this name ruled over the Chedi kingdom. Indra appeared before the king and advised him to rule with piety or Dharma since rules of Dharma support and protect the whole world. Indra himself said to him, “By observance of Dharma you will obtain such worlds as last for ever. Take care to preserve the Dharma in your kingdom. I reside in heaven, you be my representative on earth. The earth in the Chedi country is full of agricultural and mineral wealth. This land is like the very

¹ Śrūyatāṁ tāta Śakrasya yadartha dhvaja ijjate. Hari. 2. 15. 4.
udder of the earth. The people in this region are devoted to piety, contentment and virtuous character. All the four classes are devoted to their duty. I am pleased with you and present to you a celestial car (Vimāna) by which you will be able to move in the sky. With this I also present to you a garland named Vaijayanti of which the lotus flowers always keep fresh. This Indramālā will be your special sign.”

With this Indra also presented to the king a bamboo staff.¹

This was a big pole which the king took in a procession to his city in order to offer worship to it. As Vasu did all people do to-day. That Pole is decorated with garlands, perfumes and flowers. The next morning it is installed in an erect position. While offering worship to the Pole god Śaṅkara also is worshipped with many rejoicings. This Pole Festival may be regarded as the loud laughter of god Śiva.

Thereupon Indra made this proclamation that those who will worship this Flag-staff as Vasu has done will also become happy and prosperous like him. Thus Indra showed special favour and honour towards king Vasu. Vasu, ruler of Chedi, organised the Indra-maha festival and protected the earth with Dharma.²

Some more verses are given in Nilakantha’s commentary on this portion of the text from which we know that the Indra Pole measured 32 cubits, i.e., 48 feet (dvātriṃśata-kishkusammitam). The Flag-staff was beautified by five coloured strips of cloth and flowers. Alongside of the worship of the Indra Yashṭi worship was also offered to Manibhadra Yaksha and some other deities. Charities were liberally distributed amongst friends and the needy persons. People enjoyed with many kinds of amusements. Thus people living in cities and the country-side both celebrated this festival.

The word pīṭaka has been specially used to describe the decoration of this Flag-staff. There is a difference of opinion about the meaning of this word. Varāhamihira has made a special reference to Indra-yashṭi in the Bṛhat Samhitā. It is stated there that the Indra-yashṭi was decorated with the rows of small bells (kiṅkiṇi-jala), garlands, parasols, large bells and with Piṭīkas (BS. 42. 7; also 42. 57).

But the common meaning of pīṭaka is a box-like container (Hindi: pīṭāri) and that seems to be appropriate here. In Bengal it is still the custom to hang such small box-like containers (karaṇḍaka) on such Flag-staff. According to Varāhamihira round mirrors, garlands of fruits, crescent-shaped ornaments, pieces of plaintains and sugarcanes were used for decorating

(continued)

vasunā rājamukhyena prītimānaabravīt vibhuḥ // 22.
Ye pūjayishyanti narā rājānascha mahaṁ mama /
kārayishyanti cha mudā yathā Chedipatirnripaṁ // 23.
Teshām Śṛtvijayaśchaiva sarāṣṭraṇāṁ bhavishyati /
Tathā spīto janapado muditaścha bhavishyati // 24.
Utsavaṁ kārayishyanti sadā Śakrasya ye narāḥ /
bhūmidānāṃdibhīrhīrāṅgāṁ yathā pūtā bhavanti vai /
varaḍānāmaḥbhūtaistathā Śakrotsavena te // 26.
Sampūjito maghaṁa Vasuḥchedipatistadā /
pālayāmāsa dharmena chedisthāḥ prīthivimīṃm /
indraprītyā bhūmipatiśchakārendramāṁ Vasuḥ // 27.
(Ādiparva Ch. 57).
the Indra-dhvaja. It is specially mentioned that tailed lions (lāṅgula-simha) and other fabulous animals with their hind bodies having a tailed form (vyūla-lāṅgula) were used to decorate the Indra-yashti. In old images of Balarāma holding a flag-staff such fish-tailed lion is specially shown. There is such an image in the Bharat Kala Bhavan and another in Mathura sculpture.

In the Mahābhārata the community festival of Indra-dvaja has been termed as the form of Śiva’s merriment (hāsya-rūpeṇa Śaṅkaraḥ). The reading according to Nilakanṭha is, Bhagavān pūjate chaṭṭra haṃsaraṇeṇa vāsavaḥ : i.e., in the festival of the Pole, god Indra is worshipped as a goose (haṃsa-rūpa). Dr. Sukathankar has shown in one of his articles that the reading haṃsa-rūpa Indra is incorrect.¹ He thought that there is no evidence of Indra ever having assumed the form of a swan. But against this view our attention is drawn to a passage of the Rgveda in which Indra is said to be moving as a goose in friendship with the water and discerned as such by the thoughtful sage.² We thus hesitate to agree with the view of Dr. Sukathankar that the original reading of the epic text did not refer to Indra as a Haṃsa, and only to the attakāsa or mountainous laughter of Śiva. The epithet applied to Indra supported by the Rgvedic passage seems to have been a difficult text which was simplified to hāsaraṇaṇa Śaṅkaraḥ. Thus by Sukathankar’s own law of textual criticism the reading haṃsaraṇa is to be preferred to that of hāsya. We have, however, noticed above that the Dhanurmaha was connected with Śaiva worship (Hari. 2. 101. 62).

In the Rāmāyaṇa also Janaka’s Great Bow is stated to be the Bow of Devadeva Śiva (Bālaṅkaṇḍa 66. 12, 18). It is possible that the worship offered to the Flag-staff of Indra was

1. ‘Does Indra assume the form of a swan’, Bulletin of the Deccan College Research Institute, Pt. I, p. 1-7,

2. Bibhatsūnāṁ sāyujam haṃsamāhurapāṁ divyānāṁ sakhye charantam / Anuṣṭubhamañu charchārmanāṃ madram ni chikyuḥ kavayo manīśā // (RV. X. 124. 9).
connected in the remotest antiquity with some festival celebrated in honour of Śiva as part of the folk-cult; in course of time the cult of Indra (Indra-maha) came to be blended with elements of the Rudra-Śiva cult (Rudra-maha) and in such transmission the goose form of Indra became contaminated with some elements of Rudra worship involving boisterous merry-making.

The Indra Pole typified the weal and merriment of the whole community. Men and women, young and old, spent a life of happiness in the Janapadas depending on agriculture and cottage industry which were the basis of their happiness and prosperity. This spontaneous abundance was typified in the festival of Indra-maha and Indra-yashṭi. Kālidāsa mentions in the Raghuvamśa that the people experienced great rejoicing at the sight of the Indra-yashṭi (Raghu. 4.3). Mallinātha cites the Bhavishtyottara Purāṇa to the effect that the clouds pour the desired rain in the kingdom of the king who performs the festival (Yātrā) of Indra’s Flag-staff. The Indra-dhvaja festival is clearly named here as Yātrā, which signifies a religious celebration to a deity in the form of a Mēlā or popular assemblage. From Sanskrit Yātrā is derived Prakrit jattā, and Hindi jāta. The great festival of the goddess of Nagarakot in Kangra is known as Jāta and the religious gatherings due to other local gods and goddesses are also known as their Jāta. Time of the worship of the Indra-dhvaja was the autumn season. This is shown by its mention in the Raghuvamśa and the Harivamśa Purāṇa. In the Harivamśa Indra is made to speak like this: “The four months of the rainy season were meant for me. Of them, O Krishṇa, I transfer to you the period of the first two months and the latter two months of the Śarad season will be sacred to me in which there will be a festival in my honour (2.19.47-8).

As in the most archaic times the Dhanurmaha and Śiva-maha came close to each other by mutual give and take of their several elements, similarly the Giri-maha and Indra-maha
now evolve a rapprochement under the leadership of Kṛiṣṇa or the Pañcharatātra Bhāgavatās as stated clearly in the Harivaṃśa:

"On the one hand the people adorn Indra by the festival of Indra-yāṣṭi; on the other hand thereby they pay homage also to U pendra or V iṣṇu who is the younger brother of Indra. That is why of the four months of rainy season two months belong to V iṣṇu and the other two to Indra ( Hari. 2.19.59).

But besides the time indicated for Indra-yāṣṭi festival in the autumn season as in Harivaṃśa, there are different statements also. According to the Śilappadikāram, a Tamil classic of the Sangam period (circa 2nd century A.D.), the Indra-dhvajā festival was celebrated in the month of Chaitra. We find there in the fifth chapter a vivid description of Śakraśava. It is mentioned there that the people of Kāveri-paṭṭan or Pabār gathered and decided to celebrate the Śakra-mahotsava. This city was a very prosperous ses-port of those times. It was a town full of merchants trading in silken and cotton textiles, coral, sandal, pearls, jewels, golden ornaments and in many kinds of wines. Besides, there were many artisans, dealers in ceramic ware and goldsmiths and bead-makers. There were also musicians expert in playing on lutes, flutes and drums and also vocalists and dancers. All prepared various foods and drinks with much merriment and became ready for the festival. Ceremonious sea-bath also formed a part of their festival. In chapter six of the epic is given a description of the sea-bath festival. It was a Samudra-maha. This may be compared with the similar description in the Harivaṃśa where a detailed account of Samudra-maha festival is given in which Kṛiṣṇa, Balarāma, the Bhōja leaders of the Andhakas and the Vīrśnīs took part (2.88). It appears that the Indra-maha festival was accompanied by some kind of water-sports where this was possible. In Sanskrit literature there are many other references to the Indra-dhvaja festival. It is seen that this festival was closely associated with the life of the people.
Ancient Indian Folk Cults

We have already stated that the place occupied by the Vedic Yajñas in the lives of the higher classes was taken by these popular Maha festivals in the life of general community. The Harivamśa clearly states that the sacrifices performed by Vedic mantras belong to the Brāhmaṇas (mantrayajñaparāh viprāḥ, Hari. 2. 16. 9.). Thus Rik, Yajus and Sāma, these three Vedas concentrated on those sacrifices in which the Soma juice was especially prepared. They were therefore known as Sāma sacrifices. On the other hand these popular festivals were to a large extent connected with the background of the Atharva-veda, for this Veda largely reflects popular beliefs and the general life of the community. Many folk deities are mentioned in the hymns of the Atharvaveda. In these popular festivals which were associated with the gods the people indulged in many kinds of foods and drinks and gave themselves a liberty of witnessing many kinds of shows and performances. The Kausika Sūtra of the Atharvaveda makes special mention of Indra-maha. Three texts of the Atharva Pariśishṭa collection, viz., Indramahotsava, Brahmayāga and Skandayāga are related to Indra-maha, Brahma-maha and Skanda-maha respectively.¹

According to the AV. Pariśishṭa on Indra-maha the festival was celebrated in the bright half of Bhādra. The Rājatarangini also refers to the Indra Festival and names the twelfth day of the bright half of the Bhādra as Indra-dvādaśi. According to the Atharva Pariśishṭa the king and his priest observed a fast on the previous day and on the next morning raised the Indra Pole with proper ceremony. This ceremony was called Indrothāpana of which a detailed description follows in connection with the raising of the Flag-staff and keeping it tied with riggings fastened to its top and middle and lower portions. In this description a portion of the Pole is called Indrāṭaka, the meaning of which is not quite clear. On this occasion the cattle wealth was specially taken care of, which implied that god Indra took them under his protection. Along

with the king his officers and servants also enjoyed themselves with the festival for three or seven nights. The final of this festival took the form of a Svastivâchana recital by the Brâhmaṇas and an Avabhûtiha bath by all people similar to that at the end of the Yajñas. We have already seen that the Giri-maha or mountain festival was associated with sea-bath (Samudra-maha) and the Śilappadikârâma mentions the Indra-maha festival as accompanied by sea-bath. It appears that the ceremonious bath formed an essential part of these festivals similar to that performed at the end of Yajñas. The Atharva Parisîshtha says at the end that the person who performed Indra-maha obtained the fruit of royalty. “The king who performs the Indra-maha festival his kingdom prospers day and night and he becomes the sole sovereign of the earth and obtains a long life. (“Indramahotsava Parisîshtha” : 19.3.9).

Almost a similar statement is made in the story of Vasu Uparichara: “The kingdom where this Śakrotsva or Indra festival is celebrated becomes prosperous in every way and the people of that kingdom live a peaceful life.”

Bhāsa has mentioned in his drama Bālacharita that Nanda Gopa organised in his settlement the Indra-maha festival (Bālacharita, Poona edn., p. 519). There is a casual reference to the Indra-maha festival in the Mṛichchhakatâka drama: “Why are you cawing like a crow who is greedy for the crumbs thrown at the Indra-maha festival” (aredâyi Indramahahâmsuko vi a suṣṭhu hini kâkâ asi). Huge quantities of eatables were prepared at the time of the Indra-maha festival and whatever remained surplus attracted a crowd of crows, designated here as Indramaha-kâmuka.1 But Hemachandra explains Indramahâkâmuka as a dog in the Deśīnâmamalâ (I. 82). This meaning may be relevant since the dogs also were greedy to enjoy some share from the heaps of food prepared for this festival. In the Mândasor inscription the Indra festival is described as

1. According to the commentator Prithividhara Indramaha-kâmuka had a variant reading as Indramaha-kâka-podao which signifies the young one of the crow.
Sakramagha. It is evident that the three terms Makha, Magha, and Maha had a common derivation.

There are two especial features to be noted about Indramaha. Firstly that it was so timed as to coincide with the harvesting season when mountains of food and drinks were got ready to be offered to Indra. It appears that festival of Annakuta was associated with it and the ‘mountains of food’ were offered to the mountain god Govardhana as a part of the Girimaha festival at the suggestion of Krishna. Even up to this day the Annakuta festival is celebrated as an element of Govardhana worship. The Annakuta festival has taken the form of a Melā at Girirāja Govardhana. Moreover at all places where there are temples of Krishna installed by Vallabhāchārya and his followers the Annakuta is a popular festival. Amongst the people the day following the Dipāvali has become appointed as the day for celebrating the Annakuta festival. This seems to have been a part of the ancient Indramaha festival.

Indramaha festival was taken to be the biggest occasion of popular merriment and festivity. Another important reference comes from the Nātyaśāstra where it is stated that Bharata having completed his preparation for the dramatic performances asked Brahmā as to what to be done next, and Brahmā replied that the Great Festival of Indradhvaja was going on and that was the proper time for the dramatic show also:

Mahānāmayam progaścha samayāḥ samupasthitāḥ / ayaṁ dhvajamahāḥ śrīmān mahendraśya prāvartate //1.54 Atredānīmayaṁ vedo nātyasaṁjñāḥ prayuyyatāṁ / tataḥ tasmin dhvajasahāhe niḥātaśuradānave //1.55 Prahrīshṭāmarasaṁkīrṇe mahendraśvijayotsave / nāṅdhīkritā mayā purvamāśravachanasāmyutaḥ //1.56

1. Fleet, CII., III, No.
2. Sūradāsa has given a literary description of the Annakūṭa festival. (Sūrasāgara, Lyrical Song No. 1526, Kashi edn.)
Here and now is the occasion for the dramatic performance, so as a part of the ceremony Indradhvaja festival where the Devas were celebrating their victory over the Asuras, the great sage Bharata uttered his benediction (āśṭra-vachana) for the success of the Nāṭya and made the relevant Nāndī recital. Being satisfied with the dramatic show god Brahmā and other deities presented various objects for the success of the dramatic show. First of all Indra made a gift of his Flag-staff (Indradhvaja) for the success of the dramatic performances (nāṭya-prayoga).\footnote{1}

It is further stated that when the dramatic show began the demoniacal spirits of the Asuras and Rākshasas were greatly agitated and being enraged they attacked the stage with many kinds of evil interruptions (Vighna). They said that they did not like the dramatic show to be spread on the earth. They ceased the speech, acting and memory of the performers. The Sūtradhāra or the director-of-the-stage became confounded by this unexpected onset of the devils by which Indra became much enraged. In that mood of indignation he took up his Flag-staff (Indradhvaja) and holding the Jarjara staff in his hand he charged the demons who took to flight, and the stage became clear of all evil spirits\footnote{2}. 

\footnote{1}{Tato Brahmādayo devāḥ prayogaparitoshāḥ/pradadurhiashṭamanasaḥ sarvopakaraṇāni nāh//prītastu prathamam Śakro dattavān svadhyāmaḥ śubham//Nāṭyāṣṭra 1. 58-59.}

\footnote{2}{Evām prayoge prārabde daityadānavaṇaśane/abhavan kshubhitamḥ sarve daityāḥ ye tatra sāgatāḥ//Virūpākshapurogāṃścha vighnānupādyate bruvan/nethamichchhāmahe nāṭyametadāgamyatāmiti//Tatastairasurāḥ sāṛdham vighnamāyamupāśritīḥ/ vāchaścheshṭāṃ smṛitiṁ chaiva stambhayanti sma nyātām//Evām vidhvamsatāṃ drishṭvā sūtradhārasya devarāḥ/ tasmāt prayogavaishamanityuktvā dhyānamāvīṣat//Athāpasyad sadā vighnaiḥ samantāt parivāritam/ sahetaraiḥ sūtradhāraṁ nashṭaṣajñāṇājādiṃritam//}
Here is a specific description showing that the dramatic art originated amongst the various items of merriment and play which formed part of the Indrabhujaja festival. With the expansion of the Indrabhujaja festivity dramatic shows developed as an essential element (prayoge prasitile tvevaṁ sphite sakramahe punah/ Nāyāśastra 1.76).

This was quite in keeping with the origin and development of Indian festivals which got a lot of folk elements to give them a colourful festive form. These festivals were known as ‘Yātra’. The Indrabhujaja festival has actually been styled as a Yātra. In the Nayādhammakaha the first two festivals for Indra and Skanda are styled as Indramaha and Khandamaha and then occurs a list of eleven other festivals all of which are styled as Yātra, e.g., Rudra-yātra, Śiva-yātra, Vaiśravana-yātra, Nāga-yātra, Yaksha-yātra, Bhūta-yātra, Nadi-yātra, Taḍāga-yātra, Vṛksha-yātra, Chaitya-yātra, Parvata-yātra, Udyāna-yātra and Giri-yātra. The Yātra was also known as ‘Samāja.’ Their nature was very much similar to that of the Melā in modern times. The core of these Yātra festivals consisted of the worship of a deity but their outer milieu took the form of big festivals and an environment of merriment and rejoicing and communal gathering for the purpose of entertainments by music, dance, feasting and different kinds of acrobatic shows and dramatic performances. In one of the Jātakas such a festival near a mountain has been termed as Giriagga-samāja, i.e., a Samāja gathering on a high hill top (Jātaka III. 538). It consisted of big feasting arrangement and variety of shows. The description as given in the Jātakas present the following picture of the Samāja festival. An announce-

Ahotthāya drutaṁ krodhāṁ divyaṁ jagrāha sa dhvajam/
sarvaratnojvalatanāṁ kiñchadudavṛttalocharanāḥ/
Raṅgapīṭhagatāṁ vighnānasurāramāḥ devarāṁ/
jarjarikritadehāstānkaroj jarjareṇa saḥ/

(Nāyāśastra 1. 64-70)

ment was made of holding of the Samōja festival on a particular day. Then drummers and conch-blowers went about and informed all people to come and take part in the Samōja. Both rich and poor put on their waist-apparel and beautified their bodies with unguents and took part in group feasting. A number of shows and amusements were arranged. Dancing and music formed special items of entertainments. Versified ballads were recited by expert story-tellers to which the people listened with rapt attention. In some place wrestling matches and bouts were organised, at another place animal fights were arranged, for example, elephant-fight (Hasti-yuddha), horse-tournaments (Ašva-yuddha), ram-fight (Mesha-yuddha). At other places club-fights (Daṇḍa-yuddha) were shown. Dramatic performances were also staged; musicians held mutual contest; acrobats gave demonstration of their feats. Some times they showed the art of climbing on erect poles or gave demonstration of their brisk skill to walk in the air on ropes. The snake-charmers rejoiced the people with the music of their pipes. At some spot swing and rocking cradles (dolāya kīlitum) were fixed in which men, women and children enjoyed merry-go-round movement. People also enjoyed watery sports (Uda-krīḍā) by the side of water ponds or river. The core of religious worship thus took on a sheath of popular pastimes and amusements and created a general atmosphere of intense joy and merriment. This was the form of Melā which gladdened the hearts of all people assembled to take part in these Samōja festivals.

In the Virāṭaparva of the Mahābhārata the festival for the worship of Brahma has been called the Samōja of Brahma (Brahmaṇaḥ samāja, Virāṭaparva, 13-14, 15). Thus we find the two aspects of religious worship and festivals combined in these Maha celebrations which form such a notable feature of ancient Indian social life. A remarkable fact is the origin of drama as an element in the Maha entertainments, in which dance, music, acting and dialogues were developed and were given a place of honour as Drama for the enjoyment of cultured people or aristocratic society.
The folklore tradition in India is marked by strange features in which ancientmost customs have survived to this day. In a village near my own birthplace in the Merrut district I heard for the first time about the religious festival of Indrayajña. A Rajput young man named Pūran mentioned the festival as Indar-jagya. I was struck with this word and enquired as to its nature. I began to think that this word concealed the ancient Inadradhvaja festival. Although I had spent some years in the midst of those simple village folks but it was for the first time that I heard this word on that day. Our folk life is removed from Vedic times by several thousands of intervening years but there are many strands or threads of olden days which have survived up to our own time. The Indrayajña is also a cast from the same mould. I enquired with great curiosity as to what was the nature of the Indar-jagya festival. Pūran replied that in the month of Āshāḍha on any Sunday all the people of the village come together and hold a big festival and worship God Indra which is known as Indar-jagya. On the day preceding the festival a collection is made in the village community at the rate of one to five seers of grain per plough by which they hold a sacrificial offering and also feed the Brāhmaṇas. They also collect the milk on the previous evening from all households in the village. On the next morning which is the day of the festival the people get ready at an early hour and all men and women, young and old, go round the village quickly pacing and sprinkle the milk filled in jars and mixed with the Ganges water. Their circuit of circumambulation includes the village boundary. They sound all kinds of musical instruments, like drum and conch, flute and trumpet and cover the whole path almost at a running speed. All persons find themselves in a happy mood and finally eat, drink and become merry. So up to this day sacrifice of Indra (Indra-yajña), king of heaven is celebrated.

In Nepal also the festival of Indra Yātṛā is observed with much glee. The festival is celebrated in the month of Bhādrapada from the 8th Lunar day of the bright half of the month
for a period of eight days. In the beginning they erect a big Pole-staff in front of the royal palace, and then all the expert royal dancers go round the Indradhvaja in different terpsichorean steps. They use many kinds of masks at the time of giving their dance demonstration. These masks are called Mukhakota (Bengali: Mukhosa). They seem to be similar to the Mukhakosa or masked faces described by Bana in case of Saiva cult. Such masks have also been mentioned above in connection with the Girimaha festival. On the third day of the festival they perform the worship of Kumāripūja, i.e., adoration of Virgin (Wright, History of Nepal, p. 39). The circumambulation of the moution formed a special feature of Girimaha. Subhdrā went round the Raivataka mountain and performed the Girimaha at the end of which she offered food to the Brähmanas. The same kind of Pradakshinā round the village was made in the Indramaha as described above. In the Vraja-manḍala or the region of Mathurā a festival to mount Govardhana is celebrated under the name of Govardhana-pūjā in which the principal item consists of going round the Govardhana hill, which is observed up to this day. A number of ancient festivals seem to have survived in the form of such festivals consisting of going round or circumambulating the holy places of pilgrimage as at Mathurā, Vārāṇasi, Kurukshetra, etc. It is possible that the Pradakshinā of the Raivataka hill may have survived up to now as found in the case of the Govardhana hill. In the case of Mathurā a circumambulation covering a smaller distance (Antargriyāyāra) is observed on the Akshayanavami day, in the month of Kārttika on the ninth bright-half day. There is also another bigger Parikramā comprising a distance of 84 Krośas which starts sometime between the 8th to the 11th day of the bright half of Bhadrapada. This is still known as the Vraja-yātra of 84 Krośas, and takes about a month and a half. There are several variations as to the time taken and the day of commencement. In Vārāṇasi there is a Pañchakroṣi-yātra.
Ancient Indian Folk Cults

From the above description it appears that the Indramahā was a festival filled with great rejoicing and its purpose was to witness the natural beauty of the countryside during the rainy season. It demonstrated the natural desire rising in human heart to witness the great beauty and abundance of generation of the plant and forest wealth from the bowels of Mother Earth. The small inset given in the Harivamśa and based on the opposed allegiance to God Indra and the mountain God smacks some difference in cultural background of the people worshipping different deities. On one hand the great Vedic god Indra was being worshipped through regular sacrifices and on the other homage was paid to him by means of a popular festival as the Indramahā which had come down from much earlier times. Most probably the Indramahā was a feature of the Aryan people and the others like the Girimaha, Yakshamaha etc. formed part of the religious cults of the earlier settlers of the soil.

It may be noted that very much like the Indramahā festival in India the Tutanic peoples in Europe also observed the May-Pole festival which survives in many places up to now. The May-Pole corresponds to the Flag-staff of Indra (Indra-yāshū) brought ceremoniously from the forest and installed in the village. The May-Pole celebration takes a similar form, viz., people go out on the preceding day to the forest and select there a lofty tree and collect its stems and branches. They also choose some young boy as the king of the festival and go with him from door to door making small collection believing that the donors will have a share in the pious fruit of the religious festival. They carry with them the May-Tree made of the stems and branches. The next item in the celebration consists of erecting the May-Pole, of beautifying it and performing dance and other festivities round it. In some central place the May-Pole tree is erected and decorated with multi-coloured stripes of cloth and a bunting. Community dances are performed round it. In some places the custom is to
erect the May-Pole in the court-yard of each home where the members of the family make merry with dance and music. In Europe, the United States and Canada this is observed as the big festival of the spring season. The significance of the people going out to the forest and bringing from there green branches, stems and flowers is that they invoke the spirit of new life and abundance to their villages believing in renewed incarnation of that spirit in their midst after the lapse of the darkness and gloom of the winter month. (See Frazer, *Magic Art*, Pt. II, London, 1911, p. 59).

The meaning of going from door to door and visiting each home is that all people wish to share the bloom of new life and the irrepressible power of nature which rises from the earth again and again and expresses itself in the ocean of green that surges in the countryside. Mother Nature herself manifests as it were her glory and endless power of generation in the beauty of the Spring Season. Even dried trees take up new leaves and the human hearts respond to that spirit of fresh vibrant life ushering in a new feeling that the Spring is the universal festival for all (yah vasant sabhar tevhārī/Padmāvata of Jāyasī 186.2). The young boys and girls accompany their king and queen and sing songs of joy creating a new atmosphere and suggesting that those who make gift will share in the new glory of Spring. The people also by looking at the small group of the king or the queen moving with their companions in dance and music come to believe that they are having a new share in the new spirit, and experience the thrill of the new joy. In some places the king and the queen go hand in hand singing songs and their scarves are tied in token of a formal wedding. In England it is the custom to let the May-Pole remain standing in the open space of the village. It appears that originally the May-Pole was brought down in a prostrate position. The account in the *Nāyādhammahakaḥ*¹

¹ Nivvattamahe vā indalaṭṭhi vimukkasandhibandhaṇā kuṭṭimatalamī sabbaṅgehi dhasatti paṭiyā/Nāyādhamma-
definitely says that after the festival of Indramaha was over the riggings were loosened and the Flag-staff was brought low to the ground.

We are told that in ancient Scandinavia the Norse people made a drama in which some actors typified the Autumn Season and others the Spring Season and a regular conflict was staged between the two groups in which ultimate victory went to the group identifying the Spring Season. Even up to the 19th century in the small Isle of Man lying in the south of England this drama of the conflict between dark atmosphere of winter and the bright time of Spring of Summer was regularly staged each year. Frazer and other scholars state that howsoever the people may have now forgotten the real meaning of these ancient customs, there can be no doubt that the wedding of the queen and the king represented the union of the spirit of the Spring Season with that of the Summer warmth.¹

In European countries the May-Pole is decorated with garlands, stripes of cloth, glass beads and in several other ways. In the Mahābhārata and the Brihat Samhītā of Varāhamihira the Indra-yaśṭi is described as being similarly beautified with flower garlands, coloured cloths, beads and small box-like containers (piṣaka); the meaning of the last item being not very clear. This should be the special field of enquiry by the Indian Folkloric as regards the survivals of the Indramaha festival in different parts of the country.

According to the Jaina text called Niśītachārṇī, Indramaha, Skandamaha, Yakshamaha and Bhūtamaha were the four Great Festivals of India in those early ages. Accor-

¹ Also see Droṇaparva 41.11, Tāvayonyāṁ gadā-grābhyāṁ samḥatya patitau kshitau/Indradhvajavīvotsṛi-shṭau raṇamadhyaḥ parantapan/;

ding to this account the Indramaha was celebrated on the Full Moon day of the month of Āśāḍha, Skandamaha in Āśvina, Yakshamaha in Kārttika and Bhūtamaha in Chaitra. The Rāmāyaṇa, however, describes the Indramaha festival being celebrated on the Full Moon day of Āśvina.¹

There is another tradition that in the Lāṭa country, viz., Saurāšṭra, Indramaha was celebrated in the month of Śrāvaṇa on the Full Moon day (Nīṭīthachārūryi 19, p. 1174; J. C. Jain, Life in Ancient India as depicted in the Jain Canons, p. 216).

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1. Indradhvaja ivodhūtaḥ paurṇamasyāṁ mahātale/
āśvayuksamaye māsi gatasaṁtvā vichetanāḥ//
     Kishkindhākāṇḍa 16.37.
V. NADI-MAHĀ (FESTIVAL OF RIVER GODDESSES)

CHAPTER FIVE

The *Nādi-mahā* indicated the festival of river goddesses. A special example of *Nādi-mahā* maybe seen in the festival of the River Goddess Gaṅgā which was known as *Gaṅgā-mahā* (*Kaṭhā com.* on *Pāṇini* 5. 1. 109). Like the fair on the banks of the Gaṅgā there were many other such religious gatherings on the banks of other rivers. In Vedic religion the Waters were considered to be holy and there are very many references to Āpo-devatā or the Waters as deity. All the waters in the rivers, ocean, streams, lakes, waterfalls, wells, ponds, clouds etc. were considered to be holy. In the same religious traditions the festivals called *Nādi-mahā* and *Avatāmaha* ("Pond Festival") were celebrated. The divine forms of rivers is known in the Vedas also where Sarasvatī is described as a holy river. In the *Rāmāyaṇa* and *Mahābhārata* there is frequent mention of the river goddesses. The rivers are described as mothers (*dīshyāḥ*) unto the sacrificial fire-altars since the colonising process of the motherland was accomplished mostly by the fire-altars advancing along the course of the rivers.¹ The Aryan culture spread over the land through the river valleys of the seven principal rivers, viz., Sindhu, Sarasvatī, Yamunā, Gaṅgā Narmadā, Godāvari, Kāverī and all these seven were considered to be especially holy.² It is stated that all the rivers are

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1. Etānadyayastu dīshyānāṁ mātaro yāḥ prakīrtītāḥ/
   Vanaparva 212. 243.

2. Viśvasya mātaraḥ sarvāḥ sarvāśchaiva mahāphalāḥ/
   ityetāḥ sarito rājan samākhyaśātā yathāsmṛiti//
   Bhīṣmaparva 9. 37.38.

Āryā mlechchhāścha kauravya tairmiśrāḥ purushā vibho/
naḥiḥ pibanti vipulāṁ Gaṅgāḥ Sindhum Sarasvatīṁ//
   Bhīṣmaparva 9.13-142.
without distinction. Amongst all the river goddesses of India Gaṅgā was given the highest place. In the Mahābhārata the epithets Deva-nadi and Loka-nadi have been given to the Gaṅgā. She is the daughter of the Himāchala mountain, the consort of Śiva and the mother of Skanda. The last reference is rather important. It appears that the two festivals, viz., Gaṅgā-maha and Skandamaha came close to each other.

Perhaps there is no stream or pool of water in India where some religious festival does not take place either once a year, or more frequently. Similar to the Nādimaha or Nādi-yāṭrā festival another called Taḍāga-yāṭrā (Taḷāya-jattā) or ‘festival of the water pond’ was also celebrated. Each pond of water is considered to be the place sacred to some deity and such of them as remained full of water for the whole year are regarded holy from the religious point of view. How the presiding deity of rivers and ponds were illustrated in Indian art will be mentioned later.
V. KHANDA-MAHA (FESTIVAL OF SKANDA)

CHAPTER SIX

The festival of Khanda-maha is to signify the worship of Skanda. Khanda is a Prakrit form of Sanskrit Skanda. We do not find the mention of god Khanda in Pali literature (where he is referred to only once in the 'Āṭṭhakathā Commentary' of the Udānavagga, which appears to be assignable to the Gupta period). In the Rigveda there are some names of deities later on connected with Skanda but we are not able to trace back the cult of Skanda as such to the Rigveda. However, there is an Apocryphal text (Pariśishṭa) of the Atharvaveda (No. 20 and named "Dhūrta-kalpa") where we find the details of worship in honour of Skanda. It states that Skanda should be honoured by ceremonious rites on the 6th day of the dark half of the month of Phālguna, Āshāḍha and Kārttika. In this text Skanda is described as Brahmaṇya, Shaḍānana and Kārttikeya. But the most surprising epithet applied to Skanda is 'Dhūrta' which is repeated several times in this text. In fact, the whole ritual of Skanda is called a "Dhūrta-yāga," i.e., worship paid to the deity named Dhūrta. The elephant, lion, tiger and peacock are said to be the vehicles of Dhūrta. He holds a spear in his hand and always accompanied by the host of Divine Mothers. He is surrounded by thousand virgins. He is the son of Agni and Kṛśṇikās. He is also given the title of Sadyojāta and Ugra-kumāra, the violent hero. In one stanza the invocation is as follows:—

Hail to Dhūrta, Skanda, Viśākha, Pinākasena, Bhrātri-strikāma, Svachchhanda, Varaghaṁṭā, Nirmala, Lohitagātra, Śalakaṭaṇkaṭa.

