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Ancient Indian Folk Cults

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Professor Vasudeva S. Agrawala



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ANCIENT INDIAN FOLK CULTS

CHAPTER ONE

यो हि यस्मिन् रतो धर्मे स तं पूजयते सदा । (महाभाष्यमेधीय पर्व)

The Vedas have preserved a full and comprehensive account of the metaphysical and religious beliefs of the Āryan 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 Samhitā* 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-valśa Vanaspatī*) 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 Yakshaṁ bhuvanasya madhye tapasī krāntarī salilasya prishṭhe.’

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 Yudhisṭhira in the *Āraṇyakaparva*, 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

Bir-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 "Prithivī Sūkta" of the *Atharvaveda* makes a significant statement :—

'Janam bibhrati bahudhā vivāchasam nānādharmānam
Prithivī yathaukasam/Sahasram dhārā draviṇasya me duhām
dhruveva dhenuranapasphuranti' // (AV. XII. 1. 45)

The diversity of the peoples inhabiting the various parts of the country (*yathaukasam bahudhā janam*), the variety of their dialects (*vivāchasam*), and the multiplicity of their cults (*nānādharmānam*)—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 were 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 Sūkta"), 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 (*Oshadhi*)
4. Plants (*Vīrudhaḥ*)
5. Indra
6. Sūrya
7. Mitra
8. Varuṇa
9. Bhaga
10. Amśa
11. Vivasvān

12. Savitā
13. Pūshā
14. Tvashṭā
15. Gandharva
16. Apsaras
17. Āśvins
18. Brahmapaspati
19. Aryamā
20. Ahorātra (Day and Night)
21. Sun and Moon (*Sūryachandramasau*)
22. Viśve Ādityas (all the Ādityas)
23. Vāta
24. Parjanya
25. Antariksha (Firmament)
26. Diśaḥ (the Quarters)
27. Āśāḥ (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. Veśānta or Taḍāga (Lakes)
43. Saptarshi
44. Apo-Devīḥ (Divine Waters)
45. Prajāpatis
46. Pitṛis
47. Yama
48. Devāḥ Divishadaḥ (Gods of Heaven)

49. Devāḥ Antarikshashadaḥ (Gods of the middle air)
50. Prithivī-śṛīta-śakra Devāḥ (Mighty Gods of the Earth)
51. Ādityas
52. Rudras
53. Vasus
54. Divi Devāḥ (Gods in Heaven as Trayastriṃśa, Tushita, etc.)
55. Atharvāṇaḥ (Sons of Atharva)
56. Aṅgirasah (Sons of Aṅgiras)
57. Yajña
58. Yajamāna
59. Ṛichah
60. Sāma Songs (as Bṛihat, Rathantara, Raivata, etc.)
61. Bheshaja (Healing Charms)
62. Yajush formulas
63. Hotra (Litanies of the Hotṛi Priest)
64. Darbha
65. Arāya (Fiends)
66. Rakshas (Demons)
67. Sarpa (Snakes)
68. Puṇyajana (Kinnara)
69. Pitṛis
70. Mṛityu
71. Ṛitus (Seasons)
72. Ṛitupati (Lords of Seasons)
73. Hāyana (Quarters)
74. Saṁvatsara (Year)
75. Māsa (Months)
76. Samāḥ (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 Chāturmahārājikadevas)
78. Viśve Devāḥ (All-Gods)
79. Their Consorts (*Viśva-patnī*)
80. Sarva Deva (Collected Gods)
81. Collective Dames (*Sarva-patnī*)

82. Bhuta (Spirits)
83. Bhūtapatiḥ (Lord of Ghosts and Spirits)
84. Devīḥ Pañcha-pradiśaḥ (Five Sky-Regions as Goddesses)
85. Twelve Seasons as Gods (*Devā Dvādaśa Rītavaḥ*)

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, Vishnu, Bhaga, Savitā, Ushā, Tvashtā, Aryamā, Soma, Sūrya, Chandra, etc. whose rank and dignity were of highest order. On the other hand we find such names as Yaksha, Rakshas, Sarpa, Bhūta, Punyajana, etc. whose worship was of an Austic character accompanied by offerings of blood (*rakia-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 *Ashṭādhyāyī* of Pāṇini. In fact a new feature of the Pāṇinian 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 *Māsika* denoted the oblation prepared to worship the deity named *Māsa*. Similarly for the *Devatā* called *Samvatsara* the oblation was noted as *Sāmvatsarika*. There was also worship offered to the deities presiding over the seasons, e. g., Vasanta or Spring, the oblation to it known as *Vāsantam 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 Prosthapada, 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 *Rohiṇi* was believed to be sheltered by the *Devalā* 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, eatables, and lighting of lamps, etc. This mode of worship essentially differed from that of the Vedic Yajña. In the words of the *Gītā* it may be called the '*Patraṁ puṣhpam phalaṁ 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-Yātrā* or simply *Yātrā* 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 *Harivaṃśa* the festival of the Raivataka mountain was known as *Maha* but in several manuscripts we find the variant reading as *Makha* (also *Harivaṃśa* 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 *Harivaṃśa* styles the lifting of Govardhana by Kṛishṇa as *Giri-Yajña* and *Giri-maha* (sthitaḥ Śakramahastāta Śrīmān girimahastvayam. *Harivaṃśa* 2. 17. 11; Tanma hyaṁ 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 :

Mantrayajñaparā viprāḥ Sitāyajñāścha karshukāḥ/
Giriyajñās tathā gopā iḥyo'smābhir girir vane// (*Harivaṃśa*
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-yātrā (Festival of Rudra)
4. Sivajattā=Śiva-yātrā (Festival of Śiva)
5. Vessamañajattā=Vaiśravaṇa-yātrā (Festival of Vaiśravaṇa)
6. Nāgajattā=Nāga-yātrā (Festival of Nāga)
7. Jakhkhajattā=Yaksha-yātrā (Festival of Yaksha)
8. Bhūyajatta=Bhūta-yātrā (Festival of Bhūta)
9. Naḷjattā=Nadī-yātrā (Festival of Nadī)
10. Talāyajattā=Taḍāga-yātrā (Festival of Taḍāga)
11. Rukkhajattā=Vṛksha-yātrā (Festival of Tree deity)
12. Cheiyajattā=Chaitya-yātrā (Festival of Chaitya)
13. Pavvayajattā=Parvata-yātrā (Festival of Mountain deity)
14. Ujjāñajattā=Udyāna-yātrā (Festival to Garden deity)
15. Girijattā=Giri-yātrā (Festival of Mountain deity)¹

—*Nāyādhammakāḥ.*

Another list which is even bigger is found in the *Rāyaṇa-seniya Sutta* :

1. Indamaha (Festival of Indra)

¹ Ajjarūyagiḥ nagare Indamahe i vā Khandamahe i vā evaṃ Rudda-Śiva-Besamaṇa-Nāga-Jakhkha-Bhūya-naḷ-talāya rukkhkha-cheiya-pavvaya-ujjāṇa-giri-jattā i vā jao paṇṇa bahave uggā bhogā jāva e gadi siṃ e gāmimuhā niggachchhati. *Nāyādhammakāḥ* 1.25 (Vaidya edition, p. 23).

2. Khandamaha (Festival of Skanda)
3. Ruddamaha (Festival of Rudra)
4. Maundamaha=Mukundamaha (Festival of Mukunda)
5. Siyamaha (Festival of Śiva)
6. Vessamaṇamaha (Festival of Vaiśravaṇa or Kubera)
7. Nāgamaha (Festival of Nāga)
8. Jakhkhamaha (Festival of Yaksha)
9. Bhūyamaha (Festival of Bhūta)
10. Thūbhamaha=Stūpamaha (Festival of Stūpa)
11. Cheiyamaha=Chaityamaha (Festival of Chaitya)
12. Rukhkhamaha=Vṛkshamaha (Festival of Tree)
13. Girimaha (Festival of Mountain)
14. Darīamaha (Festival of Mountain cave)
15. Aḡaḡamaha=Avaṭamaha (Festival of the Water well)
16. Nāimaha=Nadīmaha (Festival of River)
17. Saramaha (Festival of Pool)
18. Sāgaramaha (Festival of Ocean).

Besides the above, two important lists are found in Buddhist literature. One in the *Niddesa* commentary of *Suttanipāla* and the other in the *Mūlindapañña*. 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. Vāsudevavatika (worshippers of God Vāsudeva)
7. Baladevatika (worshippers of God Baladeva)
8. Puṇṇabhaddavatika (worshippers of Pūrṇabhadra)
9. Maṇibhaddavatika (worshippers of Maṇibhadra)
10. Aggivatika (worshippers of the Fire God)
11. Supaṇṇavatika (worshippers of Suparṇa or Bird)
12. Yakhkhavatika (worshippers of Yaksha)
13. Asuravatika (worshippers of Asura)
14. Gandhabbavatika (worshippers of Gandharva)

15. Mahārājavatika (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 *Milindaapañña* styles the followers of the teachers of these cults as *Gaṇa*, 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 *Milindaapañña* is as follows :—

1. Pabbatā (followers of the Mountain)
2. Dhammagiriya=Dharmagiriya (followers of Dharma-giri 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 Sūrya cult)
9. Kālidevatā (followers of Kālī cult or Kālakaṛṇī god less)
10. Sivā=Śaiva (followers of Śiva cult)
11. Vāsudevā (followers of Vāsudeva cult).²

1. Santeke samaṇabrahmaṇā vatasuddhikā. Te hatthivatikā honti. Assa—go—kukkura—kāka—Vāsudeva—Baladeva—Puṇṇabhadda—Maṇibhadda—Aggi—Nāga—Supaṇṇa—Yakkha—Asura—Gandhabba—Mahārāja—Chandima—Sūriya—Inda—Brahma—Deva—Disāvatika honti. (*Mahāvi-desa* 1. 89 & 310).
2. Mallā atonā pabbatā dhammagiriya brahmagiriya naṭakā nachchakā laṅghakā piśāchā maṇibhaddā puṇṇabhaddā chandimasūriyā siridevatā kālidavatā Sivā Vāsudevā-gaṇikā asipāsā bhaddiputtā tesam tesam rahassam tesu tesu gaṇesu yeva charanti avasesūmnasā pihitam. (*Milinda-pañña*, Vāḍekar edition, p. 190.)

There is a shorter list in the *Mānava Gṛhyasūtra* (2. 15) with the following names :—

1. Yaksha
2. Jambhaka
3. Virūpāksha
4. Lohitāksha
5. Vaiśravaṇa
6. Mahāsena
7. Mahādeva
8. Mahārāja

Some other names are also found in different places—

1. Ajāmaha = 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 (Virāṭparvan 12; Ādiparvan 152. 18)
6. Raivatakamaha—Festival of mount Raivataka in Saurāṣṭra (Ādiparvan 211. 2).

The *Majjhimanikāya* mentions Govrata and Kukkuravrata, cult of the Bull and Dog respectively, which are included also in the list of the *Niddesa*. 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 Mañkhkhaligosa

-
1. Govatikoti samādinnavagovato sise simgānaṃ ṭhapetvyā naṅgaṭṭhaṃ bandhitvā gāvī saddhiṃ tiṇāni khādanto viya charati. Kukkuravatikoti samādinnavakukuravato sabbhaṃ sunakakiriyaṃ karoti. *Majjhimanikāya*, Papañcasādanī, Pt. 3, p. 100.

were organised in their respective Gaṇas and Gachchhas similarly the followers of these folk cults were organised under their Gaṇāchārya or religious teachers. They believed that in their next life they would become merged in the deity of their belief (*Devo vā bhavissati devaññatara 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 devavratā devān pīṭrīm yānti pīṭrivratāḥ/

Bhūtāni yānti bhūtejyā yānti madyājino'pi mām|| (9. 23)

The adherents of the cult of the deities were known as Vratika, Bhakta, or observers of their Yātrā, all implying the same thing. In the *Gītā* these deities come under the general name of *Vibhāsi* 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. Vishṇu
2. Ravi=Sūrya
3. Marīchi
4. Chandra (Śaśi)=Moon God
5. Indra (Vāsava)
6. Rudra
7. Vaiśravaṇa
8. Agni =Pāvaka
9. Meru=Mountain God
10. Skanda
11. Sāgara=Sea God
12. Himālaya
13. Aśvattha Vriksha (God of Tree=Rukhṅkha devatā)
14. Gandharva

15. Uchchaiṣravā (Horse deity)
16. Airāvata (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. Simha (the mythical Lion)
25. Garuḍa=Suparṇa
26. Vāyu
27. Makara
28. Nadi 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 Viṣṇu. The Bhāgavatas did not reject any one of them but accepted all as emanations of the Thousand-selfed (*Sahasradhātumā*) Great Being, Mahāpuruṣa, who is Viṣṇu.

Folk Deities in the Viṣṇudharmottara Purāṇa.

We are indebted to the author of the *Viṣṇudharmottara 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

Bhāgavatas coined a new term 'Rocha' for a god selected in this manner, according to one's individual liking :

Brahmansvīyasya cha ruchaḥ devatāyāśchā pūjanam/(*Vishṇu-dharmottara*, 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. Brāhmarocha (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 Aśvamedha sacrifice).
2. Svargarocha (Heaven as the chosen deity).
3. Chakrarocho (Worship of the Chakra of Viṣṇu bestows victory over the internal and external enemies).
4. Vānaspatyarocho (Bestows the fruit of possessing gardens).
5. Annarocha (Gives the fruit of agricultural fields and food).
6. Ahatavāsararocho (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. Āgneyarocho (Agni as Rocha deity confers the fruits of all the Yajñas).
9. Jalarocha (It gives a wealth of pearls and lotus ponds).
10. Sūryarocho (It gives health and freedom from disease in all forms).
11. Chandrarocha (It confers undisturbed peace of mind).
12. Gorocha (By devotion to this many cows come into one's possession like the Kāmadhenu or the wish-fulfilling cow of Indra's heaven).
13. Niyatirocho (Confers long life).
14. Viṣṇurocho (Confers the merit of obtaining Viṣṇu-loka).

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 Sarasvatī gives to one the desired learning and makes the person master of speech and eloquence).
23. Śrīrocha (Worship of goddess Śrī-Lakshmi 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.

This *Purāṇa* lays down two kinds of religious observances, one *Antarvedī*, 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 kāscha kasminnu kāle sampūjayet sadā/Vishvudharmottara*, 3. 221. 7), and the time proper for their worship. This list is as follows :

1. Brahmā
2. Dakṣa Prajāpati
3. Nāsatiya, the two Aśvin gods
4. Bālachandra or Śiva
5. Dvādaśa Sādhyadevatā (12 Sādhyas gods)
6. Triloka (Three Lokas, Earth, Sky and Heaven)
7. Viṣṇu
8. Dvādaśa Bhṛigudevatā (Twelve gods of the Bhṛigu 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. Sarasvatī (Goddess of Learning)
17. Prajñā (Wisdom or higher intelligence)
18. Tṛpṣṭi (Contentment)
19. Kānti (Beauty)
20. Devamātrikās (Divine Mothers)
21. Chandramā (Moon God)
22. Pṛthivī 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 Kūbara the two sons of Kubera
30. Śrī-Goddess (Śrī-Lakshmi)
31. Prīti (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. Bhadrakālī
35. Kātyāyanī
36. Dhṛitī
37. Swāhā
38. Svadhā
39. Riddhi
40. Anasūyā
41. Kshamā
42. Subhīmā
43. Devasenā
44. Velā
45. Jyotsnā (Moonlight)
46. Śachī
47. Gaurī
48. Varuṇānī
49. Yama-patnī (wife of Yama)
50. Dhūmorṇā
51. Sumahābhāgā
52. Mrityuchchāyā.

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 Uchchalśravā
55. Śiva's Nandī Bull, and
56. Vishṇu's vehicle the Great Bird Garuḍa.

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 Aśoka. 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 *Chakradhvaja or the Wheel-Flag of India* (Varanasi, 1961). The list is taken much further to 108 deities as shown below :

57. Nāgadevatā
- 58-61. Kumāra-Skanda-Viśākha-Guha (These four forms of Skanda are styled as Chaturātmā, i. e., the four forms of a single deity)
62. Ṛitus the Seasons
63. Attendants of Skanda
64. Attendants (Pāśvachara) of Rudra
65. Attendants (Pāśvachara) 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 Saranyū or Saffālā)

73. The Marut gods numbering 49 (Ūnapañchāśa 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. Sapta-pātāla (Seven Nether worlds)
79. Sapta-loka (Seven worlds)
80. Sapta-Gaṅgā (Seven streams of Gaṅgā)
81. Sapta-Sarasvatī (Seven streams of Sarasvatī, either in Kurukshetra or one each in different places as in Prayāga, Pushkara, Saurāshṭra, etc.
82. Sapta-Yajña (Seven-fold sacrifices, viz., Seven Pākasaṁstha, Seven Havirasaṁstha and Seven Homasaṁstha, *Mārkaṇḍeya P.23. 38*)
83. Āditya
84. Jayanta, son of Indra
85. Ashṭavasū (the Eight Vasus)
86. Ekānamā (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. Laguḍeśha or Lakulīśvara
91. Dharma
92. Ekādaśa Rudra (Eleven Rudras).
93. Dvādaśa Āditya Jalādhipas
94. Varuṇa
95. Deveśvara (Indra)
96. Viṣṇu
97. Kāmadeva
98. Yaksha
99. Rākshasa
100. Śaṅkha (Conch)

101. Padma (Lotus)
102. Maṇibhadra
103. Piṭṛigaṇa
104. Navagraha (The Nine Planets)
105. Nakshatra (The Stars)
106. Dvādaśamāsa (Twelve Months)
107. Kārttikeya
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 (*ishṭam devamathā-abhyarchya yatheshṭam phalamasṇute*)/*Vishṇuśarmattara* 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. Māheśvarī
2. Brāhmī
3. Kaumārī
4. Mālīnī
5. Sauparṇī
6. Vāyavyā
7. Śākrī
8. Nairṛitī
9. Saurī
10. Saumyā
11. Śivā
12. Dūtī
13. Chāmuṇḍā
14. Vāruṇī
15. Vārāhī
16. Nārasimhī

17. Vaishṇavī
18. Chalachchhikhā (Goddess of the dangling crest)
19. Śātānandā (Goddess of the hundred blisses)
20. Bhagānandā (Goddess of amorous bliss)
21. Pichchhilā (Goddess with peacock's feather)
22. Bhagamālīnī
23. Balā
24. Atibalā
25. Raktā
29. Surabhi (Cow)
27. Mukhamāṇḍikā
28. Mātrīnandā
29. Sunandā
30. Viḍālī (Cat Goddess)
31. Śakunt (Bird)
32. Revatī
33. Mahāraktā
34. Pilapichchhikhā (Goddess with a young attendant holding a bunch of peacocks feathers)
35. Jayā
36. Vijayā
37. Jayantī
38. Aparājitā
39. Kālī
40. Mahākālī
41. Dūtī
42. Subhagā (The beautiful Goddess)
43. Durbhagī (The Ugly Goddess, with deformed or grotesque form)
44. Karālī (Dreadful Goddess)
45. Nandīnī
46. Aditi (Mother of gods)
47. Diti (Mother of Daityas)
48. Mārī
49. Mṛityu
50. Karṇamoṭī

51. Grāmyā
52. Ulūkī (Owl Goddess or Mother of owlets)
53. Ghaṭodari (Goddess with prolapsus of belly)
54. Kapālī
55. Vajrahastā (Goddess holding thunderbolt in her hand)
56. Piśāchī
57. Rākshasī
58. Bhuṣuṇḍī
59. Śarnkarī
60. Chaṇḍā
61. Lāṅgali (Goddess with a plough)
62. Kuṭabhi
63. Kheṭā
64. Sulochanā
65. Dhūmrā
66. Aikavīrā
67. Karālīnī
68. Viśāladaṁshṭripī
69. Śyāmā
70. Trijaṭī
71. Kukkuṭī
72. Vaināyakī
73. Vaitālī
74. Unmattodumbarī
75. Siddhi
76. Lelihānā
77. Kekarī
78. Gardabhī
79. Bhṛīkuṭī
80. Bahuputrī
82. Viḍambinī
83. Krauñchā
84. Śailamukhī
85. Vinatā
86. Surasā

87. Danu
88. Ushā
89. Rambhā
90. Menakā
91. Salilā
92. Chitrarūpī
93. Svāhā
94. Svadhā
95. Vashaṭkārā
96. Dhṛiti
97. Kapardī
98. Māyā
99. Vichitrarūpā
100. Kāmarūpā
101. Saṅgamā
102. Mukhebilā
103. Maṅgalā
104. Mahānāsā
105. Mahāmukhī
106. Kumārī
107. Rochanā
108. Bhīmā
109. Sadāhā
110. Madoddhatā
111. Alambākshī
112. Kālakarṇī
113. Kumbhakarṇī
114. Mahāsuri
115. Keśinī
116. Śaṅkhinī
117. Lambā
118. Piṅgalā
119. Lohitamukhī
120. Ghaṭṭāravā
121. Daṁṣṭrālā

122. Rochanā
123. Kākajaṅghikā
124. Gokarṇikā
125. Ajaṁmukhikā
126. Mahāgrīvā
127. Mahāmukhī
128. Ulkāṁmukhī
129. Dhūmaśīkhā
130. Kampinī
131. Parikampinī
132. Mohanā
133. Kalpanā
134. Kshvelā
135. Nirbhayā
136. Bāhuśālīnī
137. Śarpakarṇī
138. Ekākshī
139. Viśokā
140. Nandinī
141. Jyotsnāmukhī
142. Rabhasā
143. Nikumbhā
144. Raktakalpanā
145. Avikārā
146. Mahāchittā
147. Chandrasenā
148. Manoramā
149. Adarśanā
150. Haratpāpā
151. Mātāṅgī
152. Lambamekhalā
153. Abalā
154. Vañchanā
155. Kālī
156. Pramodā
157. Lāṅgalavatī

158. Chitrā
159. Chitrajalā
160. Koṇā
161. Śāntikā
162. Aghavināśini
163. Lambastani
164. Lambasaṭṭā
165. Viṣaṭṭā
166. Vāsachūrṇini
167. Skhalantī
168. Dīrghakeśī
169. Suchirā
170. Sundarī
171. Śubhā
172. Ayomukhī
173. Kaṭumukhī
174. Krodhini
175. Aśani
176. Kuṭumbikā
177. Muktikā
178. Chandrikā
179. Bālamohini
180. Sāmānyā
181. Hāsini
182. Lambā
183. Kovidārī
184. Savāsavi
185. Śaṅkukarṇī
186. Mahānandā
187. Mahādevī
188. Mahodari
189. Hunkārī
190. Rudrasusaṭṭā
191. Rudreśī
192. Bhūtaḍāmar
193. Piṇḍajihvā

194. Chalajjvālā
195. Śivā
196. Jvālāmukhī
197. Jyeshthā (Alakshmi)

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

1. Kākī
2. Halimā
3. Rudrā
4. Bṛihati
5. 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*. Some times 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 '*Pravarānukīrtana*', 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 *Gīṣā* recording the names of folk deities. This *Pravara-sūchī* was the work of some well-informed writer who must have taken the great pain in compiling the list which is as follows :

Name of Objects	The best one
1. Deities	Vishṇu
2. Mountain	Himālaya
3. Weapons	Sudarśana Chakra
4. Birds	Garuḍa
5. Serpents	Ananta
6. Elements	Earth

Name of Objects	The best one
7. Rivers	Gaṅgā
8. Water-born objects	Lotus
9. Asuras	Devotee of Śiva
10. Kshetras	Kuru-Jāṅgala
11. Tirthas	Prithūdaka (modern Pehoa in Kurukshetra)
12. Lakes	Mānasarovara
13. Forests	Nandana
14. Lokas	Brahma Loka
15. Dharma Vidhis	Satya
16. Yajñas	Aśvamedha
17. Dear Ones	Son
18. Rishis	Agastya
19. Āgamas	Veda
20. Purāṇas	Matsya Purāṇa
21. Smṛitis	Manu Smṛiti
22. Tithis	Amāvāsyā
23. Gods	Indra
24. Shining Ones	Sūrya
25. Nakashtra	Chandramā
26. Reservoirs of Water	Ocean
27. Rākshasas	Sukeśin
28. Bonds	Nāga-pāśa
29. Cereals	Rice (Śālī)
30. Men	Brāhmaṇa
31. Animals	Cow and Lion
32. Flowers	Jātī
33. Cities	Kāñchīpurī
34. Women	Rambhā
35. Four Āśramas	Housholder
36. Cities	Kuśasthālī
37. Country	Madhyadeśa
38. Fruits	Mango
39. Buds	Aśoka
40. Herbs	Harītiki

Name of Objects

The best one

41. Roots	Bulbous root
42. Diseases	Indigestion
43. White objects	Milk
44. Cloths	Cotton cloth
45. Arts	Arithmetic
46. Sciences	Indra-Jāla
47. Vegetables	Kākamāchī
48. Flavours	Salt
49. Fruits	Tāla fruit
50. Lotus ponds	Pampū
51. Foresters	Jāmbavān
52. Trees	Banian
53. Learned Men	Śiva
54. Sati women	Pārvatī
55. Cows	Kapilā
56. Fertilizing Males	The Blue-coloured Bull.

