

DEITIES AND DEIFICATION  
IN  
THE BRAHMA PURĀNA

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ALL-INDIA KASHIRAJ TRUST  
FORT, RAMNAGAR  
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Library IIAS, Shimla



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Price : Rs. 50/-

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Published by Sri Y.N. Thakur, General Secretary, All-India Kashiraj Trust; Printed by Sri Vinay Shankar Pandya, at the Ratna Printing Works, Kamachha, Varanasi.

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A vast literature available in the form of Purāṇas, stands next to Vedas, in importance and popularity. It envisages to popularise the precepts, morals and values, propounded in the Vedas, the Upaniṣads, the Epics, and the Dharmasūtras. It succeeded not only in its mission, but also in completely revitalising and revolutionising and modernising the Vedic religion. Later and modern Hindu religion is an offshoot of the Purāṇic religion. The path of devotion and worship propounded in the Vedic literature as against the path of ritualistic exercises was followed more vigorously in the Purāṇas. Thus, the Purāṇas freed Hinduism from the clutches of the chosen few and spilled it over to masses who were unable to understand the complexities of the Vedic doctrines. The simple and lucid language of these works made more easier the attainment of the desired objective of instruction to the masses in moral and mental education.

Though the Brahma Purāṇa (BP.) takes its name after Brahmā, it is because Brahmā is one of the main narrators of the BP. and not because Brahmā is eulogised in it. On the contrary the BP. provides some uncomplimentary stories about Brahmā. In the Śiva-rahasya-khaṇḍa of Śaṅkara-Saṁhitā a classification of similar nature is given. It is added, however, that the Viṣṇuite Purāṇas teach the identity of Viṣṇu and Śiva, and the BP. establishes the identity of Brahmā, Śiva and Viṣṇu and this holds true in the case of BP. which states that Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva are one (130.10).

It is to be noted that the Brahma-purāṇa or Purāṇa of Brahmā is the first of eighteen Purāṇas. It has been rightly said that *ādyaṁ sarvapurāṇānāṁ purāṇaṁ brāhman ucyate*. The BP may be regarded as the earliest of the series, at least in the estimation of the writers of the Purāṇas. According to Bālaṁbhaṭṭa, it is consequently known by the name of Ādi or First Purāṇa. As it treats of the worship of Sūrya, the sun, it is also sometimes called the Sūrya.

Purāṇa. It contains 245 adhyāyas and approximately 14000 verses. The Agni Purāṇa makes it twentyfive thousand stanzas. Dr. Wilson opines that the actual number is about seven thousand five hundred.

The classical definition of the Purāṇa mentions the following five characteristics, viz : *sarga* (creation), *pratisarga* (dissolution and recreation), *vaiṣṇava* (divine genealogies), *manvantara* (ages of Manu) and *vaiṣṇānucarita* (genealogies of kings). None of the existing Purāṇas completely answers to the definition. Some contain much more than these while others scarcely touch these and deal with other topics, though one is happy to note that the BP. fulfils all the five characteristics, viz. *sarga* (chapter 103) *pratisarga* (chapters 231-233), *vaiṣṇava* and *vaiṣṇānucarita* (chapters 4, 6-17), and *manvantara* (chapter 5) still it must be admitted that the *pañcalakṣaṇa* occupies only a short part of the present BP. But the later additions such as *dāna* (gifts), *vratas* (religious observances), *tīrthas* (sacred places), *śrāddha* (rites in honour of the manes), etc. forming the bulk of the contents of the present BP were not covered by the above definition and in order to get over this difficulty, the Purāṇas themselves stated that the *pañcalakṣaṇa* definition was intended merely for the upā-purāṇa (minor Purāṇa) and the mahāpurāṇa has to satisfy the *daśalakṣaṇa* definition, which includes these additional topics, viz. *vṛtti* (means of livelihood), *rakṣā* (incarnations of gods), *mukti* (final emancipation), *hetu* (*jīva*, unmanifest) and *apāśraya* (Brahman). It should be noted that the BP. also treats these topics but even this definition does not fully cover all the aspects of the Purāṇa. The Matsya Purāṇa provides a definition approaching nearer to the description of the extant Purāṇas. It states that besides the ten characteristics the Purāṇas deal with the glorification of Brahmā, Viṣṇu, Sūrya and Rudra as also with the dissolution and preservation of the world and also with *dharma* (righteous conduct), *artha* (economics and polity), *kāma* (erotics) and *mokṣa* (emancipation). Even this comprehensive definition does not cover the topics like *tīrthayātrā* and others treated in the Brahma and other Purāṇas. The Purāṇa tradition has all along been floating and dynamic and with the changes in modes of behaviour, ways of living, customs and beliefs, the Purāṇas introduced various other subjects to give a picture of life that was lived by people.