The epithet Dhūrta is of rare occurrence. The nama Śalakaṭaṇkaṭa is the name of a particular Rākshasa or demon in the Rāmāyaṇa and the Mahābhārata. But in the Yājñavalkya
Smrīti (1. 285) in its Gaṇapatikalpa portion Śālakataṅkaṭa is invoked for pacification of the bad dreams and ill omen. That list also contains the name of Kūshmānda. The juxtaposition of these names in this list gives a hint that the origin of Skanda was from the lower stratum of a tutelary deity. The evidence in the Mahābhārata throws welcome light on the origin and development of the cult of Skanda. Originally Skanda was reckoned as one of the Piśācha host. In the first stage of evolution Skanda was assimilated to the cult of Rudra, in the second stage to that of Agni and in the third stage to that of Indra. As a result of the last sublimination he was accepted as the husband of Devasenā, i.e., the divine army of Indra. In that evolution we find an inset according to which Skanda was taken to be a special deity seizing children (Bāla-graha). It seems necessary to go into further details about this matter. According to natural characteristics of Hinduism there arose an elaboration of legends with the evolution of the religious concept and cult of Skanda. In these stories the concept of the original deity found a new elaboration with the glorifying legends and in the family of new gods.

The account in the Mahābhārata shows that many blood-thirsty gods and goddesses were worshipped by the people. Skanda was accompanied by such a team. All of them were produced by the seed or germ of Rudra. Owing to this reason these Piśāchas or blood-sucking ogres were admitted to the fold of Rudra’s host (Rudra-gaṇa). Rudra thus became the begetter of Skanda. In this connection that reference is also noteworthy in which Skanda is said to be Adbhuta, i.e., the wonderful or mysterious hero. In ancient literature Adbhuta was an epithet of the Yaksha. In northern India, the epithet Brahmanya (of Brahma or Yaksha) has been applied to Skanda in ancient literature for the reason that Adbhuta and Brahmanya are allied. The name Subrahmanya came into use at the later date especially in South India. In the post-Vedic and Upanishadic literature the word Brahma came to be used as a synonym of the Yaksha. It appears that Skanda became sublimated in
the hierarchy of godlings from the status of a Piśācha to that of a Yaksha. In the legend of the birth of Skanda (Skandotpatti Akhyāna in Vanaparva), Skanda is described as the form of special fire emanating from the Sun god. That fire of solar energy became mingled with an Āvāhaniya fire of the sacrifice. In other words it is said that the solar fire saw the wives of the Seven Rishis in the Yajña and he fell in love with them. In the end Daksha's wife named Svāhā assumed the form of Śivā and gave birth to Skanda from the seed of Adbhuta on a mountainous track full of serpents, Rākshasas and Piśāchas. Svāhā had impersonated for the six wives of the six Rishis excepting Arundhati and hence the new-born babe came to have six mothers and mouths. In this story we find a trans-fusion of the two strands of the Aryan and Austric (Nishāda) traditions. The Mahābhārata clearly states that Rudra and Umā who were husband and wife to each other entered by their forms Agni and Svāhā respectively and Skanda was born as their offspring.

By his incorporation into the family of Rudra-Śiva Skanda gained very much in status. On the one hand Skanda entered the team of Vedic deities like Agni who was another form of Rudra and, on the other Indra who was the king of Vedic gods accepted Skanda as the leader of the divine army or the husband of Devasena. There is a story in the Mahābhārata (Mārkanda-Sāmāsyāparva) according to which a miraculous child was born from the brilliance of Adbhuta and Rudra. The word Adbhuta here signifies a Yaksha whose real nature was unknown and who otherwise was known as Mahādbhāta. The Divine Mothers paid homage to this Babe. Many terrible hosts (Gaṇa), gnomes (Graha, Upagraha) and other tutelary godlings together with the numerous Mother goddesses were attracted to the miraculous Babe and surrounded him as their lord. Indra became alarmed and rode on his Airāvata elepha-

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1. Rudrenāgniṃ samāviśya svāhāmāviśyā chomayā / Hitārtham sarvalokāṃ jātastvamaparājītaḥ/

Vanaparva 220. 9.
nt to kill the Babe. But that boy named Guha raised such an aloued cry that all the gods were seized with fear. Indra threw his thunderbolt on Skanda which hit him in the right side. This resulted in the birth of a goat-faced young hero from the right side of Skanda who in turn was given the name of Viśākha. This legend conceals an old belief popular amongst the people that there was a minor goat-faced deity known as Viśākha who became assimilated with the cult of Skanda. This has been further explained by stating that the sixth head of Skanda was that of a goat (*shashtam chhāgamayaṁ vaktram Skandasyaîvetī viddhi tat*, ibid. 217. 12). In fact, this sixth face (or head) of the goat was regarded peculiar to the other faces.¹ Thus the story-teller has reconciled Indra with Skanda by means of a significant legend, which glorifies them both. Goddess Śrī approached that Kumāra, resplendent with golden earrings and bearing all the auspicious signs on his body. He was the supreme hero in the three worlds. She worshipped, and paid homage to the boy by which he became full of great beauty, and which fixed the eyes of all the people on him.²

This statement about the rapprochement between Skanda and Śrī is quite significant suggesting that a folk deity of terrible form with bloody red eyes and projecting fangs like those of Yakshas and cannibal goblins (*Pīśācha*) was being converted into a beautiful high-born deity having a lofty rank. As soon as Skanda assumed this beautiful form the high-souled Brāhmaṇas and sages began to sing his praises.

“O God of the golden complexion! May you be happy. You bring happiness to all. May become like the great God

1. Shanaśāṃ tu pravaraṁ tasya śirshāṇāmiha śabdyate/ saktīṁ yenāśrijad divyāṁ bhadrāśākha iti sma ha/

Ibid. 217. 13.

2. Sarvalakshaṇa-sampannaṁ trailokayā'pi supriyam/ tataḥ tam varadamā śūram yuvānam mrishṭakunḍalam// Abhajat padmarūpa Śrīssvataveṣa śarīriḥ/ śriyā jushtaḥ prithuyasaḥ sa Kumāravarastadā/

Ibid. 218. 3-4
Śiva himself in the eyes of men. Only within six days of your birth you have won the hearts of the people. You have imparted protection to all and therefore you are verily Indra who is the saviour of the world.”

In response to this Skanda enquired as to what was the deed of Indra in the world. The Rishis replied, “Indra bestows strength, glory, happiness and progeny to all creatures. He slays the wicked and protects the good by his blessing. This is the duty of Indra. Indra is full of great prowess. You also become possessor of great strength and thereby become like Indra to us.” Indra himself stepped forward and supported this prayer of the Rishis who said, “O long-armed hero, our happiness consists in your consecration as Indra which should be done forthwith.” Thereupon Skanda replied in all humility, “O Śakra-Indra, the powerful one! I am your servant and do not wish for myself the rank of Indra” (Aham te kiṃkaraḥ Śakra, na mamendratvamāṃśītam, ibid. 218. 14). Indra insisted a second time but on getting a firm refusal from Skanda, he said, “If this is your will, you give your consent to become the generalissimo of the Divine Army and I shall continue to occupy the position of Indra as you desire.” The author of this epic story had a clear purpose in view, viz., a reconciliation and synthesis of the cults of Indra and Skanda. The former was a Vedic deity of established authority and the latter a folk deity with a wide-spread cult amongst the people. The statements made here are transparent and hardly leave room for any doubt.

1. Hiraṇyavarṇa bhadraṁ te lokānāṁ Śaṅkaro bhava/
   tvayā shadṛśtra-jātena serva lokā vaśikritāḥ/
   Abhayaṁ cha punardattam tvyaivaśaṁ surotamaḥ/
   tasmād Indro bhavānastu trailokasya bhayaṁkaraḥ/
   Ibid. 218. 6-7.

2. Abhisishyasva devāṇāṁ saināpatye mahābala/
   Aham Indro bhavisheyūmi tava vākyān mahābala/
   Ibid. 218. 21.
There is another story that at one time Śiva and Pārvatī were riding in their chariot which was drawn by a thousand lions. In its vanguard Kubera with his Guhyaka followers was moving in his car named Pushpaka. At the back of the chariot followed Indra with his hosts of gods. On one side of Śiva’s chariot was proceeding the great Yaksha named Amogha with his attendants called Jambhakas, Yakshas and Rākshasas. On the other side were moving in procession the gods named Vasus, Rudras, Ādityas, Maruts and Yama accompanied by hosts of terrible diseases. Yama was followed by Śiva’s attendant named Vijaya the terrible. Behind Śiva’s trident were moving the other weapons like club, Musala, spear, etc. forming a cover. In its train there was a Kamaṇḍalu (waterpot) surrounded by numerous sages. Thus Rudra was moving in that majestic procession. It also included rivers (Nādi), mighty floods (Nada), sages (Rishis), gods, Gandharvas, serpents (Nāgas), constellations (Nakshatras), Grahas, Deva-kumāras, Apsarases and clouds (Parjanya). Soma was holding a white umbrella over Śiva’s head and the two gods Vāyu and Agni were waving fly-whisks. Indra together with the royal sages (Rājarshis) was singing songs of praise in honour of Śiva and was in the rear of the procession. Many of the secret lores were moving in a personified form behind Pārvatī, like Gaurīvidyā, Gāndhārīvidyā, Keśinī-vidyā, Sāvitrī-vidyā, etc.

These were ancient secret lores cultivated in the Tantra discipline which had come down from Vedic times. For example, Gaurī-vidyā is mentioned in the Rīgveda (RV. I. 164.41, Gaurī mīmāṣā salilāni takshati...), Keśinī-vidyā in RV. X. 136.1 (Kesiṃghni keśī viṣhām......, also I.1.64, Trayāḥ keśinā rituḥā vīchakṣhate), Sāvitrī-vidyā as in the great Gāyatri Mantra (RV. III. 62. 10), etc.

In front of all a Graha named Rākshasa was moving and holding a banner. Piṅgala Yaksha, a personal friend of Rudra who stayed within cemeteries was also moving in the procession as the lord of Yakshas. Thus Rudra was moving in a giant procession. On this occasion God Brahmaṇyā-Mahāsena-
Guha, son of the Pleiades (the six Kṛṣṭikā Mothers) was also accompanying the procession. Mahādava Śiva thus spoke to Skanda, "You protect the Marut hosts together with your divine forces (devasena). Your devotion and worship of myself will be conductive."

When this great preparation was complete there appeared frightful portents. The sky was on fire, the earth was quaking and the world was filled with darkness. Even Śiva and Pārvatī became alarmed and the gods took to flight. The fact was that the great demon Mahisha made an all out attack against the gods and drew away Indra with his divine hosts. In this crisis Śiva remembered Skanda and Mahāsena Skanda wearing his red robes and garlands of red flowers stepped forward and checkmated the forces of the demon. He hurled his spear with such force that the head of the Buffalo Demon was detached and fell on the earth. Then all the gods together with Indra worshipped Skanda and said, "O Skanda, you obtained a boon from Brahmā and have succeeded in slaying this Mahisha demon who scorned all the gods like a blade of straw. You have this day uprooted this thorn in the side of gods. You have also proved yourself invincible in battle by slaying thousands of other Asuras who were like Mahisha and had harrassed us all the time. This will be reckoned as your supreme exploit and your fame will spread in the three worlds. O leader of the great army (mahāsena), from to-day all the gods will become subservient to you and will accept your authority" (Vanaparva 221. 1-77).

At the end of this story is a verse accounting the fruit of listening to it which is indicative of the fact that the portion was grafted later on in the original text of the epic when Skanda was raised to the rank of a god as the husband of the Devasena. The portion regarding the fight between Skanda and Mahisha was only a variant of the version of the conflict between Skanda and Tārakāsura which is told in such a flowery and majestic style in the Kumārasambhava of Kālidāsa and the Matsya Purāṇa. In the golden age of Sanskrit civilization
during the 4th century A. D. the uncouth stories and legends of the Hindu religion were recast into classical forms of great beauty. Some of them were recaptured and many were woven afresh. With respect to each god or goddess a number of such stories were subject to revision and restatement during the Gupta time. Such additions to the epic maybe detected by the Phala-śruti appended in the end. Skanda as depicted by Kālidāsa obtains a new splendour in which he does not depend for his glorification on the mercy of any other deity but obtains that rank on the solid basis of his own merits. Kālidāsa has given a new interpretation to the whole idea of the nature and birth of Skanda bringing into the story the explicit motif of Yoga. He has given the following definition about Skanda:

“For the sake of giving protection to the divine army of Indra god Śiva deposited in the mouth of the Fire (i. e. Sushumṇā) his own seed or lustre more brilliant than the Sun.”

We have given its Yogic background and exposition in our studies on the Meghadūta under the chapter entitled “Śiva-kā Śvarūpa” (or the Nature of Śiva) and in the book Śiva-Mahā-deva the Great God. But while considering several motifs of this story as part of folklore we are impressed with the fact that none of the materials that had grown or come down as folklore was rejected or criticised, but accepted in-toto and transformed into something higher, nobler and richer in cultural value. Considerable material has been embodied in the Mahābhārata from different strands as they existed in folklore tradition. The story-teller did not quarrel with any single version but brought to bear a grand spirit of liberal synthesis in an eclecticism. By this technique on the elaboration in time and space the legends were cast into diversing moulds in the Purāṇas without interruption in the basic approach of

1. Rakṣāhetornavaśaśibṛtā vāsaviṇāṁ chamūnāṁ
   Atyādityāṁ hutavahamukhe sambhṛtam taddhi tejaḥ//
   Meghadūta 1. 43.
reconciling them. The tradition of several cults continued on the level of folk religion without emphasis on their differences.

It has been stated above that there is another small bunch of stories in relation of Skanda in which Skanda was conceived of as a demon seizing young children. In the Suśruta Samhitā Skanda heads in the list of evil spirits affecting children; the other names in the list being Revati, Pūtaṇā, Śakuni and Naigamesha (Suśruta, Uttaratantra 27, 3-5). Adding words of homage for Skanda as the Lord of Grahas (Namaḥ Skandāya devāya grahādhipatsye namaḥ), there are some other references in the Suśruta Samhitā.¹ It appears that there were a number of small goblins or evil spirits who affected young boys (bāla-graha). Of them Skanda came to be regarded as the foremost. This has been cast into the form of a story by Suśruta saying that after Skanda had been wedded with Devasenā his influence became much in excess of others. The others attended on him and made the following request, "Be pleased to indicate some means of subsistence for us." Skanda directed them to approach Śiva who spoke to them, "Men are wont to worship the Devas in turn the gods protect the men. You go and visit such homes where gods, manes, Brāhmaṇas, saints, teachers and guests are not honoured, and eat the young children there. You seize the young children in such families as do not observe purity and the traditional rules of religious duty." Thus the Grahas were allotted a place in the folk religion (Suśruta, Uttaratantra 37.12-22). It is slightly indicated by the story that these Grahas or tutelary

¹ Deva-devasya mahataḥ pāvakasya cha yah sutah /
Gaṅgomākritikānāṁ cha sa te śaṁma prayachchhatu//28.13
Skandāḥ srishtiḥ bhagavatā deveṇa tripūrārinā /
bibharti cha'parāṁ sañjāṁ kumāra iti sa grahaḥ //
Bālalīdharo yo'yaṁ devo Rudrāgnisambhavaḥ /
mithyāchāresu bhagavān svayaṁ naisha pravartate //
Tato bhagavati Skande surasenāpatau kṛite /
upatasthurgrahāḥ sarve diptasaktidharam guhāṁ //37.9.11.
spirits were worshipped in such low classes of the society as were outside the pale of Vedic and Śmārtta rites.

Like the Śuśruta, in the Charaka Samhitā and the Aṣṭāṅga Samgraha this material about the spirits spreading diseases amongst children is also preserved. According to the latter work Śiva produced twelve spirits as attendants of Guha-Skanda of whom five were made male and seven female. The list includes spirits of very low rank as the ram-headed Naigamesha, Pūtanā, and Śakuni. Skanda also belonged to this class and elevated to the rank of their leader later on gained more esteem. Naigamesha is given the name of Naigameya in some texts which shows that he was popular amongst the Naigama or merchant class. He had the head of a ram. He was taken to be an attendant of Skanda as a Bāla-graha, i. e., spirit afflicting children. At one time Naigamesha was quite popular amongst the people. According to the Jaina accounts Naigamesha transferred the embryo of Mahāvīra from the womb of the Brāhmaṇa lady Devanandā to that of the Kshatriya queen Trīśalā. There are several sculptures of this deity found in Mathurā art of the Kushāṇa period. On one of the reliefs now in the Lucknow Museum the name ‘Bhagavaś nemese’ is engraved. It appears that the female counterpart of this deity was also conceived of on a popular level since some sculptures are male and others are female. But all of them bear the head of a ram or a goat (Chhāgānana or Ajānana). There are also several statuettes having the normal features of a female figure with human head.

The worship of Skanda was quite popular during the Kushāṇa period. On the one hand Skanda was being worshipped as a war-god as shown by his depiction on the coins of the Yaudheyas tribe which have on the obverse the figure of Kārttikeya holding spear and with his emblem a cock by his side. This fact is supported by the account in the Mahabhārata that amongst the ancient Yaudheyas who settled in the region of Rohitaka (modern Rohtak) Kārttikeya was the presiding deity (Kārttikeyasya dayitam Rohitaham).
But there is another side of the worship of Skanda in the Kushāṇa period of which we have a record in the Kāśyapa Saṁhitā (also known as Vriddhā-Jivahiya Tantra, i. e., the text of Jivaka the senior) in its chapter on children diseases caused by the influence of evil spirits ("Bāla-graha-chikitsā-adhyāya"). A rare palm-leaf manuscript of this important text came into the hands of Rājaguru Pt. Hemaraj in Nepal which he published with a long introduction. In its 'Revati Kalpa' chapter we find some valuable material about the worship of Skanda and the cult of Revati. In Vedic times the constellation of Revati was considered to be very auspicious. In later times Revati was identified with the Mātrikās or Mothers; and so also Skanda as a bloodthirsty goblin was considered to be associated with the cult of the Mothers. The Mātrikā-gaṇa or hosts of Mothers included innumerable female deities of a local character and probably unimportant in nature whose tutelary position entitled them to receive only local allegiance. In the Mahābhārata also several stories showing the close association of Skanda and the Mātrikās are found. The terrible attendants of Skanda were all named Kumāra who stealthily removed or consumed the embryo and foetus from the womb of pregnant mothers. Similarly from the impact of Indra’s thunderbolt were produced a number of girls who asked a boon from Skanda that they should become the Mothers by virtue of his grace towards them.1

In plain words it means that they were accepted as members of the family of Skanda and received the homage of the people as so many mother-goddesses. Skanda accepted their request and it is clearly stated about these diminutive female spirits that some of them had been auspicious and others of evil nature. These tutelary Mātrikās agreed among themselves to admit Skanda to their fold as their son.2

2. Tataḥ samkalpya putratve skandaṁ mātrigaṇo'gamat/ ibid. 217. 9.
The epic list specifically gives seven names, viz., Kāki, Halimā, Rudrā, Brihāṣṭ, Āryā, Palālā and Mitrā. These are quite obscure names and obviously taken from the lowest layers of folklore tradition. Their cult and that of Skanda were put into the same crucible with a strong leaven for amity. It may be imagined that a similar goat-faced deity formed part of popular worship and was adored in connection with children rites. He had blood-red eyes and a horrible nature but when he received honour from Skanda and the Mātrikās he was re-named as Bhadra-Śākha and became transformed as a goblin of auspicious influence. This became Naigamesha as mentioned above, with increasing popularity amongst the merchant community, as shown by the name Naigameya, Lord of the Naigamas or members of the trader guilds. In that age the number of minor goddesses was very considerable and they were brought in some kind of classification and order out of a chaos. Both these points are shown clearly from the evidence of the Kāśyapa Samhitā in its ‘Revatī Kalpa’ chapter. This was the result of over-all influence of the Bhāgavata movement which started in Mathurā and gained momentum in the surrounding regions. The secret of this process of synthesis consisted in the fact that all these minor gods and goddesses were looked upon as manifestations of a single supreme god who was Bhagavān Vāsudeva. He became the unifying spirit for all these minor divinities who all thus came under the cover of one parasol.

The Tenth Chapter of the Gītā has this predominant idea that how a number of minor godlings may be linked to one supreme divinity. The exponent teachers of the Bhāgavata religion gave the name of Vibhāti-yoga to this technique of treating the various gods and goddesses as the diverse manifestations of the power and glory of one great God.

The same phenomenon held good for Skanda and the Mātrikās. We may perceive clear steps of this process operative on three fronts: firstly, the cult of Skanda was assimilated into that of Śiva; secondly, all the minor mother-goddesses were huddled together with the cult of Goddess Revatī; and
thirdly, a rapprochement developed between the respective general cults of Skanda and Revati in an atmosphere of mutual freedom of ideas and forms. We are indebted to the Revati Kalpa for this lucid statement that there existed in the beginning Ten Rudras, named (1) Aja-Ekapāt, (2) Ahirbudhnya, (3) Hara, (4) Vaiśvānara, (5) Bahurūpa, (6) Tryambaka, (7) Viśvarūpa, (8) Sthāṇu, (9) Śiva, (10) Rudra. To their number Guha was added as the eleventh who became the foremost of them all. This implied a sublimation of the cult of Skanda over that of the many Rudras. Thus in the beginning of all rites homage should be paid to Skanda for success.¹

In this chapter on the worship of Revati (Revati Kalpa) we find the names of a large number of tutelary goddesses, all of whom are said to be just different forms of Revati, "O Vṛiddha Jivaka, this Revati has many forms (Bahurūpā), such as Jātabhārīṇī, spoken of as Pilapichchhikā, spoken as the female counterpart of Rudra, spoken of as the consort of Varuṇa"¹². This gives us an important point, viz., the identification of the goddess Revati with Jātabhārīṇī. It is said that Revati detected the entry of the demons and evil spirits in the womb of all females both human and otherwise. She herself assumed the form of Jātabhārīṇī and slew those Asuras. Jātabhārīṇī has the literal meaning of 'one who afflicts the children' (jāta). Due to her presence the flowers of young plants wither away; she causes abortion of foetus; she brings


2. Saishā vṛiddhajivaka, Revati bahurūpā, jātabhārīṇī pilapichchhiketi chochyate, raudritī chochyate, vārupitī chochyate.
about the mortality of infants after their birth; she also destroys those who are in the course of being born and also those who will take birth in future. Thus the Goddess Jātahārini was popular everywhere under many names and forms. She had three aspects, viz., (1) Divine (daivi), (2) Human (mānushi), and (3) Avian (tirāśchīnā). Thus Goddess Revati in the form of Jātahārini pervaded the three worlds.


In this list Vāruṇi, Kumārī and Brāhmaṇī are well known names amongst the Seven Mothers, and Śitatāti, Pūtanā and Mukhamantaṇikā were names of bālagraha-devīs or spirits afflicting children. This shows how minor strands of folk belief were coming together to be twisted into the skein of Revati cult. The name Bahuputrikā merits special attention. In fact the names Bahuputrikā and Jātahārini point towards the Buddhist goddess Hārīti. The names Hārīti and Jātahārini have the same meaning. The word Jāta denotes a child and the Buddhist goddess Hārīti was so called because she removed children in a stealthy manner with the intention of sucking their blood and taking their life as an ogress. Thus Hārīti was originally a female spirit of folk religion. According to her legend she was a cruel monster of Rājaśīraha who killed small children in order to eat them. She herself was the mother of numerous children, whose number is said to have been five hundred. Once the Buddha visited Rājaśīraha when people brought

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1. Atha khalu vriddhaḥjīvaka, trividhāiva jātahāriniḥ prachyate, lokabhedaḥ daivi mānushi tīraśchīneti tasmāt trayo lokā bhagavatyā revatyā bahurūpayā vyāptā / p. 160.
2. Ibid., p. 67.
complaints to him about the cruel deeds of Hārīti. The Buddha decided to bring a change of heart in her and so concealed one child from the host of her children. Knowing this she felt great sorrow for that child and began to look for him. In this situation the Buddha said to her, “For one child of yours, you are feeling so much grief, so think of the misery of those mothers whose children you destroy”. This teaching produced very sober effect on her mind. And she took refuge in the Buddha, promising to refrain from her malicious ways in future. The Buddha gave pardon to all her sins and she turned into a benevolent guardian deity of children. She began to be worshipped all over the place. How popular she became in course of time is not difficult to realise. Her sculptures and paintings have been found from Magadha to Central Asia and from Afghanistan to Ajanṭā. It was natural that a goddess of such nature should be regarded in great esteem in popular worship. Therefore we understand that the goddess Jātalārini described in such detail in the Revati Kalpa was the same as Hārīti. The name Bahuputrikā also becomes consistent in view of the many children of Hārīti. In sculptures and paintings it is usual to depict Hārīti as a mother fondling her many children. Some are shown in her lap, others frolicking near her feet and still some on her shoulders. To depict such groups or friezes of frolicking and gamboling children developed as a loving motif of Indian art. Subandhu, the writer of the Vāsavadatta, a prose romance, makes mention of it as Kumārakṛitiḍaka or “playful boys”, and Bāṇa refers to it as Bālakṛiṣṇa in his Kādambarī. On the plinth of several Gupta temples we find beautiful treatment of this motif showing children in playful moods. For example, on the carved slabs of the basement of the Śiva temple at Bhūmara this motif has been rendered with great variety and beauty.

Two other points may be mentioned about Hārīti and Jātalārini. The first is that the Buddhist tradition mentions Hārīti as a goddess of Rājagṛha. But soon she mingled with other local goddesses. Especially we have evidence of the great popularity of her worship in the Gandhāra country. Some local
legends emphasised the fact that the conversion of Hāritī by
the Buddha took place in Gandhāra. In the art of Gandhāra
quite a number of sculptures and Stūpas of Hāritī have been
found. The fact is that there prevailed in Gandhāra in much
earlier times the worship of a cruel goddess under the name of
Bhīmā Devi, i.e., the female deity of terrible nature. A shrine
of Bhīmā Devi still stands on a hill top near Hoti Mardān.
The Chinese pilgrim Yuan Chwang has mentioned this goddess
and her shrine (Waters, I.222). Foucher makes mention of the
Bhīmā hill-top situated between the Indus and Pushkalāvati,
the old capital of Gandhāra which was situated at Palusa
(Foucher, La vieille Route de l'Inde de Bactres à Taxila, Paris,
1947, Fig. 9; it is an ancient route between Taxila and Bact-
ria). It seems that this terrific goddess named Bhīmā became
transformed as Hāritī when Buddha converted her into an
auspicious goddess of children (Waters, I.215). The Mārkhaṇḍeya
Purāṇa refers to the shrine of Bhīmā Devi somewhere on the
Himavanta mountain (81.45-46). But the Vanaparva in its
description of an itinerary of pilgrimage points to Bhīmā Devi
having been located in the same direction as is the situation of
her shrine at present. This reference also points to the fact
that in ancient times there did not exist any image in the shrine
of the Bhīmā goddess. It was a Yoni-tīrtha, viz., some cleft in
the mountain with water oozing from it, similar to that in the
Yoni-tīrtha near Gauhati in Assam. In the pre-partition days
crowds of pilgrims visited the shrine of Bhīmā Devi and those
who returned from there would name their children after the
goddess as Bhīmā-datta. The same principle of naming child-
ren applied to other centres of pilgrimage as Kāśi, Dvārakā,
Jagannātha, Rāmeśvara, Badarainātha, etc.

1. Atha paśchanadāṁ gatvā niyato niyatāśanaṁ /
paśchayajñānavānapnoti karmāsa ye'nu kirtitaṁ \\nTato gachchet dharmajñā Bhīmāyāṁ sthānamuttamam /
tatra snātvā tu yonyāṁ vai naro Bhāratasattama \\
Vanaparva 80. 99-100.
It has been stated above that Hāritī was the goddess of Rājagriha. Not only the Buddhist but also the Brāhmaṇas accepted this particular goddess as the guardian deity of children. When Kṛishṇa proposed to Yudhishṭhira that Jarāsandha should be slain prior to his sacrifice, Yudhishṭhīra enquired as to who Jarāsandha was? Kṛishṇa replied, “There was a king named Bṛihadratha in the Magadha country. He married with the two daughters of the king of Kāśi but had no son. Then the sage Čandra Kauśika presented him a fruit. The king gave it to his two queens and each shared half of it. At proper time they produced a foetus divided into two portions and belonged to a single babe. The two sisters became quite frightened and then the attendant nurses cast away the two undeveloped masses of tissues on the cross road outside the palace. Then a female demon named Jarā joined the two lumps together and formed them in a living babe. Hearing this the king came there to claim the child. The ogress appeared before the king in human form and said that she did not want to stay in the kingdom of a king who was so greedy for a son. Therefore the king should take charge of the babe in order to nurse it. The king became pleased with her words and enquired as to who she was having such miraculous power. He further said, “You have given me this son and therefore you seem to be a goddess (Devatā)”. Then she replied, “O king, I am a demoness named Jarā. I assume different forms as I wish. I stayed for a long time in your house with happiness and therefore I was keen to do some good to you in turn. That opportunity came to me.”

Reciting this story Kṛishṇa said that the ogress after speaking thus to the king disappeared and the latter returned with the child to his palace. The king issued an order to all the people of Magadha to celebrate a festival in honour of the goddess Jarā (Sabhāparva, Chs. 16–17). In some stanzas of this story which have been relegated to the footnote in the Poona Critical Edition the information is given that the female demon named Jarā was a household goddess of Rājagriha (Griha-devi) and her figure was painted on the walls of royal palace in which
her numerous children were also depicted with her. In this story all the elements of the cult of a folk goddess (Loka-devi) may be traced. Rājagrīha was surrounded on all sides by the settlement of Austric population. Probably some female Rākshasī was worshipped by them with offerings of blood and flesh and her name was Jarā. The goddess Jātahārini who was of malevolent nature and the destroyer of children was an elevation of Jarā in Buddhist tradition. It appears that the story connected in folklore tradition with the mother-goddess Ahoyī (literally, 'she who is opposed to the manifestation of life') whose worship prevails in many parts of Uttar Pradesh and who is painted on the walls of homes by women folk for worship on the 7th dark day of the month of Kārttika, was originally connected with Jarā or Jātahārini who was a Rākshasī or Yakshi. It may be noted that Dīpāvalī, the festival celebrated on the 15th day of the dark half of Kārttika is considered to be the biggest festival of the Yakshas during the year and the figure of Ahoyī painted on the walls is also offered worship on that night. It is significant both Jarā or Jātahārini and Ahoyī were depicted on the walls in each home. The folk tale recited on the Ahoyī day mentions that a certain woman has seven children who were devoured by the Rākshasī Ahoyī; subsequently when she was worshipped she became appeased and restored the lives of those seven sons.

It should also be noted that as all the horrible Grahas, Yakshas, and Rākshasas became assimilated in the over-all cult of Skanda, similarly all the terrible mother-goddesses of destructive nature and evil influence were imbibed in the

I. Ģrihe Ģrihe manushyāṇam nityam tishṭhati rākshasī / Ģriha-deviti namnā vai purā śrishtā svayambhuvā //
Tvadgrīhe tishṭhamānā tu pūjitā' haṁ sadā vibho /
līkhitām chaiva kuḍyeshu putrair bahubhirāvṛtā //
Yo māṁ bhaktyā likhet kuḍye saputraṁ yauvanānavitām /
睥he tasya bhaved buddhiranyathā kshayamāpunyat //
Sabhāparva, Poona edn. p. 94.
cult of the wife of Skanda named Shashthi, Bhadrā or Devasena.

In the Mahābhārata the above Grahas or evil spirits have been described as belonging to the terrible forms of Skanda. Skanda is said to have been born from the body of men in order to devour the people. These spirits were addicted to wine and flesh. It is apparent that the primitive people like the Nishādas were propitiating their gods and goddesses with offerings of flesh and blood. The epic gives a list of 18 Grahas but many more must have existed. The puerperal complications in the pre-natal and post-natal stages were all taken amongst the primitive tribes to have been caused by the influence of Yakshas and Rākshasas who must be propitiated with bloody offerings. Skanda was one of such folk deities in his original form under several names as Guha, etc., and he was closely associated with a cock (Kukkuṭa) who is the most accessible bird to be slaughtered in offering as up to now. One of the 18 Grahas was known as Skandāpasmāra or the spirit which brought about the convulsion of child-life under the effect of such murderous diseases as diphtheria. The terrible goddess named Vinitā began to be worshipped in a bird form as Sakuni. Pūtanā Rākshasi became the Graha named Pūtanā. She was probably the same as the goddess of smallpox with poisonous pustules affecting the whole body of the child. Another spirit of the same nature was named Śīta-Pūtana which is worshipped up to this day as Śitalā, the refrigerating genius of smallpox, believed to destroy the foetus of the pregnant woman or women in pregnancy. Diti, mother of demons, was identified with Mukha-maṇḍikā, the spirit causing pustules of smallpox which left pitted scars on the face similar to the bread named Maṇḍikā. She was said to be very fond ofchild-flesh. There were

1. Ime tvasṭādaśānye vai grahā māṁsa-madhu-priyāḥ / Dvipaṇcharatāṃ tishṭhanti satataṁ sūtikāgrīhe //
Āraṇyakaparva 119.35.
male and female spirits, Kumāra graha and Kumārī garha, which made a mess of the undeveloped foetus in the womb. The relationship of husband and wife was imputed to these male and female spirits and all of them were inimical to children. It was believed that Śakuni, a female spirit, visited the young children and came riding on the back of Surabhi, the mother of cows and just walked away with innocent small children. Saramā, the mother of the dogs stole away the womb of human mothers. The mother of the Gandharvas removed the foetus without being detected. The mother of trees and plants who lived on the top of Karaṇja trees (Pongamia glabra) was offered homage by the worship of that tree. Kadrū, the mother of serpents took a toll of the babe in the womb by assuming a dimunitive form. The mothers of the watery nymphs make the foetus lose its quickening, and being dead in the womb difficult of delivery. Lohitāyani, daughter of the ocean of blood, was believed to be one of the nurses of Skanda and worshipped on the Kadamba tree. Revati was identified with Aditi, the mother of gods and the Graha named Raivata received its name after her. It was a terrible Mahā-graha who caused serious diseases for children. As Rudra stalks amongst male deities so Āryā is amongst female deities and was believed to be the mother of Skanda. She was worshipped independently for fulfilment of one’s desire.