(*Vāmana Purāṇa*, Ch. XII).

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* is as follow (names are sanskritised by us) :

1. Yaksha
2. Gandharva
3. Pītara
4. Preta
5. Vasu
6. Āditya
7. Aśvin
8. Sārasvata
9. Apsarā
10. Vaiśravaṇa
11. Nakshatra
12. Graha

13. Chandra
14. Tārā
15. Baladeva
16. Vāsudeva
17. Śiva
18. Skanda
19. Viśākha
20. Agni
21. Marut
22. Sāgara
23. Nadi
24. Agni
25. Indrāgni
26. Brahmā
27. Upendra
28. Giri
29. Yama
30. Varuṇa
31. Soma
32. Rātri
33. Divasa
34. Śrī
35. Airāṇi
36. Pṛithivī
37. Ekaṇāsā (Ekānarṇśā)
38. Navamṛigā
39. Surādevī
40. Nāgi
41. Asura
42. Suparṇa
43. Dvīpakumāra
44. Samudrakumāra
45. Diśākumāra
46. Agnikumāra
47. Vāyukumāra
48. Stanitakumāra

49. Vidyutkumāra
50. Piśācha
51. Bhūta
52. Yaksba
53. Rākshasa
54. Chandra-Sūrya
55. Grahagaṇa
56. Nāgī
57. Senāvatī
58. Vahni
59. Rākshasī
60. Piśāchī
61. Bhūtakanyā
62. Gandharvakanyā
63. Kinnara
64. Kinnarī
65. Yakshiṇī
66. Vanaspatikanyā
67. Parvatadevatā
68. Samudra-nadī-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. Vaiśravaṇa
2. Viṣṇu
3. Rudra-Śiva
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 (Saunī)
19. Ekānamśā
20. Śri
21. Buddhi
22. Medhā
23. Kīrti
24. Sarasvatī
25. Yakshī
26. Rākshasī
27. Apsarā
28. Girikumārī
29. Samudra
30. Samudrakumāra
31. Samudrakumārī
32. Dvīpakumāra
33. Dvīpakumārī
34. Vyāghra
35. Simha

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. Pṛithivī
51. Dīśākumārī
52. Śrī
53. Medhā
54. Buddhi
55. Kuladevatā
56. Vāstudevatā
57. Varchas-devatā
58. Smaśānadevatā
59. Pitrīdevatā
60. Vidyādhara
61. Vidyāsiddha
62. Chāraṇa
63. Vidyādhari
64. Sarvavidyā-devatā
65. Deva-vidyā
66. Deva-vidyādhīpati
67. Maharshi

The deities in the above two lists of the *Āṅgavijjā* may be classified into three categories, namely, Divya or Major, Minor and Human (*Āṅgavijjā*, p. 223-224).

A list of goddesses occurs in the *Vāyu Purāṇa* (Chap. IX) as given below :—

1. Svāhā
2. Svadhā
3. Mahāvidyā
4. Medhā
5. Lakshmi
6. Sarasvatī
7. Aparṇā
8. Ekaparṇā
9. Pāṭalā
10. Umā
11. Haimavatī
12. Shashṭhī
13. Kalyāṇī
14. Khyāti
15. Prajñā
16. Mahābhāgā
17. Gaurī
18. Āryā
19. Prakṛti
20. Niyatā
21. Raudrī
22. Durgā
23. Bhadrā
24. Pramāthini
25. Kālarātri
26. Mahāmāyā
27. Revatī
28. Bhūtanāyikā
29. Gautamī
30. Kauśikī
31. Chaṇḍī
32. Kātyāyanī
33. Sati
34. Kumārī

35. Yādavī
36. Varadā
37. Barhīdhvajā
38. Śūladharā
39. Paramabrahmachārīṇī
40. Māhendrī
41. Indrabhagīṇī
42. Vṛishakanyā
43. Ekavāsasā
44. Aparājitā
45. Śimhāvāhīṇī
46. Ekānārūṣā
47. Māyā
48. Mahishamardīṇī
49. Bhadrakālī.

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 Lakshmi :—

Mahādevīkule dve tu Prajñā Śrīścha prakīrtyate/
Ābhyāṁ devisahasrāṇi yairvyāpyamakhilāṁ jagat//

(Vāyu. 9. 85-98).

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-Lakshmi. These two were universally worshipped.

List of Goddesses in the Revatī Kalpa of the Kāśyapa Saṁhitā.
The *Kāśyapa Saṁhitā* is a valuable text of the period of transition between Kushāṇa and Gupta times and in its chapter entitled 'Revatī Kalpa' it presents an unparalleled record of the goddesses worshipped in the society of its time. The list is as follows :

1. Revatī
2. Jātahārīṇī

3. Pilipichchhikā
4. Raudrī
5. Vāruṇī
6. Ugrarevatī
7. Śushkārevatī
8. Kaṭambharā
9. Vikuṭā
10. Dāruṇā
11. Mohinī
12. Stambhanī
13. Poshanā
14. Nākinī
15. Piśāchi
16. Yakshī
17. Vāruṇī
18. Shashṭhī
19. Bhūrikā
20. Yāmyā
21. Mātangi
22. Bhadrakālī
23. Raudrī
24. Vardhikā
25. Asādhyā
26. Puṣyajani
27. Paurushādini
28. Saṁdamśī
29. Karakoṭakī
30. Indravaḍavā
31. Vaḍavāmukhī

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

1. Sūta
2. Māgadha

3. Vena
4. Ambashṭha
5. Prāchyaka
6. Kukkasa
7. Chāṇḍāla
8. Muṣṭika
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. Āvantiya
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. Ayaskarī Jātahāriṇī (Goddess of the blacksmiths or workers in iron)

2. Takshipī (Goddess of carpenters or woodwrights)
3. Kulālī (Goddess of the potters or clay-workers)
4. Padakārī (Goddess of the leatherers or shoe-makers and tanners)
5. Mālākārī (Goddess of garland-makers or gardeners)
6. Kuvindī (Goddess of weavers or cloth-makers)
7. Sauchakī (Goddess of tailors or drapers)
8. Rajakī (Goddess of dyers or pigment-makers)
9. Nejikā (Goddess of washermen or cleaners)
10. Gopī (Goddess of milkmen or cowherds).

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

Besides, five more classes of goddesses are mentioned under the name of Śakunī (birds), Chatushpadī (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 dearth 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, Gaṅgita yakho, Suchilomo Yakho, Sudasanā yakhī, Cha(n)dā yakhī, Sirimā devatā, Chulakohā devatā, Mahākohā 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 Yādava tribes established in the region of Mathurā also practised the *Dhanurmaha* festival. When Kāṁsa wanted Kṛishṇa 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 Kṛishṇa and Balarāma".¹

Akrūra went to the house of Nanda Gopa and in the presence of the honourable cowherds delivered this message to Kṛishṇa 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 Kāṁsa, 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 Kāṁsa had organised the *Dhanurmaha* with the object of worshipping god Śiva.³

1. Rājā Dhanurmakhaṁ nāma kārayishyati vai sudhī/*Hari-vaṁśa* 2. 22. 91.
2. Saṁṛiddhastatra Kāṁsasya bhavishyati dhanurmahaḥ/
Taṁ drakshyatha saṁṛiddhaṁ cha svajanaishcha same-
shyatha//*Hari.* 2. 26. 4.
3. Kasyachit tvatha kālasya Mathurāyāṁ mahotsavam/
Pinākinam samuddiśya chakre Kāṁso narādhipaḥ//*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 *mañchā-tiṃśāñchā*, 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 Kāṃsa included these manifold items but the principal item was the Dhanurmaha. 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 sādhumatā devānam piyasā piyadasisā lājine/ (Kālsī 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, *sādhu-samāja*, designed for noble entertainments only. Scholars have held different views regarding the meaning of *Samāja*. On the authority of the *Mahābhārata*, *Harivaṃśa* 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 nānādeśyā viśāmpate/nartanā gāyanāśchaiva kuśalā nṛityakarmasu//*Hari*, 2. 101. 55.

thought that the Samāja festival were restricted to dramatic shows (*Prekshapāka*), a peculiarity described in the *Jātaka*s 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 ancestral god which was given to their forefathers and the same had descended in their royal family as an heir-loom 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 *Harivaṁśa* states that it was like a pillar of stately dimension (*Harī*. 2.27. 44). It was placed in a special hall (*Dhanurgriha* or *Dhanursālā*) adjacent to royal armory (*rājā-kṣya Ayudhāgāra*, *Harī*. 2.27.40; 51.54). Special guards (*Dhanurpāla*) were posted for guarding it. In the Dhanurmaha of Kaṁsa occasion did not arrive for Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma to bend or string this bow before public gathering as happened in the case of the Dhanurmaha of king Janaka by Rāma. Kṛṣṇa entered the Dhanurgriha one day in advance and broke the bow as an elephant would deal with a piece of sugarcane (*Harī*. 2.27. 61). As soon as Kaṁsa learnt about it he gave command for a wrestling match with Muṣṭika and Chāṇūra.

-
1. Drashṭum dhanurmaham divyam rāshṭra chaiva mahardhit/
Harī. 2.27. 32

This motif of Dhanurmaha associated with the life-story of Kṛishṇa 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; *Śaivaṃ 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 heir-loom (56. 10). It is called a Divine Bow (*divya-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 *Harivaṃśa*.

2. Taddhi pūrvaṃ naraśreṣṭha dattaṃ sadasi daivataih/
Aprameyabalaṃ ghorāṃ makhe paramabhāsvaram//
Bālakāṇḍa 31. 8.

III. GIRIMAHA (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 milch animals. This was followed by agriculture and tilling of the soil. The *Harivamśa Purāṇa* clearly refers to the *Sitā-yajña* or agricultural sacrifice of the cultivators and the cow-breeding sacrifice of the cowherds.¹

The *Sitā-maha* 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 *Harivamśa* gives a relevant explanation of the lifting of the Govardhana Mount by Kṛishṇa. There this exploit of Kṛishṇa has been explained in the back-ground of a folk cult.

When Kṛishṇa 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*. Kṛishṇa 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-dhvaja*) 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. *Sitāyajñāścha karshukāḥ giriyajñāstathī gopīḥ/Hari.*
2. 16. 9
2. *Tatra vṛiddhatamastyeko gopa vākyamuvācha ha /*
Śrūyatām tāta śakṛsya yadartham dhvaja ḥyate // 2. 15.4.
Devānāmīśvaraḥ śakra meghānām chārisūdana /
tasya chāyam mahāḥ Kṛishṇa lokanāthasya śīśvataḥ // 5.
Yasmātprāvṛṇīyam Kṛishṇa śakṛsya bhuvi bhāvinī /
tasmātprāvṛṇīḥ rājīnaḥ sarve śakraḥ mudā yutāḥ //
mahāḥ sureśamarchanti vayamanye cha mānavāḥ // 19.

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 Brāhmaṇas perform their yajñas with Vedic 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. Gopavṛiddhasya vachanam śrutvā śakraparigrahe /
prabhāvajño'pi śakrasya vākyam dāmodaro, bravīta //
Harivaṁśa, 2. 16.1.

Vayam vanacharā gopāḥ sadā godhanajīvināḥ /
gāvo'smaddaivatam viddhi girayaścha vanāni cha // 2 //
Karshukāṇaṁ kṛshirvṛttīḥ paṇyam vipaṇijīvinām /
gāvo'smākaṁ parāvṛttiretat traividyamuchyate // 3 //
Kṛshyantā prathitā sīmā sīmāntam śrūyate vanam /
vanāntā girayaḥ sarve sā chāsmākaṁ gatirdhravā // 5 //
Mantrayajñaparā viprah sītāyajñascha karshukāḥ /
giriyajñastathā gopā iḥyo'smābhigirirvane // 9 //
Tanmahyam rochate gopā giriyajñāḥ pravartatām // 10 //
Archayāmo girim devam gāschaiva cha viśeshataḥ // 41 //
Śivāya gāvaḥ pūjyantām giriyajñāḥ pravartyatām /
pūjyatām tridaśaiḥ śakro girasmābhiriḥyatām // 43 //
Kārayiśyāmi goyajñam balādapi na saṁśayaḥ /
yadyasti mayi vaḥ pritiryadi vā suhrīdo vayam // 44 //

The cowherds supported this proposal of Kṛishṇa 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).¹

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 Gīriyajña 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 Gīri-yajña. Firstly, a kind of *Samāja*-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 mountainous 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 Kṛishṇa. There, after some time a big festival of the Andhakas and the Vṛishṇis 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 Vṛishṇis took their residence. The area was embellished with a number of chandeliers with branched support for many lights (*dīpa-vrikshas*). Musical instruments were sounded, dancers began to perform their

1. Yattvāyābhihitam vākyaṁ giriyajñam prati prabho /
kastallaṅghayituṁ saktto velāmiva mahodadhiḥ // 10 //
sthitaḥ śakramahastāta śrīmān girimahastvayam /
tvaiprapīto'dya gopānām hetoḥ pravartyatām // 11 //

dances and musicians became engaged in music and song. Young Vṛishṇis, 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 Kṛishṇa went to the Dhanurmaha festival of Kaiśa at Mathurā these features had been described. He obtained new clothes from the washerman of Kaiśa, flower reeds from the garland-maker and perfumes from Kubjā. Akūrā, 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 Kṛishṇa and Arjuna also reached there. Subhadṛā, sister of Sāraṇa and cousin of Kṛishṇa 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 Pradakṣhiṇā of the Raivataka mountain.¹

Then Arjuna with the connivance of Kṛishṇa forcibly took away Subhadṛā. The Sabhūpāla officer announced danger beating the war-drum (*sānnāhikī bherī*) which attracted all the Bhoja, Andhaka and Vṛishṇi heroes to their assembly (Ādiparva 211-212).

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

1. Subhadṛā tvatha śailendramabhyarchya saha raivatam /
daivatāni cha sarvāṇi Brāhmaṇān svati vāchya cha //
pradakṣhiṇaṁ giriṁ kṛitvā prayayau dvārakāṁ prati //
(Ādiparva 212. 6, 7).

mountain (Āśvamedhikaparva 59. 4). The Vṛishṇis 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 (*kośha*), incensed garlands and perfumes, clothes of many kinds and golden Kalpavṛksha 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-kośha*) offered to cover the Śiva Liṅgas (Nirṇayasāgar edition, p. 100). Commentator Śaṅkara says that these masks were marked with a human face³.

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 Gupta period it became a common religious practice to install *Eka-mukhī* Śiva Liṅgas. In these cases the

1. Vihāro Vṛishṇi-vīrāṇaṁ mahe Raivata-kasya ha / 59. 14.

2. Babhau paramakalyāṇo mahastasya mahāgireḥ / 59. 13.

3. Mukhayuktāḥ kośhāḥ mukhakoshāḥ, ye liṅgapari diyante.

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 images¹.

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 *Piyarī*, i. e., the *sāri* 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-dāshya* in Buddhist literature. In the *Mahāvamsa* these are known as *Śīlāmaya-kañchuka*. 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-dāshya* or *Pāshūpa-kañchuka* which must have involved an expenditure of big sums of money.

In the list of the *Nāyādharmakahā* Parvata-yātrā and Giri-yātrā are mentioned separately, and their distinction is not clear now. Probably the festivals of big mountains like Raivataka and Himālaya were known as Parvata-maha and of low hillocks like Govardhana as Girimaha.

1. *Harshacharita : Eka Sāṃskṛitika Adhyayana*, p. 56.

IV. INDRA-MAHA (FESTIVAL OF INDRA)

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 *Harivaṃśa* 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 Kṛishṇa 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 *Harivaṃśa* has been stated to be the Sītā-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. Śrūyatām tāta Śakrasya yadārtha 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

1. *Yashṭi cha vaiṣṇaviṇ tasmai dadau Vṛitranishūḍanaḥ / Ādiparva 57. 17, Poona edition.*
2. *Yashṭi cha vaiṣṇaviṇ tasmai dadau Vṛitranishūḍanaḥ / ishtapradānamuddiśya śiṣṭānām paripālani // 17*
Tasyāḥ Śakrasya pūjārtham bhūmau bhūmipatistadā /
praveśam kārayāmāsa gate samvastare tadā // 18
Tataḥprabhṛiti chādyā'pi yashṭyāḥ kshitipasattamaiḥ /
praveśaḥ kriyate rājan yathā tena pravartitaḥ // 19.
Aparedyustathā chāsyāḥ kriyate uchchrayo nṛpaiḥ /
alaṅkṛitāyāḥ piṭakaingandhai mālyaiścha bhūṣaṇaiḥ //
mālyadānaparikṣiptā vidhivat kriyate'pi cha // 20.
Bhagavān pūjyate chātra hāsyarūpeṇa Śaṅkaraḥ /
svayameva grihītena vaśoḥ pīrtyā mahātmanaḥ // 21.
Etām pūjāni mahīm drashtuḥ drashtvā devakṛitām śubhām /

Some more verses are given in Nilakanṭha's commentary on this portion of the text from which we know that the Indra Pole measured 32 cubits, i.e., 48 feet (*dvātrīṃśata-kṣhkusammitām*). The Flag-staff was beautified by five coloured strips of cloth and flowers. Alongside of the worship of the Indra Yasṭi worship was also offered to Maṇibhadra 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 countryside both celebrated this festival.

The word *piṣāka* 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-yasṭi in the *Bṛihat Saṃhitā*. It is stated there that the Indra-yasṭi was decorated with the rows of small bells (*kinṅkiṇi-jāla*), garlands, parasols, large bells and with Piṭikas (BS. 42. 7; also 42. 57).

But the common meaning of *piṣāka* is a box-like container (Hindi: *piṣāri*) 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 pritimānabravīt vibhuḥ // 22.

Ye pūjayishyanti narā rājānaścha maham mama /
kārayishyanti cha mudā yathā Chedipatirṇipah // 23.

Teshām Śrīrviṇayaśchaiva sarāśhṭraṇām bhaviṣhyati /
Tathā sphīto janapado muditaścha bhaviṣhyati // 24.

Utsavam kārayishyanti sadā Śakrasya ye narāḥ /
bhūmīdānādibhirdānaiḥ yathā pūtā bhavanti vai /

varaḍānamahābhūtaistathā Śakrotsavena te // 26.
Sampūjito maghavatā Vasuḥchedipatistadā /

pālayāmāsa dharmeṇa chedisthaḥ prithivimimām /
indraprītyā bhūmipatiśchakārendramaham Vasuḥ // 27.

(Ādiparva Ch. 57).

the Indra-dhvaja. It is specially mentioned that tailed lions (*lāṅgla-siṃha*) and other fabulous animals with their hind bodies having a tailed form (*vyāla-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 Nīlakaṇṭha is, *Bhagavān pūjyate chātra haṁsarūpeṇa vāsavaḥ* : i. e., in the festival of the Pole, god Indra is worshipped as a goose (*haṁsa-rūpa*). Dr. Sukathankar has shown in one of his articles that the reading *haṁsa-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 *Rigveda* 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 Haṁsa, and only to the *aṭṭahāsa* or mountainous laughter of Śiva. The epithet applied to Indra supported by the Rīgvedic passage seems to have been a difficult text which was simplified to *hāsarūpeṇa Śaṅkaraḥ*. Thus by Sukathankar's own law of textual criticism the reading *haṁsarūpa* 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 (*Bālakāṇḍa* 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. *Bibhatsūnām sāyujam haṁsamāhurapāṇ divyānām sakhye charantam / Anuṣṭubhamanu charcharmāpamindram ni chikyuḥ kavayo manishā* // (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-yashti. Kālidāsa mentions in the *Raghuvamśa* that the people experienced great rejoicing at the sight of the Indra-yashti (*Raghu.* 4.3). Mallinātha cites the *Bhaviṣyottara 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 *Melā* 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 Kṛishṇa, 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 Kṛishṇa or the Pañchastātra Bhāgavatas as stated clearly in the *Harivamśa* :

“On the one hand the people adorn Indra by the festival of Indra-yashti ; on the other hand thereby they pay homage also to Upendra or Viṣṇu who is the younger brother of Indra. That is why of the four months of rainy season two months belong to Viṣṇu and the other two to Indra (*Hari*. 2.19.59).

But besides the time indicated for Indra-yashti festival in the autumn season as in *Harivamśa*, there are different statements also. According to the *Śilappadhikāram*, a Tamil classic of the Sangam period (circa 2nd century A. D.), the Indra-dhvaja festival was celebrated in the month of Chaitra. We find there in the fifth chapter a vivid description of *Śakrasava*. It is mentioned there that the people of Kāveri-paṭṭan or Pubār gathered and decided to celebrate the Śakra-mahotsava. This city was a very prosperous sea-port of those times. It was a town full of merchants trading in silken and cotton textiles, coral, sandle, 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 *Harivamśa* where a detailed account of Samudra-maha festival is given in which Kṛishṇa, Balarāma, the Bhoja leaders of the Andhakas and the Vṛishṇis 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.