The well-known dictum of Purāṇic lore is contained in the line 'itihāsapurāṇābhyāṃ vedam samupabṛṃhayet.' It gives us the key to understanding the intimate relationship between the Purāṇas on the one hand and their sources, the Vedas, on the other. The BP. narrates many Vedic stories and genealogies. The BP. elaborates many *upākhyānas* contained in the ṚgVeda, Aitareya Brāhmaṇa Śāṅkhāyana Brāhmaṇa, Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa and Bṛhaddevatā. The stories of Bali and Vāmana, Ahalyā, Purūravāḥ-Urvaśī episode Hariścandra and Śunaḥśepa, Kaṭha, Āṛṣṭiṣeṇa, Devāpi, Vṛṣākapi, Saramā, Śaryāti, Kavaśailūṣa, Ātreya and Ātreya, Ajigarta, Āṅgīrasa, Śākalya and Abhiṣṭuta are narrated in the BP.

The story of Hariścandra, Rohita and Śunaḥśepa given in the Aitareya Brāhmaṇa (7.3) and Śāṅkhāyana Brāhmaṇa (15-17) is narrated with more details in the BP. In fact, the similarity which we find in the versions of the Aitareya Brāhmaṇa and the BP. cannot be found to such an extent in other works.

The verses of the BP. forming an address to Hari and Puruṣottama, clearly declare its sectarian character and indicate it to be a Vaiṣṇava work. It does not figure in the list of Vaiṣṇava Purāṇas as given by the Padma Purāṇa, but is referred to 'the Śākta class, in which the worship of Śakti, the personified female principle, is more particularly inculcated, and in which *Rajas* (passion) is predominant'.

In the introduction it is related that the *ṛṣis* in the Naimiṣa forest are visited by Lomahaṛṣaṇa, the sūta, and they invite him to tell them the origin and the end of the world. Thereupon the sūta declares himself prepared to impart to them the Purāṇa which the creator Brahmā once revealed to Dakṣa, one of the primal ancestors of the human race. Then follow the legends, more or less common to all the Purāṇas, of the creation of the world, the birth of the primal man Manu and his descendants, the origin of the gods, demigods and other beings, about the kings of the solar and lunar dynasties, as well as a description of the earth with its various divisions, of the hells and heavens. By far the major portion of this Purāṇa is devoted to glorifications (*māhātmyas*) of sacred places (*tīrthas*). Oḍradeśa or Utkala (the present-day Orissa) with its sacred places and temples is described in very great detail. As Utkala owes its sanctity to sun-worship, we find here

also myths of the origin of the Ādityas (the gods of light) and the Sun-god Sūrya. The description of a forest sacred to Śiva in Utkala gives rise to stories of the birth of Umā, the daughter of Himālaya, and her marriage with Śiva, as well as other Śiva myths. A hymn to Śiva (chapter 37) is also inserted here. Nevertheless the Purāṇa is by no means Śivaite, for the Mārkaṇḍeyākhyāna contains numerous Viṣṇu legends, and rituals and *stotras* of the Viṣṇu cult.

Here, too, (chapter 178) the charming legend of the ascetic Kaṇḍu is related, who spends many hundred years in sweet love dalliance with a beautiful Apsarāḥ, and finally awaking from the intoxication of love, thinks that only a few hours of a single day have passed. A large section (chapters 180-212) is devoted to Kṛṣṇa. The well-known legends of Kṛṣṇa's childhood, adventures and heroic deeds are told in exact, often literal agreement with the Viṣṇu-Purāṇa. The introduction to this passage mentions the incarnations of Viṣṇu, which are then described in detail in chapter 213. The last chapters contain rules for the *śrāddhas*, for a moral life, the duties of the castes and *āśramas*, the rewards of heaven and the punishments of hell, and the merit of Viṣṇu worship. Then come a few chapters on the periods of the world (*yugas*) and the periodical destruction of the world, and in conclusion explanations on Sāṃkhya and Yoga and the path leading to salvation.

The Gautamīmāhātmya, the glorification of the sacred places on the Godāvāri (chapters 70-175), frequently appears in manuscripts as an independent text. The Uttarakhaṇḍa (i. e. last section) of the Brahma-purāṇa, which occurs in some manuscripts, is nothing but a *māhātmya* of a sacred river Balajā.