These evil spirits were supposed to cast their influence on the health of children up to the age of sixteen years. All the female grahas under the name of Mātrikās and all the male grahas are but different forms of Skanda1. The writer of the epic has enumerated in this chapter a list of the different spirits under the name Deva-graha, Pītri-graha, Siddhagraha Rākshasa-graha, Gandharva-graha, Yaksha-graha, Piśācha-graha, etc. All of them were counted as different forms of Skanda and Rudra. It is obvious that all the

1. Ye cha māriganāḥ proktāḥ purushāśchaiva ye grahāḥ / sarve Skandagrahā nāma jāeyā nityam śarīribhiḥ //
Āraṇyakaparva 219. 42.
tutelary goblins that were of an awful nature were assimilated in the cult of Skanda sometime during the Kushāṇa period. Similarly all the dreadful female spirits who were worshipped as Mātrikās came to be regarded as part of Skanda cult sometimes as his mothers, as stated by Skanda himself, “O ye mothers, I am your son. Now you occupy a position beyond reproof.” In another context they are reconciled with Shashṭhi or Revati and described as the female consort of Skanda. It has been explicitly stated about the Mātrikās that they made a self-confession to Skanda describing themselves as the mothers of all the people. “Whatever places were occupied by the evil hosts of female spirits in former days shall now be occupied by us and they will all be out-stayed from their respective habitations. Now we will receive homage instead of them and none of the older lot will receive any worship.”

It means that all the innumerable mother-goddesses of a minor character from earlier times were recognised as divine mothers in the family of Skanda. The preceding mother-goddesses were supplanted by new ones which formed a standard team of the Seven Divine Mothers. The names of previous mother-goddesses gradually faded out and they went out of the picture. In addition to them one of the major goddesses was Revati whose eminent position maybe inferred from the fact that the epic describes her as an incarnation of Aditi (Āraṇyakaparva 219. 28). This was probably the reason why Revati became pre-eminent amongst all as given in the Kāśyapa Samhitā.

1. Mātraro hi bhavatyo me suto vo'hamaninditāḥ / Āraṇyakaparva 219. 6.

2. Atha mātrigaṇaḥ sarvaḥ Skandaṁ vachanamabravīṁ / vayaṁ sarvasya lokasya mātaraḥ kavibhiḥ smṛtāḥ // Yāsu tāḥ mātaraḥ pūrvaṁ lokasyāsyā prakalpitāḥ / asmākaṁ tad bhavet sthānām tāsāṁ chaiva na tad bhavet //
Along with this, another goddess named Shashṭhī was gaining in popular esteem and she was believed to be identical with Revatī. As we have seen, the minor goddesses mentioned above were mostly spirits affecting the health of children and causing them various diseases by their visitation. It thus came about that the people began to believe in an auspicious goddess who became the guardian deity of children during pregnancy and after birth and she was named Shashṭhī who received worship on the sixth day after the child was born. Shashṭhī was closely associated with Skanda and both of them with number six, e.g., Skanda has six heads and is said to be the son of six Kṛittikā Mothers or the constellation of Pleiades which has six stars and he and Shashṭhī are both worshipped on the sixth day of the lunar month. We are indebted to the Mahābhārata for a clear and positive statement about the various goddesses connected with Skanda. “The wise speak of the chief consort of Skanda as Devasenā, whom the Brāhmaṇas describe as Shashṭhī and Lakshmi, Aśā, Sinivālī, Kuhā, Aparājītā. When Devasenā obtained Skanda as her husband, then through her the goddess Lakshmi also chose him as her husband in a personified form. Skanda became united with the goddess Śrī on the fifth bright day of the month of Māgha which therefore became famous as the Śrī-pāṇchami day. On the next day Skanda found his consummation with the goddess Śrī and therefore that day (tiṭhi) became famous as Shashṭhī”.

Under the thin veneer of the epic statement, we have a definite record of ancient tradition regarding the evolution and mutual exchanges amongst several religious cults, viz., those of Vedic Devasenā, Śrī-Lakshmi, Purāṇic Shashṭhī, and both Vedic and Purāṇic Skanda. All of them became mingled with each other during the course of centuries in the miraculous crucible of folk religion. The Brāhmaṇas put the stamp of their approval on this wide-spread synthesis of cults which was being evolved in numberless families at all levels of society. This is a well known phenomenon of religious history that

1. Āraṇyakaparva 218. 47-49.
different beliefs come together in a free and unrestricted exchange of ideas and forms which also find expression in iconographic formulas and sculptures. A minute scrutiny of Kushāṇa statuettes at Mathura provides a tangible commentary on the different stages of this assimilative approach. The folk beliefs do not die out but mingle in the fertile soil of the human mind depositing their seeds for new germinations and creating a leaven in which the old and the new shake hands together, and the new and fresh skein of cults gets twisted together with common approval. The Purāṇas offer a mirror to these changes from epoch to epoch as were routed in social history. They did not state things from their own side but had the wisdom and the generous approach of recording what was actually taking place in society. To dissect the folk beliefs with a view to evaluate them as good or bad was not the concern of the Purāṇa writers but they just wanted to recite to their audience what actually was happening. This important aspect of the epic and Purānic descriptions impresses itself on the mind of the reader who goes through them with an eye of understanding and sympathy.

It is stated that the goddess Revati through her multiple forms (bahirūpā), under the command of Skanda, creates delusion amongst those who do not follow the path of religious piety in order to effect their ruin. The implication is that the minor goddesses were once the cause of confusion, but in their new setting in the family of Skanda they became part and parcel of an approved religious system. The Kāśyapa Samhitā provides valuable evidence in this connection. It is stated there that the godling named Guha performed penances to worship Skanda and thus spoke to Revati, “Of your four brothers (viz., Mahāsena, Kumāra, Viśākha and Skanda) the fifth brother will be Nandikesvara (the lord of Nandi bull, i.e., Śiva) and the sixth will be your sister Shashṭhi famous amongst the people. As all people were offering homage to me

so will they worship you. Together with your brothers you will have the same influence as I had. You will look beautiful with your six faces and be worshipped on the Shashti day.” Thus a sister was produced for Skanda, as such she is paid homage at all times and confers happiness and life. This Shashti has two forms, viz., Shashti associated with the confinement room of pregnant mothers (Sutkha-Shashti), and another form with wings on her shoulders (Paksha-Shashti). Thus from the cult of Shashti came out Revati worshipped both by the gods and the demons.¹

In the above description of twofold Shashti the one associated with child-birth appears to have been evolved out of the cult of Sri-Lakshmi. The other name of Winged Shashti is most significant and seems to be a later aspect of goddess Mayä of the Asuras who moved in the air and whose head and shoulders were beautified with magical symbols like ahuša (goad), parašu (axe), and dagger, etc. and an amulet string (rakshavali, rakshakaranjaka-sūtra) was sometimes shown over her breast. The amulet string originally belonged to the goddess Orodoxo-Atargatis of Iran. Thus out of these two strands of the tradition of the gods and the Asuras was evolved the form of Shashti-Revati for whom it is aptly stated that both gods and demons paid homage to this new divinity (surāsura-namaskritā). The epic evidence as set forth above receives confirmation from several clay-figurines found in Indian terracotta art.

The statement about the four brothers of Skanda together with their chief Nandikesvara and the sixth sister Shashti becomes intelligible in the light of representations in art. For example, on some gold coins of Huvishka, we find the names of these four brothers as Skando, Komaro, Vijago, and Mahaseno. Nandikesvara is Siva standing with his Nandi bull and holding a long trident as found on numerous coins and especially on the obverse side of the coins of the above Kushana empe-

¹. Kāśyapa Samhitā, Bālagraha-chikitsādhyāya, p. 67).
ror. We also see on some tribal coins especially from the Yau-
dheya region in south-east Pâñjab a goddess with six heads, who
is true to the epithet Shânmukhâ Shashthâ, i.e., the six-headed
goddess named Shashthâ. The six heads were illustrative of the
six Divine Mothers whose son was the six-headed god Kârtil-
keya. The six heads symbolised the Six Chakras in the human
body whose energy becomes manifest in the form of six heads
of god Skanda who was therefore named as Shaḍânana or Shaṇ-
mâtura, the deity of six faces or the son of six mothers. Thus
goddess Shashthâ was variously worshipped as Sûtikâ-Shashthâ,
Paksha-Shashthâ and Shânmukhâ Shashthâ which were the
several forms of goddess Revati. It appears that Mahâsena,
Skanda, Kumâra and Viśûkha were in fact tutelary deities who
came nearer to each other and evolved conjointly with Skanda.
Their sister was as influential in popular cult as the four brot-
thers (asmât tulya-pradhâvâ tavî bhrrâtrimadhyagata sadâ). Sûtikâ
Shashthâ maybe identified with the goddess worshipped on
the sixth day of the birth of a child in ancient times, even as
to-day. Bâna refers to the worship of Ārya-vriddhâ (Grand Lady)
and Jâtamatrikâ (mother of children) who were worshipped at
the time of child-birth. Ārya-vriddhâ seems to be the same as
Āryâ of the epic also called Vriddhikâ.¹

Probably she was the same as the more ancient goddess
called Jyeshtâ whose worship did not die out. Even now a
goddess called Vi-mâtâ is worshipped on the sixth day of
child-birth. It is believed that this goddess comes to visit a
new-born child. The folk songs of this goddess are called
songs of Vihâyi (Vihâyi-ke-git) which are sung on the sixth
night celebrated by keeping watch throughout the night.
The name seems to be derived from Sanskrit Vidhâtri, the
goddess who ordains the future of a child either in the bene-
volent aspect or otherwise. The figure of the Jâtamatrikâ

1. Āryâ mâtâ kumârasya/ Vanaparva 210.40.
Striyo mânushamâsâdâ vriddhikâ mâmâ nâmatah /
vrîkseshu jâtastâ devyo namaskâryâ praîrthihiyibh //
Ibid. 220. 16.
goddess was drawn on a cloth or a wooden board and actually worshipped. She has been described as surrounded by many children which reminds us of the iconographic form Jātahārīṇī or Hārīti. She is also mentioned in the Tilakamaṇījātī of Dhana-pāla where the names of the three goddesses, Shashṭhi, Devi Jātamātrikā and Ārya-vrīddhā are separately mentioned to be represented and worshipped.

Śaṅkara the commentator on Bāṇa has made the meaning of Bāṇa’s statement more explicit stating that firstly the Jātamātrikā goddess was surrounded by many children and secondly that she had the face of a cat.

We learn from a Sanskrit lexicon (Nānārthārṇava-saṅkṣepa) that the feline faced tutelary goddess was also called Charchā (or Charchikā). According to the Kāśi Khaṇḍa of the Skanda Purāṇa there was a shrine in Vārāṇasi sacred to Charchikā (Kāśi Khaṇḍa, Ch. 99). In the inscription of the Paramāra king Naravarmadeva (1104-33) a shrine is said to have been raised for Charchikā, the family deity of the king.

There is evidence to show that the name of Charchikā first appears in the Gupta period. For example, she is stated to have replaced the ancient name of goddess Koṭṭavī at Hīṅgulāja (Vāmana Purāṇa 57. 54; see also my Vāmana Purāṇa-A Study, pp. 136-140). In folk cult Charchikā-devi is known as Chhāchhī who is still in worship in a shrine at Lucknow under this name, in the Chowk Mohalla of the city.

There is also mention of a shrine of Shasṭhi in Supia stone-inscription of Skandagupta. On a clay-sealing from Raj-

1. Sākṣāt Jātamātrī-devatā iva bahuḥlaka-vyākula nānṛ- turvṛidhātyah, Harshacharita, Ch. 4, p. 129.
2. Āharata bhagavatīm Shashṭhidevīmālikhata jātamātrīpa-
talam, ārabhadhvamāryavriddhā-saparyām, Tilakamaṇījātī, p. 77.
3. Jātamātrī-devatā mārjārānanā baluputraparivalā sūtikā-
grihe sthāpayate.
ghat is found the name Shashṭhi-datta in Gupta script showing that the parents regarded the birth of their son as due to the grace of goddess Shashṭhi. What the Kāśyapa Samhitā names as Paksha-Shashṭhī may be identified amongst the winged clay figurines of a goddess exposed from the Śuṅga to the Kushāṇa period. Generally winged figurines are absent in Indian terracottas. So also among stone statues they are conspicuous by absence. But there are a few specimens in clay depicting god Kāmadeva with wings and holding bow and arrow. It appears that the female figurines with wings depicted goddess Paksha-Shashṭhī. It is possible that the Greek god Cupid and the goddess Aphrodite who were shown with wings influenced the iconography of Kāma and Shashṭhī with wings. On the coins of the Yaudheya Republic (2nd-3rd century A. D.) we have the figure of standing Kārttikeya on one side and of a six-headed female goddess on the other showing the latter to be Śaṇmukhī and also pointing to her close relation with Kārttikeya (Journal of the Numismatic Society of India, Vol. V., p. 29: my article, “Goddess Shashṭhī on the Yaudheya coins”). Thus the archaeological evidence throws light on the worship of Skanda in a Vyūha form of four brothers together with Nandikesvara Śiva and the six-headed goddess Shashṭhī as recorded in the Kāśyapa Samhitā. The Amarakośa, a lexicon of the Gupta period, mentions the four names Mahāsena, Skanda, Viśākha, Kumāra as synonyms for Skanda, the names being repeated at the head of four lines of two verses.

The above prob into the historical evolution of Skanda shows how a minor local deity gathered many different strands during the course of his evolution and emergence as a god of high rank. In this case at one end is the Skanda-maha as an obscure cult in the list preserved in Jaina literature, and on the other is the magnificent form of Skanda whose images were installed in important shrines where the deity was shown as being consecrated by Brahmā and Śiva as the husband of Deva-senā (cf. Mathura Museum, No. 466; see my Matsya Purāṇa—A Study, Pl. facing p. 248). According to the Nīśitha-
the festival of Skanda was celebrated on the Purṇimā day of the month of Āśvina. When Mahāvīra visited Śrāvasti, this festival was being celebrated, and as the Niśītha-chūrṇī mentions that a car-festival of Skanda was being organised. This idea must have flashed in the mind of the author of this commentary after the Kushāṇa period and during the Guptā age when worship of Skanda occupied an important place in the religious background of the period. We have not found so far any representation of Skanda in art prior to the first century A. D. Recently a stone image of Skanda was found in Mathura sculpture in which the god is standing in Abhaya-mudrā and holding a long spear in his left hand. On the pedestal of the image is an inscription dated in the year II of Kanishka stating that the four sons of Viśvala established an image of Kārttikeya in their home. We may imagine that in still more ancient times before the introduction of actual images such festivals as the Skanda-maha could be celebrated by associating the deity with a sacred platform under the open sky, as in the case of several other obscure cults.

RUDDAMAHA (FESTIVAL OF RUDRA)

CHAPTER SEVEN

In the lists found in the Nāyādharmmahāhā and the Rāyapāseniya Sutta, Ruddamaha and Siva-maha are mentioned separately. Apart from the mere mention of names there is no evidence either in the Jaina or Pali literature which may throw further light on the nature of these festivals. This is, however, evident that like the festival of other gods these two festivals for the worship of Rudra and Śiva also formed part of folk cults, and the people assembled on those occasions forming a Melā. If we look both from the point of view of folk cults and that of the literary evidence we gather that the worship of Rudra was rooted in great antiquity and was of great popularity amongst the peoples, and Rudra-Śiva occupied a high place in the pantheon of the gods. Excepting Vishnu no other deity was so popular and held in such high esteem as Rudra. We also learn from the Mahābhārata and other sources that Śiva was being worshipped in Central Asia in the original home-land of the Sakas and the Yue-chih-s. There was a temple of Śiva in ancient Kāpiśā (modern Kasiristan). To the south of the Oxus river in the ancient region of Mauñjāyana (modern Munjān) Rudra was worshipped as a popular deity. In Yajurveda 3.61, Rudra is requested to go to Mauñjāyana and a territory beyond that\(^1\). Rudra is addressed here: “You are the wielder of the bow, holding the Pināka in your hand, clad in a tiger’s skin and coiled on the body with serpents, 0 Rudra, repair to remote regions further beyond”. In the Atharvaveda, there is also mention of Mahāvṛisha country together with Mūjavant. (Oko asya mūjavantaḥ oko asya mahāvṛishah, AV.5.22.5). It may be supposed that the Mahāvṛisha country and its name

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1. Etat to rudrāvasam tena para mūjavato'thi avatatatadhanvā pinākāvasaḥ krittivāsā ahim sannah śivo'thi/ V S. 3. 61.
became the vehicle of Rudra as Nandi. Indra also is styled as *Vrishabha Mahādeva*, i.e. Bull, the Great God. A reproof of Indra became the first stage in the evolution of Rudra. On the other hand Rudra and Śiva were supposed to be the lords of Bhūta, Piśācha, Yaksha, Mahoraga, Nāga, Kinnara who were local tutelary godlings and were allotted a place in the family of Rudra. A third strand of synthesis was evolved between Rudra and the mother-goddesses. The Great Mother-goddess had been worshipped in India from the remotest antiquity going beyond even the *Rigveda*. Ambikā literally means a ‘mother-goddess’. Scholars are of the view that this Great Goddess was the Earth. In other civilizations of the Middle East, the Earth is worshipped as the Great Mother-goddess. She was the *magna mater* or the supreme mother. It was therefore natural that the Great Goddess Ambikā became associated with the Great God Mahādeva-Rudra. The legend of the marriage of Śiva and Sati or Śiva and Pārvatī points to this religious process.

We get a vivid picture of the folk beliefs in the popular religion of the Vedic time in the 16th Book of the *Yajurveda* known as ‘Śatarudriya’. It is a surging invocation to god Rudra under many names. On the one hand the belief was in the existence of one Rudra (*eka eva Rudro na dvitiyāya tasthe, Taitt. Saṃ. 1.8.6.1*) and on the other it was believed that there are thousands of Rudras in each direction (*yo chaśam Rudrā abhito dikshu śriyāh sahasreṇāḥ, VS. 16.6*); that Rudra is prevailing in a thousandfold forms in waters, trees, plants, mountains, cowpans, homes, caverns, fields, barren lands, and in many other places (*asamkhyatiḥ sahasraṇi ye Rudrā adhi bhāmyām, VS.16.54*). He has many names as Śarva, Bhava, Rudra, Paśupati, Kapardin, Nilagriya. He is the lord of the mountains and is denizen of the caves. His one aspect is terrible (*Ghorā*) and the other is benevolent (*Śiva tamu*). The terrible Rudra is worshipped by the thieves, waylayers, foresters, residents of the wilderness, sword-bearing marauders and those living by violence in darkness, and that Rudra is a great tormentor. In the same manner the aus-
picious form of Rudra is worshipped by the chiefs of the assembly, horsemen, organised hosts (Gaṇapati), tribal assemblies (Vṛālā-
pati), armies and their commanders, charioteers, footmen, cart-
wrights, drivers, collectors of revenue, potters, blacksmiths, young and old. Rudra is also the god of hunters, huntsmen-
deer-trappers, foresters those roaming in wilderness with a pack of hounds. Thus Rudra was conceived under a variety
of names and forms all associated with violence. On one hand
he is Ugra and Bhīma who professes to kill and shoot. On the
other hand he is Śiva and Śaṅkara, the deity of well being for
the body and the mind. It was said that Rudra had matted
locks (kaṭāḥra) on his head, bow and arrows in hands, his
throat is blue (Nīlāgrīva) and snakes are coiled round his
body. He puts on a skin (Krītī-vīśa). It maybe seen that Rudra-
Śiva as described in the Purāṇas had his early origin in the
Vedic mantras. In this Śatarudriya chapter we also find the
conception of a supreme god of auspicious nature as Śiva who
is above all and is fountain-source of all his good and evil
forms.

It maybe imagined that the different folk beliefs about
the terrible nature of Śiva continued even after the reconcili-
ation of Rudra and Śiva in the form of a single deity. Normally
people do not introduce revolutionary changes in their reli-
gious beliefs or modes of worship. The people like the appro-
ach of synthesis, retaining all the beliefs in their god or goddess
as handed down from the past. There is always the spirit
which inspires sublimation of his or her form. There is hardly
any god or goddess in the Hindu pantheon who has not under-
gone mutual influence with the conception of Śiva. The synthe-
sis of Skanda and Śiva has been pointed out in the preceding
chapter. Similarly there are good many stories speaking of the
close connection between Śiva on one hand and Vishnu, Brahmā, Gaṇapati and many other gods on the other into the
details of which we cannot enter here.

One thing is certain that Rudra was known under many
names and forms in popular religion. In the Śatapatha
Agni is Rudra and he is worshipped under several names. In the east he is called Śarva, in Vāhīka he is called Bhava. He is also known as Paśupati and Rudra.¹

It is said elsewhere that Rudra, Śarva, Paśupati, Ugra, Aśani, Bhava, Mahādeva, Īśāna, all these eight are the forms of Agni, and his ninth aspect is Kumāra, i.e., later Skanda (ŚB. 6. 1. 3. 18). We have seen above from the epic evidence that Skanda was a spirit affecting children and with him there also existed a number of male (Kumāra-graha) and female spirits (Kumāri-graha). Both of them were assimilated in the cult of Skanda. The above evidence shows that Rudra, Śiva, Agni and Skanda were cast in a single crucible and after much give-and-take their respective relationships were brought into belief in which Rudra and Śiva became the subject of synthesis and then they were reconciled to Agni and lastly Skanda was conceived to be the son of both Agni and Rudra or Agni-Rudra. We may imagine that Rudra-Śiva who was a popular deity came under the influence of Agni, the deity of the sacrifice and thus a popular folk cult and the higher religions of Vedic sacrifice drew nearer to each other in a natural way. The implication of the legend of Daksha-Yajña also points to this phenomenon. In that Yajña, Rudra did not receive a portion or offering showing that he was outside the orbit of high Vedic Yajñas but popular as a folk deity whose numerous names and forms are enumerated in Book XVI of the White Yajurveda. As the story says Rudra was not invited by Daksha but his consort Sati came to her father’s sacrifice and finding that all gods were present there to receive their respective shares excepting Rudra, she was shocked and so much over-powered with grief that she gave up her life. Thereupon Rudra was intensively enraged and disrupted the sacrifice of Daksha who said: “I know about the Eleven Rudras but who is this Maheśvara I have not

¹. Agnirvai sa deveḥ tasyaitāni nāmāni, śarva iti yathā prāchyaḥ śakakṣate, bhava iti yathā vāhikāḥ, paśūnām pati rudro’gniriti/ ŚB. 1. 7. 3. 8.
heard of.” Finally Daksha and Śiva are reconciled. Rudra is said to be a form of Agni and Umā a form of Svāhā. Thus the numerous strands of Rudra-Śiva worship form part of the folk cult which became twisted into a single skein and their mutual relationship can be understood with the eye of modern criticism and critical approach.

The earliest evidence of worship of Rudra-Śiva-Paśupati has been discovered in the Indus Valley. Worship of the Mother Goddess and of Rudra-Śiva was the distinctive feature of the religion followed by the Indus Valley people. Śiva worship at Mohenjo-daro was a part of the folk cult prevailing there. The author of the Yajurveda has tried to sublimate it and give a philosophical meaning to the cult of Rudra-Śiva. We can see the two processes continuing side by side. Firstly Śiva worship as a folk cult continued without interruption and secondly his metaphysical and symbolical interpretation found successive statements in Vedic and Purānic literature. We may witness the continuity of Śiva worship in folk tradition in the form of hundreds and thousands of Śiva Liṅgas installed in every part of the country.1 Śiva is described as Īśāna and Īśvara in the Yajurveda. In giving a name to each Śiva Liṅga the epithet Īśvara was invariably employed as the second part of the name, e. g. Viśveśvara, Mahākāleśvara, etc. The evidence of archaeology shows that such names go back to the Kushāṇa period. An inscription in early Kushāṇa script (circa 2nd cent. A. D.) describes a Śiva Liṅga under the name Jaṭeśvara. It is possible that this process of naming was even earlier. Such names greatly multiply in the post-Kushāṇa period. In the Kāśi Khanda of the Skanda Purāṇa which seems to be a document of the Gupta age we have a long list of Śiva Liṅgas with names ending in Īśvara. This is confirmed by archaeological evidence since the clay sealings found at Rājghāt show several names as Gabhastiśvara, Avimukteśvara, Yogeśvara which are also included in the list of the Kāśi Khanda. There was another

1. Asamkhyāta sahasrāṇi ye Rudrā adhi bhūmyām, VS. XVI. 16.54.
style also in which the person who installed the Śiva Liṅga gave it a name either after his personal name or after the name of his teacher. In a Gupta inscription found at Mathura and of the time of Chandragupta II, it is stated that a Śiva mendicant named Uditāchārya installed two Śiva Liṅgas named Upamiteśvara and Kapileśvara after the names of his teacher and his teacher’s teacher respectively.

Two points are noteworthy regarding the evolution of Śiva. Firstly his benevolent form served as the basis of Yoga philosophy and Yogic practices of edifying character and Śiva was proclaimed as the Supreme Yungkin. In folk cult the Yoga doctrine and practices in association with Śiva found their highest development under the inspiration of the Nātha Yogins amongst whom Gorakhanātha was the greatest master of Yoga. According to the beliefs of the Nātha religion Śiva was the first and foremost Nātha Yungkin. There is reason to believe that even prior to the development of the Nātha religion Śiva had been assimilated in the later Mahāyāna Buddhism under the title of Avalokiteśvara or Lokeśvara. According to the Sādhana-mālā the number of Lokeśvara deities was 108 or even more. Śiva and Lokeśvara Bodhisattva are both distinguished by the following signs of matted locks, trident, rosary of Rudrāksha beads, tiger’s skin, and the third eye.

The other point is that Rudra-Śiva in his terrible form who was originally the god worshipped by the Austri tribes continued to be worshipped as part of the folk religion and a number of heaveous practices were associated with him. In this aspect he was called Bhairava. Practically in every centre of pilgrimage where Śiva Liṅgas are installed we also find the Bhairava goblins being worshipped. For example, in Vārāṇasī there are Eight Bhairavas along with many Śiva Liṅgas. The worship of Bhairava with offering of blood and flesh, intoxicants and wine was approved on a much lower level as part of the folk cult.

In this connection it is worthy of note that Yaksha worship also became reconciled to Śiva worship and the two were
drawn to each other, with such mutual borrowings as often take place in an atmosphere of mutual synthesis. The Lord of Yakshas was Vaishravana-Kubera who in the Gupta epoch was declared to be a close friend of Śiva as said in the Meghadūta of Kālidāsa. It may probably be right to say that the tradition of Yaksha worship preceded even that of Śiva. The religious worship of Rudra-Śiva supplanted that of the Yakshas whose stronghold on the minds of the people became gradually weak. To take an example, it is stated in the Matsya Purāṇa that in the remotest antiquity the Yakshas were predominant in Vārāṇasī. Later on the son of the king of the Yakshas became a devotee of Śiva. The religious followers of the Yakshas and of Śiva picked up a quarrel. Both approached Śiva as their refree, and Śiva adjudicated, “Those who are my devotees will continue to live in Vārāṇasī and those who are adherents of Yaksha worship shall go out of Kāśi.” This short inset gives a hint how the followers of Śiva and Yakshas first quarreled and then became mutually reconciled. We still find in Vārāṇasī shrines of both Śiva and the Yakshas, the latter being known as Bīra. For example, there are four Yaksha shrines in the campus of the Banaras Hindu University and many important ones like Lahurā Bīra and Bullā Bīra in the city of Vārāṇasī which abounds in numerous Śiva Liṅgas (see below Chap. 15).

In later times many Śaiva orders of ascetics like the Nātha, Avadhūta, Yogi, Jaṅgama, Liṅgāyata, Māheśvara, Kāpālikā etc. took a living part in popularising and continuing the worship of Śiva amongst the people at different levels. It may be imagined that as part of the Rudra-maha festival big fairs were held and some of them most probably maybe traced even up to our own times. Such a fair is held on the Śiva Chaturdaśi day (14th Dark night of Phālguna) which might have been the occasion of Rudra-maha festival.
VIII. NĀGAMAHĀ (FESTIVAL OF THE NĀGA DEITY)

CHAPTER EIGHT

The worship of the Nāga deity is an ancient Indian cult. It was known as Nāga-maha. The fairs in honour of the Nāga deity were known as Nāga-maha, Nāga-yātrā or Nāga-jattā. It was a very wide-spread cult known in all corners of the country and the worship offered to Nāga gods was also known as Nāga-bali. The tradition is still popular almost everywhere in the country. The Nāga worship was accepted in the Brāhmanical, Buddhist and Jaina religions. It appears that the Nāga cult was there even prior to the Yaksha worship. Surasā, the mother of gods, was an epithet used for Mother Earth. Kadrā, the mother of Nāgas, was also a term for the Mother Earth. This is the explanation in the Brāhmaṇa literature (iyan Prithivi Kadrā, SB 3. 6. 2. 2.; iyan vai Prithivi Sarparājī, SB 2. 1. 4. 30). Vishnu sleeps on the couch of the Cosmic Sarpa (Ananta Śesha). In such stories the strand of Vishnu worship was reconciled with that of Nāga worship. The Pañcharātra Bhāgavatas accepted this synthesis in more straight forward manner. According to their religious doctrine of the Chaturvyūha or four-fold divine manifestation, Balarāma is one of them and he is an incarnation of Ananta Śesha. In the beginning of the Bhāgavata religion Saṅkarshaṇa and Vāsudeva were together regarded as a pair deity. Kṛishṇa is spoken of having Baladeva as his help-mate (Baladevasahāyavan, Āraṇyakaparva 13.39) or having Saṅkarshaṇa as his second (Mahābhāshya ; also Udyogaparva 47.72) of the pair (Baladevadvitiya). The Vāyu Purāṇa speaks of Kṛishṇa and Balarāma as deities whose nature was human (Purusha-prakṛiti-śeva). Originally these were the two Kshatriya rulers amongst the Vṛishṇis and were consecrated as Vṛishṇi Vīras (Kāśikā

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on Pāṇinian sūtra 5. 2. 34, rājanyadabhavanadvandvendhaka-
vrishnovit). In course of time these Kshatriya heroes or human
leaders began to be worshipped as deities and attained to a
divinment. Balarāma also became associated with Nāga wor-
ship as happened in the case of Vishnū. The Vajurveda (3.61)
refers to Rudra-Siva as Aṁh sannah or associated with serpent.
It is possible that Nāga and Sarpa in remote antiquity repre-
sented two separate cult traditions but their distinction is not
apparent now. We have now two great legends about the Nāgas,
the first is the Nāga-Garudā feud and the second, the Nāga
Sacrifice of king Janamejaya. There is a religious element
underlying the first story while the second story is on a histo-
rical tradition.

Garudā is the symbol of Sūrya and Nāga represents the
subterranean forces of darkness. The great legend of Garudā
is his great triumph of transporting the jar of Soma from
heaven to the earth. The quest of the Jar of Immortality and
its transferring to the world of mortal men has some feature
of the international mythological story of the Holy Grail.
This Grail was a special utensil full of the embrosial drink of
life. It was sometime believed to be a special jewel. There was
much similarity between the pot of immortality (Amṛita-Ghaṭa)
and the Holy Grail. The essence of the story appears to be the
motif that the Aryan nations got the secret of the divine
elixir or Amṛita or the Drink of Immortality which the Nāgas
could not obtain. There is also the Purānic legend of the
Churning of the Ocean (Samudra-mañthana) in which the
Immortality fell to the share of the gods and not to that of
the Asuras. The Purānic story repeats the same theme in a
slightly different manner.

It appears that there is some historical truth at the root
of the story of Janamejaya and his Nāga Sacrifice. There was
some outstanding strife between the family of Takshaka and
that of the Kuru-Pāṇḍavas. That became the cause of the
end of the life of Parikshita who is said to have been bitten
by the Takshaka Nāga. Janamejaya avenged himself of his father's death by performing the Nāga-Yajña. Āstika, whose father was Jaratkāru, is said to be the son of the female Jaratkāru and thus sister's son of Vāsuki Nāga. After his birth Āstika was brought up by Vāsuki Nāga. Because of his close family connection with the Nāgas, Āstika came forward to protect the Nāgas from the all-consuming Nāga Sacrifice of Janamejaya.

The Nāgas have also a connection with the life of Kṛṣṇa who brought the Kīliyanāga under his control. The life-story of Buddha also shows several Nāga motifs; immediately after his birth Buddha was worshipped by the two Nāgas, Nanda and Upananda, who sung a Stotra to him. In the Nairāñjanā river lived a Nāga deity. After Buddha had taken bath in the river the daughter of the Nāgarāja Sāgara who lived there offered to Buddha a seat of jewels. It is also said that Buddha after partaking of the rice-bowl offered by Sujātā cast away the golden pot in the river. The same was taken by the Nāga deity under his care but Indra assuming the form of Garuḍa seized it, and transporting to the heaven of the thrity-three gods made it there the object of worship. It is also said that Nāgarāja Kālika recited a Stotra to Buddha after the latter took his bath in the Nairāñjanā river and proceeded to the Bodhi tree. He also made a prophecy about his Enlightenment or attaining Buddhahood. Buddha after attaining Sambodhi stayed at the root of the Bodhi tree. In the second week he repaired to the foot of the Muchulinda tree nearby. There the Nāgarāja Muchulinda came out of his hole in the earth and made a canopy of hoods over the head of Buddha. When Buddha had delivered his first Sermon at Sarnath he went to the village of Uruvilva (Pali : Uruvelā) where there was the hermitage of Rishi Kāśyapa. There the Buddha brought under his control a terrible Nāga who was occupying a portion of the hermitage. There are some other stories also of the Nāgas having a connection with the life of Buddha. This is very likely that there were a number of Nāga
shrines at different places and they became somehow connected with the stories of Buddha's life. There were two similar Nāga shrines in the north-west. Although the Buddha never travelled up to Gandhāra in his life-time but the story says that there was a Nāga king named Gopāla who live at Nāgarahāra (modern Jalalabad) near the Kabul river. That Nāga had become a source of terror to the local people. Buddha converted him by his preaching. Similarly there was another Nāga named Apalāla who lived at Maṅgalapura on the bank of the Swāt river and caused great havoc by bringing the river in floods. Buddha also converted him by his teaching. The ashes of Buddha after his cremation were divided amongst eight claimants including one Kshatriya ruler of Rimagrāma who got one share of the remains. It is said that the Stūpa built by them at Rimagrāma came under the care of the Nāgas who became its guardian.