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 (*mantrayajñāparāḥ 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 *Soma* sacrifices. On the other hand these popular festivals were to a large extent connected with the background of the *Atharvaveda*, 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 *Kauśika Sūtra* of the *Atharvaveda* makes special mention of Indra-maha. Three texts of the *Atharva Parīṣiṣṭa* collection, viz., Indramahotsava, Brahmayāga and Skandayāga are related to Indra-maha, Brahma-maha and Skanda-maha respectively.¹

According to the *AV. Parīṣiṣṭa* on Indra-maha the festival was celebrated in the bright half of Bhādra. The *Rājatarāṅgiṇī* also refers to the Indra Festival and names the twelfth day of the bright half of the Bhādra as *Indra-dvādaśī*. According to the *Atharva Parīṣiṣṭa* 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

1. *The Parīṣiṣṭas of the Atharva Veda*, edited by Walling and Nageline, Pt. I. Parīṣiṣṭa 19, 19 B and 20.

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 *Svastivāchana* recital by the Brāhmaṇas and an *Avabhyīṣa* bath by all people similar to that at the end of the Yajñas. We have already seen that the Gīri-maha or mountain festival was associated with sea-bath (*Samudra-maha*) and the *Śilappadhikāram* 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 Pariśiṣṭa* 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 Pariśiṣṭa"* : 19.3.9).

Almost a similar statement is made in the story of Vasu Uparichara : "The kingdom where this *Śakrotsava* 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 *Bālācharita* that Nanda Gopa organised in his settlement the Indra-maha festival (*Bālācharita*, Poona edn., p. 519). There is a casual reference to the Indra-maha festival in the *Mṛichchhakaṭika* drama : "Why are you cawing like a crow who is greedy for the crumbs thrown at the Indra-maha festival" (*aredāyī Indramahakāmuko vi a suṣṭhu kīṃ kākā asī*). 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-kāmuka*.¹ But Hemachandra explains *Indramaha-kāmuka* as a dog in the *Deśināmamālā* (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 Māndasor inscription the Indra festival is described as

1. According to the commentator Prithivīdhara *Indramaha-kāmuka* had a variant reading as *Indramaha-kāka-podao* which signifies the young one of the crow.

Śakramagha.¹ 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 *Annakūṭa* 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 Kṛishṇa. Even up to this day the *Annakūṭa* festival is celebrated as an element of Govardhana worship. The *Annakūṭa* festival has taken the form of a *Melā* at *Girirāja Govardhana*. Moreover at all places where there are temples of Kṛishṇa installed by Vallabhāchārya and his followers the *Annakūṭa* is a popular festival. Amongst the people the day following the *Dīpāvali* has become appointed as the day for celebrating the *Annakūṭa* festival². 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 *Nāṭyaśāstra* 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 :

Mahānayaṁ progaścha samayaḥ samupasthitaḥ /
ayaṁ dhvajamahā śrīmān mahendrasya pravartate //1.54
Atredānimayaṁ vedo nāṭyasamjñāḥ prayujyatām /
tataḥ tasmin dhvajamahe nihātāsuraḍānave //1.55
Prahṣiṣṭāmarasaṁkīrṇe mahendravijayotsave /
nāṇḍikṛitā mayā pūrvamāśīrvachanasamhyutaḥ //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 (*āśīrvachana*) 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*).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 spirits².

1. Tato Brahmādayo devāḥ prayogaparitoshitāḥ/pradadurhṛi-
shṭamanasaḥ sarvopakaraṇāni naḥ//prītaṣtu prathamam
Śakro dattavān svadhvajam śubham//*Nāṭyaśāstra* 1. 58-59.
2. Evaṁ prayoge prārabdhe daityadānavanāśane/
abhavan kṣubhitāḥ sarve daityā ye tatra sāgatāḥ//
Virūpākshapurogāmścha vighnānutpādyate bruvan/
netthamichchhāmahe nāṭyametaḍāgamyatāmīti//
Tatastairasurairḥ sārddham vighnamāyāmupāśritāḥ/
vāchaścheshtām smṛitiṁ chaiva stambhayanti sma
nṛīyatām//
Evaṁ vidhvamsitam drishṭvā sūtradhārasya devarāt/
tasmāt prayogavaishamyamityuktvā dhyānamāviśat//
Athāpaśyad sadā vighnairḥ samantāt parivāritam/
sahetarairḥ sūtradhāram naśṭasaḥjñamjāḍikṛitam//

Here is a specific description showing that the dramatic art originated amongst the various items of merriment and play which formed part of the Indradhvaja festival. With the expansion of the Indradhvaja festivity dramatic shows developed as an essential element (*prayoge prastute tovaṃ sphīṭe śakra-mahe punaḥ* / *Nāṭyaśāstra* 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 'Yātrā'. The Indradhvaja festival has actually been styled as a Yātrā. In the *Nāyādharmakāṇḍa* the first two festivals for Indra and Skanda are styled as Indramaha and Khanda-maha and then occurs a list of eleven other festivals all of which are styled as Yātrā,¹ e.g., Rudra-yātrā, Śiva-yātrā, Vaiśravaṇa-yātrā, Nāga-yātrā, Yaksha-yātrā, Bhūta-yātrā, Nādi-yātrā, Tādāga-yātrā, Vṛksha-yātrā, Chaitya-yātrā, Parvata-yātrā, Udyāna-yātrā and Giri-yātrā. The Yātrā was also known as 'Samāja.' Their nature was very much similar to that of the Melā in modern times. The core of these Yātrā 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-

Athotthāya drutaṃ krodhād divyaṃ jagrāha sa dhvajam/
sarvaratnojjvalatanūḥ kiñchadudavṛttalochanaḥ//
Raṅgapitthagatān vighnānasurarāmścha devarāt/
jarjarikṛitadehāstānkaroj jarjareṇa saḥ//

(*Nāṭyaśāstra* 1. 64-70)

1. *Nāyādharmakāṇḍa* 1.25. Quoted above p. 9. fn. 1.

ment was made of holding of the *Samāja* festival on a particular day. Then drummers and conch-blowers went about and informed all people to come and take part in the *Samāja*. 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 (*Hastī-yuddha*), horse-tournaments (*Aśva-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 kīlītum*) were fixed in which men, women and children enjoyed merry-go-round movement. People also enjoyed watery sports (*Uda-kriḍā*) 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 *Samāja* festivals.

In the *Virāṭaparva* of the *Mahābhārata* the festival for the worship of Brahma has been called the *Samāja* 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 *Indra-yajña*. 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 *Indradhvaja* 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 *Indra-yajña* 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 Yātrā 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 *Mukha-kola* (Bengali : *Mukhośa*). They seem to be similar to the *Mukha-kola* or masked faces described by Bāṇa in case of Śaiva 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 *Kumārīpūjā*, i. e., adoration of Virgin (Wright, *History of Nepal*, p. 39). The circumambulation of the mountain formed a special feature of Girimaha. Subhadrā went round the Raivataka mountain and performed the Girimaha at the end of which she offered food to the Brāhmaṇas. The same kind of *Pradakṣiṇā* round the village was made in the Indramaha as described above. In the Vraja-maṇḍala 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, Vārāṇasī, Kurukshetra, etc. It is possible that the *Pradakṣiṇā* 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 (*Antargiri-yātrā*) is observed on the Akshayanavami day, in the month of Kārttika on the ninth bright-half day. There is also another bigger *Parīkramā* comprising a distance of 84 Krośas which starts sometime between the 8th to the 11th day of the bright half of Bhādrapada. This is still known as the Vraja-yātrā 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 Vārāṇasī there is a *Pañcha-krośi-yātrā*.

From the above description it appears that the Indramaha 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 Indramaha which had come down from much earlier times. Most probably the Indramaha 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 Indramaha 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-yashji*) 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 tevhārū/Padmavata* of Jāyasi 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 *Nāyādharmakāṇḍī*¹

1. Nivvattamahe vā indalaṭṭhī vimukkasaṇḍhibandhaṇā kuṭṭimatalamsi sabbaṅgehi dhasatti paḍiyā/*Nāyādharmakāṇḍī*

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 *Bṛīhat Saṁhitā* of Varāhamihira the Indra-yashti is described as being similarly beautified with flower garlands, coloured cloths, beads and small box-like containers (*piṭaka*); 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 *Niṣīthachārṇi*, Indramaha, Skandamaha, Yakshamaha and Bhūtamaha were the four Great Festivals of India in those early ages. Accord-

kaḥā 1.27. Also see Droṇaparva 41.11, Tāvayonyāṁ gadā-grābhyāṁ saṁhatya patitau kshitau/Indradhvajavivotsṛiṣṭau raṇamadhye parantapau//

1. For a description of the May-Pole festival I am indebted to the *Standard Dictionary of Folklore Mythologies and Legends*, Pt. II, 695-96, New York 1950.

ding to this account the Indramaha was celebrated on the Full Moon day of the month of Āshāḍha, 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., Saurāshṭra, Indramaha was celebrated in the month of Śrāvaṇa on the Full Moon day (*Niṣīthachārṇi* 19, p. 1174; J. C. Jain, *Life in Ancient India as depicted in the Jain Canons*, p. 216).

1. Indradhvaja ivodhūtaḥ paurṇamāsyāṁ mahītale/
āśvayukṣamaye māsi gatasattvo vichetaṇaḥ//

Kishkindhākāṇḍa 16.37.

V. NADI-MAHA (FESTIVAL OF RIVER GODDESSES)

CHAPTER FIVE

The *Nadīmaha* indicated the festival of river goddesses. A special example of *Nadīmaha* maybe seen in the festival of the River Goddess Gaṅgā which was know as *Gaṅgā-maha* (*Kaśikā 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 *Nadīmaha* and *Avajāmaha* ("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 (*dhishnyā*) 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*, *Godāvarī*, *Kāverī* and all these seven were considered to be especially holy.² It is stated that all the rivers are

1. Etānadyastu dhishyānām mātaro yāḥ prakīrtitāḥ/
Vanaparva 212. 243.
2. Viśvasya mātaraḥ sarvāḥ sarvāśchaiva mahāphalāḥ/
ityetāḥ sarito rājan samākhyātā yathāsmṛiti//
Bhishmaparva 9. 37.38.
Āryā mlechchhāscha kauravya tairmiśrāḥ purushā vibho/
nadīḥ pibanti vipulām Gaṅgām Sindhum Sarasvatīm//
Bhishmaparva 9.13-142.

without distinction. Amongst all the river goddesses of India Gaṅgā was given the highest place. In the *Mahābhārata* the epithets *Deva-nadī* and *Loka-nadī* 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 Nadi-maha or Nadi-yātrā festival another called Taḍāga-yātrā (*Talāya-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 'Aṭṭhakathā 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 (*Parīśiṣṭa*) of the *Atharvaveda* (No. 20 and named "*Dhūrta-kālpa*") 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 Brahmanya, 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 Kṛittikās. 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, Bhrātṛi-
strikāma, Svachchhanda, Varaghaṇṭā, Nirmala, Lohitaḡātra,
Śālakaṭaṅkaṭa.

The epithet Dhūrta is of rare occurrence. The nama Śālaka-
taṅkaṭa is the name of a particular Rākshasa or demon in the
Rāmāyaṇa and the *Mahābhārata*. But in the *Yājñavalkya*

Smṛiti (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 Kūshmāṇḍa. 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 sublimation 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 transfusion 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 Agni¹ 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 Devasenā. There is a story in the *Mahābhārata* (Mārkaṇḍeya-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 *Mahādbhūta*. 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-

1. Rudreṇāgnim samāviśya svāhāmāviśyā chomayā /
Hitārtham sarvalokānām jātastvamaparājitaḥ//

nt to kill the Babe. But that boy named Guha raised such an aloud 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 (*śaṣṭhaṁ chhāgamayaṁ vaktram Skandasyaivetī 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 (*Piśācha*) 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. *Shaṇṇām tu pravaram tasya śrīrshāṇāmiha śabdyate/
śaktim yenāśrijad divyām bhadraśākha . iti sma ha//*

Ibid. 217. 13.

2. *Sarvalakṣhaṇa-sampannam trailokasyā'pi supriyam/
tataḥ tam varadam sūram yuvānam mṛishtakuṇḍalam//
Abhajat padmarūpā Śrīssvayameva śarīriṇi/
śriyā jushṭaḥ prithuśaḥ 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."¹

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 kinkaraḥ Śakra, na mamendratvamīpsitam*, *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."² 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 Śaṁkaro bhava/
tvayā shadrātra-jātena sarve lokā vaśikṛitāḥ//
Abhayaṁ cha punardattaṁ tvaivaishāṁ surottama//
tasmād Indro bhavānastu trailokasya bhayaṁkaraḥ//
Ibid. 218. 6-7.
2. Abhishishyasva devānāṁ saināpatye mahābala/
Aham Indro bhaviṣyāmi tava vākyaṁ mahābala//
Ibid. 218. 21.

There is another story that at one time Śiva and Pārvati 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 (Nadī), mighty floods (Nada), sages (Rishis), gods, Gandharvas, serpents (Nāgas), constellations (Nakshatra), 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 (Rājarshi) 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 Pārvati, like Gaurīvidyā, Gāndhārīvidyā, Keśinī-vidyā, Sāvitṛī-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 *Rigveda* (RV. I. 164.41, *Gaurīr mīmāya salilāni lakshatī...*), Keśinī-vidyā in RV. X. 136.1 (*Keśyagni keśi visham.....*, also I. 1. 64, *Trayaḥ keśinā rītutā vichakshate*), Sāvitṛī-vidyā as in the great Gāyatrī Mantra (RV. III. 62. 10), etc.

In front of all a Graba 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 Brahmaṇya-Mahāsenā-

Guha, son of the Pleiades (the six Krittikā Mothers) was also accompanying the procession. Mahādava Śiva thus spoke to Skanda, "You protect the Marut hosts together with your divine forces (*devasenā*). Your devotion and worship of myself will be conducive."

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 harassed 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 Devasenā. 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. *Sushumyā*) his own seed or lustre more brilliant than the Sun."¹

We have given its Yogic background and exposition in our studies on the *Meghadūta* under the chapter entitled "Śiva-kā Svarūpa" (or the Nature of Śiva) and in the book *Śiva-Mahādeva 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. Rakshāhetornavaśaśibritā vāsavīnām chamūnām/

Atyādityam hutavahamukhe sambhṛitam taddhi tejah//

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 Saṁhitā* Skanda heads in the list of evil spirits affecting children; the other names in the list being Revatī, Pūtānā, Śakuni and Naigamesha (*Suśruta*, Uttaratāntra 27. 3-5). Adding words of homage for Skanda as the Lord of Grahas (*Namaḥ Skandāya devāya grahādhipataye namaḥ*), there are some other references in the *Suśruta Saṁhitā*.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*, Uttaratāntra 37.12-22). It is slightly indicated by the story that these Grahas or tutelary

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1. Deva-devasya mahataḥ pāvakasya cha yaḥ sutaḥ /
 Gaṅgomākṛittikānām cha sa te śarma prayachchhatu //28.13
 Skandaḥ śṛiṣṭo bhagavatā devena tripurāṇā /
 bibharti chā'parām sañjām kumāra iti sa grahaḥ //
 Bālaḥlādharo yo'yaṁ devo Rudrāgnisambhavaḥ /
 mithyāchāreshu bhagavān svayaṁ naisha pravartate //
 Tato bhagavati Skande surasenāpatau kṛite /
 upatasthurgrahāḥ sarve dīptaśaktidharaṁ guhaṁ //37.9.11.

spirits were worshipped in such low classes of the society as were outside the pale of Vedic and Smārta rites.

Like the *Śuśrūta*, in the *Charaka Saṃhitā* and the *Ashṭāṅga Saṃgraha* 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 '*Bhagavā nemeso*' 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 Yaudheya 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 *Mahābhārata* that amongst the ancient Yaudheyas who settled in the region of Rohitaka (modern Rohtak) Kārttikeya was the presiding deity (*Kārttikeyasya dayitam Rohitakam*).

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 *Vṛiddha-Jivakiya 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 Revatī was considered to be very auspicious. In later times Revatī was identified with the Mātṛikās or Mothers; and so also Skanda as a bloodthirsty goblin was considered to be associated with the cult of the Mothers. The Mātṛikā-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 Mātṛikās 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 Mātṛikās agreed among themselves to admit Skanda to their fold as their son.²

1. Bhavema sarvalokasya vayanṁ mātara uttamāḥ/prasādāt tava pūjyāścha priyametat kurushva naḥ//Vanaparva 217.7.

2. Tataḥ saṁkalpya putratve skandaṁ mātṛigaṇo'gamat/ ibid. 217. 9.

The epic list specifically gives seven names, viz., Kākfī, Halimā, Rudrā, Bṛihallī, 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 Mātṛikās 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 Saṁhitā* 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 Mātṛikās. 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 Revatī in an atmosphere of mutual freedom of ideas and forms. We are indebted to the *Revatī 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 Revatī (*Revatī Kalpa*) we find the names of a large number of tutelary goddesses, all of whom are said to be just different forms of Revatī, "O Vṛiddha Jīvaka, this Revatī has many forms (*Bahurūpā*), such as Jātabhāriṇī, spoken of as Pīlapichchhikā, spoken of as the female counterpart of Rudra, spoken of as the consort of Varuṇa"². This gives us an important point, viz., the identification of the goddess Revatī with Jātabhāriṇī. It is said that Revatī 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 Jātabhāriṇī and slew those Asuras. Jātabhāriṇī 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

1. Aja-ekapāt Ahirbudhnyo Hara Vaiśvānaro bahurūpastry-ambako Viśvarūpaḥ Sthāṇu Śiva Rudra ityete purā daśa rudrā āsan. Teshām Guha ekūdaśo'bhavat...tasmāt sarveshu lokeshu sarveshu chūḍaḥsu sarvāsu devatāsu Skando rājā adhipatirityuchyate / Tasmai namo nama ityuktṛvā sarvānarthān ārabhet, siddhyanti ya evaṁ veda. *Revatī Kalpa* 6.

2. Saishā vṛiddhajīvaka, Revatī bahurūpā, jātabhāriṇī pīlapichchhiketi chochyate, raudritī chochyate, vāṇipitī 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 Jātahāriṇī was popular everywhere under many names and forms. She had three aspects, viz., (1) Divine (*daivī*), (2) Human (*mānushī*), and (3) Avian (*tīrśchīnā*). Thus Goddess Revatī in the form of Jātahāriṇī pervaded the three worlds¹.

Revatī possessed many forms and many names. The *Kātyāya Saṁhitā* mentions this fact elsewhere—"O, Revatī, you have twenty different appellations, viz., (1) Vārūṇī, (2) Revatī, (3) Brāhmī, (4) Kumārī, (5) Bahuputrikā, (6) Śushkā, (7) Shashṭhī, 8, Yamikā, (9) Dharaṇī, (10) Mukhamaṇḍikā, (11) Śītavatī, (12) Kaṇḍū, (13) Pūtanā, (14) Niruñchikā, (15) Rodanī, (16) Bhūtamātā, (17) Lokamātā, (18) Mahī, (19) Saranyū and (20) Puṇyakīrti²."

In this list Vārūṇī, Kumārī and Brāhmī are well known names amongst the Seven Mothers, and Śītavati, Pūtanā and Mukhamaṇḍikā were names of *bālagraha-devīs* or spirits afflicting children. This shows how minor strands of folk beliefs were coming together to be twisted into the skein of Revatī cult. The name Bahuputrikā merits special attention. In fact the names Bahuputrikā and Jātahāriṇī point towards the Buddhist goddess Hārītī. The names *Hārītī* and *Jātahāriṇī* have the same meaning. The word *Jāta* denotes a child and the Buddhist goddess Hārītī 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 Hārītī was originally a female spirit of folk religion. According to her legend she was a cruel monstress of Rājagriha 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 Rājagriha when people brought

1. Atha khalu vṛiddhajīvaka, trividhaiva jātahāriṇī prochyate, lokabhedataḥ daivī mānushī tīrśchīneti tasmāt trayo lokā bhagavatyā revatyā bahurūpayā vyāptā / p. 160.
2. Ibid., p. 67.

complaints to him about the cruel deeds of Hārītī. 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 Jātaḥārīṇī described in such detail in the *Revatī Kalpa* was the same as Hārītī. The name Bahuputrikā also becomes consistent in view of the many children of Hārītī. In sculptures and paintings it is usual to depict Hārītī 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 *Vāsavadattā*, a prose romance, makes mention of it as *Kumārakriḍitaka* or "playful boys", and Bāṇa refers to it as *Bilakriḍā* 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 Bhūmāra this motif has been rendered with great variety and beauty.

Two other points may be mentioned about Hārītī and Jātaḥārīṇī. The first is that the Buddhist tradition mentions Hārītī 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 Hārītī by the Buddha took place in Gandhāra. In the art of Gandhāra quite a number of sculptures and Stūpas of Hārītī 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 Devī, i. e., the female deity of terrible nature. A shrine of Bhīmā Devī 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 on ancient route between Taxila and Bactria). It seems that this terrific goddess named Bhīmā became transformed as Hārītī when Buddha converted her into an auspicious goddess of children (Waters, I.215). The *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa* refers to the shrine of Bhīmā Devī somewhere on the Himavanta mountain (81.45-46). But the Vanaparva in its description of an itinerary of pilgrimage points to Bhīmā Devī having been located in the same direction as is the situation of her shrine at present¹. 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 Devī and those who returned from there would name their children after the goddess as *Bhīmā-datta*. The same principle of naming children applied to other centres of pilgrimage as Kāśī, Dvārakā, Jagannātha, Rāmeśvara, Badarīnātha, etc.

1. Atha pañchanadam gatvā niyato niyatāśanaḥ /
 pañchayajñānavāpnoti karmaśo ye'nukirtitaḥ //
 Tato gachchhet dharmajña Bhīmāyāḥ sthānamuttamam /
 tatra snātvā tu yonyām vai naro Bharatasattama //

It has been stated above that Hārītī 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 Yudhishtīra that Jarāsandha should be slain prior to his sacrifice, Yudhishtīra enquired as to who Jarāsandha was ? Kṛishṇa replied, "There was a king named Brihadratha in the Magadha country. He married with the two daughters of the king of Kāśī but had no son. Then the sage Chanḍa Kausika 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-devī*) and her figure was painted on the walls of royal palace in which

her numerous children were also depicted with her¹. In this story all the elements of the cult of a folk goddess (*Loka-devī*) maybe traced. Rājagriha 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 Jātahāriṇī 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 Jātahāriṇī who was a Rākshasī or Yakshī. It maybe noted that Dipāvalī, 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 Jātahāriṇī 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

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1. Gṛihe gṛihe manushyāṇaṁ nityaṁ tiśṭhati rākshasī /
 gṛiha-devīti namnā vai purā sṛisṭhā svayambhuvā //
 Tvadgṛihe tiśṭhamānā tu pūjitā' haṁ sadā vibho /
 likhītāṁ chaiva kuḍyeshu putrair bahubhirāvṛitā //
 Yo mām bhaktyā likhet kuḍye saputrām yauvanānavitām /
 gṛihe tasya bhaved buddhiranyathā kshayamāpunyat //
 Sabhāparva, Poona edn. p. 94.

cult of the wife of Skanda named Shashthī, Bhadrā or Devasenā.