Surely only a small portion of what has come down to us as the Brahma-Purāṇa can lay claim to be an ancient and genuine Purāṇa. About the middle of the 7th century A. D. Huan-Tsang still found over a hundred Buddhist monasteries with myriad of monks, but he also already found 50 Deva temples in Orissa.

Śivaism was introduced in Orissa in the 6th century and Viṣṇuism still later. As the sun temple of Konarka, which is mentioned in our Purāṇa, was not built until 1241 A. D. at least the large section on the sacred places of Orissa cannot be earlier

than the 13th century. It is probable, however, that the *māhātmyas* do not belong to the original Purāṇa.

The Saura-Purāṇa (Purāṇa of the sun-god) which is mentioned in the lists of the Upapurāṇas is of great value as regards our knowledge of Śivaism, especially of the Liṅga cult. Its main purpose is to glorify god Śiva. In many places, however, Śiva is identified with the Sun-god who reveals the Purāṇa, or else the Sun god recommends Śiva worship. The advantages of Śiva worship are praised in the most extravagant terms, instructions are given for the worship of the god and the *liṅga* and many Śiva legends are told. A few chapters also deal with the genealogies; in chapter 31 on the descent of Yadu there is a version of the the Urvaśi legend. In the philosophical sections the work takes up an intermediate position between the orthodox systems. On the one hand Śiva is explained as the *ātman*, in accordance with the Vedānta, and, on the other hand, the creation from the primal matter (*prakṛti*) is explained, as in the Sāṃkhya. Three chapters (38-40) are devoted to polemics against the system of Mādhva (1197-1276) which is important from the point of view of chronology.

The formal study of the BP. leads us to two opposite possibilities: (1) of its being so bulky that it appears to be a conglomeration of the *mahāpurāṇa* and *upapurāṇa*, and (2) of its being so small as to become only a handbook dealing with religion in its original form and later becoming a collection of various chapters borrowed from different sources.

The contents of the BP. can be divided into the following six units: (i) Pañcalakṣaṇas, (ii) Geography (iii) Holy places in Orissa, (iv) Gautamīmāhātmya, (v) Kṛṣṇacarita and (vi) religion and philosophy.

#### (i) Pañcalakṣaṇas

This unit consists of twenty chapters, i. e. 1-17, and 231-233. Its main topic is to treat the five main characteristics of the Purāṇa, viz. *sarga*, *pratisarga*, *vaṃśa*, *vaṃśānucarita*, and *manvantara*. The chapters 1-3 treat of *sarga*, the chapters 231-233 of *pratisarga*, the chapters 4, 6-17 of *vaṃśa* and *vaṃśānucarita*. Both these characteristics are not treated separately but are joined together; and the chapter 5 treats of the *manavantarāṣ*.

These chapters are borrowed from Harivaṁśa and Viṣṇu Purāṇa. Only the first twenty verses of the first chapter and the chapter 231 belong to the BP. itself. As regards the first chapter the first twenty introductory verses are added by the compiler himself, the verses 21-30 are similar to those of Viṣṇu I. 2.1-8 and the verses 31 to the end are similar to Harivaṁśa 1.1.19 to the end. It seems more likely that all the three, viz., Brahmā, Harivaṁśa and Viṣṇu have borrowed from one source.

It seems that the five main characteristics which originally constituted the entire contents of a Purāṇa are not given much importance in the BP., i. e., the BP. does not possess the nature of the Purāṇas it was originally believed to be but it furnishes a later phase in as much as the topics other than these five *lakṣaṇas*, viz. *tīrthamāhātmya*, worship of gods, *śrāddha*, etc., are dealt with at a greater length, whereas the *pañcalakṣaṇas* are dealt with very briefly. As regards repetitions, the story of Dakṣa having many daughters is given in the chapters 2 and 3 but in the chapter 2.46-49, the exact number of the daughters is not given whereas in chapter 3.25, Dakṣa is said to have sixty daughters. Moreover, the story of Pṛthu which is given in short in the chapter 2.20-25 is given at length in the chapter 4, thus making the chapter completely independent. It gives all the details about Pṛthu and adds the story of milking the earth. Moreover, the chapter 4 contains chronological disorder too. Thus it begins with the story of how Pṛthu was assigned the kingdom of the world by Prajāpati but in the verse 19, the sages unnecessarily raise a question and want to know more about Pṛthu's birth and how he milked the earth thus raising occasion for the narration of the chapter. Again in the chapter 2.51-53, the sages raise some questions the answers to which are not given anywhere and the reply of Lomahaṛṣaṇa which follows these questions does not at all pertain to the questions.