In the Jātakas there are numerous references to Nāga stories throwing welcome light on the Nāga cult. On the one hand are such great legends of Bhūridatta Nāga, Champika Nāga and Śaṅkhapāla Nīga who were drawn into the whirlpool of Buddhism and its ethical ideals and on the other, we have ordinary folk tales about the Nāgas treating them as small tutelary deities who were held in esteem by the people. In the folk stories, the Nāgas are said to be Kshetra-Devatā, i.e., deities guarding fields and special portions of the earth, where they live in the ant-hills. It is also believed that they act as guardians of buried treasures which they do not permit any one to touch. Any one who worships and propitiates the Nīga is allowed to remove the treasure. Similar belief about the Nāgas is found in other countries also. There is a story in the Pañchatantra that the Nāga as Kshetra-deity used to give a golden dināra every day to a Brahmin who was the owner of that field and who had pleased him by offering milk. One day the Brahmin went to some other place and asked his son to do that duty. The Nāga gave a dināra also to his son, thereby the son thought that the ant-hill of the Nāga was
full of golden dināra coins which he should seize all at once. With this thought in his heart he hit the Nāga with the blow of his staff and the serpent becoming enraged bit him. When the Brahmin came back he went to the field with a cup of milk. Then the Nāga scolded him, “O, foolish fellow, you have come with greed of gold but I cannot forget the blow of the rod and you cannot forget the sorrow of your son’s death, and therefore there can be no friendship between you and me.” Saying so he gave a costly jewel to the Brahmin and asked him not to come again. In this story Nāga is described as a Kshetra-Devatā who was guarding a buried treasure under the earth. The third point of the story is that the Nāga deity was in possession of a precious gem (maṇi) which he could bestow on a human being as a sign of his pleasure. These three features were part of folk belief about the Nāgas. There is another story in the Pañchatantra in which a Brahmin woman is delivered of a son who is a Nāga. The Brahmin secures for his wedding a beautiful maiden. When the bride and the bridegroom meet each other at night the Nāga leaving his slough becomes a Brāhmaṇa youth, and meets his wife to enjoy with her. In the meantime his father comes there and seeing the slough understands the whole thing and burns it whereby the Nāga youth is obliged to retain his human form. This story also forms part of folklore. It is found in Kumaon folklore as follows.

A wealthy person did not have a son. The husband becoming displeased with his wife turned her out of the house. She went about as a beggar woman. One day she saw by chance a Nāga-like small rod and put it in her basket. The next day it increased in size and filled the whole basket. She put it in a bigger basket. That also became fully contained. After several repetitions of this phenomenon she went to her husband’s field and put the Nāga in her husband’s granary. The store-room also was filled with the body of the Nāga. Then the wife informed her husband that she had got a son and so the house was needed for his residence. The husband built a spaci
ous house for him. The woman accommodated the Nāga in it. The house also became fully contained with the Nāga. The woman spoke to her husband that his son had become a full grown youth and required a wife. The husband brought from somewhere an orphan girl and married her to the Nāga. The hapless maiden rubbed on the body of the Nāga some magical unctuous liquid given by her mother-in-law. She began to bemoan her ill luck but her mother-in-law advised her to take courage. The third day the Nāga gave up his slough and took the form of a beautiful young man. The bride informed her mother-in-law. The latter advised her to collect the slough that night and burn it along with her bodice. She followed her advice but the woman made a mistake and a portion of the slough remained unburnt. The Nāga entered it and again assumed his that ophidian shape. The mother-in-law advised the daughter-in-law that she should take care and turn into ashes the whole skin. The woman did as she was told and thereafter her husband lived with her in a human form (J. of the U. P. Historical Society, Vol. I, pp. 37-38).

Dr. Vogel making a comparative study of the story has pointed out that it is found in the folklore of other countries in which the animal form is burnt and thereby the human form is preserved. In the Vol-sunga Saga of Nordic mythology a similar story is found in which it is stated that the human form of a man and a woman was saved by burning the animal form of a wolf (Indian Serpent-Lore, pp. 166, 174). It is possible that outside the range of Kumaon folklore this story may be traced in the folklore of other regions.

We have many other examples of Nāga worship in Indian folk art. Nāga worship was very popular round Mathurā from the Śunga period to the Gupta period. Hundreds of Nāga sculptures and statuettes have been found in Mathurā art. One of them is that of Dadhikarṇa Nāga. A colossal Nāga image was found at a village named Chhargāon which is the best and most remarkable specimen of the Nāga images during the Kushāṇa period. There was an ancient centre of Nāga wor-
ship at the village named Dāuji which became connected with Baladeva. The image which is worshipped there to-day is in reality that of a Nāga. In the inscription engraved on the image from Chhargāon it is styled as ‘Bhagavān Nāgah.’ The title ‘Bhagavān’ denoted a divine person or deity. It is found in several other names such as Bhagavān Yaksha, Bhagavān Vaiśravaṇa, Bhagavān Mañibhadra, Bhagavān Vāsudeva.

The most influential example of Nāga worship in folk religion is available at Maniyār Maṭha in Rājagriha. In the ‘Tirtha-yātra’ chapter of the Āranyakaparva the hot springs of Rājagriha are mentioned and it is stated that a pilgrim after taking his bath in the hot springs should partake of the Prasāda distributed in the Yakshiṇī shrine there.¹

This Yakshiṇī who removed the foetus from the womb of mothers appears to have been the same as Jarā or Hārīti for whom a shrine had existed in Rājagriha from very early times as explained above. Thereafter it was enjoined that the pilgrim should go and worship in the shrine of Mañināga. He who partakes of the Prasāda distributed in the shrine of Mañināga is not affected by the poison of a serpent. The pilgrim should spend a night in the shrine of Mañināga.² When Krīṣṇa reached Rājagriha with Bhīma and Arjuna he spoke of the existence of four Nāga deities there, namely Arbuda, Śakraṇāpi, Svastika and Mañināga.

It maybe imagined that the tradition of worship of Maniyār Nāga had come down from the Austric tribes or the aboriginal settlers like that of Jarā. Later on he was sublimated

1. Yakshiṇyā naityakāṁ tatra prāśnita purushah śuchih / yakshiṇyāstu prasādena muchyate bhruṇabatyayā // Aranyakaparva 92.90.
to the rank of a deity and homage to him was prescribed even for the Aryan pilgrims. From this point of view the descriptions found in the “Tirtha-yātrā” chapters have a special significance for the deities mentioned in them where most of them are connected with the worship of the Trees, Ponds, Nāgas, Yakshas, Bhūtas etc. which were non-Aryan in origin. At the site of Maṇiyār Maṭha a temple was built in the Gupta period which is still existing, and that is embellished with stucco work and images. Such shrines were known as Nāga-ghara. Such a Nāga shrine (Nāga-grīha) existed outside Sāketa. Originally at Rājgir there existed only a platform which was held sacred for Nāga worship but later on a brick temple of circular form was erected, and the name Maṇiyār continued to be associated with it. In the excavations at the site of Maṇiyār Maṭha a number of multi-splayed jars had been found. Some of them have ten or fifteen spouts. Such jars with numerous spouts were used in the ritual of Nāga worship and are employed even to-day. A special pacification ceremony is performed after twentyseven days for such children as are born under the Mūla Nakshatra and in that their naming ceremony takes place after twentyseven days and that then the father of the babe does not see its face and which is seen only by the mother. On that day a jar with twentyseven spouts is used to bathe the Mūliya child with streams of water flowing from the spouts. The presiding deity of the lunar mansion called Mūla is a serpent. It is for this reason that this ceremony of warding off the evil influence of the Mūla constellation was performed at the shrine of Maṇiyār Nāga. It seems that such children were brought from distant places to the Maṇiyār Maṭha.

In folk religion the Nāgas are worshipped on the Nāga-Paṇchami Day, which is celebrated on the fifth bright day of the month of Śrāvaṇa. On that day the walls of the house are white-washed and figures of Nāgas are painted in black in rough outline. Thereafter on the fifteenth day of Pūrṇimā are painted bird-like figures in red ochre called Saun. This seems to be a popular representation of the great feud bwtenee
the Nāgas and the Garuḍas to which reference is found in the Sālapatha Brāhmaṇa as the conflict between the sons of Kadrū called Kādrav-yeas and the sons of Vinatā-Suparṇī known as Sauparṇeyas. The Hindi word ‘Saun’ is derived from Suparṇa, called Sovanna in Pali and Prakrit. These Suparṇa figures are drawn in outline on the door-jambs of the room entrance. The form of the Saun figures as drawn in western Uttar Pradesh throws light on their origin. Some of them resemble the form of bird and others known as ‘Kāle Saun’ that of serpent. We distinctly see there the shape of Garuḍa or Suparṇa with outspread wings. We have already mentioned the Suparṇa legend of the Mahābhārata, but it was much older since we find the name of Sauparṇa Chant in the Sāmaveda and also a reference to the Suparṇa literature. In the Tāṇḍya Brāhmaṇa it is stated that the Yajña of the gods once became resentful and left them. It wandered to and fro in the form of a Suparaṇa. The gods made it come back by chanting the Sauparṇa-Sāma, and then the sacrifice was resumed. Here we may see a synthesis of the Suparṇa cult of folk religion and that of the Vedic Yajña. Garuḍa is called Garutmā Suparṇa in the Rīgveda (I. 164. 46). The legend of the feud between Suparṇas and the Nāgas followed the pattern of the Daivāsurasam conflict in which the Suparṇas represented the ethereal spirits of light and the Nāgas the chthonic spirits of darkness and under-world. In one stanza of the Asyavāmiya Sūkta, Garutmā Suparṇa is said to be of equal rank with Agni, Indra, Mitra and as one of the many names of the supreme reality1. Suparṇa and Garuḍa were both names of Sūrya. Garuḍa was the symbol of light and the Nāga of darkness. This is the eternal conflict between the two, viz., the opposition of light and darkness. In the art

1. Indram mitram varuṣamagnimāhutaratho divyaḥ sa
Suparṇo garutmān/
Ekaṁ sadviprā bahudhā vadantyagnīṁ yamaṁ mātari-
śvānamāhuḥ //

Rīgveda I. 164. 46.
of Mathurā and Gandhāra several reliefs have been found depicting the Nāga-Garuda conflict. The Saun figures drawn on the Nāga-Pańchami Day point to the tradition of the feud between the Nāgas and Suparṇas as handed down in folklore tradition.

In popular belief the Nāgas are associated with water-pools. The Nāgas images in Mathurā art were often found installed near ponds of water. Such a water tank was known as Nāga-hrada or Nāga-pushkarini. Bāga has written that queen Vilāsavati took a ceremonial bath in the Nāga-hradas or pools sacred to Nāga deities which were believed by the people to appear in visible form and to confer the boon of a son (prasiddhesu Nāgakulahradeshu mamaṣja Kādambari, Vaidya ed., p. 65). There is frequent reference in Hindi literature to the Ashṭakulika or eight families of the Nāgas. These included such Nāgas as Śesha, Vāsuki, Kambala, Karakoṭaka, Padma, Mahāpadma, Śaṅkha and Kulika. Another list includes the names of Takshaka, Mahāpadma, Śaṅkha, Kulika, Kambala, Aśvatara, Dhṛitarāṣṭra and Balāhaka. Of these the name of Vāsuki is often told in folk tales as Bāsaka. In Indian mythology Śesha is said to be supporting the earth on his thousand hoods. Similarly in Teutonic mythology a world serpent is said to be encircling the earth.

Like Yaksha-bali and Bhūta-bali there is also the cult ritual of Nāga-bali or sacrifice to Nāga deity. According to it the Nāgas were worshipped with perfumes, lamps, flowers and sweets etc. The worship of Nāga deities was of special significance in Kashmir. In the Nilamata Purāṇa of local mythology there is mention of about 500 Nāga deities and each small pool or spring of water is said to have its special presiding Nāga deity.
IX. VRIKSHA-MAHA (TREE WORSHIP)

CHAPTER NINE

The worship of the tree was named Rukkhha-maha in Pāṇini literature. This was of the same cultural level as Girimaha and Nadimaha. In Indian literature and art we find numerous references to the tree worship, in which the trees were regarded as deities. The worship of such plants and trees as Tulasī (basil plant), Pippala (=Aśvattha, Ficus Religiosa), Vaṭa (banyan, Ficus Indica), Āmalaki (Embelc Myrobalan) is still very popular amongst all classes of people. The feeling of the human heart which made man regard the plants and trees with sanctity and worthy of worship maybe seen in the following verse of the Mahābhārata¹:

“If there be such a tree in any village that is loaded with dense foliage and bunches of fruits, then owing to these features it becomes famous and is regarded worthy of worship. People from far and near come to pay homage to it, as they would do to a deity. It is regarded as a Chaitya tree in that area.” The picture of a Chaitya tree given in this verse indicates that almost each village had its Chaitya tree. As every village had its Yaksha shrine called Yaksha-Chaitya so also there was a tree-shrine called Vṛiksha-chaitiya, which in Buddhist literature became a Bodhi-ghara. Originally it was merely a tree filling the space round it with its numerous branches and foliage. It used to have a lofty trunk and many stems rising high in the sky. Such a tree of huge dimension was accepted in the Vedas as the symbol of the Cosmic Tree or Brahman². When such a tree attained some celebrity it was enclosed by a railing

¹. Eko vr̥iksho hi yo grāme bhavet parṇaphalāṅvitaḥ / chaityo bhavati nirjñātirarchanīyāḥ supūjitāḥ //
   Ādirāpa 138. 25

². Vṛiksha iva stabdho divi tishṭhathyekāḥ/ Śvetāśvatara
   Up. 3. 9
to bestow on it a sacred character. An essential feature of
a religious cult was to erect an enclosure or railing known as
vedikā. In very ancient times when there was no temple of
brick or stone built for a deity, his platform-shrine was sur-
rounded by such a railing. Such enclosures were of bamboo or
wood in the beginning but later on were made of stone and are
often seen in early Indian art. Both the Rāmāyaṇa and the
Mahābhārata mention such enclosures round the sacred trees.
From their early origin in wood or bamboo the enclosures
developed into magnificent railings of stones pierced with
four entrances or gateways (torana). We have surviving exam-
ple of such gateways in the railings at Sanchi. It appears
that originally such railing pillars (vedikā-kamba) were plain
as in the Nārāyaṇa Vātaka at Nagarī near Chittor without
carving but later on gradually they were carved, as at
Bharhut and Mathurā. The railing at Sānchī, however, remain-
without any carving. Such magnificent trees with elabo-
rate railing were the true Chaitya Vṛikshas. In course of time
religious fairs began to be held at these arboreal shrines which
became known as Rukhkha-maha. Such shrines built for the
Bodhi tree became known as Bodhi-ghara and they appear to
have been elaborate structures of stone as known from several
illustrations at Bharhut, Sānchī and Mathurā, and in Āndhra art.
These Bodhi-shrines were sometimes double storied without ceilings but with the branches of Bodhi tree spread-
ing in all directions. The central portion was open to the sky,
and enclosed by walls all round.

Bali offerings were usually made for the tree deity (Rukhk-
ka-devatā). This worship was intended to appease the
Rukhkha-devatā, or tree-deity. The devotees believed that
the tree god could appear in a visible form, and grant their
request. When Sujātā's maid servant named Pūrṇā saw
Buddha seated under a banyan tree she thought that the
tree-deity had become visible in a human form. She informed
Sujātā and the latter came to the tree with a bowl full of rice
and milk which Buddha accepted. An explicit reference to
the Rukhkha-devatā is available in the Rukkhadhamma Jālaka (Jālaka No. 74). In the grove of Śāla tree the Bodhisattva was born in the form of a tree-deity. Śakra appointed Vaiśravaṇa as their lord. The king ordered the tree-deities to select any particular tree as their abode. The Bodhisattva as tree-deity advised all his relations to live in amity and select for themselves their respective seats on the trees in the forest. Some did not obey his advice and went to live on the solitary trees of the forest. Just then a strong gale visited the forest and such single trees were uprooted. But those that formed part of groves remained unaffected by the wind, and were saved. Thus the Buddha preached to them the Moral of living in harmony. In this folk tale there is only a very thin veneer of Buddhism and in reality it presents a picture of the folk belief in the tree-deities.

The followers of Buddhism, Jainism and Brahmanism adopted with equal zeal the tree cult. For each Buddha and Tirthaṅkara a holy tree was prescribed under the name of Bodhi-vriksha. Thus tree-worship became grafted in a very natural way on the religion of Buddha and Mahāvīra and even their predecessors received the same kind of homage from the people as they used to do before. The process of giving a sanctified character to the trees is found in several ways in the Brahmanical religion. On the metaphysical plane the cosmos is conceived of as the World Tree having its roots above and branches below—

Urdhvamūlamadhaḥ sākhamaśvattham prāhuravyayam/Gitā 15.1. What was known in Vedic times as the imperishable Pippala Tree, Aśvaya Aśvattha, became later known as Akshayaṇa, the Eternal Banyan Tree. The Rīgveda mentions the cosmos as the tree of a thousand branches (Sahasravālaśa Vanaspati)¹:

"O Soma, irrigate with our life-giving sap this tree which has a thousand branches, which is green and enriched with

¹. Vanaspatim pavamāṇa madhvā sāmaṅgdhi dhārayā / sahasravālaśaḥ haritaṁ bhrājāmānaṁ hiranyayam // Rīgveda IX.5.10.
golden radiance.” The statement holds good from the philosophical point of view also. This World Tree is ever fresh by its endless creation. It has the potency of endless creation. This is saturated in all its parts with the Soma called harita. That sap maintains the freshness of its honey-cells. The eternal order prescribed by the Creator for this cosmos which is called Rita and Madhu keeps this World Tree in an ever green and fresh condition. This tree is shining with the light of the three attributes, Sattva, Rajas and Tamas which are spoken of as its golden radiance. In Vedic symbolism Sattva is conceived of as gold which includes also the form of two other Guṇas. The Infinite is termed as Sahasra and finite as Śata in Vedic symbolism. The Sahasravatya or the thousand branches of the Eternal Cosmic Tree represent the innumerable universes and systems of world order. The human mind cannot bring them into any system of computation. Thus the Aśvattha Tree was made the basis of a profound metaphysical doctrine in Vedic times. There was so much meaning in the conception of Brahman as the Tree and Brahman as the Forest1.

The Aśvattha Tree described in the Gītā as having its roots above and branches below is the same as this cosmic tree of a thousand branches. It should be noted that the word �pellha refers to the invisible centre or transcendent Brahman and word Adhaḥ denotes the visible creation. In simple words, Urdhva is the centre of the circle and the Adhaḥ its circumference. In the Atharvaaveda we have the picture of Aśvattha in greater relief, since there the Aśvattha is said to be abode of all gods (Aśvattho deva-sadanaḥ) luxuriating in the third heaven (treyasyāṁito divi, Atharvaaveda 19.39.6). There is the strong folk belief that all the gods have their abode on the Pipala tree and therefore no Hindu tolerates the cutting of a branch of Pipala tree. His reaction is similar as to the hatching of limbs of a deity. There is hardly an instance like this of the delicate feeling in relation to a religious belief.

1. Brahma tad vanam, Brahma sa Vriksha āsa/ Taittiriya Brāhmaṇa 2.8.9.6; also Rigveda X. 81.4.
A related belief of tree worship was that of the wish-fulfilling tree of heaven, named Kalpavriksha. This name is not found in Vedic literature and its conception seems to have been a part of folk cult. It is stated that at the time of the churning of the ocean by the Devas and the Asuras the Kalpavriksha was produced as one of the Ratnas or excellent objects. This became the tree par excellence of the Nandana garden of Indra's heaven. This story indicates that the tree cult of popular religion became associated with Vedic Indra. There is another version of the legend of Kalpavriksha making it originally a tree of Uttarakuru. We find a description of the Kalpavriksha trees in the idyllic land of Uttarakuru in the Jātakas, Mahābhārata, Rāmāyana, Divyavadāna and Jaina Śūtras. According to the Bhishmaparva, the Siddhas live in the Uttarakuru. There are trees which bear flowers and fruits in all seasons. Amongst them there are trees which fulfil all wishes. Some produce streams of milk with the qualities of nectar and flavour of all the six Rasas. The branches produce clothes and ornaments and there are also some branches from which maidens of great beauty and youth, and also male and female couples, are produced (Bhishmaparva 7.2-11).

We read in the Rāmāyana that Sugrīva sent his monkey heroes in the north to the land of Uttarakuru where grew the Kalpa-trees producing from their branches all the desired


Bhishmaparva 7.2—11//
objects as clothes, jewelled ornaments, costly bedsteads, garlands; articles of food, drinks and maidens of youth and beauty.¹

According to the Mahāvīra Jātaka some merchants went out in search of treasures and travelling to find it reached a big Banyan tree which was of the nature of a Kalpavriksha. It produced from its eastern branches streams of water, from southern branches food and drinks, from western branches fair damsels and from the northern branches all desired objects.²

This happy conception of the Kalpa-tree must have been quite popular. Although the ascetic religion of Buddha based on renunciation did not agree well with this conception of the Kalpavriksha rooted in plentiful possessions, still Buddhist art from the earliest times accorded a welcome reception to the theme of Kalpavriksha. On the Torana-gateways of Bharhut and Sānchi men and women are depicted as enjoying the blessings of the Kalpavriksha. There are many scenes in which costly textiles and ornaments are shown issuing out from the meandering branches of the Kalpavriksha trees. On the railing stones of the Bharhut Stūpa scenes of the Kalpavriksha and its meandering creepers are depicted.


² Vāridā purimā sākhā annapanaḥ cha dakhkhiṇaḥ / Nāridā pachchhimā sākhā savvakāme cha uttaraḥ // Jātaka 4.352,
producing ornaments and fabrics, wines and objects of toilet are frequently depicted. The best representation of an independent sculpture of Kalpavr̥ṣkṣa which fulfilts the folk cult conception of that tree was found at Besnagar. That may be assigned to the third century B.C. and is a huge Banyan tree with dense foliage and spreading branches occupying the space on all sides. Under it is a square railing, with a round plant-guard over it from the centre of which rises the Banyan tree. Many of its offshoots are coming downwards to the earth. On one side are two pendent bags full of jewels and precious stones. Between them is suspended a jar full of silver punch-marked coins. On the other side is the conch treasure (Saṅkha-nidhi) oozing out silver coins from its mouth. As its counterpart is the lotus treasure (Padma-nidhi) from the calyx of which coins of the same type are coming out. In between them are shown some ornaments suspended form the branches and also a purse full with jewels. The leaves of the tree are broad; it has many bunches of fruits. This Kalpavr̥ṣksha probably formed the capital of the pillar dedicated to Kubera. The Saṅkhānīdhī and Padmanidhi form part of the treasures of Kubera. These two Nidhis were later having high esteem during the Gupta age and were counted amongst the Eight Nidhis of Kubera (cf. the Padmini-vidyā as explained in the Mar̥kaṇḍeya Purāṇa and Vāmana Purāṇa). The conch treasure (Saṅkhamadhyā) has been found depicted in the art of Mathurā, Deogarh, Vaiśāli and of the Borobudur Stūpa in Java. Kālidāsa has stated in the Meghaśāla that the conch and lotus treasures were depicted on the doorjambs of the houses (Dvāropānte līkha-vapushau Saṅkhopadmau cha drishivā/ Meghaśāla II, 17). Thus we see that the literary motifs, art decorations and folk beliefs all accord with each other.

Besides the trees named above other trees also were regarded to be sacred. The Āmalaki tree and its fruits are worshipped in the month of Karttika.

A form of the Rukhkha-maha was the Ujjīna-maha, the festival of the garden included in the list of the Nāyādhamma-
kaha. This seems to imply that as there was a festival for a single tree laden with fruits and leaves similarly a whole garden containing such trees was made the object of a religious festival. Such festivals were known as Uyyana-krīḍā in Pali literature. Such garden sports and excursions (goshthi) became very popular in the lives of men and women. In medieval times these became known as Udyānikā. A full account of the Udyānikā festival is found in the Upamitihavavapapanchakathā of Siddharshi. In the name of this festival people enjoyed many kinds of eatables. The Gujarati speech has still preserved the term Ujāni derived from Udyānikā. The term may also have survived in other Aryan languages. The Udyānikā festival or the garden sports were organised during the spring season when the plants and creepers assumed their most beautiful form. Such a festival is described in the Pali Nīdanakathā which was celebrated in the Lumbinī Garden. In between Kapilavastu and Devadaha was a grove of Śila trees or Lumbinī-vana. On that occasion it was blossoming with Śila flowers from top to bottom. In between the foliage and flowers swarms of bees of shining colours were humming and flying. The whole of the Lumbinī Garden appeared as a grove of multi-coloured climbers or like a royal necklace of many gems. As soon as queen Mahāmāyā came in sight of the Lumbinī Grove a desire arose in her heart to enjoy the Śilavan a sports (Śilabhāṣṭijā-krīḍā). The blossoming bough of the tree full with scented flowers became distended towards the queen like a delicate cane. The queen raised her arm and caught it. Just then she felt the pain of delivery. It was in that pose that she gave birth to the Bodhisattva from her right side (Nīdanakathā, Kāśi Ed., p. 41).

Such festivals were known as Udyāna-maha. Names of sports enjoyed on such occasion are found in grammatical literature and in the ‘Jayamaṅgalā Commentary’ of the Kāmasūtra, e.g., gathering of Aśoka flowers (Aśokapushpa-prachāyikā), plucking of Śila flowers (Śila-bhaṅjikā), plucking of
IX. Vriksha-Maha (Tree Worship)

Uddālaka\(^1\) flowers (Uddālahapushpa-bhaṇḍijā), gathering of Viraṇa flowers (Viraṇapushpa-prachāyikā), plucking of Tāla flowers (Tāla-bhaṇḍijā), eating of mangoes (Āmra-khādi), eating of cakes (Abhīyāsha-khādi), sucking of the sugar cane-sticks (Āchosa-khādi), plucking the scented flowers of the Damanaka plant (Damanaka-bhaṇḍijā), plucking of Sahakāra fruits (Sahakāra-bhaṇḍijā), eating the roots of lotus plant (Bisakhādi), etc. (Kāśikā 2.2.17; 3.3.102; 6.2.74). These sports were specially popular in eastern India and have been mentioned by Pāṇini as ‘Prāchām kriḍā’ (6.2.74). The sport named Jivaputra-prachāyikā (gathering of the flowers of Jivaputra) was popular in the north-western part of India. It is probable that women used to celebrate this festival with the flowers of the Jivaputra tree. A festival is celebrated on the Dark 8th day of Āsvina. It is likely that the festival of Jivaputra-prachāyikā coincided with it. Damanaka-bhaṇḍijā seems to be the Damanotsava festival celebrated on the Chaitra Pūrṇimā night. The festival of Viranapushpa prachāyikā was celebrated in the month of Vaśākha. The Devī-Bhāgavata prescribes the festival of Dolotsava on Bright 4th day of Chaitra, Sayanotsava on Dark 3rd day of Śrāvana, Jāgaranotsava on the month of Mārgaśīrsha, Rathotsava on Bright 3rd day of Āśādha, and Damanotsava on Chaitra Pauṇamī and Pavitrotsava on Śrāvana Pūrṇimā. In the Dolotsava Śiva and Pārvatī were worshipped with Damanaka flowers.

In the month of Chaitra the Damanaka plant is overladden with all beautiful flowers. For practically the whole month men and women enjoyed themselves with those scented flowers. Specially on the 12th Bright day of Chaitra young men and women made ornaments of the Damanaka flowers and

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1. Uddālaka (Cordia Latifolia) is, the same tree as Śleshmāntaka in Skt. and Chālala in Bengali. Its fruit is sour in taste and like the fruit of Tāla in shape. See the article “The Indoor and Outdoor Games in Ancient India”, by Trideva Natha Roy, Third Indian History Congress Proceedings, p. 243.
beautified themselves. Thus the Udyānamaha or the festival of garden in the spring season was celebrated and several items of sports and enjoyment were organised under it, e.g. garden excursion, food and drink, flower sports, water sports, dance and music, and entertainment with friends, relatives and acquaintances. The people of this country were very fond of nature including plants, trees, flowers and water sports. They had made provision for these enjoyments in their calendar. Each such festival had a social aspect, and in most cases it was made the part of religion which gave to the festival a lasting character and merit, and object of religious faith.

In the spring season when the red Aśoka (Saraca Indica) bursts into hanging sprays of red flowers, it is a festival for the eyes of gods what to say of men. What extra-ordinary beauty overtakes the groves of red Aśoka tree in the spring season maybe realised by those who have actually seen that sight. Men and women under the Indian sky felt it to be their obligation to respond to this festival of the beauty of the Aśoka tree. A special festival called Aśoka-Dhāda was devised for women. Youthful girls went to the flowering Aśoka trees, danced round them and in their whirling movements kicked the stems with their left foot. The poets have imagined that the idea behind this was that the Aśoka tree burst into flowers by the touch of their feet. After this when the proper time came for the tree to bear flowers men attracted by the divine beauty of the Aśoka tree approached it for gathering its flowers (Aśoka-pushpa-prachāyikā) and entertained themselves by beautifying their bodies with its red flowers.

In ancient India domestic gardens (Grīhodyāna) were a part of popular culture. In literature the domestic gardens and their sports are often mentioned. That has become a part of the conventional description of the Prabandha Kāvyas. According to Daṇḍi, a good Mahākāvyya becomes complete only when it contains the description of Udyāna-kṛiḍā and Salīla-kṛiḍā. Even in Muslim times the tradition of domestic gardens conti-
nued, and they were known as *Nazar-bāgh*. People loved the domestic garden as a part of their selves and extended utmost affection towards them. Bāṇa has written that queen Yaśovatī embraced the bunches of *Jāti* flowers, took leave of the pomegranate fruits of the domestic garden, and also of the *Sahakāra* creepers, gave personal affection to the bunches of red *Aboka* sprays and to the young *Bakula* flowers of the Antahpura. In reality when one looks at the young *Sahakāra* sappling beautifying the interior of the house one cannot restrain the flow of his affectionate feelings, with such endearment as shown for one's own near and dear ones. Its delicate young leaves appear as if they are made of coral. In the domestic gardens of royal palaces there were several kinds of groves as *Latā-manḍapa, Mādhavi-manḍapa, Latā-grīha* for sports and retirement. Vālmīki describes that in the palace of the king of Laṅkā there were such groves as *Latā-grīha, Kṛīḍā-grīha, Pushpa-grīha, Chitra-grīha* etc. A long channel of water flowed through the pavilions of the palace and irrigated the lotus pond known as *Dirghikā*. Vidyāpati names it as *Kritrima-nadī* in which there were small tub-like pools filled with perfumed water. In some of them were pairs of Haṃsa and Sārasa birds. In the domestic garden there used to be by the side of the lotus pond an artificial hillock (*Kṛīḍā-parvata* or *Dūru-parvata*). On this raised hill many kinds of sports were improvised. In the list of the *Nayādhammakahā*, Parvata-maha is mentioned together with Uḍyāna-maha, and besides that there is mention of Giri-maha or Giri-yātrā that is the mountain festival. We have several examples in literature, e. g. Govardhana-maha and Raivataka-maha. It is probable that the Uḍyāna-maha and Parvata-yātrā juxtaposed in the list referred to the festivals celebrated in the palace gardens. There is another feature amongst the people that a rich person plants a garden and then gives to it a final touch by celebrating its marriage. The garden is wedded to a well of big dimension. Big gardens of a thousand trees were planted known as *Sahasamba-vana* which comprised thirty-two groves each containing thirtytwo
trees. There was a *Sahasamba-vana* at several old cities like Śrāvasti and Kauśāmbi and many others have survived to this day, e. g. a Batisī-bārī in the campus of Banaras Hindu University in which a mango grove was planted in thirtytwo rows each containing thirtytwo trees. Similarly there were large mango plantation of a lac of trees called *Lākṣhārāma* in Sanskrit and *Lukhrāon* or *Lakha-pedā* in Hindi.

There is so much material about the festivals of trees and gardens (*Vṛiksha-maha* and *Udyāna-maha*) in Indian literature. On the gateways of Sānchī, tree worship occupies as much space as Buddhist subjects. Men and women are depicted as paying homage to the trees. Gandhārvas and Suparṇas holding garlands of flowers are shown as offering worship to the trees (Fergusson, *Tree and Serpent Worship*, Pls. 25-26, p. 130). In the *Rāyapaseṇiya Sutta* (Kaṇḍikā 148) there is a list of 18 Maha festivals in which occur such names as Agaḍa-maha, Sara-maha and Sāgara-maha in addition to Nadi-maha. Agaḍa-maha (or Avaṭa-maha) may have been the same as Kūpa-maha. We have mentioned above the marriage of an *Udyāna* with a Kūpa but in actual practice marriage between a Kūpa and Kāpikā is also celebrated. That is also a festival in which the well is worshipped and the festival ends with the religious feeding of Brāhmaṇas. The festival of the pond (*Sara-maha*) implied the building of a tank or pool of water with religious worship and *Brahma-bhūja*. The practice of constructing the tank (*taḍāga*) or lotus pond (*pushkariṇī*) was very popular in this country. These were found quite useful for collecting rainy water and conversion into lotus ponds both inside and outside the city, forming an essential part of the town-planning. In the Kushāṇa inscriptions of Mathurā frequent references are found to *Udyāna, Sarovara, Vāpi, Kūpa, Arāma*, etc. As part of the construction of a *Pushkariṇī*, broad and long staircases on the four sides with pakka Ghāṭs either made of bricks or stones and with corner Chaukhaṇḍis were an architectural feature, of which thousands of examples survive to this day. During the medieval period the practice of constructing such
tanks had reached its highest culmination and ponds of large dimensions were built as things of beauty and at the expenditure of huge sums of money. The whole of Bundelkhand and Baghelkhand is full of such monuments. The ponds were like *Amṛita-kuṇḍa* or pools of embrosial liquid serving as the life belt of the people and the animals. During the reign of the Chandela kings an embankment was raised for collection of water of the catchment area from the three opposite sides, and this technique was worked out in the Bundelkhand region. As the story goes, in the time of Mahārāja Virasimha fifty-two such monuments were planned during one night. With an eye on the water gushing from the three sides and collecting in extensive pools by raising a high embankment the strong-bodied sons of Bundelkhand built their pools and embankments overnight with incredible perfection and engineering skill. Big tanks were known as *Ṣagara*. We have the example of *Madana-sāgar* of king Madanadeva and *Rājasagar* built by Rājasimha of Mewar. The construction ceremonies of such pools went by the name of Sara-maha.
X. SĀGARAMAHA (FESTIVAL OF THE OCEAN)

CHAPTER TEN

It was a festival of the sea or the ocean. It was celebrated by floating a number of boats on the surface of the sea water. Men and women engaged themselves in dance, music, drink and eating. These were the common features of each Maha festival. In the city of Vārāṇasi there used to be a festival known as Buḍhavā Māṅgala celebrated in the month of Chaitra. A number of boats of different types were floated in the Gaṅgā and the rich aristocratic people enjoyed themselves with great abundance on these boats. It was a living reality until recent times, but has gone out of fashion now. We get a literary description of the Samudra-maha of Kṛṣṇa in the sea at Dwārakā. It is stated in the Harivamśa Purāṇa that the Samudra-maha was celebrated every year at Pīṇḍāraka near Dwārakā. Samudra-yāturā was a technical term bearing the same meaning as Sāgaramaha. The word Yāturā and Maha denoted the same thing. The common feature was a religious celebration together with a social festival. This fair was celebrated in the following manner according to the Harivamśa.