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 existed¹. 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 Skandāpsmāra 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 Śakunī. Pūtanā Rākshasī became the Graha named Pūtanā. She was probably the same as the goddess of small pox with poisonous pustules affecting the whole body of the child. Another spirit of the same nature was named Śīta-Pūtanā which is worshipped up to this day as Śītalā, the refrigerating genius of small pox, 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 small pox which left pitted scars on the face similar to the bread named Maṇḍikā. She was said to be very fond of child-flesh. There were

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1. Ime tvashṭādaśāṇye vai grahā māṁsa-madhu-priyāḥ /
Dvipañcharātraṁ tishṭhanti satataṁ sūtikāgrihe //

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 Karañja 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 diminutive 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, Pitri-graha, Siddha-graha 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 puruṣhāśchaiva ye grahāḥ /
sarve Skandagrahā nāma jñeyā nityaḥ śatribhiḥ //
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 Mātṛikās 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 reproach¹." In another context they are reconciled with Shashthī or Revatī and described as the female consort of Skanda. It has been explicitly stated about the Mātṛikās 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 outstayed from their respective habitations. Now we will receive homage instead of them and none of the older lot will receive any worship."²

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 Revatī 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 Revatī became pre-eminent amongst all as given in the *Kāśyapa Samhitā*.

1. Mātaro hi bhavatyo me suto vo'hamaninditāḥ / Āraṇyakaparva 219. 6.
2. Atha mātṛigaṇaḥ sarvaḥ Skandaṁ vachanamabravīt /
vayaṁ sarvasya lokasya mātaraḥ kavibhiḥ smṛitāḥ //
Yāsu tāḥ mātaraḥ pūrvam lokasyāśya prakalpītāḥ /
asmākaṁ tad bhavet sthānam tāsām chaiva na tad
bhavet //
Bhavema pūjyā lokasya na tāḥ pūjyāḥ surarshabha /
Āraṇyakaparva 219. 14, 16, 17.

Along with this, another goddess named Shashthī 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 Shashthī who received worship on the sixth day after the child was born. Shashthī 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 Kṛttikā Mothers or the constellation of Pleiades which has six stars and he and Shashthī 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 *Shashthī* and *Lakshmī*, *Āśā*, *Sinivālī*, *Kuhā*, *Aparājītā*. When *Devasenā* obtained Skanda as her husband, then through her the goddess *Lakshmī* 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-pañchamī* day. On the next day Skanda found his consummation with the goddess Śrī and therefore that day (*tīthi*) became famous as *Shashthī*"¹.

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-Lakshmī, Purāṇic *Shashthī*, 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 Kushāna 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 Purāṇic 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 Revatī through her multiple forms (*bahurūpā*), under the command of Skanda, creates delusion amongst those who do not follow the path of religious piety in order to effect their ruin¹. 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 Revatī, "Of your four brothers (viz., Mahāsena, Kumāra, Viśākha and Skanda) the fifth brother will be Nandikeśvara (the lord of Nandī bull, i. e., Śiva) and the sixth will be your sister Shashthī famous amongst the people. As all people were offering homage to me

1. *Kāśyapa Samhitā*, Revatī Kalpa, p. 154.

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 *Shashthi* day." Thus a sister was produced for Skanda, as such she is paid homage at all times and confers happiness and life. This *Shashthi* has two forms, viz., *Shashthi* associated with the confinement room of pregnant mothers (*Sūttā-Shashthi*), and another form with wings on her shoulders (*Paksha-Shashthi*). Thus from the cult of *Shashthi* came out *Revati* worshipped both by the gods and the demons.¹

In the above description of twofold *Shashthi* the one associated with child-birth appears to have been evolved out of the cult of Śrī-Lakshmi. The other name of Winged *Shashthi* is most significant and seems to be a later aspect of goddess *Māyā* of the Asuras who moved in the air and whose head and shoulders were beautified with magical symbols like *aṅkuṣa* (goad), *paraśu* (axe), and dagger, etc. and an amulet string (*rakshāvali*, *rakshākaraṇḍaka-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 *Shashthi-Revati* for whom it is aptly stated that both gods and demons paid homage to this new divinity (*surāsura-namaskṛitā*). 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 *Nandikeśvara* and the sixth sister *Shashthi* 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*, *Komāro*, *Vijāgo*, and *Mahāsena*. *Nandikeśvara* is Śiva standing with his *Nandī* bull and holding a long trident as found on numerous coins and especially on the obverse side of the coins of the above *Kushāna* empe-

1. *Kāśyapa Samhitā*, *Bālagraha-chikitsādhyaḥ*, p. 67).

ror. We also see on some tribal coins especially from the Yaudheya region in south-east Pānjab a goddess with six heads, who is true to the epithet *Shaṇmukhī Shashthī*, i. e., the six-headed goddess named *Shashthī*. The six heads were illustrative of the six Divine Mothers whose son was the six-headed god *Kārttikeya*. 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 *Shaḍānana* or *Shāṇmātura*, the deity of six faces or the son of six mothers. Thus goddess *Shashthī* was variously worshipped as *Sūtikā-Shashthī*, *Paksha-Shashthī* and *Shaṇmukhī Shashthī* which were the several forms of goddess *Revaṭī*. It appears that *Mahāsena*, *Skanda*, *Kumāra* and *Viśākha* 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 brothers (*asmāt tulya-pradhāvā tem bhṛātṛimadhyagatā sadā*). *Sūtikā Shashthī* maybe identified with the goddess worshipped on the sixth day of the birth of a child in ancient times, even as to-day. *Bāṇa* refers to the worship of *Ārya-vṛiddhā* (Grand Lady) and *Jātamatrikā* (mother of children) who were worshipped at the time of child-birth. *Ārya-vṛiddhā* seems to be the same as *Āryā* of the epic also called *Vṛiddhikā*.¹

Probably she was the same as the more ancient goddess called *Jyeshthā* whose worship did not die out. Even now a goddess called *Vī-mātā* 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 *Vihāyī* (*Vihāyī-ke-gīt*) which are sung on the sixth night celebrated by keeping watch throughout the night. The name seems to be derived from Sanskrit *Vidhātṛī*, the goddess who ordains the future of a child either in the benevolent aspect or otherwise. The figure of the *Jātamatrikā*

1. *Āryā mātā kumārasya*/ Vanaparva 210.40.

*Strīyo mānushamāsādā vṛiddhikā māma nāmataḥ /
vṛiksheshu jātastā devyo namaskāryā prajārthibhiḥ //*

Ibid. 220. 16.

goddess was drawn on a cloth or a wooden board and actually worshipped. She has been described as surrounded by many children¹ which reminds us of the iconographic form Jāta-hāriṇī or Hārītī. She is also mentioned in the *Tīlakamañjarī* of Dhana-pāla where the names of the three goddesses, Shashthī, Devī Jātamātrikā and Ārya-vṛiddhā are separately mentioned to be represented and worshipped.²

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.³

We learn from a Sanskrit lexicon (*Nānārthāṣṭava-saṅkṣhepa*) that the feline faced tutelary goddess was also called Charchā (or Charchikā). According to the Kāśī Khaṇḍa of the *Skanda Purāṇa* there was a shrine in Vārāṇasī sacred to Charchikā (Kāśī 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.⁴

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 Koṭṭavi at Hīṅgulāja (*Vāmana Purāṇa* 17. 54; see also my *Vāmana Purāṇa-A Study*, pp. 136-140). In folk cult Charchikā-devī 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 Shashthī in Supia stone-inscription of Skandagupta. On a clay-sealing from Raj-

1. Sākshāt Jātamātri-devatā iva bahubālaka-vyākulā nanṭi-turvṛidudhātyaḥ, *Harshacharita*, Ch. 4, p. 129.
2. Āharata bhagavatīm Shashthīdevīmālikhata jātamātripaṭalam, ārabhadhvamāryavṛiddhā-saparyām, *Tīlakamañjarī*, p. 77.
3. Jātamātri-devatā mārjārānāṇā bahuputraparivārā sūtikā-grihe sthāpyate.
4. Bhandarkar, *List of Indian Inscriptions*, No. 1658.

ghat is found the name Shashthī-datta in Gupta script showing that the parents regarded the birth of their son as due to the grace of goddess Shashthī. What the *Kāśyapa Samhitā* names as Paksha-Shashthī maybe identified amongst the winged clay figurines of a goddess exposed from the Śunga to the Kushāṇa period. Generally winged figurines are absent in Indian terra-cottas. 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-Shashthī. It is possible that the Greek god Cupid and the goddess Aphrodite who were shown with wings influenced the iconography of Kāma and Shashthī 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 Shāmukhī and also pointing to her close relation with Kārttikeya (*Journal of the Numismatic Society of India*, Vol. V., p. 29 : my article, "Goddess Shashthī on the Yaudheya coins"). Thus the archaeological evidence throws light on the worship of Skanda in a Vyūha form of four brothers together with Nandikeśvara Śiva and the six-headed goddess Shashthī 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 Devasenā (cf. Mathura Museum, No. 466 ; see my *Matsya Purāṇa—A Study*, Pl. facing p. 248). According to the *Nīlītha-*

chūrṇi the festival of Skanda was celebrated on the Purnimā day of the month of Āśvina. When Mahāvīra visited Śrāvastī this festival was being celebrated, and as the *Niśītha-chūrṇi* 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 Gupta 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 11 of Kanishka stating that the four sons of Viśvala established an image of Kārttikeya in their home.¹ 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.

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1. Sam. 11 he 4 di etasya pūrvvāyām kārttikeyasya pratimā pratishṭhāpitā. Viśadevena, Viśvasomena, Viśvabhavena, Viśvavasunā cha bhrātrībhiḥ Viśvalaputrehi kshattrīyehi svake āvasathe. *U. P. Hist. Society Jour.*, July. 1948, p. 65, Mathura Sculpture, No. 2949.

RUDDAMAHA (FESTIVAL OF RUDRA)

CHAPTER SEVEN

In the lists found in the *Nāyādharmakāṇḍa* and the *Rāyapasenīya Sutta*, Rudra-maha 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 Viṣṇu 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 Śakas and the Yue-chih. There was a temple of Śiva in ancient Kāpiśā (modern Kafiristan). 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 that¹. 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, O 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 mahāvṛishaḥ*, AV.5.22.5). It maybe supposed that the Mahāvṛisha country and its name

1. Etat to rudrāvasaṁ tena paro mūjavato'tihi avatata-dhanvā pinākāvasaḥ kṛittivāsā ahim sannaḥ śivo'tihi/ V S, 3. 61.

became the vehicle of Rudra as Nandī. Indra also is styled as *Vṛishabha Mahādeva*, i.e. Bull, the Great God. A reproachment 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 *R̥gveda*. 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 dvitīyāya tasmā*, Taitt. Sañ. 1.8.6.1) and on the other it was believed that there are thousands of Rudras in each direction (*yo chainaṁ Rudrā abhito dikṣu śritāḥ sahasraśaḥ*, VS. 16.6); that Rudra is pervailing in a thousandfold forms in waters, trees, plants, mountains, cowpens, homes, caverns, fields, barren lands, and in many other places (*asamkhyātāḥ sahasraṇi ye Rudrā adhi bhāmyām*, VS. 16.54). He has many names as Śarva, Bhava, Rudra, Paśupati, Kapardin, Nilagrīva. He is the lord of the mountains and is denizen of the caves. His one aspect is terrible (*Ghorā*) and the other is benevolent (*Śivā tanu*). 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 (*Vrāta-pati*), armies and their commanders, charioteers, footmen, cartwrights, 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 (*kaparda*) on his head, bow and arrows in hands, his throat is blue (*Nilagrīva*) and snakes are coiled round his body. He puts on a skin (*Kṛttī-vāsa*). It may be 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 may be imagined that the different folk beliefs about the terrible nature of Śiva continued even after the reconciliation of Rudra and Śiva in the form of a single deity. Normally the people do not introduce revolutionary changes in their religious beliefs or modes of worship. The people like the approach 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 undergone mutual influence with the conception of Śiva. The synthesis 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 Viṣṇu, 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*

Brāhmaṇa Agni is Rudra and he is worshipped under several names. In the east he is named Śarva, in Vāhika 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, Isāna, 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-grāha*) and female spirits (*Kumārī-grāha*). 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 Dakṣa-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 Dakṣa but his consort Satī 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 Dakṣa who said: "I know about the Eleven Rudras but who is this Maheśvara I have not

1. Agnirvai sa devaḥ tasyaitāni nāmāni, śarva iti yathā prāchyā āchakshate, 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 Purāṇic 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 *Kāśī Khaṇḍa* 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 *Gabhastīśvara*, *Avimukteśvara*, *Yogeśvara* which are also included in the list of the *Kāśī Khaṇḍa*. There was another

1. *Asaṁkhyātā 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 Yogin. 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 Yogin. 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 Austric 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 Vaiśravaṇa-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 referee, 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 Kāśī." 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 aśetics like the Nātha, Avadhūta, Yogī, Jaṅgama, Liṅgāyata, Māheśvara, Kāpālīka 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 Chaturdaśī day (14th Dark night of Phālguna) which might have been the occasion of Rudra-maha festival.

VIII. NĀGAMAHA (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. Kadrū, the mother of Nāgas, was also a term for the Mother Earth. This is the explanation in the Brāhmaṇa literature (*iyam Prithivī Kadrū*, ŚB. 3. 6. 2. 2. ; *iyam vai Prithivī Sarparājñī*, ŚB. 2. 1. 4. 30). Viṣṇu sleeps on the couch of the Cosmic Sarpa (*Ananta Śeṣha*). In such stories the strand of Viṣṇu worship was reconciled with that of Nāga worship. The Pāñcharātra 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 Śeṣha. In the beginning of the Bhāgavata religion Saṅkarshaṇa and Vāsudeva were together regarded as a pair deity¹. 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 (*Baladevadvītiya*). The *Vāyu Purāṇa* speaks of Kṛishṇa and Balarāma as deities whose nature was human (*Puruṣha-prakṛitika-deva*). Originally these were the two Kshatriya rulers amongst the Vṛishṇis and were consecrated as Vṛishṇi Vīras (*Kāśikā*

1. Dvandvaṁ Saṅkarshaṇavāsudevau, dvāpyabhivyaktau sāhacharyeṇetyarthaḥ. *Kāśikā* 8. 1. 15.

on Pāṇinian sūtra 5. 2. 34, *rājanyabahuwachanadvandve'ndhaka-viśhiṣṭhai*). In course of time these Kshatriya heroes or human leaders began to be worshipped as deities and attained to a divinement. Balarāma also became associated with Nāga worship as happened in the case of Viṣṇu. The *Yajurveda* (3.61) refers to Rudra-Śiva as *Ahim sannaḥ* or associated with serpent. It is possible that *Nāga* and *Sarpa* in remote antiquity represented 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-Garuḍa 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 historical tradition.

Garuḍa is the symbol of Sūrya and Nāga represents the subterranean forces of darkness. The great legend of Garuḍa 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 Purāṇic legend of the Churning of the Ocean (*Samudra-manthana*) in which the Immortality fell to the share of the gods and not to that of the Asuras. The Purāṇic 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 Jaratkārū 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 Kṛishṇa 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 thirty-three gods made it there the object of worship. It is also said that Nāgarāja Kālīka 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 Nagrahāra (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 Rīmagrāma who got one share of the remains. It is said that the Stūpa built by them at Rīmagrāma 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 Nāga 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 Nāga 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 *diṇāra* 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 *diṇāra* also to his son, thereby the son thought that the ant-hill of the Nāga was

full of golden *śīṇāra* 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 Śuṅga 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 Chhaṛgāon it is styled as 'Bhagavān Nāgaḥ.' The title 'Bhagavān' denoted a divine person or deity. It is found in several other names such as Bhagavān Yaksha, Bhagavān Vaiśravaṇa, Bhagavān Maṇibhadra, Bhagavān Vāsudeva.

The most influential example of Nāga worship in folk religion is available at Maṇiyār Maṭha in Rājagriha. In the 'Tīrtha-yātrā' chapter of the Āraṇyakaparva 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 Hārtī 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 Maṇināga. He who partakes of the *Prasāda* distributed in the shrine of Maṇināga is not affected by the poison of a serpent. The pilgrim should spend a night in the shrine of Maṇināga.² When Kṛishṇa reached Rājagriha with Bhīma and Arjuna he spoke of the existence of four Nāga deities there, namely Arbuda, Śakravāpī, Svastika and Maṇināga.

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

1. Yakshiṇyā naityakaṁ tatra prāśnita puruṣaḥ śuchiḥ /
yakshiṇyāstu prasādena muchyate bhrūṇabatyayā //
Āraṇyakaparva 92.90.

2. Maṇināgaṁ tato gatvā go-sahasra-phalaṁ labhet /
naityakaṁ bhuñjate yastu Maṇināgasya mānavaḥ //
Dashṭasyāśvishenā'pi na tasya kramate viṣam /
tatroshya rajanīmekāṁ sarvapāpaiḥ pramuchyate //
Āraṇyakaparva 82. 91—92.

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-spouted 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-Pañchamī 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 *Sann*. This seems to be a popular representation of the great feud between

the Nāgas and the Garuḍas to which referenc is found in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* as the conflict between the sons of Kadrū called Kādraveyas 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 cutline 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 Suparṇa. 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 *Rigveda* (I. 164. 46). The legend of the feud between Suparṇas and the Nāgas followed the pattern of the *Daiṇusuram* 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. Indraṁ mitraṁ varuṇamagnimāhvaratho divyaḥ sa
 Suparṇo garutmān/
 Ekaṁ sadviprā bahudhā vadantyagniṁ yamaṁ mātari-
 śvānamāhuḥ //

of Mathurā and Gandhāra several reliefs have been found depicting the Nāga-Garuḍa conflict. The Saun figures drawn on the Nāga-Pañchamī 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 Nāga images in Mathurā art were often found installed near ponds of water. Such a water tank was known as *Nāga-hrada* or *Nāga-pushkariṇī*. Bāṇa has written that queen Vilāsavatī 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 (*prasiddheshu Nāgukulāhṛadeshu mamaṁja*) (*Kādambarī*, Vaidya ed., p. 65). There is frequent reference in Hindi literature to the *Ashṭakulī* or eight families of the Nāgas. These included such Nāgas as Śeṣha, Vāsuki, Kambala, Karakoṭaka, Padma, Mahāpadma, Śaṅkha and Kulika. Another list includes the names of Takshaka, Mahāpadma, Śaṅkha, Kulika, Kambala, Aśvatara, Dhṛitarāshṭra and Balāhaka. Of these the name of Vāsuki is often told in folk tales as Bāsaka. In Indian mythology Śeṣha 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 *Rukhṣha-maha* in Prakṛit 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 *Tulsi* (*basil* plant), *Pippala* (= *Aśvattha*, *Ficus Religiosa*), *Vaṭa* (banyan, *Ficus Indica*), *Āmalakī* (*Emblīc 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 *Mahābhārata*¹ :

"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 *Vriksha-chaitya*, 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 *Brahman*². When such a tree attained some celebrity it was enclosed by a railing

1. *Eko vriksho hi yo grāme bhavet pāṇaphalānvitaḥ /
chaityo bhavati nirjñātirarchanīyaḥ supūjitaḥ //*

Ādiparva 138. 25

2. *Vriksha iva stabdho divi tishṭhatyekaḥ / 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 surrounded 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 (*torāṇa*). We have surviving examples of such gateways in the railings at Sanchi. It appears that originally such railing pillars (*vedikā-khamba*) were plain as in the *Nārāyaṇa Vāṭaka* at Nagari near Chittor without carving but later on gradually they were carved, as at Bharhut and Mathurā. The railing at Sanchi, however, remained without any carving. Such magnificent trees with elaborate railing were the true Chaitya Vrikshas. In course of time religious fairs began to be held at these arboreal shrines which became known as *Rukkhā-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, Sanchi and Mathurā, and in Andhra art. These Bodhi-shrines were sometimes double storeyed without ceilings but with the branches of Bodhi tree spreading 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 (*Rukkhā-devatā*). This worship was intended to appease the *Rukkhā-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 Rukkhkha-devatā is available in the *Rukkhāhadhamma Jātaka* (Jātaka 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—

Ūrdhvamūlamadhaḥ śākhamaśvatthaṁ prāhuravyayam/*Gītā*
15.1. What was known in Vedic times as the imperishable Pippala Tree, Avyaya Aśvattha, became later known as Akshaya-vaṭa, the Eternal Banyan Tree. The *Rigveda* mentions the cosmos as the tree of a thousand branches (Sahasra-valśa Vanaspati)¹:

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

1. Vanaspatiṁ pavamāna madhvā samaṅgdhī dhārayā /
sahasra-valśaṁ haritaṁ bhrājamānaṁ hiraṇyayam //
Rigveda 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 *Ṛita* 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 *Sahasraśālā* 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 *Ūrdhva* refers to the invisible centre or transcendent Brahman and word *Adhaḥ* denotes the visible creation. In simple words, *Ūrdhva* is the centre of the circle and the *Adhaḥ* its circumference. In the *Atharvaveda* 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 (*trītiyaśyāmito divi*, *Atharvaveda* 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 vanaṁ, Brahma sa Vṛksha āsa/ Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa* 2.8.9.6; also *Ṛigveda* 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 *Rainas* 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*, *Rāmāyaṇa*, *Divyāvadāna* and Jaina *Sūtras*. According to the *Bhīṣmaparva*, 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 (*Bhīṣmaparva* 7.2-11).¹

We read in the *Rāmāyaṇa* 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

1. Utarāṇ kuravo rājan puṇyāḥ siddhanishevitāḥ // 2.
Tatra vrikshā madhuphalā nityapushpaphalopamāḥ /
pushpāṇi cha sugandhāni rasavanti phalāni cha // 3.
Sarvakāmaphalāstatra kechid vrikshā janādhipa /
apare kshīrīṇi nāma vrikshāstatra narādhipa // 4.
Ye ksharanti sadā kshīraṁ śaḍrasaṁ chāmṛitopamam /
vastrāṇi cha prasūyante phaleshvābharāṇi cha // 5.
Mithunāni cha jāyante striyaśchāpsarasopamāḥ /
teshām tu kshīriyaṁ kshīraṁ pibantyaṁṛitasannibham // 8.
Mithunaṁ jāyate kālē samaṁ tachcha pravartate /
tulyarūpaguṇopetaṁ samaveshaṁ tathaiva cha // 9 //

Bhīṣmaparva 7.2-11//

objects as clothes, bejewelled ornaments, costly bed-steads, garlands, articles of food, drinks and maidens of youth and beauty.¹

According to the *Mahāvāṇīśa 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 Kalpavṛksha. 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 Kalpavṛksha rooted in plentiful possessions, still Buddhist art from the earliest times accorded a welcome reception to the theme of Kalpavṛksha. On the Torana-gateways of Bharhut and Sāncī men and women are depicted as enjoying the blessings of the Kalpavṛksha. There are many scenes in which costly textiles and ornaments are shown issuing out from the meandering branches of the Kalpavṛksha trees. On the railing stones of the Bharhut Stūpa scenes of the Kalpavṛksha and its meandering creepers

1. Jātarūpamayaiśchāpi hutāśanasam uprabhūṣiṇ /
nityapushpaphalāstatra nagāḥ patrarathākūlāḥ // 43.
Divyagandharasasparśāḥ sarvān kīṃn sravanti cha /
nānākārāṇi vasāṃsi phalantyanye nagottamāḥ // 44.
Muktāvoidūryachitrāṇi bhūṣaṇāni tathaiva cha /
sastrīṇāṃ yāyanurūpāṇi parusnāṇāṃ tathaiva cha // 45.
Sarvartusukhasevyāni phalantyanye nagottamāḥ /
manārhamañchitrāṇi phalantyanye nagottamāḥ // 46.
Śayanāni prasūyante chitrāstarapavanti cha /
maṇḥkāntāni mālyāni phalantyatrāpare drumiḥ // 47.
Pāṇiṇi cha mahārḥāṇi bhakṣyāṇi vīvidhāni cha /
striyaścha guṇasampinnā rūpayauvananalakṣitāḥ // 48.