## (ii) Geography

This unit consists of ten adhyāyas, viz, 18-27. In it the description of the world together with its oceans and continents, of the *pātālas*, hells and the other three worlds, viz. Bhūḥ, Bhuvaḥ, and Svaḥ, of Jambūdvīpa, Bhāratavarṣa and its *tīrthas* is given. The Purāṇas served an important function in providing geographical information by describing the greatness of various holy places. The

BP. describes the *bhuvanakoṣa* but does not follow the *kūrmavi-bhāga* system as is given by the Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa and others. These chapters are mainly borrowed from Viṣṇu and Mārkaṇḍeya as stated above.

The chapter 19 in this unit describes the Jambūdvīpa and seems to interrupt the lengthy description of geography by its brevity. Moreover, the chapter 25 gives a long list of the names of holy places and is wholly unconnected with those preceding and following it. Chapter 26 is meant for serving as introduction to chapter 27 dealing with the geography of India. It, therefore, seems to have been written at the time when chapter 27 was borrowed from the Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa. In short, the chapters 18-27 do not contain any story element but only describe the geographical aspect in the general style of the Purāṇas.

### (iii) Holy places in Orissa

This unit consists of thirtysix adhyāyas, viz. 28-70 and 176-178 and describes the holy places in Orissa. According to Dr. Hazra it should be divided into four groups : (i) chapters 28 (1-8), 42 (35 to the end), 44-69, 70 (1-11) and 176-178 on Puruṣottama-kṣetra or Puri sacred to Viṣṇu, (ii) chapters 28 (9 ff.)-33 on Konarka sacred to the Sun-god, (iii) Chapters 34-41 on Ekāmra-kṣetra or Bhuvaneśvara sacred to Śiva and (iv) chapter 42 (1-34) on Virajākṣetra or Jajpore sacred to Devī.

### (iv) Gautamīmāhātmya

This unit consists of one hundred and five chapters, viz. 70-175 all of them eulogizing various holy places situated on the bank of the river Godāvāri. It forms an independent book by itself. Its style also differs from the general style of the BP. In each of its chapters, it takes up one tīrtha and relates the story of the origin of the name given to the tīrtha, after its importance is described and the merit of visiting it is given at the end. This is the general style of this unit though there are variations.

### (v) Kṛṣṇacaritra

The BP. refers to Kṛṣṇa's birth in the genealogical chapters and the Syamantaka jewel story is also referred to but the regular Kṛṣṇacaritra describing his life from birth to death is given in the

chapters 180-212. From the position which the Kṛṣṇacaritra occupies in the BP., it seems that it is somewhat superfluous. But it seems that the Kṛṣṇacaritra was introduced in the Purāṇa, when Kṛṣṇa worship was widely prevalent.

The story of Kṛṣṇa is given in detail in Harivaṁśa, Brahma and Viṣṇu Purāṇas, Bhāgavata and Brahmavaivarta and in others it is given in short. Some of the portions of Kṛṣṇacaritra are also narrated in the Mahābhārata. The Harivaṁśa, Brahma and Viṣṇu Purāṇa, are very similar and it is difficult to decide as to which version is earlier in the absence of a complete collation of all the adhyāyas of Kṛṣṇacaritra in all the three Purāṇas.

#### (vi) Religion and Philosophy

This unit consists of 30 chapters, viz, 213-230 and 234-245 dealing with topics of religious and philosophical nature.

After the Kṛṣṇacaritra nothing remains to be said and therefore the BP. starts at random to describe various matters. Thus it describes the incarnation of Viṣṇu (chapter 213), Yama and his hells (chapters 214-215) *dharma* (chapter 216), evolutionary rebirth (chapter 217), *Dāna* of food (chapter 219), *śrāddha* (chapter 220), *sadācāra* (chapter 221), *Varnāśramadharmā* (chapter 222), *karma-vipāka* (chapters 223-225), worship of Viṣṇu (chapters 226-229), *bhaviṣyakathana* (chapters 229, 230), philosophy (chapters 234-244) and importance of the BP. (chapter 245).