When the proper time for the Samudrayāturā festival arrived Ugrasena and Vasudeva were given the duty of the Mayor of the city and all men and women came out of the city. Vṛishni young men came out with courtesans. These women were the object of common dalliance for all Vṛishni young men. Kṛṣṇa fearing that there should be no quarrel laid it as a rule that the women were to be shared equally by all. The sea water was made clear and perfumed. Under orders of Kṛṣṇa the water was made sweet and free of salt. It was so arranged that the water was in some places knee-deep, at other places waist-deep and in some other places breast-deep. Entering such

1. Dvāravatyaṁ nivasato Vishnoratulatejasah/Samudra-yātṛa-
samprāptā tirtha-pīṇḍārake nṛipa // Harivamśa 2. 88. 4.

2. Towyuṁ vilavaṇam mṛishṭaṁ Vāsudevasya śāsanāt /
ipid. 2. 88. 23.
water women began to enjoy the water festival by splashing the water on Kṛiṣṇa. Small boats were cast into water for enjoying the water sports. The row of front portions¹ of these boats exhibited the shapes of goose, peacock, elephant, crocodile and fish. The women took their seats in them and began to enjoy the watery sports in the sea water. They were putting on diaphanous clothes. Kṛiṣṇa also entered into the atmosphere proper for that time. Groups of young men began to enjoy the sports with the courtesans.

The women wearing garlands of blossoming flowers formed a maṇḍala holding hands of one another and dipping themselves in and out of the water. They took quick steps in the water as on land. In the midst of these sports they enjoyed themselves with a number of eatables and drinks.

The boats were of the shape of house-chambers or rooms. On the decks many kinds of saloons were made. Some were rectangular, others square, others were circular and still others of svastika form. Some had the elevation of Kailāsa, others of Mandara mountain and still others of Meru mountain. The barges were shaped in their fore-parts like several birds and animals. They were beautified by Torāṇa-doors of crystal, agate and jade and inset with many jewels. Many of the boats had the form of Gauḍa or Krauṇcha birds with outspread wings, some looked like parrot and some had the form of elephant; they were beautified with golden creepers. The boatmen acting as pilot of such boats spread them on the surface of the sea making the whole place assume a gala appearance².

¹ Kāścitkāśhṭhamayaisteruḥ plavaiḥ sarvaṅgasobhanāḥ / krauṇchabahriṇā-nāgānāmākārasadṛśaiḥ striyaiḥ // 27
Makaramākritubhiśchānyā minābhairapi chāparaḥ / bahurūpākṛtitdharaiaḥ pāpluvuschāparaḥ striyaiḥ //
Harivasā 2. 88. 27–28.

² Naubhīrgrīhāprakārābhiśchikrīdurarparājitī / snātānułiptamuditāḥ sāyāne'ndhaka-vrishaṇayāḥ //
The sea looked beautiful with white-coloured boats and the masts of the Jhilihā boats. These boats scattered on the surface of the sea appeared as if imitating the beauty of Gandharva-nagara appearing in the cloud. Some of the sea-boats were beautified like gardens with plants and flowers that grow in the Nandana grove of Indra’s heaven and these were similarly beautified with groves, pavilions, trees and Dirghikā with flowing waters. Some were adorned exactly like the gardens of heaven, and they imitated the beauty of Indra’s heaven. At that time the trees were filled with joy and scattered a rain of flowers. Pleasant breeze began to blow. The season also was pleasant. With dance and music the festival spread over a surface of several Yojanas on the sea (see Harivamśa 2. 88. 63-67)

The author of the Harivamśa Purāṇa has given an elaborate description of Samudra-maha or Samudra-yātā. When the people became satiated with sporting in water they began enjoying Rāsa dance. The women began to perform the Tāla-ka-rāsa, wearing the same kind of dress and following the same sketch as was proper to that function. Krishṇa could not restrain himself and began to perform the dance movement with Subhadra who had a beautiful form. Balarāma, Śātyaki, Pradyumna, Śamba, Śaṅkha, Gada, Akrūra and two sons of Balarāma named Niśātha and Ulmuka all joined the party on a boat floating on the surface of the sea water. Nārada also could not restrain himself and joined the party of the Yadus in a spirit of great abundance. His matted locks became dishevelled. He moved his limbs in accordance with Rāsa steps and made himself a laughing stock of Balarāma, Krishṇa, Subhadra, Arjuna

Āyatācchaturasrāscha vṛtāscha svastikāstathā /
prāśādā naushu kauravya vibitā viśvakarmanā //
Kailāsamandarachchhandā meruchchhandastathaiva cha /
tathā nānāvayaaschchhandās tathelāmṛgarūpināḥ //
Vaidūryatairīnaiśchitrāḥ chitrābhīrmaṇi bhaktibhiḥ /
masāragalvarkamayaiśchitrabhaktiśatairapi //

Harivamśa 2. 88. 57-60.
and Revatī. Thus the spirit of laughter increased and when Krīṣṇa saw that it had reached its excess he took Nārada by the hand and jumped into the sea and divided all into two parties. On one side was the party of Balarāma with Revatī and on the other was Krīṣṇa himself, and both entered into a mock water strife. They splashed water over one another with syringes and hands. The sea water in that area was made free from aquatic animals and rendered scented and sweet. The sea-shore to that extent was made pleasant for the citizens. After the water strife was over all assembled for the drinking party. Uddhava and the Bhoja Brāhmaṇas kept themselves aloof from food and drink. They satisfied themselves with vegetable soop, milk, curd and such other vegetarian preparations only. But others began to enjoy themselves with drinks like Maireya, Madhvikā, Surā and Āsava, and until they were fully saturated with sour fruits, pomegranates, meat boiled in ghee, meat cutlets, baked lambs, young roasted pigs, thick roasted hearts of different animals to their fullest satisfaction. Then they began a different course with slices of mangoes, sea-salt, chillies, radishes, pomegranates, lemons, ginger and with meats of birds and animals, boiled in ghee and fried with oil.

We have thus a very graphic description of meat eating and drinking on the occasion of the Samudra-yātrā festival which also seems to have been the case with other Yātrās or Samāja festivals. We may thus understand why Aśoka ruled out the celebration of Samāja festival. We may get here some idea of the common features of such festivals as Yaksha-maha, Bhūta-maha, Giri-maha and other Maha festivals in which such items of food and drinks and club-life formed an essential feature.
XI. DARĪMAHA

(FESTIVAL OF THE MOUNTAIN CAVE)

CHAPTER ELEVEN

In the list of the Rāyapaseṇiya we have the mention of Darī-maha but no light is thrown on its nature. Kālidāsa has stated that the Kirātas or wild foresters went at night to the Darī-grihas and enjoyed there with their wives.¹ It is possible that the origin of the Darī-maha festival started with such tribes as the Kirātas and the Kinnaras in the Himalayas who made use of natural caverns to spend their time for family enjoyment. This became habitual with them at different times of the year. Such a custom might have been prevalent in the northern parts of the country and possibly the Darī-maha festival was included in the Maha lists on that basis. On the northern gateway of the Mahāstūpa at Sānchi there are pairs of men and women seated under Kalpavṛkṣa trees and enjoying free life. These maybe scenes of Darī-maha but related possibly with the Uttarakuru country. Definite evidence on the Darī-maha festival has yet to be traced. There are, however, some references to Darī-patha or passages leading to mountainous caverns which were difficult of access since such places were in deep interior of the hilly terrains.

¹. Vanecharāṇāṃ vanitāsakhānāṃ
darīgrihotṣaṅganishaktavāsāḥ /
Bhavanti yatrausadhayorajanyām
atailapūrāḥ suratapradipāḥ //

Kumārasambhava 1.10.
XI. STŪPAMĀHA AND CHAITYAMĀHA  
(FESTIVALS OF STŪPA AND CHAITYA) 
CHAPTER TWELVE

In the list of Nāyūdhammakhāhā there is mention of Chaitya-yāṭrā (Chēia-jattā) and in the list of Rāyapaseṇiyā there is reference to Chaitya-maha (Chēia-maha), and also to Stūpa-maha with it. It has been shown above that a tree or mound of earth worthy of worship was called Chaitya. The Mahābhārata refers to the Chaitya-vṛīksha. Festival of religious worship for such Chaityas became known as Chaitya-maha. The Stūpa was also a kind of Chaitya or funeral mound which was worshipped. In course of time Stūpa and Chaitya became synonyms. Originally Chaitya was a funeral monument (chātuyāṁ bhūvah chaityaḥ). On the spot of the funeral pyre the burnt bones were collected on the third day and the spot was sprinkled over with water and properly consecrated. There a young sapling was planted or a small mound of earth was raised. This practice is still followed. A tree or a mound marked the spot in a religious manner. On this basis the tree and the mound both became known as Chaitya. It is probable that this custom was borrowed from the culture of Nīshāda people who worshipped the trees and also megalithic stone burials. They deposited their burials in pits and marked it with big-sized stones. Such pits are known as Rākṣasā-sallā in South India (literally Rākṣasā = colossal, and sallā = stone!), signifying the same thing as megalith. These Austric customs led it to the origin of Chaityamāha and Stūpamāha. In course of time Chaitya worship became a conspicuous feature of folk religion. The Āśvalāyana Grihyasthātra prescribes Chaitya-yajña for householders which implied that the Bali was offered to the Chaitya (Chaitya-yajñī prāh svishṭakriñaschaityāya balīm hareḥ Āśvalāyana GS. 1.12). This does not make it clear whether the Chaitya was a tree or a Stūpa.
The extreme popularity of Chaitya worship is indicated by numerous references in the *Mahābhārata, Rāmāyana*, Buddhist and Jaina literature. There was a great Chaitya in Laṅkā, mentioned as *Chaitya-prāsāda* (*Chaitya-prāsādam merukṛśṇa-mivaṇṇatam*, Sundarakānda 43.3). When Hanūmān destroyed the forest grove of Rāvāna the idea came to him that he had not destroyed the Chaitya-prāsāda of Laṅkā. Special guards (*Chaitya-pāla*) were appointed for the protection of that shrine. There was a column near that Chaitya¹. Hanūmān burnt the Chaitya-prāsāda with fire. It appears that the Chaitya-prāsāda and its post were both made of wood. There was also a Torana or gateway outside the Chaitya. It is very probable that the original form of this Chaitya with its gateway and column was of the same type as the Stūpa with gateway and column at Sānci. The mention of a wooden post near the Chaitya-prāsāda is highly significant. At Lauriā Nandanagarh have been found a number of earthen mounds in the centre of which wooden posts have been preserved in some examples. We can throw light from this on the stone column erected by Aśoka in front of the gateway of the Sānci Stūpa. Following the same custom stone pillars have been found in front of the rock cut Chaitya-halls at Kūrle, Bhājā, Kanherī etc. Even in the rock-cut examples both the Chaitya and the pillar have been carved from the same rock. Such rock-cut examples were known as *Kirti* from the root *Kṛt* ‘to excavate’ or ‘scoop out’. This meaning of Kirti is borne out by the epigraphical evidence. In an inscription (dated 493 A. D.) of the Traikūṭakas found in the Kanherī cave the rock-cut cave is called *Kirti* (*tāvatākirtiḥ sthīreyam bhajatu śubhakari satsaśas ṣṭuvyanōmmah*)². The pillars raised in Kirti-excavations were called Kirti-stambha. The big window which became the starting point of cutting the rock and which as the work progressed served the purpose of light and air into the interior of the Chaitya hall became known as Kirti-mukha.

¹. Sundarakānda 43.17.
Such frontal pillars were substitutes of sacrificial stakes. As sacrificial Yūpas were established in the Yajña-bhūmi so the Chaitya columns in the Chaitya-bhūmi. It is also possible that the ancient cult of the Pillar influenced the erection of the Yūpas in the sacrificial ground. It has been stated that the Yajña has the same significance for the Devas as the Maha for the people (Yajño vai devānāṁ mahaḥ, ŚB. 1. 9. 1. 11). This statement indicates the higher antiquity for the Maha festival.

There is mention of the Nikumbhilā Chaitya in the Laṅkā-kāṇḍa (Rāmāyaṇa 6. 84. 13) The Rākshasas performed their fire offerings in that Chaitya. The Rākshasīs appointed there are stated to have said that they would drink wine and eat raw flesh in order to propitiate Nikumbhilā, the she-demon. It is very likely that the Nikumbhilā-Chaitya was the same as the Chaitya-prāśāda of Laṅkā destroyed by Hanūmān.

There are several references to Chaityas in the Mahābhārata. It is stated that in the kingdom of king Marutta the earth was full of Chaityas and produced the crops without being ploughed. Of the five hill-tops which surrounded Rāja-gṛīha, the ancient capital of Magadha, one was known as Chaityagiri, probably because there was a Chaitya on its top where Gautama had spent some time and a post marked the place. Krishṇa, Arjuna and Bhīma are said to have ruined the Chaitya of Magadha.4

The worship of the Chaitya and with it the building of a monastery or the residence of the monks was naturally deve-

2. Akṛishṭapachyā prīthivī vibabhau chaityamālinī Śānti parva 29.18.
3. Tathaiva rishigiristāta subhāschaityaka-pañchamāḥ.
loped as a festival. It was a natural phenomenon amongst the people to build a Kūpa (well), pool of water, tank, pavilion, a shrine of the mothers, religious establishment, temples etc., and then to complete it with some kind of religious ritual and feeding of the Brāhmaṇas (Brahma-bhoja). This included the circumambulation (pradakṣiṇā) of the Stūpa or Chaitya, the pillar, the pool of water and inviting friends, relatives and the people to a community dinner, songs and music that took the form of a festival. The Mahāvaṁsa, a Pali text, describes such a Vihāra-maha or festival of building a monastery. Duṭṭha-gāmanī, king of Laṅkā, built a Chaitya and near by it a Vihāra for which he celebrated a great festival in which alms were distributed for a week (Mahāvaṁsa, Ch. 26 called "Marichavaṭṭhi-Vihāramaha"). This text also contains an elaborate description of the building of a Chaitya named "Loha-prāsāda", and the celebration of its maha festival. When the work of construction began king Duṭṭha-gāmanī made a pile of eight lacs of gold Kārshīpaṇas in each direction of the Chaitya, and many containers of clothes and eatables, and announced that no one was to work without receiving his wages. He paid all workmen their dues. The Mahāprāsādachaitya was hundred cubits broad and of equal height. That Prāsāda is said to have contained nine storeys and each storey consisted of a hundred Kūṭāgāra cells and rooms which were made of silver. Their platforms and Toranaṇas were fitted with silver bells and they were also fitted with lotus medallions. The Mahāprāsāda consisted of one thousand rooms (gabhā), which were decorated with Sīha-paṇḍara ventilators. In the centre was erected a pavilion which resembled the Nārīvāhana-yāna or the pavilion of Kubera borne on the shoulders of women. It was beautified with figures of lions, tigers and divine attendants and pillars. It was surrounded by pearl festoons and coral railings. Under the canopy was a bed of ivory placed on a platform of crystal, on which was carved a Sun of gold, a Moon of silver and Stars of pearls, and medallions of various gems and golden creepers. The bed
spread over with a costly cover and an ivory fan was suspended from it. Near it was placed a foot-stool of crystal. On its top was a canopy with silver rods decorated with eight auspicious signs and decorative motifs of the four noble animals (Chatushpada-pandj). A spittoon of gold (achamana-kumbhi) was placed nearby. Other luxuries in that were beyond words. It was enclosed by a high wall and four gateways. The top floor of the Prasāda was fitted with copper so it became famous as Loha-prasāda. When the Loha-prasāda became ready the king invited the Saṅgha to celebrate a festival of Prasādamahajjiva similar to that of Vihāramahajjiva and his gift of food and valuable things continued for a week.

Thus the Prasādamahajjiva has been described in the Pali literature. The Prasādamahajjiva is not specifically mentioned in the lists of Mahas but all such festivals followed the pattern of Vihāramahajjiva, or Chaityamahajjiva.

King Duṭṭhagāmiṇī after building a monastery (Vihāra) and a Prasāda also ordered the construction of a magnificent Chaitya. This Stūpa of Anurādhapura has been held in high esteem in Śimhala. It is said that after his conquest of the Tamil country king Duṭṭhagāmani conceived the plan of building this Stūpa. Material of building was brought from distant places, and then a big festival was celebrated in which monks were invited from Rājagriha, Vaiśāli, Sārnāth, Kauśāmpī, Ujjaini, Pāṭaliputra, Kashmir, Vārāṇasī, Vindhyātavī and even from such a distant place as Alasandā or Alexandria. It is said that when the ground plan was being made for building the Stūpa the king’s heart was filled with great zeal but a Buddhist monk named Siddhārtha thought that if the ground plan was laid for such a big Stūpa it would not reach its completion in the life-time of the king, and therefore it would be proper to build a Chaitya of middle dimensions. The king accepted this advice and he ordered the building of the Mahāstūpa accordingly. When the Stūpa was ready the relics of the Buddha were deposited in its centre (Dhātugarba. The writer of the Pali Mahāvamsa has given a very graphic description of the building
of the Mahāstūpa. It was decorated with many kinds of decorative motifs and images. For example, divine figures holding their hands in adoration (Āñjali-paggahā Devā), dancing Devas (Nāchchakā Devā), divine figures playing on musical instruments (Turiyavāddakā Devā), divine figures holding bowls (Pāttāharā Devā), divine figures carrying sugarcane branches (Ukkhha-sākhādharā Devā), figures carrying sword (Khaggaḥāharā Devā), divine figures carrying Dharmachakras (Dharmachakkaḥāharā Devā), figures carrying auspicious jewels (Ratinādharā Devā), figures carrying lotus medallions (Paḍumādikagāhakā Devā). Divine figures carrying these various symbols were carved on the slab encasing. Similarly Pūrṇaghaṭā motifs full with flowers, the eight auspicious symbols (Ashṭamāṅgalikachihma), rows of four-footed animals of noble breed (Chatuṇpadānaṃ pani), rows of geese (Hamśa-pantsi), festoons of bells with pearl strings (Muttākinī-kalāja), rows of golden bells (Swarna-ganaṃ pani), bunches of pendants woven with pearls (Muttādāma-kalāpaka), varieties of lotus medallions (nāṇa paḍumakā), decorative motifs of the Sun, the Moon and the Stars. The Mahāstūpa was adorned with these different kinds of motifs. The relics of the Budhha were placed in a casket for being deposited in the Stūpa. The relics were enshrined on the 15th Bright day of Āshādha. On that occasion many gods and goddesses, Nāgas and Brāhmaṇas and Arhantas presented themselves on the spot of the Stūpa. The king went round the Stūpa three times and then deposited the relic-casket inside the Stūpa. And then food and clothings were distributed to the monks of the Buddhist community and the common people. All the people kept awake during the night and the scriptures were recited. The latter (Rātri-jāgarana) has been a practice since then throughout the country. Amongst the Hindus the Brāhmaṇas follow this practice of reciting the “Gopīla-sahasranāma” on the Dipavali night. The woman folk observe special religious festival by keeping awake at night and performing dance and music. Thus that king celebrated four festivals, namely Vihāramaha, Prāsādamaha,
Stūpārambhama and Dhūtunidhānamaha (Mahāvanśa, Chs. 29-32)\(^1\).

In the Jaina text Rāyapaseṇiya there is the description of the Āmrasālavana Chaitya built outside the Āmalakalpānagarī. In the Chaitya, Sūryābhadeva listened to the religious preaching of Bhagavān Mahāvīra after making the Pradakshinā. Thereafter he organised a dramatic performance with thirtytwo elements. In this context the description of the Vimāna of Sūryābhadeva and of Dwātrimśika-nātyavidhi is unique in Sanskrit and Prakrit literature. If we try to understand this whole description we are impressed with the idea that we are being treated to a detailed account of the Chaitya-maha. It is clear that the Chaitya of the Āmrasālavana was much older than the birth of Mahāvīra. Its building, religious cult and celebration of worship were in origin much older than his time. Only it became linked with the religion of Mahāvīra although it had come down from much more ancient time. The description of the Vimāna of Sūryābhadeva is a model to the magnificent Stūpas of Bharhut and Sānci, Amarāvatī and Mathurā. The terminology of the Vimāna of Sūryābhadeva is applicable to the Stūpas of the ancient period that have survived with their gateways, railing pillars, copings and cross-bars. If we eliminate the mythical element of the Vimāna we are face to face with realistic descriptions of the ancient Vimāna or Stūpa type of monuments.\(^2\) The thirtytwo items of dramatic performance just remind of very elaborate theatrical programmes that were associated with the Mahā festival. These formed an essential part of the social and religious life derived from much more ancient festive tradition showing the obsession of dance, drama, music and religious festivity on the mind, life and culture of the people.

\(^1\) Vihāramahasattāhe prāsādasya mahe tathā / Thūpārambhetu sattāhe tathā dhātunidhānake //

\(^2\) See my Indian Art (Varanasi, 1965), pp. 220 ff.
XIII. MUKUNDAMAHĀ (WORSHIP OF MUKUNDA)

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

In both the lists of the Nāyādhammakāhā and Rāya-paseniya the names of following minor religious festivals are found: Mukundamahā, Bhūtamahā, Ajjāmahā, Koṭṭakiriyāmahā, Kāmamahā Yakkhamahā, Vessamañamahā, Chandamahā and Brahmapīhā. The interpretation of Mukundamahā is based on the fact that Mukunda is synonymous with Vāsu deva. It was also an ancient cult. Like the worship of Śiva the worship of Vāsudeva also is noticed in the time of Pāṇini. The followers of the Vāsudeva cult were known as Vāsudevakā. The worship of Vāsudeva was very popular within a radius of 200 miles around Mathurā. In an inscription of the time of Mahākshatrapa Shodāśa (1 cen. B. C.) there is mention of Mahāsthāna and a Chatushāśa Torāṇa of Bhagavān Vāsudeva (Mathurā Museum, Vedikā No. 367). In the terminology of that period the shrine of a deity was known as Sthāna. For example, the Sthāna of Devī and of Yaksha are well known terms even to-day. Under the influence of the Bhāgavata religion the shrine of god Vāsudeva became known as Sthāna. Whereas the shrines to other deities were known as mere Sthāna, the shrine of Bhagavān Vāsudeva became known as Mahāsthāna. The nature of this Mahāsthāna or great shrine of Vāsudeva is indicated by the fact that it was enclosed by a railing which was most probably pierced by four gateways (chatushāśa-tonḍan). But in its centre there used to be only an open air platform as in the case of other shrines. We know of a Nārāyaṇarāja for the worship of Saṅkarshaṇa and Vāsudeva built at Nagarī near Chittor. It was a huge enclosure with a high railing of stones having a small platform within it. It is now known as ‘Hāthibādā’ for Akbar in his siege of Chittor ordered it to be used for keeping his elephants. It is 300 ft. in length and 150 ft. in breadth, and its stone railing is built of huge blocks of stones, and wall
together with its coping is 9 ft. 6 inches high. There was an inscription engraved at three places on this railing which contains the following five facts.

1. A king named Sarvatāta who was the follower of a Vedic religion had accepted the new Bhāgavata religion.

2. The Bhāgavata religion implied the worship of Bhagavān Saṅkarshaṇa and Vāsudeva, both of whom are mentioned in the inscription. The pair names of Saṅkarshaṇa and Vāsudeva had become famous in the Śunga period as known from the Mahābhāṣya of Patañjali and the inscriptions found at Mathurā and Bāsnagar. In the Mahānīdesa commentary of the Suttanipāta the followers of the cult of Baladeva-Vāsudeva are mentioned together. The two streams of the cults of Baladeva and Vāsudeva had come into union with each other under the influence of the Bhāgavatas.

3. The third point in the epigraph refers to the construction of a Pājā-ṭila or a stone of worship and a Prākāra or stone enclosure. This was the form of Nārāyanaṭaka as shown by the excavation. Inside the enclosure was a small platform on which was probably placed the stone-tablet which originally preceded the installation of divine images. The tablet was used for offering worship to the deity with flowers, water, lamp, garland, etc. This was the form of the ancient-most shrines. In the centre was a Manaṭa, Sthaṇṭila or Maṇḍala where the Śilā-ṭaṭa was placed, and this was demarcated from the area around it by an enclosure called Vedikā. The architecture of the Buddhist Stūpas followed a similar pattern in which the central mound of earth or Stūpa was surrounded by an enclosure. The Stūpa Vedikā resembles the Prākāra in the case of Nagarī monument. Aśoka after visiting the birth-place of Buddha at Lumbini erected a pillar engraved with the inscription saying:

"Hida Budhe jāte Sakyamuni ti, silībīgadābhichā kīlāpita silāthabhe cha usapāpita", i.e. the Buddha was born on this spot and so he erected a stone wall and also a pillar.
In these words, śilā seems to indicate a pūjā-śilā or tablet-of-homage. The stone slab was enclosed by a huge wall which was perhaps made of earth, since no stone railing was discovered. The word vigaḍa also denoted earth (Stede, Pali Dictionary, Vinaya Pitaka 1.206), and Pali Vaśćika was an adjective signifying earthen (Ibid., p. 105; Dighanikāya 1.167). Near the enclosure a stone pillar was also installed. This was the same practice as mentioned above specially in the case of Chantya mound with a wooden post found, at Lauriā Nanda Nagar. Aśoka changed the material of the column and has therefore mentioned it as śilā-thambha, or stone column. In the Nārāyaṇavāṭaka at Nagari the Pūjāśilā and enclosure wall have been preserved but the column seems to have banished. This Pūjāśilā maybe identified with the Āyagapattā of Mathurā Jaina inscriptions. The word Āyagapattā was translated as Arghapattā, i.e., the stone slab for worship, and is usually rendered as tablet-of-homage (by Bühler). Several of such tablets have been found at Kaṅkālītiḷā which are carved with religious and auspicious symbols. One of them in the Mathurā Museum was established for the worship of the Aṭhanta by Sinhanācika (Simhanādicāsa Āyagapato pratikārito arhanapāyaye). In the Lucknow Museum a Toraṇa-typanum is deposited in which some male and female figures are worshipping the Stūpa and the Āyagapaṭṭa, placed on a platform. On the three tablets shown here flowers are scattered which were offered for worship (Lucknow Museum, No. J, 550, Smith, Jain Stūpa Pl. 20). The practice of worshipping the deity by offering flowers on a square tablet of stone seems to have been much more ancient and borrowed from the cult of the Yakshas.

4. Thus the Nārāyaṇavāṭaka of Nagari is a unique monument, a class by itself. This Mahāsthāna of Vishnu maybe identified as the oldest Vishnu shrine. This shrine was conceived as a platform, probably of unbaked bricks or of clay in the beginning, and that was open to the sky. The stone slab appears to have been an after thought. Thus we may think of three elements in the making of an early shrine, viz., (i) a
platform with a slab, (ii) an enclosure wall, of earth, wood or stone, and (iii) a post of wood or stone. This seems to have been the most natural form, from the point of view of the earliest beginning of folk tradition. Although at Nagarî no post or column has been found but in the Vaishānava shrine at Bhilsā a stone pillar was discovered dedicated by the Greek Heliodoros who became a Bhāgavata and then erected the pillar in honour of Vishṇu in the shrine raised for him. The erection of a pillar was regarded as an essential element of the shrine. Many such pillars have also been found. Garuḍa was the vehicle of Vishṇu and his flag-staff became known as Garuḍa-stambha. A similar pillar sacred to Kumāra or Kārttikeya has been found as an independent column in a village named Lālā-Bhagat in the Kānpur district which is engraved with the word 'Kumāravarasa'. In Mathurā a Tāla-dhvaṣa meaning a flag-staff of the palm tree has been found which seems to have been associated with the worship of Balarāma. At the places sacred to God Kāmadeva Makaravasṭī pillars were installed. An example of that was found at Besnagar. In the background of Buddhism and Jainism such pillars were topped by wheels (Dharmachakra) and became known as Chakradhvaṣa.

As in the Morā well-inscription of Shoḍāsa of Mathurā the shrine of Vishṇu is styled as Mahāsthāna, similarly in the inscription on the Besnagar pillar the shrine of Vishṇu is called Prāsādottama, i.e., the most excellent shrine amongst the shrines of gods.

5. The position of Vishṇu as supreme over other deities is also indicated by the word Sarvaśvāra of the Nagarî inscription. The king Sarvatāta who styled himself as a Bhāgavata must have known many other gods and goddesses of his time and here seems to have been some good reason for selecting the epithet Sarvaśvāra for god Vāsudeva. He regarded Saṅkarshaṇa and Vāsudeva as most esteemed amongst them all. The Bhāgavata movement predominating the few centuries before the Christian era emerged as supreme above all and this is
reflected in the title Sarvaśvara applied to Vishnu. A mirror to this religious movement is provided by the Tenth Book of the Gītā where a list of many gods and goddesses is given, and it is stated that Vāsudeva is himself Ṣaṅkara amongst Rudras, Kubera amongst Yakshas and Rākshasas, Meru amongst mountains, Skanda amongst the leaders of armies, the Ocean amongst the collections of water, the Himālaya amongst the immovables, the Aśvattha amongst the trees, Chitraratha amongst the Gandharvas, Uchchhaiśravā amongst the horses, Airāvata amongst the elephants, Kāmadhenu amongst the cows, Vāsuki amongst the serpents, Ananta amongst the Nāgas, Pāvaka (Fire) amongst the Vasus, Prahlāda amongst the Daityas, Garuḍa amongst the birds, the Ganges amongst the rivers and Vāsudeva amongst the Vṛiṣṇis'. He says: "All these are manifestations of my divine form. I am the seed of all creatures. There is no living form existing without me. There is no counting of my divine forms. This is only a sampling given here. Any object or creature manifesting some extraordinary feature, beauty or power is an exemplar of my divine radiance. The whole creation is thus one part of my divine being". (Gītā, ch. X).

This indeed is the idea behind Sarvaśvara of the Nagari inscription. This was a marvel of the Bhāgavata religion that all the godlings like the Yakshas, Nāgas, Bhūtas, Rivers, Ponds, Suparnas, Birds and Animals were drawn in the whirlpool of this great religion. They were known as if like sparks scattered from a single fire, and brought into the orbit of a unifying religious influence.¹

This complex of names of gods and goddesses is not only an idea of the author of the Gītā but has a real existence of the numerous folk cults that had a hold on the minds of the people. We get an example of this in the Mahānīdēsa commentary of Pali Suttanipāta where like the Gītā twentytwo godlings are enumerated as follows:

¹. Visñabhāyāhamidam kṛitṣnamekāṁśena sthito jagat, Gītā 10.42.

"Those who are followers of the Aśva cult,...etc." These names maybe classified as follows:—

1. Powers of Nature— Chandramā (Moon), Sūrya (Sun), Agni (Fire), Disā (Quarters)

2. Cults relating to Animals— Hasti (Elephant), Aśva (Horse), Go (Bull), Kukkura (Dog), Kīka (Crow)

3. Bhūta-Preta etc. (Ghosts and Spirits)— Nāga (Serpents), Suparna (Birds), Yaksha (Spirits), Asura (Demons), Gandhabba, Puṇṇabhadra (name of a Yaksha), Manibhadra, Mahārāja (Yakshas)

4. Bhāgavata cult— Vāsudeva and Baladeva

5. Vedic deities— Indra, Brahmā, Deva.

A similar list is given in the following Gana followers of— Milindāpanaṇa including the
Piśācha, Maṇiḥbhadra, Chandra, Sūrya, Kālī, Śiva, Vāsudeva, Pūrṇabhadra, a cloud maiden (Ghanīka).¹ The Simhali commentary explains these gaṇas as the followers or worshippers of those deities. Nāgasena adds that they preserved the secret of their cult in their own circle and did not impart it to others.² The followers of Maṇiḥbhadra, Pūrṇabhadra, Śiva and Kālī concealed the secret practices of their cults from others. They did not reveal their practices to others as the performers like Naṭa, Nartaka, Laṅghaka did not communicate the secret of their trade to others excepting initiates of their own community. An interesting field of study relating to ancient Indian life is to investigate the details of these obscure cults. A couple of instances help us in throwing light in this matter. For example in the “Kukkuravatika Sutta” (No. 51) of the Mājjhima-nikāya it is said that Puṇyakoliyaputta was the follower of Govrata (Govatika) and Seniya Achela was the dog-vowed (Kukkuravatika). Commenting on these words Buddhaghosha says that follower of the Bull cult tied horns on his head, a tail behind, and imitating the life of a bull or a cow lived amongst the herds eating grass or similar food. Similarly a follower of the dog-vow imitated the life of a dog, and behaved likewise³. Such persons under the guise of a religious cult were of loose moral as shown by a reference in the Mātsya Purāṇa that the adherents of the Bull cult (Saurabhyeṣadharma) did not consider


2. tesāṁ tesāṁ rahassāṁ tesu tesu gaṇosu yeva charanti avasesāṁmanāṁ pihitam / Ibiṃ.

it sinful to transgress the rules about connubium (gamyāgamya), food (bhakshyābhakshya) and drinks (peyāpeya).

The Disāvatikā or followers of the cult of four quarters of the Suttanīpāta appear to be the same as Disāpokkhīyā of the Bhagavati Sūtra (11.9). A recluse living in Hastināpura on the banks of the Gaṅgā took the vow of a Disāpokkhīya. He ate once in three days (Chhaṭṭham vrata). On the day of breaking his fast he first sprinkled water in the eastern direction and worshipped the Sun god and then he collected roots, fruits, flowers, leaves, vegetables etc., and coming back swept his thatched hut and bathed in the Gaṅgā; then he prepared an altar with sand and produced fire by a drill and made offerings in the fire with honey, ghee, and after worshipping the Viśvedevas with boiled rice took food. Thereafter he kept a similar Chhaṭṭham vow and worshipped Yama in the southern direction, then Varuṇa in the west and finally Vaiśravana in the north.

A Bhikṣhu named Sromila in Vāraṇaśī was likewise the follower of the Disā cult (Disāpokkhī) (Niryāvalī Sūtra 3; Jagdish Chandra Jain, Life in the Jain Canons, p. 204).

The Disāvrata was a cult of the highest antiquity being developed in the time of the Rgveda in which there is ample evidence mentioning the four quarters, their guardian deities, etc.