Kishkindhā Kāṇḍa Ch. 41

2. Vāridā purimā sākhā annapanāṇāḥ dakṣhiṇā / Nāridā
pachchhimā sākhā savvakāme cha uttarā // *Jātaka* 4.352.

producing ornaments and fabrics, wines and objects of toilet are frequently depicted. The best representation of an independent sculpture of Kalpavriksha which fulfils 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 (*Śaṅkha-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 from the branches and also a purse full with jewels. The leaves of the tree are broad; it has many bunches of fruits. This Kalpavriksha probably formed the capital of the pillar dedicated to Kubera. The *Śaṅkha-nidhi* and *Padma-nidhi* 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 *Paṇḍinī-vidyā* as explained in the *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa* and *Vāmana Purāṇa*). The conch treasure (*Śaṅkha-nidhi*) has been found depicted in the art of Mathurā, Deogarh, Vaiśālī and of the Borobudur Stūpa in Java. Kālidāsa has stated in the *Meghadūta* that the conch and lotus treasures were depicted on the doorjambs of the houses (*Dvāroṣānte likhita-vapushau Śaṅkha-padmau cha drishṭvā/Meghadūta* 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 Kārttika.

A form of the Rukkhaka-maha was the Ujjāna-maha, the festival of the garden included in the list of the *Nāyādhama-*

kahā. 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 *Uyyāna-kriḍā* in Pāli literature. Such garden sports and excursions (*goshikā*) 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 *Upamitibhava-prapañchakathā* 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 Pāli *Nidānakathā* which was celebrated in the Lumbini Garden. In between Kapilavastu and Devadaha was a grove of Śāla trees or Lumbini-vana. On that occasion it was blossoming with Śāla 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 Lumbini 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 Lumbini Grove a desire arose in her heart to enjoy the Śālavana sports (*Śālabhañjikā-kriḍā*). 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 (*Nidānakathā*, 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 *Āśoka* flowers (*Āśoka-pushpa-prachāyikā*), plucking of *Śāla* flowers (*Śāla-bhañjikā*), plucking of

Uddālaka¹ flowers (*Uddālaka-pushpa-bhañjikā*), gathering of Virāṇa flowers (*Virāṇa-pushpa-prachāyikā*), plucking of Tāla flowers (*Tāla-bhañjikā*), eating of mangoes (*Āmra-khādikā*), eating of cakes (*Abhyāsha-khādikā*), sucking of the sugar cane-sticks (*Āchoshā-khādikā*), plucking the scented flowers of the Damanaka plant (*Damanaka-bhañjikā*), plucking of Sahakāra fruits (*Sahakāra-bhañjikā*), eating the roots of lotus plant (*Bisakhā-dikā*), 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 *Jivaputraka-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 Āśvina. It is likely that the festival of Jivaputra-prachāyikā coincided with it. Damanaka-bhañjikā seems to be the *Damanotsava* festival celebrated on the Chaitra Pūrṇimā night. The festival of Virāṇa-pushpa prachāyikā was celebrated in the month of Vaiśākha. The *Devī-Bhāgavata* prescribes the festival of *Dolotsava* on Bright 4th day of Chaitra, *Śayanotsava* on Dark 3rd day of Śrāvaṇa, *Jāgarotsava* on the month of Mārgaśīrsha, *Rathotsava* on Bright 3rd day of Āshāḍha, and *Damanotsava* on Chaitra Paurṇamī and *Pavitrotsava* on Śrāvaṇa Pūrṇimā. In the *Dolotsava* Śiva and Pārvatī were worshipped with *Damanaka* flowers.

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

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-Dhanda* 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-phushpa-prachāyikā*) and entertained themselves by beautifying their bodies with its red flowers.

In ancient India domestic gardens (*Grihadyāna*) 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 Kāvya. According to Daṇḍī, a good Mahākāvya becomes complete only when it contains the description of *Udyāna-kriḍā* and *Salila-kriḍā*. 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 Yaśovati embraced the bunches of *Jātī* 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 *Āśoka* 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-maṇḍapa*, *Mādhavī-maṇḍapa*, *Latā-griha* for sports and retirement. Vālmīki describes that in the palace of the king of Laṅkā there were such groves as *Latā-griha*, *Kriṣṇā-griha*, *Pushpa-griha*, *Chitra-griha* 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 *Harṣa* and *Sārasa* birds. In the domestic garden there used to be by the side of the lotus pond an artificial hillock (*Kriṣṇā-parvata* or *Dōru-parvata*). On this raised hill many kinds of sports were improvised. In the list of the *Nāyāhammakahā*, *Parvata-maha* is mentioned together with *Udyāna-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 *Udyāna-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 thirty-two

trees. There was a *Sahasamba-vana* at several old cities like Śrāvastī and Kauśāmbī and many others have survived to this day, e. g. a Batistī-bāri 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 *Lākshārāma* in Sanskrit and *Lakhrāon* or *Lakha-peṭā* in Hindi.

There is so much material about the festivals of trees and gardens (*Vṛksha-maha* and *Udyāna-maha*) in Indian literature. On the gateways of Sānchi, tree worship occupies as much space as Buddhist subjects. Men and women are depicted as paying homage to the trees. Gandharvas 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 Nadī-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 *Kūpikā* 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-bhoja*. 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 Kushāna inscriptions of Mathurā frequent references are found to *Udyāna*, *Sarovara*, *Vāpi*, *Kūpa*, *Ārāma*, 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 *Amrita-kunda* or pools of ambrosial 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 fiftytwo 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 *Sāgara*. 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 Vārāṇasī there used to be a festival known as *Buddhavā Maṅgala* 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 Kṛishṇa in the sea at Dvārakā. It is stated in the *Harivaṁśa Purāṇa* that the Samudra-maha was celebrated every year at Piṇḍāraka near Dvārakā¹. *Samudra-yātrā* was a technical term bearing the same meaning as Sāgaramaha. The word Yātrā 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 *Harivaṁśa*.

When the proper time for the Samudrayātrā 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. Vṛishṇi young men came out with courtesans. These women were the object of common dalliance for all Vṛishṇi young men. Kṛishṇa 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 Kṛishṇa the water was made sweet and free of salt². 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 Vishṇoratulatejasah/Samudra-yātrā-samprāptā tirtha-piṇḍārake nṛipa // *Harivaṁśa* 2. 88. 4.
2. Toyam vilavaṇam mṛishṭam Vāsudevasya śāsanāt / *ibid.* 2. 88. 23.

water women began to enjoy the water festival by splashing the water on Kṛishṇa. 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. Kṛishṇa 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 Torana-doors of crystal, agate and jade and inset with many jewels. Many of the boats had the form of Garuḍa or Krauñcha 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. Kāśchitkāśṭhamayaisteruḥ plavaiḥ sarvaṅgaśobhanāḥ /
krauñchabarhiṇa-nāgānāmākārasadṛśaiḥ striyaḥ // 27
Makarākṛitibhiśchānyā minābhairapī chāparāḥ /
bahurūpākṛitidharaiḥ pupluvuśchāparāḥ striyaḥ //

Harivaṁśa 2. 88. 27-28.

2. Naubhīrgrihaprakārābhiśchikrīḍuraparājītā /
snātānuliṭtamuditāḥ sâyāhne'ndhaka-vṛishanayaḥ //

The sea looked beautiful with white-coloured boats and the masts of the Jhillikā 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 Dīrghikā 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 *Harivaṃśa* 2. 88. 63-67)

The author of the *Harivaṃśa Purāṇa* has given an elaborate description of Samudra-maha or Samudra-yātrā. 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. Kṛiṣṇa could not restrain himself and began to perform the dance movement with Subhadrā who had a beautiful form. Balarāma, Sātyaki, Pradyumna, Sāmba, Sāraṇa, Gada, Akṛūra and two sons of Balarāma named Nisātha and Urukā 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, Kṛiṣṇa, Subhadrā, Arjuna

Āyatāschaturasrāścha vṛitāścha svastikāstathā /
prāsādā naushu kauravya vibitā viśvakarmaṇī //
Kailāsamandarachchhandā meruchchhandastathaiva cha /
tathā nānāvayaśchchhandās tathelāmṛigarūpiṇaḥ //
Vaidūryatairīṇaiśchitrāḥ chitrābhirmaṇibhaktibhiḥ /
masāragalvarkamayaiśchitrabhaktiśatairapi //

Harivaṃśa 2. 88. 57-60.

and Revati. Thus the spirit of laughter increased and when Kṛishṇa 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 Revati and on the other was Kṛishṇa 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 soup, milk, curd and such other vegetarian preparations only. But others began to enjoy themselves with drinks like Mātreya, Madhvīkā, 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, Gīri-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 *Kisātas* 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 *Himālayas* 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 list* on that basis. On the northern gateway of the *Mahāstūpa* at *Sānchī* there are pairs of men and women seated under *Kalpavṛksha* 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.

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1. Vanecharāpām vanitāsakhānām
 darīgrihotsaṅganishaktavāsah /
 Bhavanti yatraushadhayorajanyām
 atailapūrāḥ suratapradīpāḥ //

XII. STŪPAMAHA AND CHAITYAMAHA (FESTIVALS OF STŪPA AND CHAITYA)

CHAPTER TWELVE

In the list of *Nāyūdhammakahā* there is mention of Chaitya-yātrā (*Cheia-jattā*) and in the list of *Rāyapaseṇiya* there is reference to Chaitya-maha (*Cheia-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-vṛksha. 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 (*chitāyān bhāvaḥ 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 Nishāda 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 *Rākshasa-gallā* in South India (literally *Rākshasa* = colossal, and *gallā* = stone), signifying the same thing as megalith. These Austric customs led it to the origin of Chaityamaha and Stūpamaha. In course of time Chaitya worship became a conspicuous feature of folk religion. The *Āśvalāyana Gṛhyasūtra* prescribes Chaitya-yajña for householders which implied that the Bali was offered to the Chaitya (*Chaitya-yajñe prāḥ svishṭakṛitaḥ chaityāya balim 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*, *Rāmāyaṇa*, Buddhist and Jaina literature. There was a great Chaitya in Laṅkā, mentioned as *Chaitya-prāsāda* (*Chaitya-prāsādaṁ meruṣpīṅga-mitonnatam*, Sundarakāṇḍa 43.3). When Hanūmān destroyed the forest grove of Rāvaṇa 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 Sānchī. 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 Sānchī Stūpa. Following the same custom stone pillars have been found in front of the rock cut Chaitya-halls at Kārle, 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 *Kīrti* from the root *Kṛi* 'to excavate' or 'scop out'. This meaning of *Kīrti* 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 *Kīrti* (*tāvata-kīrtiḥ sthīreyaṇi bhajatu śubhakarī satsaṁśaṇi puṣhyandōmnaḥ*)². The pillars raised in *Kīrti*-excavations were called *Kīrti-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 *Kīrti-mukha*.

1. Sundarakāṇḍa 43.17.

2. See my article "*Kīrti, Kīrtimukha and Kīrtistambha*," *Studies in Indian Art* (Varanasi, 1965), pp. 241 ff.

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 devānām mahāḥ*, 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.¹ The Rākshasās 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-prāsāda 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.² Of the five hill-tops which surrounded Rājagṛīha, 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.³ Kṛishṇa, 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-

1. Nikumbhilāyām vidhivat pāvakaṁ juhuve/ Sundarakāṇḍa 24. 45.
2. Akṛishṭapachyā pṛithivī vibabhau chaityamālīnī/ Śānti parva 29.18.
3. Tathaiva ṛishigiristāta śubhāśchaityaka-pañchamāḥ.
4. Māgadhbānām suruchiram chaityakāntam samadravan/ Sabhāparva 29.17; chaityakam cha gireḥ śṛiṅgam mitvā/ ibid. 39.21.

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 *Mahāvamsa*, a Pali text, describes such a *Vihāra-maha* or festival of building a monastery. Duṭṭhagāmaṇī, 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 (*Mahāvamsa*, Ch. 26 called "Marichavathṭhi-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 Duṭṭhagāmaṇī made a pile of eight lacs of gold Kārshāpaṇas 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 Torāṇas were fitted with silver bells and they were also fitted with lotus medallions. The Mahāprāsāda consisted of one thousand rooms (*gabbha*), which were decorated with *Sīha-paṇḍjara* ventilators. In the centre was erected a pavilion which resembled the *Nārī-vāhana-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 (*Chatuspadapaṇī*). A spittoon of gold (*āchamana-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 *Prāsāda* was fitted with copper so it became famous as *Loha-prāsāda*. When the *Loha-prāsāda* became ready the king invited the Saṅgha to celebrate a festival of *Prāsādamaha* similar to that of *Vihāramaha* and his gift of food and valuable things continued for a week.

Thus the *Prāsādamaha* has been described in the Pali literature. The *Prāsādamaha* is not specifically mentioned in the lists of Mahas but all such festivals followed the pattern of *Vihāramaha*, or *Chaityamaha*.

King Duṭṭhagāmiṇī after building a monastery (*Vihāra*) and a *Prāsāda* also ordered the construction of a magnificent *Chaitya*. This *Stūpa* of *Anurādhapura* has been held in high esteem in *Sinhala*. It is said that after his conquest of the Tamil country king Duṭṭhagāmaṇī 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 *Rājagṛha*, *Vaiśālī*, *Sārnāth*, *Kāusāmbī*, *Ujjayinī*, *Pāṭaliputra*, *Kashmir*, *Vārāṇasī*, *Vindhyāṭavī* 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 (*Dhātugarbha*). 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 (*Añjali-paggahā Devā*), dancing Devas (*Nachchakā Devā*), divine figures playing on musical instruments (*Turiyavōḍakā Devā*), divine figures holding bowls (*Pōtiāharā Devā*), divine figures carrying sugarcane branches (*Ukkhka-sākhāḍharā Devā*), figures carrying sword (*Khaggāḍharā Devā*), divine figures carrying Dharmachakras (*Dhammachakāḍharā Devā*), figures carrying auspicious jewels (*Ratīnāḍharā Devā*), figures carrying lotus medallions (*Padumāḍikagāhaka Devā*). Divine figures carrying these various symbols were carved on the slab encasing. Similarly *Pāṇyaghaṭa* motifs full with flowers, the eight auspicious symbols (*Aṣṭamūṅgalikachihna*), rows of four-footed animals of noble breed (*Chaturpadānam paṇṭi*), rows of geese (*Haṁsa-paṇṭi*), festoons of bells with pearl-strings (*Muttākiṅkiṇi-jāla*), rows of golden bells (*Suvarṇa-ghaṇṭā-paṇṭi*), bunches of pendants woven with pearls (*Muttādama-kalāpaka*), varieties of lotus medallions (*nānā padumakā*), decorative motifs of the Sun, the Moon and the Stars. The Mahāstūpa was adorned with these different kinds of motifs. The relics of the Buddha were placed in a casket for being deposited in the Stūpa. The relics were enshrined on the 15th Bright day of Āshāḍha. 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-jāgarāṇa*) has been a practice since then throughout the country. Amongst the Hindus the Brāhmaṇas follow this practice of reciting the "Gopāla-sahasranāma" on the Dipāvalī night. The women folk observe special religious festival by keeping awake at night and performing dance and music. Thus that king celebrated four festivals, namely Vihāramaha, Prāsādamaha,

Stūpārambhamaha and Dhātunidhānamaha (*Mahāvamśa*, Chs. 29-32)¹.

In the Jaina text *Rāyapaseṇiya* there is the description of the Āmraśālavana Chaitya built outside the Āmalakalpā-nagarī. In the Chaitya, Sūryābhadeva listened to the religious preaching of Bhagavān Mahāvīra after making the Prada-kṣhiṇā. Thereafter he organised a dramatic performance with thirtytwo elements. In this context the description of the Vimāna of Sūryābhadeva and of *Dvātrīṃśika-nāṭyavidhī* 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 Āmraśālavana 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 Sāncī, Amarāvati 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 Maha 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 maha tathā /
Thūpārambhetu sattāhe tathā dhātunidhānake //
2. See my *Indian Art* (Varanasi, 1965), pp. 220 ff.

XIII. MUKUNDAMAHA (WORSHIP OF MUKUNDA)

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

In both the lists of the *Nāyādharmakāṇḍa* and *Rāyapaseṇiya* the names of following minor religious festivals are found : Mukundamaha, Bhūtamaha, Ajāmaha, Koṭṭakiriyaṃmaha, Kāmamaha Yakkhamaha, Vessamaṇamaha, Chandamaha and Brahmanaha. The interpretation of *Mukundamaha* 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 *Vāsudevaka*. The worship of Vāsudeva was very popular within a radius of 200 miles around Mathurā. In an inscription of the time of Mahākshatrapa Śhoḍāśa (1 cen. B. C.) there is mention of Mahāsthāna and a *Chatuṣśāla 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 (*chatuṣśāla-torāṇa*). But in its centre there used to be only an open air platform as in the case of other shrines. We know of a *Nārāyaṇavāṭaka* for the worship of Saṅkarshaṇa and Vāsudeva built at Nagari 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 Bhagvān Saṅkarshaṇa and Vāsudeva both of whom are mentioned in the inscription. The pair names of Saṅkarshaṇa and Vāsudeva had become famous in the Śuṅga period as known from the *Mahābhāṣya* of Patañjali and the inscriptions found at Mathurā and Bṛhannagar. In the *Mahānīdāsa* commentary of the *Suttanīpāta* 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 *Pūjā-sīla* or a stone of worship and a *Prākāra* or stone enclosure. This was the form of *Nārāyaṇavijaya* 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 *Maṇḍa*, *Sihanḍila* or *Mañcha* where the *Śilā-paṭṭa* was placed, and this was demarkated 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 Nagari monument. Aśoka after visiting the birth-place of Buddha at Lumbini erected a pillar engraved with the inscription saying :

"Hida Budhe jāte Sakyamunī ti, silābigaḍabhichā kālāpita 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*; *Vinayaṭīṭhaka* 1.206), and Pali *Vaikaṭika* 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 Chaitya mound with a wooden post found at Lauriā Nandanagarh. Aśoka changed the material of the column and has therefore mentioned it as *śilā-thambha*, or stone column. In the Nārāyaṇa-vāṭaka at Nagari the *Pūjāśilā* and enclosure wall have been preserved but the column seems to have banished. This *Pūjāśilā* maybe identified with the *Āyāgapatta* of Mathurā Jaina inscriptions. The word *Āyāgapatta* was translated as *Aryakapatta*, 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 Kaṅkālīlā which are carved with religious and auspicious symbols. One of them in the Mathurā Museum was established for the worship of the Aśhanta by *Simhanācika* (*Simhanādikasa Āyāgapatto pratihāpito arhamapūjāye*). In the Lucknow Museum a Torāṇa-tympanum is deposited in which some male and female figures are worshipping the Stūpa and the *Āyāgapatta*, 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 Viṣṇu maybe identified as the oldest Viṣṇu 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 Nagari no post or column has been found but in the Vaishṇava 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 Viṣṇu 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 Viṣṇu 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-dhvaja* 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 *Makara-yashṭi* 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 *Chakradhvaja*.