But the vital life-line of the BP. consists in its vast canopy of deification and ostentation of various categories of the deities. Most of the vedic gods failed to maintain their significance—some quietly made their way unnoticed and some underwent partial or even complete metamorphic transformation in this purāṇa. Such stalwart vedic deities as Agni, and Indra lost their footing, while Dattātreyā, Gaṇeśa and Kārttikeya attained distinct deification. Quite a large number of new images evoked renewed personifications. Demigods and demi-divine beings like *yakṣa*, *siddha*, *gandharva* and *kinnara* had been elevated to the same rank of the primary distinguished deities. Much attention had been given to female deities also. Pārvatī, Aditi, Lakṣmī and Sarasvatī had been deified with proper care and brought to limelight. Holy rivers and shrines had been eulogised; worship had been extended even to

the Nyagrodha (Fig) tree. Besides this, the extant BP. deals with sages, demons, saints and kings who are remembered with solemn reverence and idolized with adoration.

Here an attempt has been made on depicting the deities and the process of deification as observed in the BP. Their origin where possible has been traced in the vedic days. This gradual change in the conception of the deities and deification shows the importance of such type of study so far as the history of the ancient religious thoughts of India is concerned.

For long forty years I have been earnestly engaged in the study of the Purāṇas. At present I have been given the tough responsibilities of the project of bringing out all the Purāṇas in their lucid Bengali rendering with a detailed introduction on each of those. Since my tenure of professorship in Purāṇa and Itihāsa in the Sanskrit University (now Sampurnanand Sanskrit Vishwa-vidyalaya), Varanasi I had the privilege to come in contact with His Highness Maharaja Vibhuti Narayana Singh of Banaras and the All-India Kashiraja Trust established by him for the furtherance of the Purāṇic research. It is gratifying to note that my work on the Svargakhaṇḍa of the Padma-purāṇa has been published from the Trust. Dr. R. S. Bhattacharya, the present ebullient editor of the "Purāṇa", has gone through the present treatise and he has been kind enough to include it in the valuable series of the Trust. My language is too poor to express my sincere gratitude and heart-felt thanks to them.

I am also indebted to my wife Sm. Jharna Chatterjee who is ever alert in seeing my work published with as much perfection as possible. My only granddaughter Km. Toya Chatterjee is the fountain-head of my strenuous activity and rational sagacity. To her love and affection I am deeply obliged.

I would like to draw the attention of the orientalist who are cordially invited to express their opinion with regard to the merit or otherwise of the present publication.

Department of Sanskrit  
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Makarasaṁkrānti  
14. 1. 1989

Asoke Chatterjee Sastri

## THE DEITIES AND DEIFICATION IN THE BRAHMA PURĀṆA

Vedic religion was based upon nature-worship. The god was hardly differentiated from physical phenomena. Thus we see the Dyauḥ as the broad bright sky; the Maruts, the deities of the storm; Indra, the god of the rain-cloud, who later became the mighty warrior; and Agni the god of fire, later getting an individual and concrete existence. Lack of individuality is a conspicuous feature in the Vedic gods. Thus dawn, sun, fire, have the common features of being luminous and dispelling darkness. Apart from this, certain essential traits like brilliance, power, beneficence are attributed to all gods in common and these common features tend to obscure what is distinctive in each god and lead to the confusion of one god with another. Thus praying to lord Agni, the seer identifies him with Varuṇa, Mitra, Indra and others (RV. 5.3). This poses a linguistic problem as to whether these various "names" were used as terms for describing attributes of nature or were in fact names for concrete personified natural phenomena. The tendency towards personifications, however, can be seen in the later hymns, as in the nature of Aditi, the immensity; in Prajāpati, the lord of creatures; in Hiraṇyagarbha, the golden germ.

In the period of the Brāhmaṇas, a ceremonial type of worship was developed and a growing insistence or rigorous precision in the observance of niceties of rites and sacrifices marked the epoch. In the Āraṇyakas, the hermits believed themselves capable of superseding the gods and of obtaining from them any gift at will by the practice of intense meditation and prolonged self-mortification. The line of thought on nature and being, of god in the Upaniṣads as opposed to the Brāhmaṇas is speculative and mystical and the great systems of Indian philosophy carry forward and develop it.

The importance of the great epic poems and the Purāṇas of India for the history of religious thought and its bearing upon the Hindu conception of god is very great as they are the popular possessions of the inhabitants of every village and town, and the centres of pilgrimage. The names of their heroes and heroines are on the tongue of every Indian. The trend of this literature is



towards a rich polytheism, but by the time of the Epics and the Purāṇas, the phenomenal side of the gods was greatly obscured. Anthropomorphism was carried to such length that even the sun and the moon were clothed in human dress, speech and action.