The society was under the influence of many obscure cults similar to these. They had been handed down for many generations when Buddha condemned them as lower cults (Tirachchhā vijjā) and false practices (Michhā jīva) and advised the people to be careful in such matters and follow the right Dharma. On the other hand the Bhāgavatas took a

1. Vṛishabha uvācha—
Nāṃkaraḥ vidyate tāta pātakaṁ steyameva cha /
bhakshyābhakshyaṁ tathā chaiva peyāpeyāṁ tathaiva cha//
Dvipadāṁ bahavo hyete dharma esha gavāṁ smṛitaḥ/
kāryākārya na vāgamyāgamanaṁ cha tathaiva cha //

Matsya Purāṇa 48.49-50.
different attitude and instead of criticising any of these cults preached that they were all different aspects of the one great religion of Bhagavān Vāsudeva. According to Bhāgavata point of view it was not necessary to hurl criticism against any of these faiths but it was only required to connect them with the higher religion of Vāsudeva. Amongst all animate and inanimate creatures there permeates one divine principle named Mahā-Vishṇu or Vāsudeva or Nārāyaṇa. All the gods and goddesses are his divine manifestations or Viṣṇुśīla. The Bhāgavatas as it were made a bon-fire of many lower cults of this type and consigned them to the conflagration or tower of fire that was Mahā-Vishṇu.

It is easy to understand the popularity of such cults as Bhūtamaḥa, Chandamaḥa, Śūryamaḥa etc., but the cult that was held in the highest esteem was Yakṣamaḥa and will be discussed later.
CHAPTER FOURTEEN

The followers of Śrī Devatā are mentioned in the list of the Milinda-panaḥ. Śrī Devi was at one time a very popular deity. Just as a number of godlings were assimilated to the cult of Vāsudeva similarly many goddesses of a minor status became absorbed in the cult of Śrī-Lakṣmi, and she herself was assigned an honourable rank as the consort of Viṣṇu. Thus the two cults of Viṣṇu and Lakṣmi became philosopher’s in stone hands of the Bhāgavatas, leading to the fusion of many smaller cults which came to be appreciated in status, and quite a number of these base metals were converted into pure gold. Śrī and Lakṣmi are mentioned in the Yajurveda "Purusha Śūktam", and this reference seems to have come from a folk belief in these deities. It is stated in the Atharvaveda that a person since his birth is surrounded by a hundred kinds of Lakṣmi Goddesses. Some of them are auspicious and others are evil. Originally she was one Lakṣmi but came to be conceived of in hundred differentiated forms as in the case of other gods and goddesses. Śrī and Lakṣmi were dual deity but drawn to each other into a single form of Śrī-Lakṣmi. In the Virāṭaparva, Śrī is associated with Viṣṇu, Lakṣmi with Dāmodara, Śaci with Indra, Rudrā with Śaṅkara, Sāvitri with Brahmā, and Shashthi with Graha. (Virāṭaparva, Poona ed., p. 77, Śloka 347). But this seems to be a conception crystallized only later. Śrī and Lakṣmi formed part of a single evolving cult as we find it in the Śāntiparva where both Bhūti and Lakṣmi are identified.

1. Ekaśataṁ Lakṣmyo mārtiṣyas āśakaṁ tanvā janushodhi- jātāḥ / Tāsāṁ pāpishṭā niritaḥ pra hiṃmaḥ śivā asmabhyam jātavedo ni yachchha // AV. 7.115.3.
2. Bhūtir lakṣmīti māmāhuḥ Śrīrtyevam cha vāsava / 2188. aham Lakṣmiraham Bhūtir Śrīchāhām balasūdana / 221.21.
Padmā-Śrī standing on lotus is often mentioned in the Rāmāyana and Māhābhārata. In the Śāntiparva it is said that goddess Padmā-Śrī wears ornaments of stars and garland of starry designs (tārā-bhakti), and in this form she appeared in a lotus lake (Śāntiparva 218.14). This reference reminds of the Iranian goddess Anāhitā who was believed to be beautified with ornaments of stars. In several places the goddess Padmā-Śrī is said to have appeared in a visible form.

When Bharata expressed his desire to go to the forest in order to bring back his elder brother Rāma the people became full with exaltations and said, “O Bharata, may Goddess Padmā-Śrī shed her divine influence on you!”. The goddess Padmā-Śrī is described as standing in a lotus pond on clusters of lotuses; wearing lotus garland (Padma-mālinī) and holding lotus buds and flowers in her hands. On the two sides of the goddess stand elephants holding lotuses in their trunks. The goddess was shown with her two hands in Abhayā-mudrā. The goddess in this form became known as Gaja-Lakshmi.

It appears that there was another goddess named Māyā of a much older tradition than Śrī. The Upanishads speak of Māyā as identical with Prakṛti (Māyām tu prakṛtinī vidyāt māyinām tu mahēśvaram / Śvetāśvatara 4.10). The Śatapatha Br. (11.4.3.11) regards Māyā to be the same as Asura-vidyā. Most probably the power of the Asuras believed to be Māyā, became famous as a goddess of the same name. A passage in the

1. Abhajat Padmarūpā Śrīḥ svayameva śaririni / Vanaparva 218.3.
2. EVAṁ te bhāṣhamāṇasya Padmā Śrīrpatishthatām / yastvaṁ yyeshthe nṛpasute prithivi dātumichchhasi // Ayodhyā, 79. 15.
Śāntiparva definitely states Māyā to be an Asura goddess and the beauty of Śrī is compared to that of Māyā.¹

Goddess Śrī is addressed as follows:

"O Lady of the beautiful brows, please tell me of your true nature. You are looking so resplendent like Goddess Māyā."

Āśvaghoṣha also refers to the goddess Māyā furnishing a standard of comparison for her beauty.²

"The queen of king Śuddhodhana was Māyā, who was free of anger, deceit and darkness like the goddess Māyā of heaven." Thus Māyā was one believed to be the goddess of heaven. Hanūmān on his first sight of Sītā thought her to be a goddess of the Nandana Grove.³ Although the particular goddess of Nandana Forest is not named here but in all probability she seems to have been Māyā. It appears that the goddess Māyā became known by the general title of Devatā. King Bṛhadratha asked Jarā as to who she was and said that she appeared to him like a ‘Devatā’. How Māyā-devatā of the Asuras became a goddess of Nandana Forest is a question with its root going deep into the ancient religious history of India. When the Asura and Aryan cultures came into long contact with each other and entered into exchange of their institutions, this Asura goddess became worshipful for the Aryans also. There was no diminution in her status and sacred character but she became identified with Śrī goddess. One of the appellations of Lakṣmī is ‘Mā’ which points to the original name Māyā. The Prakrit name Mā denoted Lakṣmī, with variants as Māyi and Māyī (Paśasadama-

2. Tasya devī nṛdevasya māyā nāma tadāḥ bhavat / Vitakrodhatamo māyā māyeva divi devatā // Saundarananda 2.49.
3. Avekshamāṇastāṁ devīṁ devatāṁiva nandane / Sundarakāṇḍa 30.2.
hannavo, p. 847). There is a figure at Bharhut labelled as ‘Srimati Devata’. This appears to be a representation of Śrī-Mā, or Māyā and Devatā all of which stood for the same goddess.

Goddesses Māyā and Śrī exercised a far-reaching influence on Indian art. The goddess Gaja-Lakṣmī is believed by the followers of the Buddhism, Jainism and Hinduism or Brāhma-nism, and therefore she was represented in the art traditions of these three religions. On the facade of the caves at Udayagiri and Kanheragiri this goddess is depicted. On the Stūpas of Bharhut and Sānci this goddess is shown several times. In the art of Mathurā during the Śunāga and Kusānā periods several statuettes of goddess Śrī-Lakṣmī or Gajalakṣmī have been found. In the art of Gupta period, in the caves at Ajaṇṭā and Ellorā and in many subsequent temples and also in the paintings this goddess is represented. Amongst the people this goddess is worshiped and the festival of Dīpāvali is associated with the worship of Goddess Lakṣmī. On that occasion clay-figurines of Lakṣmī are manufactured by the potters in large numbers and they are worshipped in each house. It is indeed difficult to point to any other goddess commanding such wide popularity from the earliest times for over three thousand years and her worship has found favour with all classes of people.

Three kinds of statuettes have been found in Śunāga and Kusānā art, viz., (i) beautiful female figure whose hair is adorned with lotus flowers and body with elaborate ornaments. Her coiffure is adorned with such signs as aṅkuśa, parśu, dhvaja, darpaṇa, nāga-mudrā, sṛi-vāsa etc. Such clay-figurines have been found at Mathurā, Ahichchhatrī, Tāmūk and Chandraketugarh. The goddess does not hold lotus in her hands. A very beautiful figurine of this type was found at Kauśambī which is now deposited in the Indian Institute Museum at Oxford. The elements of mother-goddess are explicit in this form. The auspicious signs are indicative of her mystical
and religious character. Originally she was of the nature of Āsuri Māyā. The various auspicious symbols point to her original nature as a goddess of mysterious power, and some important form of the mother-goddess. Outside India the auspicious symbols were associated with the mother-goddess, and an important feature was her association with a necklace of mystical symbols which were believed of religious significance. For example the goddess Atargatī wore an amulet-string of smaller cylinders or amulets. The Greek goddess Cybele, who was held in the highest esteem amongst all the Grecian goddesses and whose worship in Phrygia had been popular for a thousand years before the rise of Greek civilisation, also wore a necklace of amulets. These auspicious signs were woven not in the close fitting torque but in necklaces which appear hanging on the breast. In Mathurā and Ahichchatrā we have two-fold examples, in one type the auspicious signs are woven in the lower loop of the necklace and in the other the auspicious signs are shown in the side string of the necklace. (See my "Ahichchatrā Terracottas", Ancient India, No. 4, Pl. Nos. 16, 11, 12, 14, 23, 25). In some figurines of Ahichchatrā the hair is adorned with a row of Nāgamudrā sings, or a pair of confronting serpents. This points to original mystic character of a mother-goddess in a culture where serpent worship was an important element. For example, in the case of the Cretan mother-goddess and of Kaḍrā and Suraśā in India. This evidence leads to the point that this goddess with auspicious signs should be viewed on the broad canvas of mother-goddesses prevailing in India and in Asian countries. We get some light from an unexpected source about her Indian name. Professor E. H. Johnston1 in his study of the Kauśāmbī clay-figurine deposited in the Indian Institute Museum at Oxford has pointed out that the Egyptian goddess Isis was praised as one of the numerous goddesses of the 3rd century A. D. whose list is recorded in a papyrus manu-

script found at Oxyrhynchus. In this list are found such names as Atargatis, Astarat, Iranian goddess Namia and others, including the name of the Indian goddess Maia. This Maia seems to have been the same as Mayā whose name as an Asura goddess is known in Indian literature even prior to that of Śrī as pointed out above. This provides some evidence in favour of identifying as Mayā the ancientmost clay-figurines with auspicious signs found at Mathurā, Ahichchhatra, Kañcāmbi and other sites.

Such necklaces interwoven with auspicious signs were named as Ashṭamaṅgala-Mālā. This word has been used by Bāṇa in the Harsha-charita where the land of Bhāratavarsha is said to be adorned with an Ashṭamaṅgala-Mālā of 18 Dviyas (Islands). We find on the Torana gateway at Sāńchi two such amulet-strings of auspicious symbols which belong to the same age (circa 1st century B.C.) as the above clay-figurines of mother-goddesses (Fergusson, Tree and Serpent Worship, Plate 3, p. 4). The Sāńchi necklaces include the following signs: Aṅkuṣa (goad), Darpaṇa (mirror), Kārtari (hatchet), Śrīvatsa, Vaijayaṇi (triangle-headed standard), Nandi-pada, Mina-mithuna (pair of fishes), Kuṭñāra (battle-axe). Some of these are the same as found in the hair-dress and necklaces of clay-figurines. The sign of Śrīvatsa is particularly noteworthy. This sign became symbolical of Śrī-Lakṣmī as indicated by its very name. In Indian art there are some figurines of Rāja-Lakṣmī in which she is depicted in the form of Śrīvatsa. At the time of Dipaṇalī, the figure painted on the wall resembles the Śrīvatsa sign and is known as Saṅgri in western Uttar Pradesh. Along with her worship is offered to Gaja-Lakṣmī also in the form of figures made of clay and even of sugar.

Side by side with Mayā we have two more kinds of Śrī-Lakṣmī figures: (1) A female figure standing in the midst of

2. "Goddess Lakṣmī and her symbols," JUPHS, Vol. XIV, pt. 1, Fig. 1 from Kāveripakkam, now in Madras Museum.
lotuses and holding lotuses in her hands (with no elephants), and (2) similar figure with elephants sprinkling water over Lakshmi. The first may be said to represent the figurine of Padma-Sri and the second of Gaja-Lakshmi. In the Vāyu Purāṇa there is a list of 56 names of goddesses including Lakshmi, Shashṭhi, Bhadrā, Revati, Ekānaṁśā, Mahishamardini, Kātyāyanī, Umā Haimavati, Gaurī, etc. Finally it is said here that there are only two forms of the goddess, viz., Prajñā and Śrī, same as Sarasvatī and Śrī. From these have originated thousands of goddesses known amongst the people (Vāyu Purāṇa 9.98). The names Śrī and Prajñā of this verse remind of Śrī and Sarasvatī mentioned by Kālidāsa as two different goddesses. The goddesses included in the list of the Vāyu Purāṇa are those who were worshipped in the Śuṅga, Kushāṇa and Gupta periods. All of them have been said to be different aspects of one principal Goddess sprung from the mouth of the self-existent Creator (Svayambhū).

The Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa mentions a special aspect of Śrī-Lakshmi cult known as Padmini-vidyā. Lakshmi was the presiding deity of that Vidyā. Under her auspices were included eight treasures or Nidhis known as Padma, Mahāpadma, Makara, Kachchhapa, Mukunda, Nandaka, Nila and Śaṅkha.

1. Padma-nidhi. It was possessed by those who dealt in ornaments made by gold and silver. It remains with them for generation together.

2. Mahāpadma-nidhi. It consists of wealth earned by trading in pearls, corals and rubies, and lasts for seven generations.

3. Makara-nidhi. It consists of profits earned by trading in different arms and weapons and other dealings with kings and rulers. This wealth is earned mostly by the effort of a single individual, and does not continue in heredity.

1. Mahādevikule dve tu Prajñā Śrīscha prakīrtaye / Vāyu Purāṇa Ch. IX. 85, 97, 98.

4. Kachchhapa-nidhi. It is the wealth accumulated by trading in different commodities. Such a person neither enjoys himself nor parts with his wealth to others nor has confidence in anyone else. He buries his treasure under the earth and feels satisfied with it. This also lasts for one generation.

5. Mukunda-nidhi. It is that kind of wealth which a person obtains as his inheritance from ancestors and which he enjoys with his friends. That also lasts for one generation.

6. Nandaka-nidhi. It is that kind of wealth which is possessed by aristocratic persons of the status of Tallukedār, Jāgirdār, Thikānedār or Sāmanta feudatories. By that he becomes the owner of gold, silver, pearls etc. and by it he feels an egoistic pride. All people praise him and he cannot bear even the slightest insult. Such a treasure lasts for seven generations. Such a person supports his family and relatives.

7. Nīla-nidhi. This is the wealth earned by a person trading in grains, timber, different commodities and also articles produced in water like pearls and corals. He spends this wealth in the building of wells, stepped ponds, tanks, gardens, etc. This lasts for three generations.

8. Śānika-nidhi. The owner of this wealth enjoys it alone. He is the tied-fisted person and does not share his wealth to others. He does not like to spend even on his food and his clothes and behaves in a miserly way even towards his wife, sons and brothers.

Thus the above Eight Nidhis are the presiding deities of a person’s wealth. A person who owns any one of these treasures has also that particular temperament. The presiding deity of these is Padminī-Srī or Padmā-Srī. This conception of the Eight Nidhis was fully evolved in the Gupta period.

1. Ityete nidhayah khyātā naraṇāmarthadevatāḥ / Mārkandeya. 68.45.
2. Yathāsthitāsvabhāvāstuch bhavatyeva vilokanāt / sarveshāmādhipatye cha Śrīreshā dvijapadmin/ Mārkandeya. 68.46.
Subsequently another Nidhi named *Kharva* was added to the list making a total of Nine Nidhis which became famous in literature and amongst the people.

A study of the names and forms of goddesses impresses with their division in two classes: (1) Terrible and (2) Auspicious. In the *Atharvaveda* there is a reference to a hundred kinds of *Lakshmis* associated with a person since birth. Some are evil (*Pāpīkha*) and others good (*Śiva*, AV, 7. 115. 3). This belief continued amongst the people. Continuing the same conception the writer of the *Vāyu Purāṇa* has said that the woman produced from the mouth of Śiva had half of her body as white and the left half as dark.¹ This belief is also referred to in the *Sīrī-Kālakṛṣṇī Jātāna*. Kālakṛṣṇī was the daughter of *Mahārājā Viśūpākṣa*, one of the four *Mahārajika* gods, and *Sīrī* or *Śrī* of *Dhritarāśhtra* Mahārājā. Both went to the Anavatapta Lake for having their bath. Who should take her bath first; this became a point of controversy amongst them. Kālakṛṣṇī said, "I protect the people and have regard for them. Therefore I shall take bath first". Sīrī said, "I preside over such actions of men as bring to them wealth and possession, and therefore I shall have the first turn". They agreed to refer the matter for judgement to the Four Mahārajika gods. They went to the world of the Four Mahārajika gods and asked their question as to who was entitled to take her bath first in the Anavatapta Lake.

Dhritarāśhtra and Virūpākṣa did not decide the matter themselves but directed them to *Virūdhaka* and *Vaiśravāṇa*. They also expressed their inability and asked them to go to Śakra. Śakra listened to both of them and thought that both of them were the daughters of his chief agents and therefore he could not decide the matter. Śakra then replied, "In the city of *Vārānasī* there is a Śrēshṭhin named Pure-family

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¹ Kāyārdham *dakṣhipām tasyāḥ śuklam vānam tathā*...sā tu proktā dvīdhā bhūtā śnkalā krīḍhā oha va: dvijāḥ // *Vāyu Purāṇa* 9.83.84.
In his house there is a seat and a bedstead that has not been used by any one. Such of you as may use it first deserves to have her bath with priority". Hearing this Kalakarni put on blue robes, blue unguents and ornaments of blue gems and went at night time to the reception hall of the Sreshthin and stood there in the sky. The Sreshthin saw her and did not like her. He asked as to who she was and who was her father. Kalakarni replied that she was the daughter of Virupaksha Maharrja named Chandi and kali (Terrible and Black daughter) and full of inauspicious marks (alakshana), and that her proper name was Kalakarni, and added that she wanted his permission to stay in his house. The Sreshthin asked her about the nature and character of the person with whom she used to stay. Kalakarni replied, "I like a person who is ungrateful, not amenable to reason, jealous, miserly, wicked, and who spends his wealth in evil ways. I very much like the person who is full of anger, backbiting habit, who creates disunity, who speaks thorny words. I consider him as worthy of my love who does not discriminate between work that should be done to-day and that should be done tomorrow, he who reacts in anger to wholesome advice, he who interferes with persons of good character, he who is badly addicted towards beautiful women and whom all his friends have forsaken". Hearing this the Sreshthin said, "Then you begone from my house since I do not have any of these traits of character. You go to any other country, town or capital". On this Kalakarni became displeased and said that she already knew that the Sreshthin had none of those aspects of character. But there were many other persons of evil ways to whom she and her brother would go and live with them and bring their ruination, and that she did not care for his riches. Saying so she left the place.

After that the goddess Sita wearing white dress, golden ornaments and with scented unguents came to the rich man's house and stood at his door with her radiant form. Seeing her the Bodhisattva who was the Sreshthin himself
enquired as to who she was and who was her father. She replied, "I am the daughter of Mahārāja Dhṛitarāṣṭra. My name is Śri and Lakhkhī (i.e., Śri-Lakshmi). People say that I possess much intelligence (prajñā). I pray that you permit me to stay with you". The Śreshṭhīn asked as to the nature and character of the person with whom she would like to stay. "The person who spares extremes of weather like heat and cold, or pangs of hunger and keeps busy with his work and does not give up his objective even when faced by death is the person whom I like. I welcome with a great heart like the wave of the sea such a person who is straightforward, who loves his friends, speaks sweet words, whose speech is trustworthy, he who is humble although placed high in life, he who in his dealings with high, low and equal persons does not give up his aim but is always devoted to his object. Such a person I follow unto death. But he who is indifferent to any one of the matters is abandoned by me. A person creates his own fortune or misfortune. No one else can create it for him." The Śreshṭhīn listening to her speech, welcomed her and said, "This seat and this couch not used by others is for you." Goddess Śri repaired to the region of the Chāturmahārājika gods next morning and took her bath in the Anavatapta lake. That couch being used by her became known as 'Śri-sayyā'. The moral of the story is quite clear. Amongst popular cults the tradition of Kālakarnī and Śri continued throughout. There is a reference in the Prithvirāja Rāso that on the day of the birth of Prithvirāja, Kālakarnī burst into laughter on the cities of Kannauj, Gazni, and Pāṭana that she would bring their ruin.

Here it seems necessary to consider another goddess from south India named Koṭṭavi. She was a popular mother-goddess

worshipped amongst the people in south India. She was originally an ogreess (*Rakshasi*). Later on she began to be worshipped as Durga or Uma (see my article, "Abichchhatra Terracottas", *Ancient India*, No. 4, p. 152, figs. 202-203). Attention maybe drawn to *Kottakiriya*ahama mentioned in Jaina literature which was a religious festival of the goddess Kottakiriyā (J. C. Jain, *Life in the Jain Canons*, pp. 224-25). Durga riding on the buffalo demon got the name Kottakiriyā (*Nyāyadhamma commentary*). It is indicated from this that the goddess Mahishāsuramardini and Kottakiriyā belong to the same family whose worship was popular amongst the aboriginal tribes, and at some stage they became fused together. According to the *Bhāgavata* the name of the mother of Bāṇāsura was Kottarā (tannūlā Kottarā nāma nagnā muktasīrorukhā, 10. 63. 20.). Her form was nude and of dishevelled hair. It is probable that the south Indian nude goddess Kottavī was the original form of Kottarā. Bāṇa also mentions Kottavī in the *Harshacharita* whose appearing was an ill omen. Bāṇa's commentator Śaṅkara explains Kottavī as a nude woman which agrees with Kottarā of the *Bhāgavata*. Keśava in his lexicon explains Kottavī as an aspect of Ambikā (*Kalpadrukośa*, 1660 A. D., p. 298, Śloka 127). Hemachandra also explains Kottavī as a nude woman with dishevelled hair¹.

Goddess Kottavī as a Rākshasī seems to have her origin amongst the aboriginal tribes, and subsequently as one of the blood-thirsty deities her worship spread far and wide from the south to the north. In my search for tree and Yaksha worship, I found a small shrine of Kottamā, i.e., the mother-goddess Kottavī in the campus of the Banaras Hindu University itself. I also learnt that in the district of Almora there is a place named Kotalagarh, 12 miles from the city of Lohādhār having a local tradition that it was the place of the goddess Kottavī. Kottavī was the mother of Bāṇāsura. The upper half of her body was

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protected by a coat of mail and the lower half nude. The legend is that once Bānasura, son of Mahābali, entered into a battle with Vishnu when the gods combined to reproduce goddess Kāli to enter into the fray on their behalf. She slew the Asuras and also their protectress Koṭṭavī. Koṭalagarh literally signifies the citadel of the unde woman (Amrit Bazar Patrika, 15th May, 1952 Hill Supplement, p.3). These references indicate that the same goddess was being worshipped from the far south to the Himalayas under an identical string of names as Koṭṭakiriyā, Koṭṭavī, Koṭarā, Koṭavi or Koṭamāi. An enquiry into folklore may reveal further evidence about the worship of Koṭṭavī.

But a positive proof about the wide-spread cult of Koṭṭavī comes from another important source in the extreme west of India, viz., from Hiṅgulāj where the goddess is known under the name of Koṭṭari. According to the Vāmana Purāṇa the local goddess of Hiṅgulāj became known as Charchikā. It appears that there were three layers in the evolution of this local goddess. Originally she was known as Koṭṭari, subsequently under the Scythians she became known as Nānī or Nanālā; and lastly the author of the Vāmana Purāṇa gives her name as Charchikā. The three chronological stages are clear, i.e., before the Christian era her original appellation was Koṭṭari or the same as Koṭṭavī; then about the beginning of the Christian era she became known as Nānī, a name found on the Indo-Scythian coins and finally under the inspiration of the Bhāgavata religion she was identified with Charchikā, a goddess well known in the Gupta period. The Vāmana Purāṇa makes the positive statement that the presiding female goddess of Hiṅgulāj was known by the name of Charchikā. Thus at three nodal points of the Tamil land, the

1. Ityevamuktvā varadena Charchikā bhūyo’nuyātā
girivindhyavāśinim,
mahīṃ samantād vichachāra sundarī śthānam gatā
Hiṅgulakādhiruttamam //
Vāmana Purāṇa 70.45.
See also my Vāmana Purāṇa—a study, pp. 137-40.
Himālayas and Hīṅgulāj we find the cult of Koṭṭavī springing into undoubted belief and entering into relationship with other local goddesses.

An indication is forthcoming from the Nāyādhhammakāha Commentary that Koṭṭavī while moving northward entered into exchange with Mahishāsuramardini of the Vindhyāchala forest. Mahishāsuramardini or Kātyāyani seems to have far-reaching association with many regions in the Vindhyā ranges. She is still worshipped at Vindhyāchala as the Great Goddess. During the Kusāṇa period, her worship was very popular at Mathurā where hundreds of images and statuettes of this goddess have been found. She was identified or reconciled with such other goddesses as Chāmunḍā, Chandikā, Kātyāyani etc. The story in the Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa under the title “Devi-Māhātmya” shows the prominent position to which this goddess was raised in Gupta civilisation under the deep devotional influence of the Bhāgasvata religion of which Rishi Mārkaṇḍeya was the spearhead. Mahishāsuramardini was identified with the paramount Goddess Durgā or Ambikā and many other aspects of the goddess known in that age, e.g., Nārāyaṇi, Viśveśvarī, Vindhyāchalanivāsini, Raktadautikā, Śatākshi, Śākambhari, Durgā, Bhīmā, Bhramarī, etc. (Devi Māhātmya, Ch. XI). It is possible that these religious names were based on different local traditions of the worship of several mother-goddesses who were being brought within the orbit of a single cult under Bhāgasvata sublimation. An intensive scrutiny of the history of folk cults is likely to throw light on the local appellations of these tutelary goddesses.

What was the time for the celebration of Koṭṭakiriyāmaha? Some light is thrown on this question by the Indian calendar. There are two occasions of Devī festival, the first in the Bright half of Chaitra and the second in the Bright half of Āśvina. Both continue for nine days as worshipping the Devī, with unusual eclat. Of these the Chaitra festival appears to be that of the Goddess Mahishāsuramardini of
north India who is specially worshipped in Vindhyāchala with great pomp and show. This festival of Vindhyavāsini goddess belonged to north India. In the western districts of Uttar Pradesh the goddess is specially worshipped in the month of Chaitra when the religious festival of the goddess in Kāṅgrā or Nagarakoṭa is celebrated. This festival is known as ‘Devi-yātrā’ or ‘Devi-ki-jāt’ to which a large number of people from Panjab, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh assemble at the shrine of the goddess. She was originally associated with the aboriginal tribes of south India. Rāma after his victory over Rāvana is said to have worshipped the goddess. This celebration partook of more ruthless rites. The religious festival of Āśvina is famous as Śabarotsava festival of the Śabara tribes or the Austric people of south India. It is this reason why the Durgā Pūjā has deeper roots in eastern India especially in Bengal and Assam where the people came under Śabara influences to a much larger extent. According to the Yogini Tantra on the tenth day of the Kāmākhyā worship a festival named Śabarotsava was celebrated (Yogini Tantra 63.19; Bani Kant Kakati, The Mother Goddess Kāmākhyā, p. 48). The Yogini Tantra names the Devī worship of Kāmarūpa as the rite of Kīrātas (Kairālaja-dharma, Yogini Tantra 2.9.9.).

If we survey the local goddesses and examine the religious festivals associated with them a whole world of religious synthesis of innumerable goddesses is likely to present itself before our eyes. We shall see how in the process of acculturation released by Hinduism many religious beliefs and cults came together and entered into mutual give and take. The worship of the numerous local goddesses came under the influence of the cult of single mother-goddess Ambikā. Many goddesses coming from outside also mixed in the same stream. For example, the cult of the Rāndala goddess in Gujarat was originally an imported one, which became assimilated to the cult of the Indian Mother-goddess. In Mewar the festival of Gangaūr is celebrated for nine days from the Dark 10th day of Chaitra to the Bright 3rd day of the same month. On
this occasion the countryside is full with songs for Ranu Devi and her husband Dapiyer (a name of the Sun). Ranu Bāi is also the presiding goddess in Nimāḍī folk songs. One folk song has it as follows:—

"O Ranu Bāi, what form of thine shall I glorify? You have travelled here from Saurāṣṭra." (Thāro kāyi kāyi rūp babāṃ Ranu Bāi Soraṭha des se āyi o ///). The reference to the goddess as coming from Saurāṣṭra is significant. In another song Ranu is addressed as Rāṇī. In yet another folk song the temple of Ranu Bāi is said to bless barren women with children. We think that this Ranu goddess was the same as Rājñī, wife of Sūrya, the changed form of the name being due to Apabhramśa influence. Just as we have a chain of derivatives from Yajña as jaṇṇa < janna < jana and jāna (e. g. in janēu from yajñopavīta), similarly from Rājñī was derived Raṇī < Rāṇī < Ranu. The cult of goddess Rājñī was popular in Gujarat and Saurāṣṭra where many images and statuettes of her have been found. In one inscription on the image she is described as the goddess Raṇā of Sāmbāditya. There are temples of Rannā or Rāndala Devī in the villages of Bagvādar and Kinnarkheḍā near Porbandar in Saurāṣṭra. According to the Mātṣya, Skanda and Vishnuharmottara Purāṇas Rājñī and Nikshubhā were the wives of Sūrya. In addition to these Ŭshā and Pratīyūshā also were believed to be the consorts of the Sun god. It appears that the relation of Ŭshā and Pratīyūshā was of Indian origin, and handed down from much earlier time. In course of time the tradition of Rājñī and Nikshubhā became grafted on the older belief as an importation from outside, i. e., from Iran brought by the Scythians who ruled in Saurāṣṭra for several hundred years. According to the Iranian religion Mithra or Mihira had two acolytes or attendants named Raṇā and Narshaf. In our opinion these two names were sansekritisied as Rājñī and Nikshubhā in Indian Sun cult. In Pahelvi

or Sasanian religion the associate of Mithra or Mihira was Raśna. Just as we have the derivative word *Jaśna* from *Yajña* similarly from the word Rājñī was derived the name Raśna. In our enquiry about the origin of goddess Rājñī and her prevalence in India our attention is drawn to the Śaka and Scythians who ruled over Malwa and Saurāshṭra for about 400 years with their capital at Ujjain. At the end of the fourth century this region was made free from Scythian domination by Chandragupta II Vikramāditya. We may suppose that in this background the worship of Ranu Bāī, Rān Devī, or Rāndala Devī became popular in Saurāshṭra, Gujarāt and Malwa. (See *Jānapada*, Year 1, Vol. II, pp. 91-92).

Thus we see that the Iranian goddess Rājñī became transformed as Ranu Devī whose cult is so widely spread and appears as if sprung from the soil of India. In one folk song we find its seed:

"The pitcher is made of gold or silver, the cord is of silver which is fastened round its neck. In her sports of maidenhood Ranu Bāī filled it with the waters of the Gaṅgā, and filled it in the waters of the Jamunā; and she travelled to the Kāverī to fill her pitcher with the waters of the south." The maiden breathing the air of these folk songs is one and undivided from the Gaṅgā to the Kāverī. In the distant extreme south we find the goddess Kumārī on the sea-shore rapt in meditation of Śiva as if she is the genius of all the maiden goddesses of the holy land. She meditates on the feet of Śiva who resides on Kailāsa in the Himalayas and this mental union of the two releases magnetic vibrations of the oneness of the holy land oscillating from the south to the north and from the north to the south.

Such is the warp and woof of Indian culture in which countless strands have become interwoven to produce embroidered patterns of rare beauty.
Indian culture may well be compared to the heart of a plantain tree which is concealed within a series of outer coverings. Similarly in this culture a series of modes of religious worship have become superimposed one above another. They have become reconciled with one another like the round pellets of stone which lying in the stream of the Ganga are being converted into the fine sand that makes the alluvial loam on the banks of the river that becomes overspread in the fertile fields. A process like this is working at the root of Indian culture making different elements of religions and cults come close to each other and entering into mutual exchanges get converted into the subconscious of our body politic.

This culture is somewhat mysterious. It is difficult to expose all its layers and decode their meanings. What has been assimilated and from where how much has been taken and how much has been given is a hard task to settle finally. Like the sparks of fire the elements building up the great Indian culture flash into our vision and fill the heart with delight. Our esteem for this great culture is thereby enhanced. Our faith towards the process of symbiosis and acculturation is deepened by the discovery of these facts which through the ages have built up our culture into an integrated system of religions and modes of religious worship and beliefs. Indian culture takes into its orbit all the different elements as if rejecting nothing whatsoever. Accepting the worship of a number of gods and goddesses as Rivers, Trees, Mountains, Yakshas, Nagas, Devas, Earth etc., this culture has evolved through the ages and as an outcome of this massive churning its thinkers arrived at the lofty concept of a single Deve filling the whole universe.
In Indian religions the worship of the Yakshas was at one time most popular. On the one hand it is mentioned in the Rgveda, Yajurveda, Atharvaveda, Brāhmaṇas, Upanishads, Grīhyasūtras, Dīgha Nīkāya, Jātakas, and other Pali texts, Jaina Āgamas, and their commentaries, and works of Sanskrit literature, Purāṇas, Poetry, Drama and Story. And on the other this was a popular cult in the form of Bir-Barahm which is found surviving in India even to-day from Bengal to Kutch and from the Himalayas up to Cape Komorin. If the whole material is collected it will form the subject of a comprehensive thesis. Dr Ananda Coomaraswamy four decades ago undertook to compile on this subject his work entitled Yakshas in two parts.

The name Yaksha is also included in the list of ancient deities such as Bhūta, Piśācha, Kinnara, Rākshasa, Gandharva, Yātudhāna, Kīṁpurusha, Nāga, Dānava etc. The Yakshas rub shoulder with equal rank amongst the brotherhood of ancient gods and goddesses that were popular in folk cult.