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

5. The position of Viṣṇu as supreme over other deities is also indicated by the word *Sarveśvara* of the Nagari 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 *Sarveśvara* for god Vāsudeva. He regarded Saṅkar-*śaṇa* 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 *Sarveśvara* applied to Vishṇu. 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 'Śaṅkara 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, Uchchaiṣravā 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 Vṛishṇis'. 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 *Sarveśvara* of the Nagari inscription. This was a marvel of the Bhāgavata religion that all the godlings like the Yakshas, Nāgas, Bhūtas, Rivers, Ponds, Suparṇas, 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 *Mahāniddesa* commentary of Pali *Suttanipāṭa* where like the *Gītā* twentytwo godlings are enumerated as follows:

1. Viṣṭabhyāhamidaṃ kṛtsnamekāṃsena sthito jagat, *Gītā* 10.42.

Santeke shamapabrāhmaṇā vataśuddhikā, te haththivatikā [cp. *Airāvataṁ gajendrāpām* of the *Gītā*] honti, te assavatikā [cp. *Uchchaiṣṛavasamaśvānām*] honti, te govatikā (*Dhenūnāmasmi Kāmadhuk*) honti, te kukkuravatikā honti, te kākavatikā honti, te Vāsudevavatikā [*Vṛishyānām Vāsudevo'smi*] honti, te Baladevavatikā honti, te Puṇṇabhaddavatikā [*Vitteśo yaksharakshasām*] honti, te Maṇibhaddavatikā honti, te Aggavatikā [*Vasūnām Pāvakaśchāsmi*] honti, te Nāgavatikā [*sarpāṇāmasmi Vāsukih, Anantaśchāsmi nāgānām*] honti, te Supaṇṇavatikā [*Vainateyaścha pakshīṇām*] honti, te Yakkhavatikā [*Vitteśo yaksharakshasām*] honti, te Asuravatikā [*Prahalādaśchāsmi dai yānām*] honti, te Gandhabbavatikā [*Gandharvāṇām Chitraruthaḥ*] honti, te Mahārājavatikā [*Vitteśo yaksharakshasām*] honti, te Chandrimavatikā [*nakshatrāṇāmahaṁ śaśī*] honti, te Sūryavatikā [*jyotiśhām raviraṁśumān*] honti, te Indavatikā (*devānāmasmi vāsavaḥ*) honti, te Brahmāvatikā honti, te Devavatikā honti, te Diśavatikā honti. (*Niddesa*, Pt. I, p. 79, also p. 310). "These who are followers of the Aśva cult,...etc." These names maybe classified as follows :—

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1. Powers of Nature— | Chandramā (Moon), Sūrya (Sun), Agni (Fire), Diśā (Quarters) |
| 2. Cults relating to Animals— | Hastī (Elephant), Aśva (Horse), Go (Bull), Kukkura (Dog), Kāka (Crow) |
| 3. Bhūta-Preta etc. (Ghosts and Spirits)— | Nāga (Serpents), Suparṇa (Birds), Yaksha (Spirits), Asura (Demons), Gandhabba, Pūrṇabhadra (name of a Yaksha), Maṇibhadra, Mahārāja (Yakshas) |
| 4. Bhāgavata cult— | Vāsudeva and Baladeva |
| 5. Vedic deities— | Indra, Brahmā, Deva, |

A similar list is given in the *Milindapañña* including the following Gaṇa followers of—

Pisācha, Maṇibhadra, Chandra, Sūrya, Kālī, Śiva, Vāsudeva, Pūrṇabhadra, a cloud maiden (*Ghanikā*).¹ The Sīṃhali 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 Maṇibhadra, 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 *Majjhima-nikāya* it is said that Puṇyakoliyaputta was the follower of Govrata (*Govatika*) and Seniya Achela was the dog-vowed (*Kuḥkuravatika*). 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 *Matsya Purāṇa* that the adherents of the Bull cult (*Saurabheyadharmā*) did not consider

1. Mallā, Atonā, Pabbatā, Dhammagiriya, Brahmagiriya, Naṭakā, Nachchakā, Laṅgakā, Pisāchā, Maṇibhaddā, Puṇṇabhaddā, Chandimasūriyā, Kālīdevatā, Sivā, Vasudevā, Ghanikā, Asipāsā, Bhaddiputtā. *Milindapañña*, Vadekar ed., p. 190.
2. tesāṃ tesāṃ rahassaṃ tesu tesu gaṇesu yeva charanti avasesāṃnaṃ pūjitam / *Ibid.*
3. Govattikoti samādippa govato sis:siṅgānaṃ ṭhapetvā naṅguṭṭhaṃ bandhitvā gviḥisaddhiṃ tiṇāni khadanto viyacharati/Kukkuravatikoti samādippakukkuravato sabbaṃ sunaka-kiryam karoti// *Papañcha Sūdanī* 3.100.

it sinful to transgress the rules about connubium (*gamyāgamyā*), food (*bhākshyābhākshyā*) and drinks (*peyāpeya*).

The *Disāvratika* or followers of the cult of four quarters of the *Suttanipāta* appear to be the same as *Disāpokkhiyā* of the *Bhagavati Sūtra* (11.9). A recluse living in Hastināpura on the banks of the Gaṅgā took the vow of a *Disāpokkhiyā*. He ate once in three days (*Chhappham 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 *Chhappham* vow and worshipped Yama in the southern direction, then Varuṇa in the west and finally Vaiśravaṇa in the north. A Bhikṣu named Samila in Vārāṇasī was likewise the follower of the *Disā* cult (*Disāpokkhi*) (*Niryāvali Sūtra* 3; Jagdish Chandra Jain, *Life in the Jain Canons*, p. 204).

The *Disāvratā* was a cult of the highest antiquity being developed in the time of the *Rigveda* 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 (*Micchā jīvā*) 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—

Nāsmākaṁ vidyate tāta pātakaṁ steyameva cha /
 Bhakshyābhakshyaṁ tathā chaiva peyāpeyaṁ tathaiva cha //
 Dvipadāṁ bahavo hyete dharma esha gavāṁ smṛitaḥ /
 kāryākārye na vāgamyāgamaṇaṁ 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 *Vibhūti*s. 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 Bhūtamaha, Chandamaha, Sūryamaha etc., but the cult that was held in the highest esteem was Yakshamaha and will be discussed later.

XIV. SRĪ DEVATĀ (GODDESS SRĪ)

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

The followers of Śrī Devatā are mentioned in the list of the *Milindapañña*. Śrī Devī 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-Lakshmi, and she herself was assigned an honourable rank as the consort of Viṣṇu. Thus the two cults of Viṣṇu and Lakshmi 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 Lakshmi are mentioned in the *Yajurveda* "Puruṣa Sūkta", 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 Lakshmi Goddesses¹. Some of them are auspicious and others are evil. Originally she was one Lakshmi but came to be conceived of in hundred differentiated forms as in the case of other gods and goddesses. Śrī and Lakshmi were dual deity but drawn to each other into a single form of Śrī-Lakshmi. In the *Virāṭaparva*, Śrī is associated with Viṣṇu, Lakshmi with Dāmodara, Śachi with Indra, Rudrāṇi with Śaṁkara, Sāvitrī with Brahmā, and Shashthī with Graha. (*Virāṭaparva*, Poona ed., p. 77, Śloka 347). But this seems to be a conception crystallised only later. Śrī and Lakshmi formed part of a single evolving cult as we find it in the *Śāntiparva* where both Bhūti and Lakshmi are identified².

1. Ekaśataṁ Lakshmyo martyasya sākaṁ tanvā janushodhi-
jātāḥ /
Tāsāṁ pāpishthā niritāḥ pra hiṇmaḥ śivā asmaḥ
jātavedo ni yachchha // AV. 7.115.3.
2. Bhūtirlakshmiti māmāhuḥ Śrīrityevaṁ cha vāsava / 2188.
aḥam Lakshmirahaṁ Bhūtiḥ Śrīśchāhaṁ balasūdana /
221.21.

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."

Aśvaghosha 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 Bṛihadhratha 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 Lakshmī is '*Mā*' which points to the original name *Māyā*. The Prakrit name *Mā* denoted Lakshmī, with variants as *Māyī* and *Māyīā* (*Pāiasaddama-*

1. Kā tvaṁ tiṣṭhaṣi māyeva dīpyamānā svatejasā /
hitvā daityeśvaram subhru tvaṁ mamāchakshva
tattvataḥ // Śāntiparva 218.6.
2. Tasya devī nṛidevasya māyā nāma tadā'bhavat /
Vitakrodhatamo māyā māyeva divi devatā //
Saundarananda 2.49.
3. Avekshamāpastām devīm devatāmiva nandane /
Sundarakāṇḍa 30.2.

hanyavo, p. 847). There is a figure at Bharhut labelled as 'Śrīmā Devatā'. This appears to be a representation of Śrīmā, 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-Lakshmi is believed by the followers of the Buddhism, Jainism and Hinduism or Brāhmanism, and therefore she was represented in the art traditions of these three religions. On the facade of the caves at Udayagiri and Khandagiri this goddess is depicted. On the Stūpa of Bharhut and Sāncī this goddess is shown several times. In the art of Mathurā during the Śuṅga and Kushāṇa periods several statuettes of goddess Śrī-Lakshmi or Gajalakshmi have been found. In the art of Gupta period, in the caves at Ajanta and Ellora 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 Dīpāvalī is associated with the worship of Goddess Lakshmi. On that occasion clay-figurines of Lakshmi 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 Śuṅga and Kushāṇa 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*, *paraśu*, *dhvaja*, *darpaṇa*, *nāga-mūlā*, *śrī-vāsa* etc. Such clay-figurines have been found at Mathurā, Ahichchhatrī, Tāmruk and Chandraketugarh. The goddess does not hold lotus in her hands. A very beautiful figurine of this type was found at Kauśāmbī 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 Āsurī 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 Atargatis 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 Ahichchhatrā 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 "Ahichchhatrā Terracottas", *Ancient India*, No. 4, Pl. Nos. 16, 11, 12, 14, 23, 25). In some figurines of Ahichchhatrā the hair is adorned with a row of Nāga-mudrā signs, 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 Kadrū and Surasā 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-

1. "A Terracotta figure at Oxford", *J. of the Indian Society of Oriental Art*, 1942, p. 94, 102.

script found at Oxyrhynchus. In this list are found such names as Atargatis, Astarate, Iranian goddess Nanāia and others, including the name of the Indian goddess Māia. This Māia seems to have been the same as Māyā 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 Māyā the ancientmost clay-figurines with auspicious signs found at Mathurā, Ahichchhatrā, Kauśāmbī and other sites.

Such necklaces interwoven with auspicious signs were named as *Ashṭamaṅgalaka-Mālā*. This word has been used by Bāṇa in the *Harshacharita* where the land of Bhāratavarsha is said to be adorned with an *Ashṭamaṅgalaka-Mālā* of 18 *Dvīpas* (Islands)¹. We find on the Torāṇa gateway at Sāncī 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 Sāncī necklaces include the following signs: *Ankuśa* (goad), *Darpaṇa* (mirror), *Kartari* (hatchet), *Śrīvatsa*, *Vaijayanti* (triangle-headed standard), *Nandipada*, *Mina-mithuna* (pair of fishes), *Kuṣhāra* (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*². At the time of Dīpāvalī, the figure painted on the wall resembles the *Śrīvatsa* sign and is known as *Saurī* 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 Māyā we have two more kinds of Śrī-Lakṣmī figures: (1) A female figure standing in the midst of

1. See my *Harshacharita—Eka Sāṃskṛitika Adhyayana*, p. 122.

2. "Goddess Lakṣmī and her symbols," *JUPHS.*, Vol. XIV, pt. 1, Fig. 1 from Kāverīpakkam, 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 Padmā-Śrī and the second of Gaja-Lakshmi. In the *Vāyu Purāṇa* there is a list of 56 names of goddesses including Lakshmi, Shashthi, Bhadrā, Revati, Ekānāśā, 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.¹ 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 goddesses². 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 Śrīścha prakīrtyate /
Vāyu Purāṇa Ch. IX. 85, 97, 98.
2. Nisargabhinnāspadamekasamsthāmasmin dvayaṁ Śrīścha
 Sarasvatī cha / *Raghuvamśa* 6. 29.

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 Tāllukedār, 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. Śaṅka-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 wealth¹. A person who owns any one of these treasures has also that particular temperament. The presiding deity of these is Padminī-Śrī or Padmā-Śrī.² This conception of the Eight Nidhis was fully evolved in the Gupta period.

1. Ityete nidhayaḥ khyātā narāpāmarthadevatāḥ /

Mārkaṇḍeya. 68.45.

2. Yathāsthitisvabhāvastu bhavatyeva vilokanāt / sarveshā-mādhipatyē cha Śrīreshā dvijapadmini//*Mārkaṇḍeya*. 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 (*Pāpishā*) and others good (*Śivā*, 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 *Siri-Kālakarṇī Jātaka*. Kālakarṇī was the daughter of Mahārāja Virūpāksha, one of the four Mahārājika gods, and Siri or Śrī of Dhṛitarāshṭra Mahārāja. Both went to the Anavatapta Lake for having their bath. Who should take her bath first, this became a point of controversy amongst them. Kālakarṇī said, "I protect the people and have regard for them. Therefore I shall take bath first". Siri 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 Mahārājika gods. They went to the world of the Four Mahārājika gods and asked their question as to who was entitled to take her bath first in the Anavatapta Lake.

Dhṛitarāshṭra and Virūpāksha did not decide the matter themselves but directed them to Virūdhaka and Vaiśravaṇa. 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 Vārāṇasī there is a Śreṣṭhin named Pure-family

1. Kāyārdham dākṣiṇām tasyāḥ śuklam vāmarṁ tathā-
sitam / sā tu proktā dvīdhā bhūtā, śuklā kṛishṇā cha val-
dyāḥ // *Vāyu Purāṇa* 9.83-84.

(Suchiparivāra). 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 Kālakarṇi put on blue robes, blue unguents and ornaments of blue gems and went at night time to the reception hall of the Śreṣṭhin and stood there in the sky. The Śreṣṭhin saw her and did not like her. He asked as to who she was and who was her father. Kālakarṇi replied that she was the daughter of Virūpāksha Mahārāja named *Chandikā* and *Kālī* (Terrible and Black daughter) and full of inauspicious marks (*alakṣaṇa*), and that her proper name was Kālakarṇi, and added that she wanted his permission to stay in his house. The Śreṣṭhin asked her about the nature and character of the person with whom she used to stay. Kālakarṇi 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, back-biting 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 Śreṣṭhin 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 Kālakarṇi became displeased and said that she already knew that the Śreṣṭhin 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 Śrī 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 Śreṣṭhin himself

enquired as to who she was and who was her father. She replied, "I am the daughter of Mahārāja Dhṛitarāshṭra. My name is Śrī and Lakhkhī (i. e., Śrī-Lakṣmī). People say that I possess much intelligence (*prajñā*). I pray that you permit me to stay with you". The Śreṣṭhin 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."¹ The Śreṣṭhin listening to her speech, welcomed her and said, "This seat and this couch not used by others is for you." Goddess Śrī 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 'Śrī-śayya'. The moral of the story is quite clear. Amongst popular cults the tradition of Kālakaṇṭhī and Śrī continued throughout. There is a reference in the *Prithvirāja Rāso* that on the day of the birth of Prithvirāja, Kālakaṇṭhī 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 Koṭṭavī. She was a popular mother-goddess

1. Attanā kurute lakhkhīm alakhkhī kurutattanā/nahi lakhkhī alakhkhī vā añño aññassa kāraṇo//*Sirīkālakaṇṭhī* 7. 3. 392.
2. Avatār liyau Prithvirāj pahu / tā dīn dān anant diyā / Kanvāj des gajjan paṭan / kilakilant kālakaṇṭhī // 40
Prithvirāja Rāso, abridged by Hazari Prasad Dvivedi, p. 8.

worshipped amongst the people in south India. She was originally an ogress (*Rākshasī*). Later on she began to be worshipped as *Durgā* or *Umā* (see my article, "Abichchhatrā Terracottas", *Ancient India*, No. 4, p. 152, figs. 202-203). Attention maybe drawn to *Koṭṭakiriyāmaha* mentioned in Jaina literature which was a religious festival of the goddess *Koṭṭakiriyā* (J. C. Jain, *Life in the Jain Canons*, pp. 224-25). *Durgā* riding on the buffalo demon got the name *Koṭṭakiriyā* (*Nāyā-dhamma commentary*). It is indicated from this that the goddess *Mahishāsūramardini* and *Koṭṭakiriyā* 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 *Koṭṭarā* (*tanmātā Koṭṭarā nāma nagnā muktasīrorukhā*, 10. 63. 20.) Her form was nude and of dishevelled hair. It is probable that the south Indian nude goddess *Koṭṭavī* was the original form of *Koṭṭarā*. *Bāṇa* also mentions *Koṭṭavī* in the *Harshacharita* whose appearing was an ill omen. *Bāṇa's* commentator *Śaṅkara* explains *Koṭṭavī* as a nude woman which agrees with *Koṭṭarā* of the *Bhāgavata*. *Keśava* in his lexicon explains *Koṭṭavī* as an aspect of *Ambikā* (*Kalpadrūkośa*, 1660 A. D., p. 298, *Śloka* 127). *Hemachandra* also explains *Koṭṭavī* as a nude woman with dishevelled hair¹.

Goddess *Koṭṭavī* 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 *Koṭṭamāi*, i. e., the mother-goddess *Koṭṭavī* in the campus of the Banaras Hindu University itself. I also learnt that in the district of Almora there is a place named *Koṭṭalagarh*, 12 miles from the city of *Lohādhār* having a local tradition that it was the place of the goddess *Koṭṭavī*. *Koṭṭavī* was the mother of *Bāṇāsura*. The upper half of her body was

1. *Nagnā tu Koṭṭavī, Abhidhāna Chintāmaṇi* 3. 98. Commentary by him : *Nagnā vivastrā yoshit muktakesītyāgamāḥ, koṭṭane lajjāvasāt yāti Koṭṭavī*.

protected by a coat of mail and the lower half nude. The legend is that once Bāṇāsura, son of Mahābali, entered into a battle with Viṣṇu when the gods combined to reproduce goddess Kālī to enter into the fray on their behalf. She slew the Asuras and also their protectress Koṭṭavi. Koṭalagarh literally signifies the citadel of the unde woman (*Amrit Bazar Patrika*, 15 th May, 1952 Hill Supplement, p. 3). These references indicate that the same goddess was being worshipped from the far south to the Himālayas under an identical string of names as Koṭṭakiriyā, Koṭṭavī, Koṭarā, Koṭavi or Koṭamāi. An enquiry into folk lore 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 Koṭṭarī. 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 Koṭṭarī, subsequently under the Scythians she became known as Nānī or Nānāi; and lastly the author of the *Vāmana Purāṇa* gives her name as Charchikī. The three chronological stages are clear, i. e., before the Christian era her original appellation was Koṭṭarī 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.¹ Thus at three nodal points of the Tamil land, the

1. Ityevamuktivā varadena Charchikā bhūyo'nuyātā
gīrivindhyavāśinīm/
mahīṇa samantād vichachāra sundarī sthānam gatā
Hiṅgulakādrimuttamam //
Vāmana Purāṇa 70.45.

See also my *Vāmana Purāṇa—a study*, pp. 137-40.

Himālayas and Hiraṅulāj we find the cult of Koṭṭavi springing into undoubted belief and entering into relationship with other local goddesses.

An indication is forthcoming from the *Nāyādhammakāṇḍa* Commentary that Koṭṭavi while moving northward entered into exchange with Mahishāsūramardīnī of the Vindhyāchala forest. Mahishāsūramardīnī or Kātyāyanī seems to have far-reaching association with many regions in the Vindhya ranges. She is still worshipped at Vindhyāchala as the Great Goddess. During the Kushāṇa 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 Chāmūṇḍā, Chaṇḍikā, Kātyāyanī etc. The story in the *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa* under the title "*Devī-Māhātmya*" shows the prominent position to which this goddess was raised in Gupta civilisation under the deep devotional influence of the Bhāgavata religion of which Rishi Mārkaṇḍeya was the spearhead. Mahishāsūramardīnī was identified with the paramount Goddess Durgā or Ambikā and many other aspects of the goddess known in that age, e.g., Nārāyaṇī, Viśveśvarī, Vindhyāchalanivāsīnī, Raktadantikā, Śatākṣhī, Śākambharī, Durgā, Bhīmā, Bhramarī, etc. (*Devī 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 Bhāgavata 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 Koṭṭakiriyā-maha? 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 *ecstasy*. Of these the Chaitra festival appears to be that of the Goddess Mahishāsūramardīnī 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 Kāngrā or Nagarakoṭa is celebrated. This festival is known as 'Devī-yātrā' or 'Devī-kī-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 Rāvaṇa 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 *Yoginī Tantra* on the tenth day of the Kāmākhyā worship a festival named Śabarotsava was celebrated (*Yoginī Tantra* 63.19; Bani Kant Kakati, *The Mother Goddess Kāmākhyā*, p. 48). The *Yoginī Tantra* names the Devī worship of Kāmarūpa as the rite of Kīrātas (*Kairātaja-dharma, Yoginī 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 Gangaur 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 Devī and her husband Dapīyer (a name of the Sun). Ranu Bāī is also the presiding goddess in Nimāḍī folk songs. One folk song has it as follows :—

"O Ranu Bāī, what form of thine shall I glorify? You have travelled here from Saurāshṭra." (Thāro kāyi kāyi rūp barbāṇ Ranu Bāī Sorāṭha des se āyi o //). The reference to the goddess as coming from Saurāshṭra is significant. In another song Ranu is addressed as Rānī. In yet another folk song the temple of Ranu Bāī 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 *janau* from *yajñopavīta*), similarly from *Rājñī* was derived *Raṇṇī* < *Rānī* < *Ranu*. The cult of goddess Rājñī was popular in Gujarat and Saurāshṭra 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.¹ There are temples of Rannā or Rāndala Devī in the villages of Bagvādar and Kinnarkheḍā near Porbandar in Saurāshṭra. According to the *Matsya*, *Skanda* and *Vishṇudharmottara Purāṇas* Rājñī and Nikshubhā were the wives of Sūrya. In addition to these Ūshā and Pratyūshā also were believed to be the consorts of the Sun god. It appears that the relation of Ūshā and Pratyūshā 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 Saurāshṭra for several hundred years. According to the Iranian religion Mithra or Mihira had two acolytes or attendants named Raśna and Narshaf. In our opinion these two names were Sanskritised as Rājñī and Nikshubhā in Indian Sun cult. In Pahlavi

1. See S. C. Upadhyaya, "An Image of Rājñī Devī of the 14th century," *J. of U. P. Historical Society*, 1950, pp. 213-217.

or Sasanian religion the associate of Mithra or Mihrā was Rašna. Just as we have the derivative word *Jaśna* from Yajña similarly from the word Rājñi was derived the name *Rašna*. In our enquiry about the origin of goddess Rājñi 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 Bāi, Rān Devī, or Rāndala Devī became popular in Saurāshṭra, Gujarat and Malwa. (See *Janapada*, Year 1, Vol. II, pp. 91-92).

Thus we see that the Iranian goddess Rājñi 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 Bāi 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 Himālayas 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.

XV. YAKSHA (YAKHKHA) MAHA (THE CULT OF YAKSHAS) CHAPTER FIFTEEN

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 Gaṅgā 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, Nāgas, 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 *Devā* 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 *Rigveda*, *Yajurveda*, *Atharvaveda*, *Brāhmaṇas*, *Upanishads*, *Gṛīhyasūtras*, *Dīgha Nikāya*, *Jālakas*, 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 Bīr-Barahm which is found surviving in India even to-day from Bengal to Kutch and from the Himālayas 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 parts¹.