In the pantheon of the Brahmapurāṇa (BP.) there are various categories of gods such as Viṣṇu and Śiva are of primary importance. The god Sūrya occupies an independent section. Brahmā is the narrator of the Purāṇa and the Purāṇa takes its name after him. The gods Indra, Yama, Agni are of secondary importance and the gods Dattātreyā, Gaṇeśa, Soma, Varuṇa, and Kārttikeya occupy a lower position.

There can be no limit to the pantheon when constantly new images evoke new personifications. Thus Manyu is anger personified and Kāmadeva is the feeling of love incarnate. Sometimes small gods were created by greater gods, through a purely physiological process. Thus *vāra* was created out of the perspiration of Gaṇeśa's body, and the *mātṛs* were the creation of lord Śiva's perspiration. Semi-divine beings like the *yakṣas*, the *siddhas*, the *gandharvas*, the *kimmaras* and other are always mentioned in connection with some primary deity. Among the goddesses, Pārvatī is described at length in association with Lord Śiva, and there are stray references to Aditi, Lakṣmī and Sarasvatī. The BP. lays special emphasis on the worship of Subhadrā with Lord Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma. It does not mention Rādhā. The outstanding feature of the mythology of this Purāṇa is that it presents a long eulogy of the river Godāvarī, deifies it and describes its miraculous powers. Worship is extended to the *nyagrodha* tree and it is identified with Viṣṇu. The *pitṛs* are also deified and worshipped. On the whole, it seems that while some Vedic gods are mentioned and eulogized as required by convention, the BP. like other Purāṇas has extended its pantheon to include the non-brahmanic (or non-aryan) forms ascribed to the Vedic pantheistic forms of worship.

In the BP. the gods are described as human beings who have attained highest virtue and glory. They are versed in the *śāstras* and know the way to attain *mokṣa* and meditate on the highest principle. They are *parivrāṭs*, who practise yoga and meditate on the Veda. Their abode is the golden peak of the mountain Meru,

which is also inhabited by the *siddhas*, *vidyādhara*s, *yakṣas*, *gaṇas* of gods, sages, *guhyakas*, *suparṇas*, *maruts*, *sādhus*, *kaṣṭhāpās*, *prajāśvaras*, *vālakhilyas* and others (45. 5-7). The function of these semi-divine beings is either that of praying to the lord or of showering flowers, blowing the conch, serving the lord and protecting the sacrifice. When not directly interested in the human affairs to the point of descending to the earth, either to partake of a sacrifice or to intervene in worldly matters, the gods reside in sky in courts of their own 'on top of the sky', in the third heaven or gather at the halls of their colleagues.

Besides gods, the BP. deals with demons, powerful characters who are regarded as enemies of gods and men. It also narrates the stories of sages who helped kings and gods in the performace of sacrifice and various other matters, and thereby attained godhead.

### Viṣṇu :

In the Ṛgveda, Viṣṇu occupies a subordinate position and his only anthropomorphic traits are the strides, which, as a solar god, he takes across the heavens. He traverses the three worlds in three strides referring probably to the sun in the heavens through the three stages of arising, culminating and setting, or the three steps with which he encompasses the universe. This trait of Vedic Viṣṇu was later on symbolized in his incarnation as Vāmana, who asked for land from Bali to be covered in these strides. In the Brāhmaṇas, the position of Viṣṇu remains much the same; he is regarded as equal to the other gods, not their superior. In the older portions of the Mahābhārata, Viṣṇu is little more than a hero; in others he is represented as paying homage to Śiva. In the latest portions of the poem, he is regarded as the most exalted deity. In the Rāmāyaṇa and the Vaiṣṇava Purāṇas, he is exalted to be the supreme spirit. The BP. is chiefly a Vaiṣṇava Purāṇa and exalts Viṣṇu as the supreme deity, though it assigns a high rank to Lord Śiva also. At one point it takes the view that strictly speaking there is no distinction between Lord Viṣṇu and Lord Śiva and that they are two aspects of one and the same divinity (56. 64-72). In any case, the most interesting fact about the Viṣṇu of the Purāṇas, is his identification with Kṛṣṇa, who probably represented the ascendance of the non-Vedic and non-Aryan gods, in the Hindu pantheon.