Once the Yakshas were held in the highest esteem and reckoned above all deities. In course of time the Āryan gods like Indra, Mitra, Varuṇa, Sūrya gained ascendancy and the Yakshas had to recede into the background taking subordinate position. Most of these Āryan deities were at one time or the other compared with the Yakshas and in doing so it was considered to bestow honour on that deity. Gradually with the emergence of the Āryan gods as supreme the Yakshas in comparison to them lost their high rank. There was also the other fact that by mingling with the fraternity of the lower tutelary deities and godlings like Bhūta, Preta, Rākshasa, the Yakshas also became degraded in rank and began to be

1. Yakshas (Pt. I) Smithsonian Institute, 1928, Yakshas, Pt. II, 1931. There are 87 plates in both parts in which are illustrated figures relating to the Yakshas and other deities of Water cosmology as well connected motifs.
regarded as goblins living on human flesh and propitiated by bloody sacrifices.

Many of the local Yakshas and Yakshis were said to have such ferocious nature and continued to be so remembered in folk tradition. The one example is that of Jarā, Yakshi of Rājagriha who became satisfied with the blood of children, but after her conversion under the influence of Krishṇa or Buddha she became the presiding deity of child-birth and her figure was painted in every home in the city of Rājagriha. Another instance is that of Yakshi Ulākhala Mekhālā, one of the celebrated tutelary goddesses, deity of Kurukshetra who was beneficent when worshipped in day time but was considered as the malicious being at night. Both the Buddhist and Jaina religions took within their fold the cult of the Yakshas. Many Yakshas and Yakshis of local character became associated with the religion of the Buddha. Several long lists of such Yaksha deities are preserved in Buddhist literature. The best of them is that in the Mahāmāyūrī text. Numerous sculptures of Yakshas and Yakshis were installed in Buddhist Stūpas as if the Yaksha cult was the natural part of Buddhism. In the words of emperor Aśoka, Amiśā devā husu te dānī misā kaṭā, "those deities of popular religion who were not mingled (with the Buddhist religion) became mingled with it." The door once being opened admitted the host of fallen deities into the sphere of Buddhist worship. The result was soon apparent in the popular cults and art of the Stūpas. In Jainism each Tīrthaṅkara was given a Yaksha or Yakshi as his attendant. Both in the high religion of Vedic gods and the popular pantheon Yakshas were admitted in an integral manner.

Yaksha is called Yakkhā in Pali and Jakkha in Prakrit. In the various dialects the words Jakkha, Jākha, Jakhaiyā are derived from them. In Simhalese Yaksha is called Yakā and Yakshi Yakī. In south India the name is Yaska. There is some difference of opinion about the etymology of 'Yaksha'. According to the Rāmāyaṇa, Prajāpati created the Waters (Āpāḥ satīla-sambhavāḥ). To guard them he created some
beings. They questioned Brahmā about their duty. Brahmā gave command, ‘Rakṣadhvam’ Protect as guardians. In reply some misunderstood the wishes of the creator and said ‘Yakṣā-mah’ and the others said ‘Rakṣāmah’. In fact both misunderstood the orders of Brahmā. Those who said, ‘Rakṣāmah’ implied that they would seize or hold anything in their power not allowing it freedom of movement; such became Rakṣhasas. Those who said, ‘Yakṣāmah’ became Yakṣhas implying that they would devour or eat any thing given in their charge. Coomaraswamy gives this meaning to the root ‘yakṣ’ although we do not find it in the list of Sanskrit roots. In Vedic Sanskrit there is a root ‘yakṣ’ which has no meaning with the eating of food but is used in the sense of worshipping. Keith and some other scholars derive Yaksha from the root ‘yaj’ meaning worshipping a deity, and thus the word Yaksha denoted a ‘worshipful’ or ‘adorable one’.

There is an opinion amongst some modern scholars that the word Yaksha is of Austric origin and given a sanskritised form. In Vedic Samhitās, Yaksha is described as a miraculous, beautiful and esteemed deity as shown by several references of the Rigveda. The most notable feature of the conception of Yaksha was its miraculous nature. Addressing Mitra and Varuṇa it is said :

“Steers, all infallible are these your people in whom no wondrous thing is seen, no worship.

“Guile follows close the men who are untruthful: no secrets maybe hidden from your knowledge.”

“O Wondrous Strong, Mitra and Varuṇa, may we never see, enjoy another’s solemn feast, ourselves, our sons, or progeny.”

2. Amūrā viśvā vrishṇavimā vām na yaśu chitraṁ dādirise na yakṣām/druhāi sachante anjita janānāṁ na vām nīṁyānāchite abhūvan // RV. 7. 61. 5.
3. Mā kasyādbhutakratā yakṣāṁ bhujemātanūbhibhī/ mā śeśasā mā tanasā // RV. 5. 70. 4.
In the above hymn, Mitra and Varuna are given the epithet \textit{Adbhutakratā}, ‘wondrous strong’, which was also a characteristic feature of the Yaksha. The implication is that Mitra and Varuna have the same wondrous strength as the Yaksha: why should then one care for the Yaksha in preference to Mitra and Varuna. These two Mantras point to the shifting of antithesis from the Yaksha to Mitra and Varuna.

The implication of the first Mantra is that only persons of undeveloped intellect or imperfect religious consciousness (\textit{Amārāḥ}) put their faith in such deities as Yaksha.

In another Mantra, prayer is made to Agni that if any one of our friends or relations visits the abode of Yaksha (\textit{Yaksha-sadam}) Agni should not even stealthily enter his house. “Go never to the feast of one who harms us, the treacherous neighbour or unworthy kinsman”.

The word ‘neighbour’ here stands for the members of Austrian tribe who lived in association with the Āryans. If a member of Āryan tribe falling into religious error worshipped a Yaksha, the Āryan god Agni should not look upon him with kindly eye or go to his house. The mention of \textit{Yaksha-sadam} or ‘Yaksha-abode’ is of particular significance as implying the existence of a formal Yaksha-shrine, the like of which were later known as \textit{Yakshāyatana}. Warning was given from going to such a place similar to the interdiction against visiting a Jaina temple in later times. In another Mantra, Agni Vaiśvānara is invoked as eminent and powerful so as to be regarded as the lord of even a Yaksha (\textit{Yakshādhyaksha}) (\textit{Yakshasyādhyakshaṁ tavishañḥ bṛihantam}, RV. 10. 88. 13).

In all the above four stanzas the common idea is that the Yaksha is regarded a lower or subordinate godling and is being kept aloof from Āryan deities. But the Rgveda also makes specific mention of the beautiful form of a Yaksha (\textit{Atyāso na ye marutaḥ svāṇoḥ yakṣaḥṛīṣo na śubhayanta maryāḥ}): ‘The

1. Mā kasya yakṣaṁ sadamiddhuro gā mā veṣasya pramānato māpeḥ / RV. 4. 3. 13.
Maruts, fleet as coursers, while they deck them like youthful spectators of a festal meeting, linger like beauteous colts, about the dwelling, like frisking calves". (RV. 7. 56. 16).

The comparison is between the fleet Maruts and the youthful competitors having beauty of form like a Yaksha. The conception of Yaksha being beautiful in his appearance (Yaksha-driṣṭaḥ) may be traced in later literature. It is instructed in the Grihyasūtras that a young Brahmachārin seeking his admission into the Vedic Charana or academy and having a look at his teacher surrounded by his pupils (saprāshatka-āchārya) wishes for himself the beauty of a Yaksha pleasing to the eye (Yakshamīva chakshusaḥ priyo bhūyāsam).\(^1\)

A stranger woman being beautiful was so addressed "Are you a Yakshi?\(^2\) When Nala attended the Svayamvara assembly of Damayanti women present there became impressed with his beauty and began to think "Is he a Deva, a Yaksha or a Gandharva?\(^3\) Buddha and Mahāvīra also were sometimes taken to be Yaksha owing to the beautiful radiance of their body.\(^4\)

In the Mantras given above the epithets Chitra and Adbhuta are used for a Yaksha. In the Yajurveda the mind is

1. **Gobhila Grihyasūtra (3.4.28):** Yakshamīva chakshushaḥ priyo vā bhūyāsam iti.
   **Mantra B. (1.7.14):** Saprāshatka-māchāryam abhyetya brahmachāri paṭhati, Yakshamīva chakshushaḥ priyo vā bhūyāsam iti.
   **Drāhyāyaṇa Grihyasūtra (3.1.25):** Upetyāchāryam parīshadam prakshed Yakshamīva priyo bhūyāsam.

2. Na deveshu na Yaksheshu tādṛṣṭaṃ pavatī kvacit / māṇusheshvapi chānyeshu dhriṣṭaṃ pravṛtī na cha śrutā //
   Āranyakaparva 50. 13; 61.114.

3. Aho rūpamahā kāntirahā dhairyam mahātmanaḥ /
   ko'yaṃ devo nri Yaksho nu gandharvo nu bhavisyati//
   Āranyakaparva 52. 16.

4. Ādichchu paṭṭhānaṃ mahadupaṭṭhānaṃ abhyujallanam
   sirimāyanam iti evarūpāya tirachchāna vijjāya michchhājivā paṭṭivirato samāno gotamo ti /
compared with a Wondrous Yaksha. The words Ād bhuta (miraculous), Āpārva (unknown, mysterious), Chitra (wondrous) point to the same meaning. A Yaksha was also known as Mahādhūta (Ādīparva 21.12), i.e., a great being. Indra was also so called in the same context of the Ādīparva and both Indra and Yaksha are mentioned as Rājā. The epithet Mahat alone was prefixed to Yaksha as in the Atharvaveda, "A mighty Being (Yaksha) is in creation’s centre: to him the rulers of the realm bring tribute" (AV. 10. 8. 15). Elsewhere the Atharva-veda refers to Mahād-Yaksha as Mahad-Brahma (1.32. 1-4). In the Rāmāyaṇa it is said that Hanumān owing to his great physical strength was taken to be a Mahādhūta or Yaksha by the Rākshasas of Laiṅkā. (Sarvathā sam mahād-bhūtānḥ mahābalaśparigrāham, Sundarakāṇḍa 46.6).

Buddha counted Mahādu-paṭṭhāna or Yaksha worship as of a lower class of knowledge and of false livelihood. It was the belief of the common people. Buddha gave a clarion call to all the people saying “Know you all that the teacher regards the worship of Āditya, Mahādhūta, Śū-Lakshmi and such other tutelary godlings as pure superstition and therefore warns every one against such blind practices.” In the Atharva-veda also, Vaiśravaṇa Kubera and her son Kāberaka are spoken of as Itarajana, i.e., of other people or common folk (AV. 8. 10. 5)

The Yakshas are also known as Rājā in Sanskrit literature. Kālidāsa styles Kubera as ‘Rājarāja’, i.e., king cf Rājōs or Yakshas (ānuccharaṃ rājarājasya, Meghadūta 1. 3). The word ‘Rājana’ was derived from the root Rāj to shine, and a Yaksha was so called from his looking resplendent or shining as a moving light. The epithet ‘Mahārāja’ is used for Kubera and signifies the supreme Rājā or Yaksha. The offering intended for Kubera

1. Yad pūrvaṃ yakshamantaḥ prajānāṁ tanme manāḥ śiva-saṅkalpamastu / VS. 34.2.
was known as Mahārāja-bali. Pāṇini also refers to Mahārāja as a deity (or Devaṇa 4. 2. 35) and the devotees of the god Mahārāja were known as Mahārājika in Pāṇini’s time (4. 3. 87). It shows that the worship of Mahārāja was a regular cult. In fact the epithet Mahārāja on this model came also to be applied to the paramount head of other classes of godlings. For example, the Pali literature speaks of four Mahārājika gods who were guardians of the four quarters and of the rank of Lokapālas. Amongst them Dhṛtarāṣṭra was the king of Gandharvas and lord of the eastern region; Virūḍhaka was the king of Kumbhāṇḍas (literally, ithyphallic dwarfs) and lord of the southern region; Virūpāksha was the king of Nāgas and lord of the western region; Vaiśravaṇa was the king of Yakshas and lord of northern region. These four were collectively known as Chāturmahārājika gods and were more or less worshipped in the same manner as the Yakshas. On the gateways of the Bharhut Stūpa they all are labelled as ‘Yaksha’.

The most important synonym of Yaksha was Brahma. In the Mahābhārata Yaksha-maha is called Brahma-maha. After the Rākshasa named Baka was killed, all the four classes of people, viz., Brāhmaṇa, Kshatriya, Vaiśya and Śūdra, together organised a fair in the Ekachakrā city under the name of Brahma-maha. In the Matsya-Janapada (modern Jaipur) there used to be a great festival of Brahma in which all the people from countryside assembled. On that occasion wrestling matches of the leading wrestlers were arranged. The king Virāṭa himself made arrangements.

This Brahma-mahotsava was the same as Yaksha-maha. The people even to-day use the epithet ‘Barahm’ for Yaksha and the Yakshas are also known as ‘Bīra-Barahm’. In Kāśi-Janapada the shrine of Harikeśava Yaksha is still known as ‘Harasū Barahm’.

1. Tastaṁ brāhmaṇaḥ sarve kṣhatriyaścāḥ suvismitaḥ / vaiśyāḥ śudrāścāḥ muditāśchakrur Brahma-mahāṁ tadā //
Ādiparva 152. 18.
In the *Atharvaveda* mention is made of the city of Brahma (Brahmapuri) in which resides a vast-bodied Yaksha (ātman-vadyaksha). In that hymn several of the motifs were derived from ancient Yaksha worship. Presumably the Yaksha shrines were known as ‘Brahmapura’ since Brahma was synonymous with Yaksha. A special feature of the Brahma puri was its possessing of ‘Amṛita’ or nectar. The Yakshas were closely related to the death-conquering embrosia and hence the epithet ‘Aparājītā’ was implied to the Yaksha shrine. It is also said that this shrine possessed a treasure of gold; it was a natural description of the servants of Kubera, the god of wealth. It was believed that a corpulent and ponderous Yaksha of large size resided in his Brahma puri or Brahma-city. These were several features of Yaksha worship. The city of Brahma or Yaksha was the centre of immortality and provided with coffers of gold resplendent. It was believed to have a triangular-headed shrine and triple foundation. He who offered worship to such a shrine did not suffer loss of vision or vitality.¹

**Avadhya Brahmapura (The Immortal Brahma-city)**

Considering the inviolable Brahma-city surrounded by Amṛita we are reminded of a passage in the *Mahābhārata* which refers to the shrine of Brahman that was free from death.

1. Yo vai tāṁ Brahmaṇo vedāṃrenāvṛtāṁ puraṁ /
   tasmāi Brahma cha Brāhmaṇaḥ chakṣuḥ prāṇaṁ prajāṁ
daduḥ //

Na vai tāṁ chakṣurjāhāti na prāṇo jarasaḥ puraḥ /
puraṁ yo Brahmaṇo veda yasyaḥ purusha uchyaṭe //
Ashtāchakrā navadvārā devānāṁ pūrayodhyā /
tasyāṁ hirāṇyayah kośaḥ svargo jyotishāvṛtāḥ //
Tasmin hirāṇyaye koṣe tryare tripratiṣṭhite /
tasmin yad Yakshasmātmanvat tadvaɪ Brahma-
vido viduḥ //

Prabhṛājmanāṁ hariṁyāṁ yaśasā sam parīvṛtāṁ /
puraṁ hirāṇyayāṁ Brahma vivesāparājitām //

**AV. 10.2.29-33**
In it several technical terms have been used to give a picture of Yaksha worship. The following verse is obscure to the commentators:—

\[
\text{Ātmanā saptaṃ kāmāṃ hatvā satrumivottamam/} \\
\text{prāpyāvadhyaṃ brahmapuram rājeva syāmabhāṃ sukhi/} \\
(Mokshadharmaṇarva 171.52)
\]

In the epic context the doctrine of ‘Niyatīvāda’ is being discussed and it is said that by the restraint of desire (Trishṇā-kshaṇa), and controlling the six passions and the body (ātmanā saptaṃ kāmāṃ) one feels the same pleasure as the Yaksha (Rājā) feels happy after entering his inviolable Brahma-city (avadhyā-brahmapura).

The word rājā stands here for a Yaksha as pointed out above. The epithet ‘ātmanvad yaksha’ of the Atharvaveda should also be understood here in the phrase ‘ātmanā saptaṃ kāmāṃ’ implying the six hostile passions and the body as the seventh. Ātmā is equivalent to the material body also called Bhūtātmā. A big body (Mahākāya) formed the iconographic feature of a Yaksha as seen in the early colossal statues from Parkham, Besnagar, Patna, Sisupalgarh and other places. In the Yaksha-Yudhishṭhīra Discourses of the Mahābhārata the Yaksha is spoken of as a big body of huge stature like the palm tree (tālasamuchchhrīta), high like a mountain (parvatomama), having a great strength (mahābala), inviolable (aḍhrīṣhya) or whom none could conquer (this epithet being equal to (avadhyā) and resplendent like the Sun and the Fire (jvalanārka-pratikāśa).

We find these epithets exemplified in the gigantic statues of the Maurya, Śunga and Kushāṇa periods in which the special feature of oversize was accepted for the Yakshas, and later on for Bodhisattva statuary. Aavadhyā, Aparājīta and Aḍhrīṣhya

1. Virūpākṣaṁ mahākāyaṁ yakṣaṁ tālasamuchchhrīyayāṁ / 
   jvalanārka-pratikāśamadhrīṣhyayāṁ parvatomam //
   Setmuśrītyatishṭantaṁ dadarśa bharatarśabha / 
   meghagambhīrāyā vāchā tarjayantaṁ mahābalaṁ //
   Āraṇyakaparva 258.15.
were based on the belief that the Yaksha was in possession of Amṛita or the immortal drink of life which he bestowed on those who worshipped him. That is due to the original idea of the *Atharvaveda* in speaking of the Brahma-city as the abode of immortality. The association of Yaksha with Amṛita was the main reason of his worship and cult belief. In the *Rāmāyaṇa* of Vālmiki, the Yaksha-hood is equivalent to *Amaratva* or immortality. According to the epic, Brahmā conferred three boons on Kubera, viz., Immortality (*amaratva*), Lordship over treasure (*dhanesatva*) and Guardianship of the world (*lokapālatva*). The immortal drink was preserved in an apartment of Kubera’s palace. In the epic it is said that this immortal drink was a kind of yellowish honey which was not prepared by the bees (*madhu pītamamākshiham*). This was kept stored in a jar guarded by the serpents, and held dear by Kubera. Those priests who worship Brahma or Yaksha state that anyone who tasted that honey became immortal by conquering his death propensity, the old became young, and the blind gained his eye-sight. These priests were known as *Jambhasādhaka*, i.e., worshippers of the folk deity known as Jambha, probably an equivalent of Yaksha. The Jambhaka priests held out the temptation of this immortal drink to the followers of their cult. In Buddhist literature Kubera is therefore known as *Jambhala* the lord of Jambhas. The tasting of this immortal drink was the secret lore of the Jambhaka priests.

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1. Pitāmahastu prītātmā dadau Vaiśraṇaṣasya hi / amaratvāṁ dhaneśatvāṁ lokapālatvameva cha / Āraṇyakaparva 258. 15.

2. Tatra paśyāmahe sarve madhu pītamamākshikam / maruprapāte vishame nivishṭām kumbhasammitam /// Āśīvishāṅhrakshyaṃaṇāṃ Kuberadayitāṁ bhṛśam / yat prāśya purusho martyo amaratvāṁ nīgachchhati /// Achakshurlabhate chakshurviddhō bhavati vai yuvā / iti te kathayanti saṃ Brāhmaṇa jambha-sādhakāḥ /// Udyogaparva 62.23-25.
This was later on accepted in the iconography of Maitreya who held in one of his hands a flask or bottle of Amṛita with a long neck from which the priests and their devotees practised the art of sipping nectar, the flask being known as Amṛita-ghaṭa. Thus the keen desire to taste the immortal drink was at the back of the popularity of Yaksha worship. It influenced the popular mind to the great extent. In Yaksha statues sometimes an Amṛita-flask is shown held in the left hand illustrating the above idea.

Because of possessing the emborsial drink the Yaksha was given the epithet Avadhya 'inviolable' or not subject to death, Aparājita, death-conquering, i.e., the god of death did not cast his influence over a Yaksha or in the Yaksha-city. Later on details of the mode of Yaksha worship were adopted in the case of other deities. As the Yaksha shrine had an enclosure similarly the shrines of Vishṇu or Śiva were enclosed by big railings as we find at Madhyaminā or Nagarī in the case of Nārāyana-vaṭaka. We find that in the inscription at Nagarī the gods Sańkarshaṇa and Vāsudeva are mentioned as Anihata which was equivalent to Avadhya, and also as Sarveśvara, i.e., lord over all, or supreme amongst deities. The epithet Anihata was similar in implication to Aparājita, Adhrishta and Avadhya. Epithets derived from Yaksha worship were transferred to Vishṇu so that in a short epigraph of minimum words the epithet Anihata was applied to Vishṇu. In the Arthaśāstra of Kautilya also Vishṇu is called Apratihata due to the same reason.

In the Brahma-city of the Yakshas there existed a treasure of gold. Kubera-Vaiśravana as the chief of the northern direction is well known as Dhanapati, or the lord of wealth. In the same direction is Sumeru, the golden mountain, and the region of gold or Hāṭaka-deśa also is located there. The Jambunāda gold, Paippīlika gold and Ashtāpada gold were all produced in the northern region. Kubera was also regarded as the lord of Saṅkha and Padma Nidhis. In Kushāṇa statuettes Lakṣmi is depicted as one of the consorts of Kubera. In
the Rāmāyana the amassing of gold is said to be a special feature of the palace of Kubera (Kuberaabhavanopamam). This treasure or wealth was nothing else but gold. It is probable that gold implied the yellowish honey stored in jars, i.e., granular gold held so dear by Kubera. Elsewhere in the epic (Sabhāpaśiva) it is said that Paśitalika or granular gold was measured in jars (droyameya).

There was a belief also in the existence of an Auspicious Jewel (Bhadra-maṇi) that formed part of the treasure of Kubera. The Mahābhārata refers to this auspicious jewel as part of Yudhishthira's treasure. Each king coveted to keep such a jewel in his treasure. The Jātakas also refer to the qualities of such a jewel. The Atharvaśāstra refers to a jewel of thousand potency (Sahasravirya-maṇi) (maṇiṁ sahasraviryaṁ varma deva akrīṇavata, 8. 5. 14.). It appears that Yaksha king Manibhadra, who was only next in command to Kubera, got his name from his being master of this auspicious jewel (Bhadra-maṇi).

Yaksha worship in Buddhism

When the Buddha began to preach his religion the people were very much devoted to Yaksha worship. Although many accepted Buddhism but their devotion towards the Yakshas and Yakshis continued as before. The Jātakas and other Buddhist texts are full of references to Yaksha worship. The Yakshas are spoken of as influential deities (mahiddhika). The Yakshas had both good and evil nature. In the “Āṭaṇaṭṭiya Sutta” portion of the Dīghanikāya valuable evidence is preserved about the Yakshas. Vasīravaṇa, king of the Yakshas, himself speaks to the Buddha that the Yakshas did not follow the religion of the Buddha. In his teachings the Buddha asked the people to keep away from many kinds of evil and therefore the Yakshas did not like them. There are some Yakshas who tease and give trouble to the followers of the Buddha, but the great Yakshas, viz., the Mahārājas do help in the observance of religious ways and keep the evil Yakshas under control. In
the list of Yakshas as given by Vaiśravaṇa are the names of Indra, Somā, Varuṇa, Prajāpati, Maṇibhadra, Ājāvaka, etc. Vaiśravaṇa also hints at the Rakṣāmantra, protective talisman, by muttering which the evil Yakshas are spared away, and cannot create any trouble.

There is another text called Mahāmāyārī which was compiled about the 3rd century A.D. This is a long list of local Yaksha names together with the names of places where their worship was prevalent. In this list are found some of the following names:

1. Bakula and Vajrapāṇi in Rājagriha
2. Kāla and Upakālaka in Kapilavastu
3. Mahēśvara in Virāṭa
4. Bṛhaspati in Śrāvastī
5. Sāgara in Sāketa
6. Vajrāyudha in Vaiśāli
7. Sudarsana in Champā
8. Mahākāla in Vārāṇasi
9. Vishṇu in Dvārakā
10. Vibhīshana in Tāmraparṇi (Ceylon)
11. Mardana in Uragā (Uragapura, capital of the Pāṇḍya-deśa)
12. Kapila in Bahudhānyaka (i.e. Rohitaka, capital of the Yaudheyas)
13. Vasutrāta in Ujjayini
14. Vasubhūti in Avanti
15. Bharuka in Bharukachchha (Broach)
16. Mālyadhara in Agrodaka (Agroha in the east Panjab)
17. Śukladamśhtra in Suvāstu (Swat valley)
18. Mahāgiri in Girinagara (Girinar)
19. Vāsava in Vidiśā
20. Kumāra-Kārttikeya in Rohitaka
21. Bṛhadhratha in Kalināga
22. Duryodhana in Srughna
23. Arjuna in Arjunāvana (i.e. Ārjunāyana)
24. Girikūṭa in Malwa
25. Sarvabhadra in Śākala
26. Kapila in Varṇu (Bannu valley)
27. Pramardana in Gandhāra
28. Prabhañjana in Takshaśilā
29. Kharapostā in Bhadraśīla (sic, Bhadraśīlā)
30. Prabhañkara in Rauruka (i.e. Sakkhar Rori, capita of Sauvīra)
31. Kalaḥapriya in Lampāka (Lamghān)
32. Gardabhaka in Mathurā
33. Vijaya and Vijayanta in Pāṇḍyamathurā (Madura, South India)
34. Pūrṇaka in Malaya
35. Kinnara in Kerala
36. Sundara in Nāsika
37. Pālaka in Vanavāsī (North Kanārā)
38. Ratika in Ahichchhatra
39. Kapila in Kāmpilya
40. Naigamesha in Pāṇchāla
41. Prasama in Hastināpura
42. Purāṃjaya in Yaudheya
43. Tarārka and Kutarārka in Kuruksheṭra (same as Arantuka, Tarantuka and Ulūkhalamekhalā of the Mahābhārata, who were the Yakshas of Kuruksheṭra)
44. Mahāsaṇa in Koṭīvarsha (Bengal)
45. Anāyāsa in Kauśāmbi
46. Pushpadanta in Champa
47. Bhūtamukha in Pātaliputra
48. Aśoka in Kāsti
49. Jambhaka in Marubhūmi
50. Devaśarmā in Daradadeśa
51. Prabhañkara in Kāśmīra
52. Pāṇchika and his 500 sons on the confines of Kāśmīra
53. Elder son of Pāṇchika in the Chīna land
54. Laṅkeśvara in Kāpiṣṭ or Begram in Afghanistan
55. Dharmapāla in Russia
56. Mahābhujā in Bāhlī (Balkh)
57. Yuvarāja Jinarshabha, son of Vaikravaṇa, in the Tushāra country.
58. Sātagiri and Haimavanta in Sindhusāgara
59. Pañchālagandha in Dravīḍadesa
60. Dhaneśvara in Simhala
61. Pārśara in Pāradadesa
62. Śamkara in Śakasthāna
63. Vemachitra in Paḥlavadesa
64. Karāla in Uḍḍiyāna
65. Chitrasena in Vokhāna
66. Rāvana in Ramathā (or Jāguḍ, the region of asafoetida)

This long list illustrates two things. Firstly in the extensive domain from Iran to Ceylon where Buddhism had become the prevailing religion Yaksha worship was also simultaneously in vogue. Secondly the names of local Yakhas such as Duryodhāna, Arjuna, Naigamesha, Vishnū, Śamkara, Indra, Bṛhaspati, Mahākāla, etc. were not strictly Buddhist deities or connected with Buddhism but were gods and personātes of high rank of Brahmanism and Jainism. In fact, Yaksha worship formed part of all the three religions, Brahmanism, Jainism and Buddhism, and in folk religion there was no exclusive possession but a wide-spread common basis of beliefs held by the people throughout the country. It is also difficult to predicate the number of names that were actually current in the localities mentioned against them. But as for Tarārka-Kutarārka and Uṭākhalamekhala there is strong epic evidence that they were the Yakhas of Kuruśhetra to whom homage was paid since time immemorial, and whose shrines existed many centuries before and even now. It is therefore probable that the compiler of the Mahāmāyūri list was working on older materials which were rooted in folk religion. Similarly Kṛishṇa of Dvārakā is an intriguing name, for which no other proof than that of the epic was required.

The Buddhist literature refers to the worship of the four Mahārājīka gods known as Chālam-mahārājīka Devas. These were the presiding deities or guardians of the four quarters, i.e., Vaishravana, king of the Yakshas in the north; Dhṛitṛāshṭra, king of the Gandharvas in the east; Virūḍhaka, king of the Kumbhāṇḍas in the south and Virūpākṣa, king of the Nāgas in the west. In this list Kubera was regarded as the lord of the Yakshas. He was also called Vaishravana, Pañchika and Jambhala, the last name being derived from Jambhas or magic, or mystic rites connected with Kubera worship. The worshippers were known as Jambhaka priests and they believed in the miracle of immortality obtained through the worship of Kubera. They also believed that a kind of embrosial drink in the form of the yellowish quaint essence of honey, which was not produced by the bees of the beehives, was preserved in the home of Kubera and was made available to his devotees in order to confer immortality on them. This was a secret miraculous cult to which reference is found in the Mahābhārata. In the hands of many Yakshas a flask of nectar (Amrita-ghaṭa) was held. It had a prolonged neck and a very thin hole for sucking the embrosial drink. All these were side beliefs of the cult of Jambhaka teachers. The capital of Kubera was Alakāpuri situated near Kailāsa, the present glacial village from which river Alakanandā takes her birth. The gods residing in the city of Kubera were known as Vaishravanakāyika-devas, i.e., those who shared in the miraculous power of Kubera. The pomp and magnificence of the capital of Kubera have been described with much elaboration. His grove was Chaitrabhārata, full of Kalpavṛkṣas or wishfulfilling trees and creepers. This grove was also known as Vaibhṛāja (as in the Meghadūta). There was a treasure of unlimited gold in the palace of Kubera and many valuable Nidhis or special treasures formed part of his treasury. Many images of Kubera have been found depicting him as a potbellied rich merchant, wearing a thick necklace, with twisted moustaches and a happy countenance.
The name Pańchika became quite popular in Mahāyāna Buddhism. In the region of Gandhāra, Pańchika and his consort Hārīti were widely worshipped, and they were popular even in Central Asia where Hārīti was held in great favour. It is said about Hārīti that she was the mother of five hundred Yakshas. Her original place was in Rājagriha. In the Āraṇya-kaparva of the Mahābhārata the Yakshi of Rājagriha was far-famed (82. 90). Her name was Jarā. The Sabhāparva speaks of her as a blood-thirsty ogress (16. 38), and flesh was offered in her worship. She was of a nature of Rākshasi. It was she who brought together the two split parts of the foetus of Jarāsandha. Being pleased with her grace Jarāsandha's father Bṛihadratha commanded his subjects to offer worship to Jarā and to celebrate a festival every year in honour of that goddess. It is also said that the people of Rājagriha paid homage to her as the goddess of their home (Gṛiha-gevi) and painted her figures on the walls of their houses in which she was depicted as surrounded by many children. The same goddess became famous as Hārīti in Buddhism. It is said of her that she stealthily concealed children. She also stole Jarāsandha but gave him back. Because of her taking away children she became known as Jātahārini or Hārīti. When the Buddha came to Rājagriha the people spoke to him about the terror of Hārīti. The Buddha concealed one of her children which filled her with sorrow and her heart became filled with motherly affection. The Buddha preached to her and from that day she

1. Paṇḍako nāma yakhkho tu saddhist hāritayakkhiyā / pańchasatehi puttehi phalam pāpuṇi ādikam / Mahāvamsa 12. 21.
Ājāpayachcha rākshasyā māgadhesu mahotsavam / Sabhāparva 17. 5.

became the auspicious goddess for the welfare of children. In the Kushāṇa period Mathurā was a centre for worship of Hāritī and thereafter she became the popular goddess of childbirth up to Gandhāra and Central Asia.

According to the Buddhist, Hāritī caused the death of children through small pox. This disease is common to children and throws light on the story of Hāritī. Jarāsandha may have suffered from small pox believed to be caused by Hāritī but his life was saved. She is worshipped even to-day as the Mother Śitalā. Coomaraswamy has stated on the testimony of Buddhist literature that one of her names was Nandā. She is styled as the ‘Smiling Playful Mother’ (Hindi: Haṁsani khelani Mātā).

The Yaksha shrines were known as Yakṣāyaṇa or Yakṣa-kānava. In the dialects they are even now known as Śikān or Bhāmn. In the beginning the Yaksha Chaityas were shrines having the form of a flat platform of clay or brick. On it a tablet of homage or conical aniconic representation for the Yaksha was installed under the open sky.

The other form of Yaksha worship was to install their anthropomorphic images. Colossal images of the Yakshas, 8 to 12 feet in height, have been found in standing and seated poses, and they stand out as the grand ancestors of all Indian statuary. Many such images have been found. Their age goes back to the 3rd cent. B. C. being regarded as most ancient of all historical images. A conspicuous turban on the head, a flat torque round the neck, a triangular necklace on the breast, armlets round the arms, bracelets on the wrists, a scarf thrown over the shoulder, and a dhōtī on the legs secured by a tied belt, of the two arms the right one lifted and the left suspended—this is the form of the Yaksha statues. The Bodhisattva and Vishnu images of later times were carved after these models. Of all such statues the one from Parkham village in Mathurā

1. The small pox that attacks a child without fever is so called.
district is the most famous and outstanding. An epigraph engraved on its pedestal makes it out to be an image of Manibhadra Yaksha. Manibhadra Yaksha was next to Kubera in popular esteem and he was regarded as the presiding deity of the caravan merchants. Padmavati or Pañraya in Gwalior was the centre of Manibhadra worship, where a guild of merchants was devoted to this Yaksha and which installed his statue there. Amongst the other statues is a colossal image found in Baroda village in Mathura district. In the village of Jhāṅg-kā-Nagarā a life-size seated image of a Yakshi is still in worship. Similarly there is a free-standing Yaksha image still worshipped as ‘Jākha’ in the Noh village, four miles from Bharatpur. A Yakshi statue was found at Padmavati. Two Yaksha statues with Mauryan polish were found at Pāṭaliputra. At Rājghat near Vārāṇasī was found a composite statue of three-faced Yaksha. Some years back several Yaksha images were found at Śisupālgarh in Orissa. Recently at the confluence of the rivers Vidiśa and Vetravati (Bes and Betwā) was found a Yaksha statue (12 ft. high), which has been taken in worship by the local people. Kurukshetra also was in antiquity the region abounding in Yaksha worship and there were four Yakshas marking its boundary, bearing the names Arantuka, Tarantuka, Machakraka and Kapila, and their wife was the Yakshi Ulūkhalamekhalā with a shrine of great celebrity. The names occur in the Mahābhārata but no image has been found up to now. The Mahāmāyūrt list refers to them as Tarārka and Kutārārka.