The name *Yaksha* is also included in the list of ancient deities such as Bhūta, Pisācha, Kinnara, Rākshasa, Gandharva, Yātudhāna, Kimpurusha, 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

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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 Yakshīs were said to have such ferocious nature and continued to be so remembered in folk tradition. The one example is that of Jarā, Yakshī of Rājagriha who became satisfied with the blood of children, but after her conversion under the influence of Krishna 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 Yakshī Ulūkhala Mekhalā, 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 Yakshīs 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 Yakshīs were installed in Buddhist Stūpas as if the Yaksha cult was the natural part of Buddhism. In the words of emperor Aśoka, *Amisā devā husu te dāni misā kaṇā*, "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 Tirthaṅkara was given a Yaksha or Yakshī 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 *Yakkha* in Pali and *Jakkha* in Prakrit. In the various dialects the words *Jakkha*, *Jākha*, *Jakkhiyā* are derived from them. In Sinhalese Yaksha is called *Yakā* and Yakshī *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 (*Āpaḥ salīla-jambhāvāḥ*). To guard them he created some

beings. They questioned Brahmā about their duty. Brahmā gave command, 'Rakshadhvam' Protect as guardians. In reply some misunderstood the wishes of the creator and said 'Yakṣhāmah' and the others said 'Rakṣhāmah'. In fact both misunderstood the orders of Brahmā. Those who said, 'Rakṣhāmah' implied that they would seize or hold anything in their power not allowing it freedom of movement; such became Rākshasas. Those who said, 'Yakṣhāmah' became Yakshas implying that they would devour or eat any thing given in their charge. Coomaraswamy gives this meaning to the root 'yaksh' although we do not find it in the list of Sanskrit roots. In Vedic Sanskrit there is a root 'yaksh' 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 Saṁhitās, 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."²

"O Wondrous Strong, Mitra and Varuṇa, may we never see, enjoy another's solemn feast, ourselves, our sons, or progeny."³

1. Uttarakāṇḍa 4. 9-13.

2. Amūrā viśvā vṛṣṇāvimā vām na yāsu chitram dadṛṣe na yakṣham/druhaḥ sachante anṛitā janānām na vām niṣyānyachite abhūvan // RV. 7. 61. 5.

3. Mā kasyādbhutakratū yakṣhaṁ bhujemātanūbhīh/ mā śśhasā mā tanasā // RV. 5. 70. 4.

In the above hymn, Mitra and Varuṇa are given the epithet *Adbhutakratū*, 'wondrous strong', which was also a characteristic feature of the Yaksha. The implication is that Mitra and Varuṇa have the same wondrous strength as the Yaksha : why should then one care for the Yaksha in preference to Mitra and Varuṇa. These two Mantras point to the shifting of antithesis from the Yaksha to Mitra and Varuṇa.

The implication of the first Mantra is that only persons of undeveloped intellect or imperfect religious consciousness (*Amūrāḥ*) 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 (*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".¹

The word 'neighbour' here stands for the members of Austric 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 *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 *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 (*Yakshādhyaksha*) (*Yakshadyādhyakshaṁ tavisham brihantam*, 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 *Rigveda* also makes specific mention of the beautiful form of a Yaksha (*Atyāso na ye marutaḥ svañcho yakshadṛiṣo na śubhayanta maryaḥ*) : "The

1. Mā kasya yakshaṁ sadamidhuro gā mā veśasya praminato 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-driṣaḥ*) may be traced in later literature. It is instructed in the *Grihyasūtras* that a young Brahmachārin seeking his admission into the Vedic *Charaṇa* or academy and having a look at his teacher surrounded by his pupils (*sapariśatka-āchārya*) wishes for himself the beauty of a Yaksha pleasing to the eye (*Yakshamiva chakshuṣaḥ priyo bhūyāsam*).¹

A stranger woman being beautiful was so addressed 'Are you a Yakshī?'² When Nala attended the Svayamvara assembly of Damayantī women present there became impressed with his beauty and began to think 'Is he a Deva, a Yaksha or a Gandharva'.³ Buddha and Mahāvira 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) : Yakshamiva [chakshuṣaḥ priyo vā bhūyāsam iti.

Mantra B. (1.7.14) : Sapariśatkamāchāryamabhyetya brāhmachārī paṭhati, Yakshamiva chakshuṣaḥ priyo vā bhūyāsam iti.

Drāhyāyana Grihyasūtra (3.1.25) : Upetyāchāryam pariśadam prakshed Yakshamiva priyo bhūyāsam.

2. Na deveshu na Yaksheshu tādgrūpavati kvachit / mānusheshvapi chānyeshu dṛiṣṭapūrvā na cha śrūtā //
Āraṇyakaparva 50. 13; 61.114.

3. Aho rūpamaho kāntiraho dhairyam mahātmanah /
ko'yaṁ devo nṛi Yaksho nu gandharvo nu bhaviṣyati//
Āraṇyakaparva 52. 16.

4. Ādichchu paṭṭhānam mahadupaṭṭhānam abhyujallanam
sirimāyanam iti evarūpāya tirachchhāna vijjāya michchhā-
jivā paṭivirato samaṇo gotamo ti / Brahmajāla Sutta,
Dīghanikāya (Devanāgarī ed. by Bhāgavat, Poona), p. 13.

compared with a Wondrous Yaksha.¹ The words *Ādbhuta* (miraculous), *Apūrva* (unknown, mysterious), *Chitra* (wondrous) point to the same meaning. A Yaksha was also known as *Mahādbhuta* (*Ādiparva* 21.12), i. e., a great being. Indra was also so called in the same context of the *Ādiparva* and both Indra and Yaksha are mentioned as *Rājā*. The epithet *Mahat* alone was prefixed to Yaksha as in the *Atharvaveda*.² "A mighty Being (Yaksha) is in creation's centre : to him the rulers of the realm bring tribute" (*AV.* 10. 8. 15). Elsewhere the *Atharvaveda* refers to *Mahad-Yaksha* as *Mahad-Brahma* (1.32. 1-4). In the *Rāmāyaṇa* it is said that Hanūmān owing to his great physical strength was taken to be a *Mahādbhuta* or Yaksha by the *Rākshasas* of *Laṅkā*. (*Sarvathā taṁ mahādbhūtaṁ mahābala-parigrahaṁ*, *Sundarakāṇḍa* 46.6).

Buddha counted *Mahadupatthāna* 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*, *Mahādbhuta*, *Śrī-Lakshmi* and such other tutelary godlings as pure superstition and therefore warns every one against such blind practices." In the *Atharvaveda* 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 of *Rājās* or Yakshas (*anucharaṁ rājarājasya*, *Meghadūta* 1. 3). The word '*Rājan*' 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 pūrvam yakshamantaḥ prajānām tanme manaḥ śivā-saṁkalpamastu / VS. 34.2.*
2. *Mahad yakshaṁ bhuvanasya madhye tasmai balim rāshṭra-bhṛito bharanti / AV. 10.8.15.*

was known as Mahārāja-bali. Pāṇini also refers to *Mahārāja* as a deity (or *Devatā* 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 Dhītarāśhṭra 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*.¹ 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 'Bira-Barahm'. In Kāśī-Janapada the shrine of Harikeśava Yaksha is still known as 'Harasū Barahm'.

1. Tataste brāhmaṇāḥ sarve kshatriyāścha suvismitāḥ /
vaiśyāḥ śūdrāścha muditāśchakrur Brahma-maham tadā //
Ādiparva 152. 18.

In the *Atharvaveda* mention is made of the city of Brahma (*Brahmapuri*) in which resides a vast-bodied Yaksha (*āman-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 *Brahmapuri* was its possessing of '*Amrita*' or nectar. The Yakshas were closely related to the death-conquering embrosia and hence the epithet '*Aparajita*' 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 *Brahmapuri* 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

Avadhyā Brahmapura (The Immortal Brahma-city)

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

1. Yo vai tām Brahmano vedāmrītenāvṛitām puram /
tasmai Brahma cha Brāhmāscha chakṣuḥ prāṇaṁ prajāṁ
daduḥ //

Na vai taṁ chakṣurjahāti na prāṇo jarasaḥ purā /
puram yo Brahmano veda yasyāḥ puruṣa uchyate //
Ashtāchakrā navadvārā devānāṁ pūrayodhyā /
tasyāṁ hiraṇyayaḥ kośaḥ svargo jyotiḥśāvṛitaḥ //
Tasmin hiraṇyaye kośe tryare tripratishṭhite /
tasmin yad Yakshasmātmanvat tadvai Brahma-
vīdo viduḥ //

Prabhrājamānāṁ hariṇīṁ yaśasā saṁ parivṛitām /
puram hiraṇyayīṁ Brahmā vivesāparajitām //

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

Ātmanā saptamaṁ kāmaṁ hatvā śatrumivottamaṁ /
prāpyāvadhyaṁ brahmapuraṁ rājeva syāmahaṁ sukhī //
(Mokshadharmaparva 171.52).

In the epic context the doctrine of '*Niyativāda*' is being discussed and it is said that by the restraint of desire (*Trishṇā-kṣaya*), and controlling the six passions and the body (*ātmanā saptamaṁ kāmaṁ*) one feels the same pleasure as the Yaksha (Rājā) feels happy after entering his inviolable Brahma-city (*avadhya-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 saptamaṁ*' 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-Yudhisṭhira Discourses of the *Mahābhārata* the Yaksha is spoken of as a big body of huge stature like the palm tree (*tālasamuchchhrita*), high like a mountain (*parvatopama*), having a great strength (*mahābala*), inviolable (*adhrishya*) or whom none could conquer (this epithet being equal to (*avadhya*) and resplendent like the Sun and the Fire (*jvalanārka-pratikāśa*).¹ We find these epithets exemplified in the gigantic statues of the Maurya, Śuṅga and Kushāṇa periods in which the special feature of oversize was accepted for the Yakshas, and later on for Bodhisattva statuary. *Avadhya*, *Aparājita* and *Adhrishya*

1. Virūpākṣaṁ mahākāyaṁ yakṣaṁ tālasamuchchhayaṁ /
jvalanārka-pratikāśamadhrishyaṁ parvatomaṁ //
Setmuśṣṭityatiṣṭantaṁ dadarśa bharatarṣabha /
meghagambhīrayā 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 (*dhaneśatva*) and Guardianship of the world (*lokapālatva*)¹. 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 pītamamākshīham*). 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-sight². These priests were known as *Jambhāsādhaka*, 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.

1. Pītāmahastu pītātmā dadau Vaiśravaṇasya hi /
amaratvaṁ dhaneśatvaṁ lokapālatvameva cha /
Āraṇyakaparva 258. 15.
2. Tatra paśyāmahe sarve madhu pītamamākshīham /
maruprapāte viśame nivīṣṭam kumbhasammitam //
Āśvīśaiḥrakshyamāṇam Kubera-dayitam bhṛīṣam /
yat prāśya puruṣo martyo amaratvaṁ nigachchhati //
Achakshurlabhate cakshurvipiddho bhavati vai yuvā /
iti te kathayanti sma Brāhmaṇā jambhā-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 was *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 ambrosial drink the Yaksha was given the epithet *Avadhya* 'invulnerable' 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 Viṣṇu or Śiva were enclosed by big railings as we find at Madhyamikā or Nagari in the case of *Nārāyaṇa-vāṭaka*. We find that in the inscription at Nagari the gods Saṅkarshaṇa 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*, *Adhrishya* and *Avadhya*. Epithets derived from Yaksha worship were transferred to Viṣṇu so that in a short epigraph of minimum words the epithet *Anihata* was applied to Viṣṇu. In the *Arthashastra* of Kauṭilya also Viṣṇu is called *Apratihata* due to the same reason.

In the Brahma-city of the Yakshas there existed a treasure of gold. Kubera-Vaiśravaṇa 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 Hātaka-deśa also is located there. The *Jāmbunada* gold, *Paipiliha* gold and *Ashṭāpada* gold were all produced in the northern region. Kubera was also regarded as the lord of Śaṅkha and Padma Nidhis. In Kushāṇa statues Lakshmi is depicted as one of the consorts of Kubera. In

the *Rāmāyaṇa* the amassing of gold is said to be a special feature of the palace of Kubera (*Kuberabhavanopamam*). 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 (*Saṃhāṭṭa*) it is said that *Paṇḍita* or granular gold was measured in jars (*droṇameya*).

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 Yudhisṭhira's treasure. Each king coveted to keep such a jewel in his treasure. The *Jātaka*s also refer to the qualities of such a jewel. The *Atharvaveda* refers to a jewel of thousand potency (*Sahasravīrya-maṇi*) (*maṇim sahasravīryam tasma devā akṛiṇavata*, 8. 5. 14.). It appears that Yaksha king Maṇibhadra, 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 *Jātaka*s 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 "Āṭānāṭṭiya Sutta" portion of the *Dighanikāya* valuable evidence is preserved about the Yakshas. Vaiśravaṇa, 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, Soma, Varuṇa, Prajāpati, Manibhādra, Ālavaka, etc. Vaiśravaṇa also hints at the *Rakṣhāmantra*, protective talisman, by muttering which the evil Yakshas are spared away, and cannot create any trouble.

There is another text called *Mahāmāyūrī* 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. Maheśvara in Virāṭa
4. Bṛhaspati in Śrāvastī
5. Sāgara in Sāketa
6. Vajrāyudha in Vaiśālī
7. Sudarśana in Champā
8. Mahākāla in Vārāṇasī
9. Viṣṇu in Dvārakā
10. Vibhishṇu in Tāmraparṇī (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 Ujjayinī
14. Vasubbhūti in Avanti
15. Bharuka in Bharukachchha (Broach)
16. Mālyadhara in Agrodaka (Agrohā in the east Panjab)
17. Śukladamśhṭra in Suvāstu (Swat valley)
18. Mahāgiri in Girinagara (Girinar)
19. Vāsava in Vidiśā
20. Kumāra-Kārttikeya in Rohitaka
21. Bṛhadratha in Kaliṅga
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 Bhadrāsaila (sic, Bhadrāsīlā)
30. Prabhañkara in Rauruka (i. e. Sakkar Rori, capita of Sauvira)
31. Kalahapriya 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 Vanavāsi (North Kanārā)
38. Ratika in Ahichchhatra
39. Kapila in Kāmpilya
40. Naigamesha in Pāñchāla
41. Prasama in Hastināpura
42. Purāñjaya in Yaudheya
43. Tarārka and Kutarārka in Kurukshetra (same as Arantuka, Tarantuka and Ulūkhalamekhalā of the *Mahābhārata*, who were the Yakshas of Kurukshetra)
44. Mahāsena in Koṭivarsha (Bengal)
45. Anāyāsa in Kauśāmbī
46. Pushpadanta in Champā
47. Bhūtamukha in Pāṭaliputra
48. Aśoka in Kāśī
49. Jambhaka in Marubhūmi
50. Devaśarmā in Daradadeśa
51. Prabhañkara in Kāśmīra
52. Pāñchika and his 500 sons on the confines of Kāśmīra
53. Elder son of Pāñchika in the China land
54. Lankeśvara in Kāpiśī or Begram in Afganistan
55. Dharmapāla in Russia
56. Mahābhujā in Bāhlī (Balkh)

57. Yuvarāja Jinarshabha, son of Vaiśravaṇa, in the Tushāra country.
58. Sātāgiri and Haimavanta in Sindhusāgara
59. Pañchālaganḍa in Draviḍadeśa
60. Dhaneśvara in Simhala
61. Pārāśara in Pārādadeśa
62. Śaṁkara in Śakasthāna
63. Vemachitra in Pahlavadeśa
64. Karāla in Uḍḍiyāna
65. Chitrasena in Vokhāna
66. Rāvaṇa² in Ramaṭha (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 Yakshas such as Duryodhana, Arjuna, Naigamesha, Viṣṇu, Śaṁkara, Indra, Bṛhaspati, Mahākāla, etc. were not strictly Buddhist deities or connected with Buddhism but were gods and personates 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 Ulākhālamekhalā there is strong epic evidence that they were the Yakshas of Kurukshetra 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 Mahāmāyūrī 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.

1. See "Yakshas in the Mahāmāyūrī", *JUPHS.*, Vol. 15, pt. 2, pp. 27-29. It is a translation of Sylvain Levi's French paper published in *Journal Asiatique* (1915).

The Buddhist literature refers to the worship of the four Mahārājika gods known as *Chātum-mahārājika Devā*. These were the presiding deities or guardians of the four quarters, i. e., Vaiśravaṇa, king of the Yakshas in the north, Dhṛiterāshṭra, king of the Gandharvas in the east, Virūḍhaka, king of the Kumbhāṇḍas in the south and Virūpāksha, king of the Nāgas in the west. In this list Kubera was regarded as the lord of the Yakshas. He was also called Vaiśravaṇa, Pañchika and Jambhala, the last name being derived from *Jambha* 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 ambrosial drink in the form of the yellowish quintessence 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 (*Amṛita-ghaṭa*) was held. It had prolonged neck and a very thin hole for sucking the ambrosial 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 *Vaiśravāṇahāyika-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 *Chaitraratha*, full of Kalpavṛkshas or wishful-filling trees and creepers. This grove was also known as *Vaibhrāja* (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 pot-bellied rich merchant, wearing a thick necklace, with twisted moustaches and a happy countenance.

The name Pañchika became quite popular in Mahāyāna Buddhism. In the region of Gandhāra, Pañchika and his consort Hārītī were widely worshipped, and they were popular even in Central Asia where Hārītī was held in great favour. It is said about Hārītī that she was the mother of five hundred Yakshas. Her original place was in Rājagriha. In the Āraṇyaka-parva of the *Mahābhārata* the Yakshī of Rājagriha was 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 Rākshasī. It was she who brought together the two split parts of the foetus of Jarāsandha. Being pleased with her grace Jarāsandha's father Bṛihadraṭha commanded his subjects to offer worship to Jarā and to celebrate a festival every year in honour of that goddess¹. It is also said that the people of Rājagriha paid homage to her as the goddess of their home (*Gṛiha-devī*) and painted her figures on the walls of their houses in which she was depicted as surrounded by many children². The same goddess became famous as Hārītī 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 *Jātahāriṇī* or *Hārītī*. When the Buddha came to Rājagriha the people spoke to him about the terror of Hārītī. 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 yakkho tu saddhim hāritayakkhiyā /
pañchasatehi puttahi phalaṃ pāpuṇi ādikam /
Mahāvamsa 12. 21.
Ājñāpayachcha rākshasyā māgadbeshu mahotsavam /
Sabhāparva 17. 5.
2. Gṛihe gṛihe manushyāṇāṃ nityaṃ tiṣṭhāti rākshasī /
gṛihadevīti namnā vai purā śṛiṣṭā svayambhuvā //
Likhitā chaiva kuḍyeshu putrairbahubhirāvṛitā /
gandhapushpaistathā dhūpairbhakshyairbhojayaiḥ
supūjitā // Sabhāparva, Poona ed., p. 94.

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

According to the Buddhist, Hārītī caused the death of children through small pox. This disease is common to children and throws light on the story of Hārītī. Jarāsandha may have suffered from small pox believed to be caused by Hārītī but his life was saved. She is worshipped even to-day as the Mother Sītālā. 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*)¹.

The Yaksha shrines were known as *Yakṣhāyatana* or *Yaksha-kṣavana*. In the dialects they are even now known as *Sihān* or *Bhann*. 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 *dhoti* 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 Viṣṇu 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 Maṇibhadra Yaksha. Maṇibhadra Yaksha was next to Kubera in popular esteem and he was regarded as the presiding deity of the caravan merchants. Padmāvati or Pāwāyā in Gwalior was the centre of Maṇibhadra 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 Barodā village in Mathurā district. In the village of Jhāṅg-kā-Nagarā a life-size seated image of a Yakshī 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 Yakshī statue was found at Padmāvati. Two Yaksha statues with Mauryan polish were found at Pāṭaliputra. At Rājghāt near Vārāṇasī was found a composite statue of three-faced Yaksha. Some years back several Yaksha images were found at Śiśupālgarh in Orissa. Recently at the confluence of the rivers Vidiśā 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 Yakshī Ulūkhāmekhalā with a shrine of great celebrity. The names occur in the *Mahābhārata* but no image has been found up to now. The *Mahāmāyūrī* list refers to them as Tarārka and Kutārarka.

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 Suchiloma, Kupira (= Kubera), Ajakālaka, Gaṅgita, Supāvasa, Virūḍhaka, Sudasanā, Charudā Sirimādevatā, Chulakokādevatā and Mahākokādevatā. The last five names are those of Yakshīs. The pair names Chulakokā and Mahākokā find their parallel in the Yaksha names of Vārāṇasī, viz., Lahurābīr and Bullābīr, the latter name having the form Vipulā in Sanskrit. A sentence in the

inscriptions of Aśoka, '*amisādevaḥ hsuḥ te dānā misā kaṣa*' 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 Brahmanical deities, although in many cases the traditional Vedic Yajñas were also performed in temples. In the *Gītā* this mode of worship is clearly mentioned as '*Patram puṣhpam phalam toyam*', i.e., worship by offering leaves, flowers, fruits and water. This popular form of worship ultimately triumphed over the Vedic Yajñas.

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 Bīr godlings and verses are recited about them (called 'Śīloḡ' or Skt. śloka). Thus we find tangible proof to Yaksha worship amongst the people even to-day. Not only in Vārāṇasī but in the adjoining districts Bīr-Barahm forms part of religious worship by the people.

Pt. Hazari Prasad Dvivedi informed me on 16.4.1952 that in every village of Ballia district a 'Chaurā' or a platform of Bīr is found, on which a conical representation in clay of Yaksha or Bīr is made and worshipped. In fact Mahābīr 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 Bīr on an open platform.

The foremost amongst the Yakshas was given the epithet Mahābīr. In the districts of western Uttar Pradesh the Dipāvalī night is held sacred for Mahābīr worship being regarded as the birth day of Mahābīr when offerings are made of *Chūrmā* (wheat-cakes made into a powder). The Dipāvalī was in ancient times known as *Yaksha-rātri*, 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 Bīr-Barahm godlings (like Lahurābīr and Bullābīr cited above, and as Chulakohā and Mahākokā in Bharhut art). In Vārāṇasī there are several others spots of Yaksha worship including the Daṇḍiyābīr of Bhelupur which was derived from Sanskrit *Diṇḍima*, 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 Bīr-Barahm with Śrī Byohar Rajendra Singh. He informed that in Madhya

Pradesh, Barahm Deo or Barahm Bābā is worshipped even now. Barham is often believed to reside on a tree. Bīr also has a tree or platform. This is often a Pīpal tree with a Bīr or Barahm on it. He drew attention to the fact that Goswāmi Tulasīdāsa has described Mahābīr in the form of a Bīr-Barahm or Yaksba :

"One should worship Mahā Bīr whose worship brings about the fulfilment of desire. One should get himself instructed in his cult and also recite his *Biṇa-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 Bīr advances in the path of devotion to Raghunāthaji". (*Vinaya Patrikā* 108). The motifs in this stanza were taken from popular folk cult centring around Bīr worship. Tulasīdāsa was acquainted with the mode of worship of the Bīr prevailing in eastern districts.