Viṣṇu in the BP. is described as having a thousand heads (45.40; 213.12) and a thousand eyes (45.41, 128.155, 213.12). The eyes are compared to the lotus (68.28, 178.29). They are wide like the lotus-leaf (178.123) and perhaps as a result he shines like the lighting (68.53). He has thousand mouths (213.12), thousand tongues (213.13) and thousand hands (213.12). He is also said to have four hands (45.65, 68.30). He has a sign of *śrīvatsa* on his chest (45.41; 64; 68.31; 178.24). *Śrīvatsa* is a particular curl of hair on the breast indicating the status of a *cakravartī*, the 'universal sovereign', or *mahāpuruṣa*. This sign is generally associated with Kṛṣṇa, which is ascribed to Viṣṇu, as the former is considered an incarnation of the latter. The explanation of the sign is given as 'Śrī's favourite abode'. His complexion is blue like the petal of a blue lotus (45.62). He is also called Śyāma (68.44). His majesty is like that of a cloud full of water (45.41) and he is compared to an *ataśi* flower (178.121). Thus, again, it seems, Viṣṇu in BP. has taken on the complexion and characteristics of Kṛṣṇa.

He wears yellow clothes (45.65, 68.44, 178.124) and decorates himself with *vanamālā*, *hāra*, *keyūra*, *mukuṭa* and *aṅgada* (45.65; 68.301; 178. 123-124). He applies divine *candana* to his body (178.125). All these are the favourite *vastrabhūṣaṇas* of Kṛṣṇa.

He wields the *śaṅkha*, the *cakra* and the *gadā* (45.65). His *sudarśana cakra* is very powerful and is his main weapon. Its whiteness is like that of the *kunda* flower, the moon, the milk of the cow (68.45-46). His *śārṅga* bow has the lustre of the sun and the arrows are like its rays (68.49,50). He is well-versed in all the *śāstras* (68.21) and bears Sarasvatī on his tongue (122.71).

*Attributes* : Elsewhere it is said that *agni* is his mouth, *kṣiti* his feet, the sun and the moon are his eyes, the sky together with its directions is his ears and body, heaven is his head, the directions are his eyes, *vāyu* is his mind, the waters are his perspiration (56.16-17), stars, the pores of his skin; the oceans abound in the jewels his clothes, bed and abode (56.27,29). Again it is said that the brāhmaṇas are his mouth, the kṣatriyas his hands, the vaiśyas his thighs and the śūdras are his feet (56.22-23). He is also called Bahubāhu, Ūrupada, Bahukarṇa and Akṣiśiraska (122. 72). He is frequently called Nārāyaṇa (56.12,60.25), because

water is his abode. Nārāyaṇa is an ancient and dignified epithet which has been used for various Hindu gods. It is not the name of any distinct Hindu divinity. The word is believed to be a patronymic, derived from 'nara' (man), so that it means 'son of man', but it is not known for whom it was originally used. The RV. (X. 90), the Śatapatha-brāhmaṇa, (XII.III. 4.1), (XI. II. VI. I. I.) (2.12); the Kātyāyana Śrautasūtra, (XXIV. VII. 36) and the Mahānārāyaṇa Upaniṣad (II. IX. 1) relate the word nārāyaṇa with puruṣa and at a much later date, in the Taittirīya Saṁhitā of the Black Yajurveda (vii. 1.5.1) it was suggested that the word was derived from *nara* (the waters for they are sprung from *nara*) and *ayana* (moving). As in Greek thought, that the world has arisen from waters is one of the earliest theories of the Hindus as well, and therefore most Hindu writers preferred this secondary derivation of the word (cf. Manu. 1.8-10), and the BP. also follows the same line of thought. He resides in the Kṣīrasāgara (45.60, 126.24) and sleeps on the serpent Śeṣa (45.60). Lord Viṣṇu is also called Hari, Saṅkara, Vāsudeva, Deva, and Kṛṣṇa (8.65), Govinda, Madhusūdana, Śrīdhara, Keśava, Mādhava, Vāmana, Varāha and Trivikrama (60.39-41; 61.14-15, 39, 40).