The most emphatic evidence of Yaksha worship is available in the form of engraved statues on the gateway and railing of the Bharhut Stūpa, with names as Suchioma, Kupira (= Kubera), Ajakālaka, Gaṅgita, Supāvasa, Virāḍhaka, Sudasanā, Charndā Sirimādevatā, Chulakokādevatā and Mahākokādevatā, The last five names are those of Yakṣhs. The pair names Chulakokā and Mahākokā find their parallel in the Yaksha names of Vārāṇasī, viz., Lahurābir and Bullābir, the latter name having the form Vipula in Sanskrit. A sentence in the
inscriptions of Asoka, ‘amisādeva husu te dānti misā kāja’ signifies that those godlings who had not mingled with the gods of higher religion became so mingled in accordance with the emperor’s new religious policy of associating the popular cults with Buddhism. The result of this policy soon became apparent on the construction of Stūpas invoking both the events of Buddha’s life and Jātaka stories together with scenes of Yaksha and Nāga cults.

It should be remembered that the worship of Yaksha deities had its special character. Its several elements were the offerings of flowers, garlands, incense and music. In course of time this also became the norm of worship offered to Brahmānical deities, although in many cases the traditional Vedic Yajñās were also performed in temples. In the Gītā this mode of worship is clearly mentioned as ‘Patram pushpam phalam toyam’, i.e., worship by offering leaves, flowers, fruits and water. This popular form of worship ultimately triumphed over the Vedic Yajñās.

In the religious tradition of our country we find that older gods and goddesses continue and survive, and are sometimes put into background by new ones. It is with difficulty that two things ever disappear, firstly the spot of the shrine of a godling or deity, and secondly the fair or public festival held to do honour to it. In course of time although the name and form of the deity may change but still the religious spot and the religious fair continue as before. In the same manner Yaksha worship never became extinct. We find it even to-day in the form of ‘Bir-Barahm’ worship. In the Banaras Hindu University Campus there are even to-day four Yaksha shrines under the name of ‘Bir’ receiving religious homage even now. In every village there are several shrines or open platforms for the worship of Bir godlings. The two words Bir and Barahm are meant for the Yakshas. In the Kena Upaniṣad we find Brahma appearing before the gods in the form of a Yaksha. In the Atharvaveda Brahma is given the epithet of Mahadyaksha. In medieval literature there are frequent
references to Fiftytwo Bir godlings and verses are recited about them (called 'Silogo' or Skt. sloka). Thus we find tangible proof to Yaksha worship amongst the people even to-day. Not only in Vrāṇasī but in the adjoining districts Bir-Barahm forms part of religious worship by the people.

Pt. Hazari Prasad Dwivedi informed me on 16.4.1952 that in every village of Ballia district a 'Chaurā' or a platform of Bir is found, on which a conical representation in clay of Yaksha or Bir is made and worshipped. In fact Mahābir is worshipped in a twofold manner, firstly by installing his statue in roofed shrines and secondly by making a conical representation like that of a Bir on an open platform.

The foremost amongst the Yakshas was given the epithet Mahābir. In the districts of western Uttar Pradesh the Dipāvalī night is held sacred for Mahābir worship being regarded as the birth day of Mahābir when offerings are made of Chārmā (wheat-cakes made into a powder). The Dipāvalī was in ancient times known as Yaksarātri, night of Yaksha, according to the Kāmasūtra, and a great nocturnal fair was held on this occasion according to a Jātaka. The dice played on this night and keeping awake throughout the hours are reminiscent of ancient Yaksha worship. In western districts such sweet cakes and wheat powder represent the continuation of the tradition of Yaksha worship. We also know that such epithets as junior and senior were prefixed to Yaksha names as still current in the names of Bir-Barahm godlings (like Lahurābir and Bullābir cited above, and as Chulakohā and Mahākokā in Bharhut art). In Vrāṇasī there are several others spots of Yaksha worship including the Dauḍhiyābir of Bhalupur which was derived from Sanskrit Dīṇḍima, implying the name of a Yaksha with a ringing bell hung from his neck that was specially placed at the site of accustomed house to indicate such persons as evaded the payment of toll-tax.

On 17.4.1952 I had a discussion about Bir-Barahm with Śrī Byohar Rajendra Singh. He informed that in Madhya
Pradesh, Barahm Déo or Barahm Bābā is worshipped even now. Barahm is often believed to reside on a tree. Bir also has a tree or platform. This is often a Pipal tree with a Bir or Barahm on it. He drew attention to the fact that Goswāmī Tulasidāsa has described Mahābir in the form of a Bir-Barahm or Yaksba:

“One should worship Mahā Bir whose worship brings about the fulfilment of desire. One should get himself instructed in his cult and also recite his Bija-mantra as is done by Śiva. One should offer to him water, ghee, fuel-fire and Bali to propitiate him. This Being also causes upsetting, bewitching and killing of mind by spells or incantations and death, and gives wealth to his worshippers. He who worships this great Bir advances in the path of devotion to Raghunātha-Ji”. (Vinaya Patrika 108). The motifs in this stanza were taken from popular folk cult centring around Bir worship. Tulasidāsa was acquainted with the mode of worship of the Bir prevailing in eastern districts.

The same day Śrī Krishnānand Gupta of Garauṭhā (Jhansi district) came to see me and I continued the discussion about Bir-Barahm with him. At first he denied about Bir-pūjā in his district but later on accepted that Bir is worshipped in his side also. There is a platform for Bir, and Bir also comes to possess some individuals. There are also folk songs of Bir worship.

Śrī Parameshwari Lal Gupta told me that Bir-Barahm are also worshipped in his area in Azamgarh district. Śrī Harihara Prasad Gupta who has worked on folklore told me that Bir-Barahm worship is prevalent in Jaunpur district which is his home.

Thus I was working on the pattern of a miniature folklore survey which revealed the continuity of Bir-Barahm worship up to our own times, throughout Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh.

Fortunately, on 20. 4. 52, Pt. Sukhalal Sanghavi, a great Jaina scholar, came to the University and I opened this topic to
him. He said that Fiftytwo Birs are worshipped in Jainism. In old texts we read of Jakhkhja-Cheyiya or Jakhkhyatana, i.e., Yaksha shrines. The best places where Mahâvîra used to stay were the Yaksha shrines. There are quite a number of folk songs for the Bir which in Gujarat are known as Silogo or verses. He said that in his early days he remembered quite a number of Silogo verses. The worship of Fiftysix Yoginis is in accompaniment of Bir worship. It is believed that without a Yaksha and Yakshi being installed as guardian deities no Jaina temple is well protected. There are stories stating that a wild Yaksha became troublesome and when he was properly propitiated he became pacified. The original name of Mahâvîra was Vardhamâna. When he became famous he got the name of Mahâvîra or ‘Senior Vîra’, i.e., the great Yaksha. It is possible that the name Mahâvîra was adopted from the vocabulary of Bir worship. Sri Parameshwari Lal stated that in his dialect there is a saying ‘If I accomplish this I would get the title of Bâvanbir’ (aisâ karâh to bâvan bir kahâhî). It seems that at one time a list of Fiftytwo Bir godlings was drawn up like the 108 centres of Devî worship. In the list of Birs given in the Prithvîrâja Râso there are several names taken from an older tradition, e.g., Mânikarudra, Samudrataraça, Samudrâsoka, Indrâvîra, Jâmavîra, Sahasrânga, Narasîmha, Devâgni, Kshetrapâla, Lohabhañjana, etc. Mânikarudra of this list is most likely the same as Mañîbhadrâ Yaksha of ancient times who was the right hand of Kubera and was worshipped at Mathurâ and Padmâvatî. At Parkham in Mathurâ a colossal image of Mañîbhadrâ Yaksha has been found. In Bengal Mañîbhadrâ Yaksha is worshipped even today as Mânikbir. As Mañîbhadrâ was considered to be their deity by the caravan merchants of Padmâvatî, similarly Mânikbir is the godling of fishermen and boatmen. In the Arânyakaparva of the Mahâbhârata it is described how a big caravan of merchants was travelling and crossing the Vetravati river. It is said there that the leader of the merchants (Jyeshîha-sârthavâha) and his companions were devotees of Mañîbhadrâ Yaksha.
In the beginning in very early times the shrines of Yakshas and other deities were of the nature of a platform open to the sky. These were sometimes demarkated by enclosures. No image was installed on these platforms but only a small mound of earth served as the aniconic representation of the deity. In the case of Yaksha it was a small conical mound with a pointed top. Sometimes later, probably from about the Mauryan period, large-sized stone images of Yakshas began to be made out of single block of stones and this tradition was followed subsequently in the case of gigantic statues of Bodhisattvas, Buddha, Vishnu and Siva. The mode of cult worship adopted for the Yakshas became a part of Hinduism and has continued for more than two thousand years.

During the present time we find the worship of Pañchapir at several places. In reality the word Pañchapir seems to have been derived from Pañchavira under Muslim influence. In ancient times Vaisravana, Manibhadra, Purṇabhadra, etc. were the Yakshas offered worship in popular cult. Their list is found in the Sabhāparva and the Āṭānātiya-suttanta of the Dighanikāya. It is a natural phenomenon that out of the several lists of Yakshas popular in cult worship a few names emerged as the foremost and these became a group of Pañchavira Yakshas. A list actually occurs in the Vishnudharmottara Purāṇa (III, 222. 13-5) giving the names as 1. Maṇibhadra, 2. Dirghabhadra, 3. Purṇabhadra, 4. Yakshabhadra, 5. Svabhadr. After the model of the Five Yakshas or Pañchaviras, a list of the five Vrishni heroes (Pañchavristhī Vīras) was drawn as mentioned in the Morā well-inscription of Mathurā. In the Daśakumāracharita there is also a reference to the Pañchavira-goshthi, i.e., a club organised for worshipping the Pañchaviras. According to the commentator a countryside club became famous by this name (तत्पार्णविरा-गोष्ठिनं यत्तु जानपदानि सदाः). The word Vīra in Pañchavira stands for a Yaksha. The place where a club was founded in honour to five Yakshas became known as 'Pañchavira-Goshthi'.
If we accept the equation that *Pir* is the same as *Bir* of later times many a conundrum of religious history becomes illumined. Pt. Hazari Prasad Dwivedi and Pt. Sukhalal Sanghavi have both accepted this identification of *Pañchapīr* with *Pañchavīra*. According to Pt. Dwivedi the pronunciation of *Bir* as *Pir* is very probable in Chūlikā Paisāchi or Panjabi. When the Muslims advanced from the Panjab side to the east and Bengal they carried with them this epithet of *Pañchapīr*.

Dr. P. L. Vaidya informed me that Bir worship is also popular in Mahārāṣṭra. Dr. Haridasa Bhattacharyya, Professor of Religion at the Hindu University, informed me that Bengal has preserved many forms of Bir worship. We have already referred to Mānik Pir. Similar to Satya Pir is worshipped there. My colleague Dr. Awadh Kishor Narain informed me that in the Māgadhi area of Bihar almost every village has a Barahm shrine or platform of Barahm worship. The platform has a tree nearby or is built under it. The Barahm shrine is usually located near the passage marking the entry to the village. There are folk songs about the worship of Barahm-deva. In Ballia district the Barahm shrine or platform is merely known as *Asthān* (Skt. *Sthāna*) or Chaurā (Skt. *Chatvāra*).

On 4. 5. 52 I came across a Yaksha shrine built in the University campus and obtained some information about the Bir cult from a villager who was carrying his load of vegetables to the market. We both passed by a shrine and I enquired the name of its deity. He first mentioned it as a Mandir or temple but later on corrected himself by saying that it was a ‘Dīh’. Then I enquired if it was a *Sthāna* and then he confirmed it saying that it was the Asthān (dialectical form of Sthāna) or the shrine of a Bir. On enquiry he gave out its name as Karaman Bir and added that there was also a shrine of Mānik Bir. This gladdened me to find that the name of Maṇihadra Yaksha still survived as Mānik Bir in folk worship. He is worshipped at the time of floods or epidemic. Maṇihadra was at one time the foremost amongst the Yakshas and only next in command
to Kubera. There was a centre of his worship at Pāwāyā (old Pādmāvatī) near Gwalior where there was "a club of his devotees who lived a life of extreme happiness as if they were still care-free like the children in the mother's womb". The devotees of Maṇiphadra cultivated this attitude of mind and considered themselves free from all anxiety and worry. Actually in olden times there was a belief in the existence of an Auspicious Jewel, Bhadramani, which was in the possession of the Yaksha Maṇiphadra and the type of which existed in the treasury of Yudhishthira under the name of Divyamanī. The jewel was the source of prosperity and wealth and many other perfections which are named in the story of the Pūrṇaka Yaksha as recorded in a Jātaka. Maṇiphadra was the presiding deity of this Auspicious Jewel and therefore his followers felt so contented and happy.

Folk culture is immortal and undecaying. Many institutions coming from times immemorial are preserved in folklore and can be identified by stretching a little. I asked the same person as to where the shrine of Koṭamāl could be seen. He directed me to a modest shrine built on a mound saying that the goddess Koṭamāl wielded great influence, and possessed miraculous powers. I at once realised the greatness of this goddess who really belongs to South Indian folk cult under the name of Koṭṭavī, originally a nude goddess whose worship was from the earliest time most popular. She was named as ‘Koṭṭavai’, but sanskritised as Koṭṭavī as mentioned by Bāņa in the Harshacharita. She was originally the nude mother-goddess of South India whose cult also spread in the north up to the Hīmahālayas and also in the west up to Baluchistan. It was least expected that Koṭṭavī would be found enshrined in the University campus but such is the triumph of folk religion in India that it has preserved many ancient folk cults up to our own time. Koṭṭavī is mentioned in the Bhāgavata as the mother of Bāņāsura and a shrine to her still exists in Almora district at Koṭalgarh, 12 miles from Lohāghāṭ. The local tradition makes it the centre of Koṭṭavī worship. Her
upper body is covered with a coat of mail and the lower half being nude. It is said that Bānāsura, the descendant of Bali, once fought with Lord Vishnu. The number of Asuras who were revived exceeded those who died in the fight. Then the Devas brought Mahākāli into existence. She slew both the Asuras and the goddess Koṭṭvī. Koṭalagarh literally signifies the citadel of the nude woman (Amrit Bazar Patrika, 19. 5. 1852, Hill. Supplement, p. 3). This information gives proof of the worship of a South Indian goddess right into the interior of the Himalayas. Some more evidence is available about her worship extending in the western direction. It is stated in the Vāmanā Purāṇa that the goddess of Hiṅgulā was originally named as Koṭṭvī which must have been her ancientmost form. Later on during the Gupta period she began to be worshipped as Charchikā, who was a typical goddess of the Gupta period. Thus we have several strata of religious worship superimposed one above another. As for example Koṭṭvī of the Dravidians, Hiṅgulā or Nanā of the Scythians and Charchikā of the Brahmanical religion. The Vāmanā Purāṇa specifically mentions that the name of that goddess was Charchikā. It was a fact of religious history during the Gupta period. In the Sujā (Rewa district) inscription of the Gupta emperor Skandagupta there is a reference to the building of a shrine of goddess Charchikā whose worship was popular during that time. The name Charchikā has now gone out of use but the statement of the Vāmanā Purāṇa makes it certain that her original name was Koṭṭvī and under Śaka influence she got the new name of Nāṇī, Nanā or Nanāiā as on the Kushāṇa coins.

On 6.5.52 during my morning walk I met two persons coming from village side. When they approached the shrine of Karaman Bir they stopped there and taking off their shoes made obeisance to the Karaman Bir. I asked them as to what it was and they said that it was the shrine (Stūpa) of Karaman Bir. Continuing my talk I enquired about the difference between Bir and Śiva. One of them replied in a definite
manner that there was a Bir shrine in every village and so with that of a Śiva-liṅga. It was not necessary that there should be a Śiva temple in every village. One temple for two or more villages will suffice but it was essential that there should be a Bir shrine in each village. It is said in a local saying—‘There is a Ṭhākur and a Bir in every village’ (Gāon gāon ko Ṭhākur gāon ṭhāk ko Bir). He also pointed out that a Śiva-liṅga is smaller in size and rounded at the top but the symbol of a Bir is conical and bigger in size. The symbol of Karaman Bir in the University is 5 ft. high and 7½ ft. at the base. The third distinctive sign is that there is a small niche about the middle of the conical symbol of a Bir for lighting a lamp; no such depression is in the case of a Śiva-liṅga. The next point is that a Śiva-shrine may have some other images of Gaṅgāśa, Pārvati etc. But a Bir shrine has none of them and stands alone on its platform. From this interview I learnt for the first time that the tradition of Bir worship was distinct from that of Śiva worship and the former exceeded the latter in antiquity, popularity and importance. Amongst the people Bir worship was popular during earlier ages when it was supplanted in some centres by Śiva worship.

One evening my assistant Pt. Tilakdhar came with the news that in the city of Vārāṇasī there is a Ḍauḍḍā Bir and a Bullā Bir. It was pointed out that the Bir deities outside the limits of Assi are not genuine whereas those within the limits of the city are original. This traditional belief is confirmed by some historical evidence given in the Matsya Purāṇa stating that there was at first the worship of Yakshas in the city of Vārāṇasī which was replaced by that of Śiva who ordained that only the followers of Śiva should remain in the city and those of Yakshas should go outside. Those shrines of Bir divinities which had existed from much earlier times continued to be there such as Lahurā Bir and Bullā Bir signifying the Junior Yaksha and the Senior Yaksha. There is a small shrine of Daitarā Bir along the path of the Pañchakroṣṭi-Parikramā,
who, as the name indicates, was at one time a blood-thirsty
ogre. Śrī Parameshwari Lal informed me that there is also a
shrine of Daitarā Bābā in the Chetganj area. This slightly
hints that the number of Bīr shrines outside Vārāṇasī may be
equal to those within the city. Outside Vārāṇasī the most
important centre of Bīr worship is the shrine of Harasū
Barahm in which ‘Barahm’ stands for the Yaksha and ‘Harasū’
for Hari-Keśava. He is regarded as the Lord of that area to
this day. The villager had mentioned to me the name of Khorā
Bīr as the deity in the village of Tikari. It is the same as
Khoraka given in the Śāntiparva (283.53) who was considered
to be the guardian deity of the bullocks and other cattle.
Khorakāḥ sauṛabhayānām, i.e., the wrath of Śiva which
spread in several forms also appeared as Khoraka in
respect of the domestic animals of the village. Khoraka was
the name of both a disease and a Bīr. There is an unimportant
shrine on the right hand side of the road outside the Univer-
sity gate named as Barahm Bīr in which the word ‘Barahm’ is
reminiscent of ancient Sanskrit word Brahma, a synonym of
the Yaksha.

The name Dauṇḍī Bīr is worthy of attention. Its Sanskrit
name is Dīpḍima Vīra. We are told that outside the city of
Vaiśālī, capital of the Lichchhavīs there was a shrine (Āyatana)
of Ghantā Yaksha. When any outsider entered the city surrep-
titiously the bell round the neck of Ghantā Yaksha began to
ring and the unauthorised stranger was apprehended especially
at the toll barrier. The Dauṇḍī Bīr was believed to function
as such on the outskirts of ancient Kāśi. Many Bīr names are
after those of human beings. The real difference between the
Vedic gods and the Bīr divinities of the folk cult was that the
latter were modelled after real human beings (Purusha-prakri-
sika Deva). The Vaiśvā Purāṇa states that Five Vishnu Viras
had the normal personality of human beings (Purusha-prakri-
sika Deva). During my visit to Bodhgaya, I learnt that there
was a shrine of Barahm Bīr near the Bodhgaya temple. I was
informed that almost in every village of Magadha there is a Bir shrine at which worship is still offered to the Bir godling.  

Even to-day the geographical distribution of Bir worship extends from Bengal to Mahārāṣṭra and from Rajasthan to Uttar Pradesh, about which more evidence was available on enquiry from friends. If we can direct the course of folklore survey according to some precise method we may extract more information on this point by which it will be more profitable to interpret this material of folk religion in the light of ancient Yaksha worship. Dr. Menon of the English Department, Hindu University, informs to my great delight that in Kerala and Tamilnadu there is still a tradition of Yaksha worship, and almost in each village the cult of Yaksha is prevalent. The folklorist of South India should pay attention to the collection of such evidence.

In our paper entitled "Gāhā Palhāyā" (Janaśpada, No. 2) we have shown that Yaksha worship was accompanied with questions and answers as given by the Yaksha deity which was known as Praśnavyākaraṇa. Even now when a person is possessed by a Yaksha all persons present begin to ask questions with such interrogatories as 'Who you are?' 'Whence have you come?' Thus whatever they like they ask. This was an essential element of Yaksha worship. In the Mahābhārata the dialogue between Yaksha and Yudhishthira is in the form of question-and-answer in which Yaksha asks a series of questions and Yudhishthira gives answers to them. This model of question-and-answer was known as Brahmodya, i.e., 'discourse with Brahma or Yaksha'. This style was a characteristic feature of Yaksha worship and goes back in antiquity to the Vedic period. In the Yajurveda (Book 23) there is a discourse called Brahmodya in which several stanzas are the same as in the Mahābhārata. It appears that this chapter belongs to folk literature and both the author of the Yajurveda and Sage Vyāsa of the epic borrowed them from the same source. This

I. For this information I am indebted to Ram Avatar, atten-
dant of the P. W. D. Bungalow, B. H. U.
is an exceptional liason between Vedic and folk literature. Our surprise is much heightened when we find that the same stanzas have continued in the Kuru dialect under the name of Gâhâ-Pâliyâ even to our own days. In folklore there is a line ‘E tâ kaun jagat meî ek hâi ? E tâ kaun jagat meî jâgatâ’ ?

In reply to this question it is said ‘E tâ Râm jagat meî ek hâi / E tâ Dharma jagat meî jâgatâ’. This question occurs in the Yajurveda and the epic in this form:—

Kim svidêkâki charati ka u svijjâyate punah /
Sûrya ekâki charâti chandramâ jâyate punah //

If the Silogo and other stanzas and songs of Yaksha worship are collected and scrutinised there may be found other motifs of a similar character.

We may also mention that the Greek ‘Oracles’ based on questions and answers were similar to such elements of the most ancient Yaksha worship in India. It is stated in the Karnaparva that these Oracles were known as “Samisiddham vachanottaram”, i.e., a question to which the reply was considered as of a decisive nature. This was the nature of Greek Oracles; the Oracle of Delphi being one of them. With the coming of Indo-Greeks in India with their capital at Sâkala or Syâlkot the Madraka-yavanas also brought with them several of their institutions including dances, drinks, Bacchanalian feasts and festivals, symposia, songs, and oracles at which imbecile priests slowly drugged with narcotic were maintained by the state to officiate as interlocuters for the purpose of uttering the oracles. The reference in the epic to this institution is surprising enough and has great similarity with the form of Yaksha worship prevailing in our own country. ¹

Coomarasawamy was the first to draw attention to the widespread literary evidence of Yaksha worship in an authoritative way. He wrote a book entitled Yaksha (published in two

¹. See my Presidential Address, All-India Oriental Conference, Guwahati Session, 1964.
parts by the Smithsonian Institute, Washington) where he brought together much valuable evidence from the Buddhist, Jaina and Brahmanical sources. We learn that in ancient times there were important Yaksha shrines near large cities. There was a shrine of Yaksha Śākyavardhana outside Kapila-vastu, to which the parents of Siddhārtha went with the child to worship the Yaksha. There was a shrine of Višāla Yaksha outside Vaiśālī. There was a shrine of Puragā Yaksha in Paṭaliputra. There was a shrine of Suchilema Yaksha in Gayā. According to the Jaina text Sūrya-Prajñāpī there was a shrine of Maṇiḥbhadra Yaksha in Mithilā. The Aupaṇātha Sūtra mentions a Chaitya shrine of Pūrṇabhadra Yaksha in Champā (Bhagalpur). The rich and the poor assembled there and offered worship with flags, bells, peacock-feathers, sandal paste, full-jars, incense, red-sandal paste, flowers, sweets; lamps etc. There in the fair held at the shrine all kinds of jugglers, acrobats, performers, musicians, wrestlers also assembled and displayed their performances. This kind of celebration was known as Yātrā, from which was derived Hindi word Jāt and Prakrit Jattā. It should be noted that during the protracted tradition of folklore other elements may survive or disappear but that of a fair held at some holy place lives for ever, although some changes may occur in its original nature. We believe that old fairs in honour of Nāga, Yaksha and Devī worship have come down to our own days and the proper thing would be to make a comprehensive survey of these local fairs and feasts. For example, the Mahābhārata mentions the fair of Maṇiṇāga in Rājaγriha who was the presiding serpent deity of the place. The tradition of that worship still continues at Maṇiyār Maṭh in Rājaγriha. From the sculptures found there it is certain that for four hundred years from the Kushāṇa to the Gupta period, Maṇiyār Maṭh was a centre of Nāga worship. At Noh in Bharatpur the colossal stone Yaksha installed in the open continued to be worshipped under the name of 'Jākha' or 'Jakhaiyā'. If we stretch the surface of Indian folk life we find many superimposed layers
which bear witness to the chequered religious history of this land. Our society does not look upon as suspect any mode of religious worship nor does it reject the various cults but it keeps them under various names and forms. Each institution survives by its own life-sap and shakes hand with others during the moving flux of time. From Gauhati in Assam which was the centre of the worship of the mother-goddess Kāmākhya up to Saurāshtra where Śivalīṅga was worshipped at Piabhāsa and Somanātha, and from there up to Āndhra and Kerala, many races of Kirāta, Nīshāda, Śabara, Mūndā, Dravīḍa and Ārya resided in concord rubbing shoulders with each other and amalgamating many elements of their religion and culture. In the Yogini Tantra the worship of Kāmākhya is said to be a festival of the Śabaras (Śaburotsava) where loose morals of the wild mountaineous tribes were also admitted as part of the worship ritual. That very text refers to the local belief as the ‘Dharma’ of the Kirāta people (Kairātaja dharma, Yogini Tantra 2. 9. 9.). This is a factual statement of the position which prevailed in that shrine of goddess Kāmākhya. The Kirātas or Mon-Khmer people reside in that area and beyond to the east and north. It was natural that their cult practices should prevail in that region. It is a characteristic feature of the national Indian culture that the Āryan people came into contact with the local population and influenced their way of life and religious worship with its own elements which were of a higher standard of moral and religion. But in doing so they did not use any coercion but acted in the most natural manner so as to elicit spontaneous response from others. In turn Āryan culture itself became deeply influenced by those local cultures. For example, the mode of Yaksha worship became acceptable in the Vaishnava Bhāgavata cult. The Gītā refers to this as the mode of worship by means of offering ‘leaves, flowers, fruits and water’ which was primarily a form of Yaksha worship. To-day for thousands of years this has become the standard mode of worship in all Brahmanical temples but prior to this the performance of Yajña, Vrata,
Upavāsa, Dāna etc. played an important part for divine worship. In ancient Yaksha worship there were three essential elements, viz., instrumental music, flower and Bali offering. At the end of worship some prasāda were distributed. This mode of offering worship was different from that of Yajña. As in iconography the image of Viṣṇu was evolved from Yaksha images and as the images of Five Viṣṇa heroes were evolved from the Five Yaksha or Pañchavīra images similarly the Bhāgavatas sublimated the mode of Yaksha worship and made it applicable in the Vaishnava shrines. Of pratītya puskpanth phalṭum toyam none was necessary in Vedic Yajñas where the worship was of a different order by means of invoking the various gods round the fire altar. Amongst the Bhāgavatas also these two streams of worship continued to exist side by side for a much longer time. In the Parama Samhitā, Jayākhya Samhitā and other ancient Samhitā texts of the Bhāgavatas we find clear injunctions to the performance of Vedic Yajñas for the worship of Viṣṇu, and on the other hand to the mode of worship comprising dance, music, instrumental music, leaves, flowers, fruits, banners and Bali offering which were approved being taken from folk worship. Thus Indian culture has progressed by these sproutings of the seed of synthesis and harmony, with its motto as propounded by Aśoka.

Samavāya eva tādhu.
Appendix I

1. Bāvanavīra Nāmāvalī

   (From Jinaḍattasūri-charita by Jayasāgarasūri)

1. Kshetrapāla Vīra
2. Kapila
3. Nārasimha
4. Gopāla
5. Bhairava
6. Baṭuka
7. Garuḍa
8. Raktavarṇa
9. Devasena
10. Rudra
11. Varuṇa
12. Vajra
13. Vajrajaṅgha
14. Bhadra
15. Skandha
16. Kuru
17. Priyaṅkara
18. Priyamitra
19. Vahni
20. Kandarpa
21. Harṣa
22. Ekagandha
23. Ghaṭopatha
24. Dāyaka
25. Kāla
26. Mahākāla
27. Meghanāda
28. Bhumā
29. Mahābhīma
30. Tuṅgabhadra
31. Vidyādhara
32. Vasumitra
33. Viśvasena
34. Nāga
35. Nāgaḥasta
36. Pradyumna
37. Kathpila
38. Bakula
39. Uraddhapada
40. Trīmukha
41. Piśācha
42. Bhūtabhairava
43. Mahāpiśācha
44. Kālamukha
45. Kunaka
46. Asthimukha
47. Retovedhasa
48. Śmaśānāchāra
49. Kelikāla
50. Bhṛṅga
51. Kaṭṭaka
52. Viḥīṣhaṇa
2. Bāvanavīra Nāmāvai

1. Vāpillo
2. Khudīo
3. Talapaharī
4. Nāḍitoḍa
5. Sulibhañjaṇa
6. Masāṇalaṭaṇa
7. Gaḍharpūḍaṇa
8. Samudratāraṇa
9. Samudrasoṣhaṇa
10. Lohabhañjaṇa
11. Saṅkalatadaṇa
12. Visakhāparo
13. Ruṇḍamāla
14. Agiyo
15. Bāpavira
16. Jamaghaṇṭa
17. Kāla
18. Akāla
19. Agnikānti
20. Vishakānti
21. Ragatiyo
22. Koilo
23. Kālīyāra
24. Kālavela
25. Kālaghaṇṭa
26. Indravīra
27. Yamavīra
28. Devāri
29. Durītāri
30. Harādīra
31. Jhānapaḍo
32. Māṇibhadra
33. Kāpaḍīvo
34. Kedūro
35. Nāharasimha
36. Goro
37. Ghaṭa
38. Kaṭuka
39. Vaga
40. Mahāvaga
41. Samtosha
42. Mahāsamarosha
43. Bhramara
44. Mahābhramara
45. Sahasrākṣa
46. Sāhāsāṅga
47. Kṣetrapāla
48. Bhūtakhāṇa
49. Śākanimāra
50. Devarathabhañjaṇa
51. Sālavāhana
52. Ādramāra

Iti Bāvanavīra.
3. Bāvanavīra Nāmāvalī

(Based on manuscripts recently purchased).\(^1\)

1. Chhāpilovīra
2. Dhuliyovīra
3. Talapāhārīvīra
4. Sūlibhañjanavīra
5. Nāditodanavīra
6. Masāhātochanavīra
7. Gaḍāupāchanavīra
8. Samudrāntaranavīra
9. Samudrasoshanavīra
10. Parvatāupāchanavīra
11. Lohabhañjanavīra
12. Sānkalatochanavīra
13. Vishapahārīvīra
14. Rūndamālavīra
15. Agishāuvīra
16. Sāpashāuvīra
17. Jamaghanṭīvīra
18. Asalatīvīra
19. Kāloviṇa
20. Goroviṇa
21. Aginakāntavīra
22. Vishakāntavīra
23. Ragatiyovīra
24. Kāliyavīra
25. Kālavelaṇa
26. Kālaghračañavīra
27. Iudraṇavīra
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42. Santosavīra
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49. Śākanīṃravīra
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51. Sahaśrāṃshyavīra
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1. For these lists of Fiftytwo Bīr godlings, on pp. 200–203, we are indebted to Shri Agar Chand Nahta of Bikaner.
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1. Chausaṭha Yogini Nāmāvalī

1. Brahmasī 
2. Kumārī 
3. Saṅkarī 
4. Rudrāṇī 
5. Kīṅkālī 
6. Karāli 
7. Kālī 
8. Mahākāli 
9. Chāmuṇḍā 
10. Jvalāmukhī 
11. Kāmakshā 
12. Vārāhī 
13. Bhadrakālī 
14. Durgā 
15. Ambikā 
16. Lalitā 
17. Gorāvī 
18. Sumangalā 
19. Rohaṇī 
20. Kapilā 
21. Sūlakarā 
22. Kūḍalānī 
23. Trīpurā 
24. Kurakulyā 
25. Bhairavī 
26. Champāvatī 
27. Nārasiṁhī 
28. Niraṅjanā 
29. Hemavati 
30. Pretāsanā 
31. Īśvari 
32. Veśāṁnarī 

33. Vināyakī 
34. Yamaṇgaṇṭā 
35. Sarasvatī 
36. Totilā 
37. Veṁsanavī 
38. Vaṅdī 
39. Saṁshani 
40. Padamanī 
41. Chitraṇī 
42. Vāruṇī 
43. Jamabhagani 
44. Sūryaputri 
45. Susītalā 
46. Krishnavārāhī 
47. Raktākṣi 
48. Kālarātrī 
49. Akāśī 
50. Śresṭhanī 
51. Jayā 
52. Vijayā 
53. Imavati 
54. Vāgeśvari 
55. Kātyāinī 
56. Agnihotri 
57. Chakresvari 
58. Mahāvidyā 
59. Īśānī 
60. Bhavānī 
61. Bhuvanesvari 
62. Chakresvari 
63. Moharātrī (Mahārātī) 
64. Thi (Dhi) Devī

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2. Chausaṣṭha Yogini Nāmāvalī

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2. Mahājogini
3. Siddhajogini
4. Yugeśvarī
5. Pretākshi
6. Dākinī
7. Kāli
8. Kalarātrī
9. Nīśācharī
10. Kāṅkāri
11. Siddhi Vaitāli
12. Hṛṅkāri
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22. Rākshasī
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24. Viraktākshi
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26. Vīrī
27. Kumārī
28. Chaṇḍikā
29. Vīrahī
30. Muṇḍadhārīṇī
31. Bhairavī
32. Vajrāṇī
33. Krodhāye
34. Durmukhi
35. Pretavāhanī
36. Kaṇṭakī
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