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

Śrī Parameshwari Lal Gupta told me that Bīr-Barahm are also worshipped in his area in Azamgarh district. Śrī Harihara Prasad Gupta who has worked on folklore told me that Bīr-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 Bīr-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 Jakhkha-Cheyiya or Jakhkhāyatana, i. e., Yaksha shrines. The best places where Mahāvīra 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 Mahāvīra was Vardhamāna. When he became famous he got the name of Mahāvīra or 'Senior Vīra', i. e., the great Yaksha. It is possible that the name Mahāvīra was adopted from the vocabulary of Bir worship. Śrī Parameshwari Lal stated that in his dialect there is a saying 'If I accomplish this I would get the title of Bāvanbīr' (*aisā karūñ to bāvan bīr kahūñ*). It seems that at one time a list of Fiftytwo Bir godlings was drawn up like the 108 centres of Devī worship. In the list of Birs given in the *Prithvirāja Rāso* there are several names taken from an older tradition, e. g., Mānikarudra, Samudratarapa, Samudraśoka, Indravīra, Jamavīra, Sahasrāṅga, Narasimha, Devāgni, Kshetrapāla, Lohabhañjana, etc. Mānikarudra of this list is most likely the same as Mañibhadra Yaksha of ancient times who was the right hand of Kubera and was worshipped at Mathurā and Padmāvati. At Parkham in Mathurā a colossal image of Mañibhadra Yaksha has been found. In Bengal Mañibhadra Yaksha is worshipped even to-day as Mānikbīr. As Mañibhadra was considered to be their deity by the caravan merchants of Padmāvati, similarly Mānikbīr is the godling of fishermen and boatmen. In the *Āraṇyakaparva* of the *Mahābhārata* 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 (*Jyeshtha-sārthavāha*) and his companions were devotees of Mañibhadra 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 Śiva. 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 Pañchapīr at several places. In reality the word Pañchapīr seems to have been derived from Pañchavīra under Muslim influence. In ancient times Vaiśravaṇa, Maṇibhadra, Pūrṇabhadra, etc. were the Yakshas offered worship in popular cult. Their list is found in the Sabhāparva and the Ātānātiya-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 Pañchavīra Yakshas. A list actually occurs in the *Vishṇudharmottara Purāṇa* (III, 222, 13-5) giving the names as 1. Maṇibhadra, 2. Dirghabhadra, 3. Pūrṇabhadra, 4. Yakshabhadra, 5. Svabhadra. After the model of the Five Yakshas or Pañchavīras, a list of the five Vṛishṇi heroes (*Pañchavṛishṇi Viras*) was drawn as mentioned in the Morā well-inscription of Mathurā. In the *Dakṣaśmṛiti* there is also a reference to the *Pañchavīra-goshṭhī*, i.e., a club organised for worshipping the Pañchavīras. According to the commentator a countryside club became famous by this name (*taṭpañchavīra-goshṭhiantu yattu jānapadam sadā*). The word *Vīra* in Pañchavīra stands for a Yaksha. The place where a club was founded in honour to five Yakshas became known as '*Pañchavīra-Goshṭhī*'.

If we accept the equation that *Pīr* is the same as *Bīr* of later times many a conundrum of religious history becomes illumined. Pt. Hazari Prasad Dvivedi and Pt. Sukhalal Sanghavi have both accepted this identification of *Pañchapīr* with *Pañchavīra*. According to Pt. Dvivedi the pronunciation of *Bīr* as *Pīr* is very probable in Chhūlikā Pāisāchi 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 *Bīr* worship is also popular in Mahārāshtra. Dr. Haridasa Bhattacharya, Professor of Religion at the Hindu University, informed me that Bengal has preserved many forms of *Bīr* worship. We have already referred to Mānik Pīr. Similarly Satya Pīr is worshipped there. My colleague Dr. Awadh Kishor Narain informed me that in the Māgadhī 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. *Chaturā*).

On 4. 5. 52 I came across a Yaksha shrine built in the University campus and obtained some information about the *Bīr* 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 '*Dih*'. 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 *Bīr*. On enquiry he gave out its name as Karaman *Bīr* and added that there was also a shrine of Mānik *Bīr*. This gladdened me to find there the name of Mañibhadra Yaksha still survived as Mānik *Bīr* in folk worship. He is worshipped at the time of floods or epidemic. Mañibhadra 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 Padmāvati) 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 Maṇibhadra 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, *Bhadramaṇi*, which was in the possession of the Yaksha Maṇibhadra and the type of which existed in the treasury of Yudhishtira under the name of *Divyamaṇi*. 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*. Maṇibhadra 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 Koṭamāi could be seen. He directed me to a modest shrine built on a mound saying that the goddess Koṭamāi 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 Koṭṭavi, originally a nude goddess whose worship was from the earliest time most popular. She was named as 'Koṭṭavai', but sanskritised as Koṭṭavi as mentioned by Bāṇa in the *Harshacharita*. She was originally the nude mother-goddess of South India whose cult also spread in the north up to the Himālayas and also in the west up to Baluchistan. It was least expected that Koṭṭavi 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. Koṭṭavi is mentioned in the *Bhāgavata* as the mother of Bāṇāsura and a shrine to her still exists in Almora district at Koṭalgarh, 12 miles from Lohāghāt. The local tradition makes it the centre of Koṭṭavi worship. Her

upper body is covered with a coat of mail and the lower half being nude. It is said that Bāṇāsura, 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 Mahākālī into existence. She slew both the Asuras and the goddess Kōṭṭavi. Kōṭalagarh literally signifies the citadel of the nude woman (*Amrit Bazar Patrika*, 19. 5. 1952, Hill Supplement, p. 3). This information gives proof of the worship of a South Indian goddess right into the interior of the Himālayas. Some more evidence is available about her worship extending in the western direction. It is stated in the *Vāmana Purāṇa* that the goddess of Hīṅgulā was originally named as Kōṭṭavi 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 Kōṭṭavi of the Draviḍians, Hīṅgulā or Nanā of the Scythians and Charchikā of the Brahmanical religion. The *Vāmana Purāṇa* specifically mentions that the name of that goddess was Charchikā. It was a fact of religious history during the Gupta period. In the Supjā (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 *Vāmana Purāṇa* makes it certain that her original name was Kōṭṭavi and under Śaka influence she got the new name of Nānā, 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 Bīr they stopped there and taking off their shoes made obeisance to the Karaman Bīr. I asked them as to what it was and they said that it was the shrine (*Sthāna*) of Karaman Bīr. Continuing my talk I enquired about the difference between Bīr and Śiva. One of them replied in a definite

manner that there was a Bīr shrine in every village and so with that of a Śiva-līṅga. 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 Bīr shrine in each village. It is said in a local saying—'There is a Ṭhākur and a Bīr in every village' (*Gāon gāon ho Ṭhākur gāon gāon ho Bīr*). He also pointed out that a Śiva-līṅga is smaller in size and rounded at the top but the symbol of a Bīr is conical and bigger in size. The symbol of Karaman Bīr in the University is 5 ft. high and $7\frac{1}{2}$ ft. at the base. The third distinctive sign is that there is a small niche about the middle of the conical symbol of a Bīr for lighting a lamp; no such depression is in the case of a Śiva-līṅga. The next point is that a Śiva-shrine may have some other images of Gaṇeśa, Pārvatī etc. But a Bīr shrine has none of them and stands alone on its platform. From this interview I learnt for the first time that the tradition of Bīr worship was distinct from that of Śiva worship and the former exceeded the latter in antiquity, popularity and importance. Amongst the people Bīr 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 Ḍauṇḍiā Bīr and a Bullā Bīr. It was pointed out that the Bīr 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 Bīr divinities which had existed from much earlier times continued to be there such as Lahurā Bīr and Bullā Bīr signifying the Junior Yaksha and the Senior Yaksha. There is a small shrine of Daitarā Bīr along the path of the Pañchakrośī-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 'Harsaū' 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 Tīkari. 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. *Khorakaḥ saurabheyāṇām*, 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 University gate named as Barahm Bīr in which the word 'Barahm' is reminiscent of ancient Sanskrit word *Brahma*, a synonym of the Yaksha.

The name Daundā Bīr is worthy of attention. Its Sanskrit name is Dīṇḍima Vīra. We are told that outside the city of Vaiśālī, capital of the Licchhavis there was a shrine (*Ayatana*) of Ghaṇṭā Yaksha. When any outsider entered the city surreptitiously the bell round the neck of Ghaṇṭā Yaksha began to ring and the unauthorised stranger was apprehended especially at the toll barrier. The Daundā Bīr was believed to function as such on the outskirts of ancient Kāśī. 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-prakṛti-sīta Deva*). The *Vāyu Purāṇa* states that Five Vṛishṇī Viras had the normal personality of human beings (*Purusha-prakṛti-sīta Deva*). During my visit to Bodhgaya, I learnt that there is a shrine of Barahm Bīr near the Bodhgaya temple. I was

informed that almost in every village of Magadha there is a Bīr shrine at which worship is still offered to the Bīr godling.¹

Even to-day the geographical distribution of Bīr worship extends from Bengal to Mahārāshṭra 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 Tamiḷnāḍu 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" (*Janapada*, No. 2) we have shown that Yaksha worship was accompanied with questions and answers as given by the Yaksha deity which was known as *Praśnavyākharāṇa*. Even now when a person is possessed by a Yaksha all persons present begin to ask questions with such intergatories 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 Yudhisṭhira is in the form of question-and-answer in which Yaksha asks a series of questions and Yudhisṭhira 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

1. For this information I am indebted to Ram Avatar, attendant 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 *Gāhā-Pāthāyā* even to our own days. In folklore there is a line 'E ji kaun jagat meñ eh hai ? E ji kaun jagat meñ jōgātā' ?

In reply to this question it is said 'E ji Rām jagat meñ eh hai | E ji Dharma jagat meñ jōgātā'. This question occurs in the *Yajurveda* and the epic in this form :—

Kim svidekāki charati ka u svijjāyate punaḥ /

Sūrya ekāki charati chandramā jāyate punaḥ //

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 "*Samsiddham 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 Sākala or Syālkoṭ 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 country¹.

Coomaraswamy 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, Gauhati 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 Kapilavastu, to which the parents of Siddhārtha went with the child to worship the Yaksha. There was a shrine of Viśāla Yaksha outside Vaiśālī. There was a shrine of Puragā Yakshi in Pāṭaliputra. There was a shrine of Suchiloma Yaksha in Gayā. According to the Jaina text *Sārya-Prajñāpti* there was a shrine of Maṇibhadra Yaksha in Mithilā. The *Aupapātika Sātra* 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 Maṇināga in Rājagriha who was the presiding serpent deity of the place. The tradition of that worship still continues at Maṇiyār Maṭh in Rājagriha. 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 Kāmākhyā up to Saurāshṭra where Śivaliṅga was worshipped at Piabhāsa and Somanātha, and from there up to Āndhra and Kerala, many races of Kirāta, Nishāda, Śabara, Muṇḍā, Draviḍa and Ārya resided in concord rubbing shoulders with each other and amalgamating many elements of their religion and culture. In the *Yoginī Tantra* the worship of Kāmākhyā is said to be a festival of the Śabarās (*Śabarotsava*) 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 dharmā*, *Yoginī Tantra* 2. 9. 9.). This is a factual statement of the position which prevailed in that shrine of goddess Kāmākhyā. 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 Vaishṇava 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 Vṛiṣṇi 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 *patraṇi puṣhpāṇi phalāṇi toyāṇi* 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 Saṁhitā*, *Jayākhyā Saṁhitā* and other ancient Saṁhitā 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, instrumentalmusic, 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 sādhu.

Appendix I

1. *Bāvanavīra Nāmāvalī*

(From *Jinadattasūri-charita* by Jayasāgarasūri)

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

2. *Bāvanavīra Nāmāvalī*

- | | |
|-------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Vāpillo | 27. Yamavīra |
| 2. Khudīo | 28. Devāri |
| 3. Talapaharī | 29. Duritāri |
| 4. Nāḍitoḍa | 30. Harādīra |
| 5. Sūlibhañjaṇa | 31. Jhāñpaḍo |
| 6. Masāṇaloṭaṇa | 32. Māṇibhadra |
| 7. Gaḍhapīḍaṇa | 33. Kāpaḍivo |
| 8. Samudratāraṇa | 34. Kedāro |
| 9. Samudrasoṣhaṇa | 35. Nāharasiṃha |
| 10. Lohabhañjaṇa | 36. Goro |
| 11. Saṅkalatoḍaṇa | 37. Ghaṭa |
| 12. Visakhāparo | 38. Kaṇṭuka |
| 13. Ruṇḍamāla | 39. Vaga |
| 14. Agīyo | 40. Mahāvaga |
| 15. Bāpavīra | 41. Saṃtoṣa |
| 16. Jamaghaṇṭa | 42. Mahāsaṃtoṣa |
| 17. Kāla | 43. Bhramara |
| 18. Akāla | 44. Mahābhramara |
| 19. Agnikānti | 45. Sahasrākṣa |
| 20. Vishakānti | 46. Sāhasāṅga |
| 21. Ragatīyo | 47. Kṣhetrapāla |
| 22. Koilo | 48. Bhūtakhāṇa |
| 23. Kāliyāra | 49. Śākanimāra |
| 24. Kālaveḷa | 50. Devarathabhañjaṇa |
| 25. Kālagharaṭṭa | 51. Sālavāhana |
| 26. Indravīra | 52. Ādrakumāra |

Iti Bāvanavīra.

3. *Bāvanavīra Nāmāvalī*

(Based on manuscripts recently purchased).¹

- | | |
|------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Chhāpīlovīra | 27. Indravīra |
| 2. Dhuliyovīra | 28. Jamavīra |
| 3. Talapāāhārīvīra | 29. Devārīvīra |
| 4. Sūlibhañjanavīra | 30. Dūritāravīra |
| 5. Nāḍitoḍaṇavīra | 31. Dūripāravīra |
| 6. Masāṁṇatoḍaṇavīra | 32. Hariyārīvīra |
| 7. Gaḍāupāḍaṇavīra | 33. Jhāñpaḍovīra |
| 8. Samudrāntāraṇavīra | 34. Mmāñabhadravīra |
| 9. Samudrasoshaṇavīra | 35. Kāpaḍīvīra |
| 10. Parvatāupāḍaṇavīra | 36. Nārasimhavīra |
| 11. Lohabhañjanavīra | 37. Gorilovīra |
| 12. Sāṅkalatoḍaṇavīra | 38. Ghūñṭavīra |
| 13. Vishapabhārīvīra | 39. Kūtākavīra |
| 14. Ruṇḍamālāvīra | 40. Vakavīra |
| 15. Agishāuvīra | 41. Mahāvīra |
| 16. Sāpashāuvīra | 42. Santosavīra |
| 17. Jamaghañṭīvīra | 43. Bhramaravīra |
| 18. Asalaṭīvīra | 44. Mahābhramaravīra |
| 19. Kālovīra | 45. Kedāravīra |
| 20. Gorovīra | 46. Sahaśrashāñṇavīra |
| 21. Aginakāntavīra | 47. Sahaśrāñkavīra |
| 22. Vishakāntavīra | 48. Bhūtashāñṇavīra |
| 23. Ragatīyovīra | 49. Śākanīmīravīra |
| 24. Kāliyāvīra | 50. Dākanīmāravīra |
| 25. Kālavelavīra | 51. Sahaśrāmshyavīra |
| 26. Kālagharaṭavīra | 52. Uttamādikavīra |

Iti Bāvanāvīra namaḥ.

1. For these lists of Fiftytwo Bīr godlings, on pp. 200-203, we are indebted to Shri Agar Chand Nahta of Bikaner.

4. *Bāvanavīra Nāmāvalī*

(Obtained from Śrī Vijayendrasūriji of Bikaner)

- | | |
|-----------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. Kapilāññavīra | 27. Jamavīra |
| 2. Khoḍiyāvīra | 28. Devarārivīra |
| 3. Talapahārīvīra | 29. Dutarārīvīra |
| 4. Nāḍitoḍanavīra | 30. Harārīvīra |
| 5. Sulibhañjanavīra | 31. Jhāñpaḍāvīra |
| 6. Masāṇaloṭanavīra | 32. Māñibhadravīra |
| 7. Gaḍhāupāḍanavīra | 33. Kāpadīyovīra |
| 8. Samudratīraṇavīra | 34. Kedārovīra |
| 9. Samudrasoṣhaṇavīra | 35. Nārasimhavīra |
| 10. Lohabhañjanavīra | 36. Gurachalovīra |
| 11. Sāñkalitoḍanavīra | 37. Ghaṭavīra |
| 12. Viśnapāravaravīra | 38. Kātaravīra |
| 13. Rūḍamālāvīra | 39. Vāñgavīra |
| 14. Āgīyāvīra | 40. Mahatavīra |
| 15. Vāpavīra | 41. Santoshavīra |
| 16. Yamaghañṭavīra | 42. Santoshamahāvīra |
| 17. Kālivīra | 43. Bhamaravīra |
| 18. Akālavīra | 44. Mahābhamaravīra |
| 19. Agnikantavīra | 45. Kshetrapālavīra |
| 20. Viśhākrantavīra | 46. Bhūtaśhūpavīra |
| 21. Ragatīyāvīra | 47. Hiṇḍavakhānavīra |
| 22. Koyalāvīra | 48. Makashāṇavīra |
| 23. Kāliyāvīra | 49. Sākiñibhūtavīra |
| 24. Kālavelavīra | 50. Darūtabhañjanavīra |
| 25. Kālaghañṭavīra | 51. Erājabbhālāvāhanavīra |
| 26. Indravīra | 52. Ādrakavīra |

Appendix II

1. *Chausaṣha Yoginī Nāmāvalī*

- | | |
|----------------|---------------------------|
| 1. Brahmāṇī | 33. Vināyakī |
| 2. Kumārī | 34. Yamaghaṇṭā |
| 3. Saṅkarī | 35. Sarasvatī |
| 4. Rudrāṇī | 36. Totilā |
| 5. Kīṅkālī | 37. Veṃsanavī |
| 6. Karālī | 38. Vamḍī |
| 7. Kālī | 39. Saṁshanī |
| 8. Mahākālī | 40. Padamanī |
| 9. Chāmupḍā | 41. Chitraṇī |
| 10. Jvālāmukhī | 42. Vāruṇī |
| 11. Kāmākshā | 43. Jamabhagaṇī |
| 12. Vārāhī | 44. Sūryaputrī |
| 13. Bhadrakālī | 45. Susitalā |
| 14. Durgā | 46. Kṛṣṇavārāhī |
| 15. Ambikā | 47. Raktākshī |
| 16. Lalitā | 48. Kālarātrī |
| 17. Goravī | 49. Akāṣī |
| 18. Sumaṅgalā | 50. Śreṣṭhānī |
| 19. Rohaṇī | 51. Jayā |
| 20. Kapilā | 52. Vijayā |
| 21. Sūlakarā | 53. Imavatī |
| 22. Kūḍalanī | 54. Vāgeśvarī |
| 23. Tripurā | 55. Kātyāinī |
| 24. Kurakulyā | 56. Agnihotrī |
| 25. Bhairavī | 57. Chakreśvarī |
| 26. Champāvatī | 58. Mahāvidyā |
| 27. Nārasimhī | 59. Īśānī |
| 28. Nirañjanā | 60. Bhavānī |
| 29. Hemavati | 61. Bhuvaneśvarī |
| 30. Pretāsanā | 62. Chakresvarī |
| 31. Īśvarī | 63. Moharātrī (Mahārātri) |
| 32. Veśāmnarī | 64. Thī (Dhī) Devī |

Iti Chausaṣha Yoginī Nāmāvalī.

2. *Chausaṣṭha Yoginī Nāmāvalī*

- | | |
|----------------|-----------------|
| 1. Kālī | 33. Chandrāvati |
| 2. Karālī | 34. Nāharasimhī |
| 3. Īśvari | 35. Chaṇḍī |
| 4. Susāmālā | 36. Sautilā |
| 5. Divyayogī | 37. Sarasvatī |
| 6. Mahāyogī | 38. Harasiddhi |
| 7. Vāruṇī | 39. Vaiśvanī |
| 8. Brahmāṇī | 40. Īśānī |
| 9. Ambikā | 41. Lalitā |
| 10. Durgā | 42. Gaurī |
| 11. Jayā | 43. Sūryaputrī |
| 12. Vijayā | 44. Pemabhagani |
| 13. Dhūmavati | 45. Vanadevī |
| 14. Kāmeśvari | 46. Nārāyaṇī |
| 15. Chāmupālā | 47. Bhairavī |
| 16. Mahākālī | 48. Bhadrāvati |
| 17. Chitraṇī | 49. Agnihotrī |
| 18. Vāruṇī | 50. Kātyāyani |
| 19. Kurukullā | 51. Jvālāmukhī |
| 20. Kapilā | 52. Kāmākshī |
| 21. Rohiṇī | 53. Kapālinī |
| 22. Sumaṅgalā | 54. Bhadrakālī |
| 23. Vārāhī | 55. Śreshṭhīnī |
| 24. Raktākshī | 56. Kālarātri |
| 25. Vaināyikī | 57. Yugeśvari |
| 26. Yamaghanṭā | 58. Siddhi |
| 27. Vaiśvānari | 59. Kumārī |
| 28. Pretanāśā | 60. Śaṅkarī |
| 29. Hemakāntā | 61. Indrāṇī |
| 30. Nīraṣaṇī | 62. Hṛīṅkāli |
| 31. Saṅkhani | 63. Mahāvidyā |
| 32. Padmanī | 64. Chakreśvari |

Iti Chausaṣṭha Yoginī.

3. *Chausaṣha Yoginī Nāmavalī*

- | | |
|---------------------|-------------------|
| 1. Divyā Joginī | 33. Krodhāye |
| 2. Mahājoginī | 34. Darmukhī |
| 3. Siddhajoginī | 35. Pretavāhanī |
| 4. Yugeśvarī | 36. Kaṇṭakī |
| 5. Pretākshī | 37. Lamboshṭhī |
| 6. Dākinī | 38. Mālinī |
| 7. Kālī | 39. Mantra Yoginī |
| 8. Kālarātri | 40. Kālākshī |
| 9. Nīśācharī | 41. Mohinī |
| 10. Klīṣākārī | 42. Chakrī |
| 11. Siddhi Vaitālī | 43. Kaṅkāli |
| 12. Hṛīṣākārī | 44. Bhuvaneśvarī |
| 13. Bhūtadāmā | 45. Kuṇḍalī |
| 14. Ūrdhvakeśī | 46. Mālinī |
| 15. Virūpākshī | 47. Lakshmi |
| 16. Raktākshī | 48. Dhanadurī |
| 17. Narabhojanī | 49. Karālī |
| 18. | 50. Kauśikī |
| 19. Virabhadrākshī | 51. Bhadrāṇī |
| 20. Dhrūmākshī | 52. Vyāghraṇī |
| 21. Kalahapriyā | 53. Yakshāyai |
| 22. Rākshasī | 54. Yakshaṇī |
| 23. Ghora Raktākshī | 55. Kumārī |
| 24. Viraktākshī | 56. Yantravāhinī |
| 25. Bhayaṅkarī | 57. Viśālī |
| 26. Virī | 58. Kāmākshī |
| 27. Kumārī | 59. Vishahāriṇī |
| 28. Chaṇḍikā | 60. Dvijaṭī |
| 29. Virāhī | 61. Vikatī |
| 30. Muṇḍadhāriṇī | 62. Dhorāyai |
| 31. Bhairavī | 63. Kapālī |
| 32. Vajraṇī | 64. Vishalaṅgulī |

Iti Chausaṣha Yoginī Nāmavalī.

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