*Philosophical Epithets* : Some philosophical epithets are ascribed to Viṣṇu, Thus he is called Avyakta, Śuddha, Nitya, Sa-daikarūpa, Sarvajīṣṇu, Paramātmā, Hiraṇyagarbha, gross as well as subtle, *ajara*, *amara*, *akṣaya*, *avyaya*, one as well as many, *sarvajña* (1.21-27), *sat* as well as *asat* (23.42), *nirguṇa*, *śānta*, *sanātana* (45. 61-63), *kūṭastha*, *acala*, devoid of *bhāva* and *abhāva*, all-pervading, beyond *prakṛti* (45.66-67), the *ātmā* of all, omnipresent, endless, *brahmarūpa*, *urukrama*, and the one controlling the wheel of time (56.43-44). He is known from the Vedas (126.25). He is higher than *pradhāna*, *buddhi* and the senses (181.22). He is *avyākṛta-mūla-prakṛti* and the *vyākṛta* world (23.43). He is *acyuta* (122.70) and is called *bhūtāpavyakta*, *bhūtakṛt*, *bhūtabhṛt* and *bhūtabhāvana* (178.133,135). He is also called *kṣetrajña*, *kṣetra-bhṛt*, *kṣetrī*, *kṣetrahā*, *kṣetrakṛd*, *kṣetrātmā*, *kṣetrarohita*, *kṣetrasraṣṭā* (178.135). He is also called *guṇālaya*, *guṇāvāsa*, *guṇāśraya*, *guṇavaha*, *gṇabhoktā*, *guṇārāma*, and *guṇatyāgi* (178.136). He is *rk*, *yajuḥ*, and *sāma* (178.143). He is day, night, *vatsara*, *kāla*. *kāṣṭhā*, *muhūrta*, *kṣaṇa*, *lava* (178.145-146)

etc. He is called *jagadbīja*, *jagaddhāmā*, *jagatśākṣī* (178.128) and *jagatpati* (68.28). The historically important fact here is that he is lauded with the Vedānta epithets, as in the Bhagavadgītā.

*Various forms* : In different continents, he is worshipped in different forms. Thus it is said that in the Plakṣadvīpa, he is worshipped in the form of Soma (20.19) in Śālmaladvīpa in the form of Vāyu (20. 32), in the Kuśadvīpa in the form of Brahmā (20. 40), in Krauñcadvīpa in the form of Rudra (20.57) and in the Śākadvīpa in the form of Sun (20.72). So too his *dharma* is said to possess different colours in the different *yugas*. Thus it is said that his *dharma* becomes white in the Kṛtayuga, *śyāma* in the Tretāyuga, red in the Dvāparayuga and *kṛṣṇa* in the Kaliyuga (56.40-41). Desire, anger, joy, fear and attachment are his other forms (56.29-30). He has a sacrificial form which is lauded at great length. It consists of *savana* pots, *havya*, *pavitṛaka*, *vedī*, *dīkṣā*, *samidh*, *sruva*, *sruk*, *soma*, *sūpa*, *muṣala*, *prokṣaṇi*, *dakṣiṇāyana*, *adhvaryu*, a brahmin knowing the recitation of *sāmas*, *sadasya*, *sadana*, *sabhā*, *yūpa*, *cakra*, *dhruva*, *darvī*, *caru*, *ulūkhala*, *prāgvamśa*, *yajñabhūmi*, *sthaṇḍila*, *kuśa*, *mantra*, sacrificial share, *somabhoktā*, *hutārciḥ* and he is called *agrāsanabhojī*. The constant identification of Viṣṇu with the sacrifices is a special feature of the brāhmaṇas. Elsewhere it is said that Lord Viṣṇu has four forms. The first is known by the name Vāsudeva. It is near as well as far and has a white complexion. It is always pure. Its nature is indescribable. The second form is called Śeṣa which is the *tāmasa* form of Lord Viṣṇu holding the earth upon his head. The third form arising out of the *sattva* quality of Lord Viṣṇu, maintains the world, establishes *dharma*, destroys the demons and protects the gods. The fourth form lies in the ocean on a big serpent and remains engrossed in creating the world. *Rajaḥ* is his main quality (180.18-24).

*Functions* : The primary function of Lord Viṣṇu is the maintenance of the world but it is said that he created Brahmā whose primary function is the creation of the world. Thus it is said that when at the beginning of a *kalpa*, all the moving and non-moving beings were destroyed, when the gods, *gandharvas*, *daityas*, *vidyādharas* and *uragas* were absorbed in darkness, when nothing was distinguishable on account of all-pervading darkness,

Lord Viṣṇu created Lord Brahmā from his naval-lotus at the end of his *yoganidrā* (45.26-30, 213.28-29). It is again said that Viṣṇu created water from which a golden egg came out and out of it, Brahmā emerged (I. 38-40). This conception seems to have arisen from the ancient belief of the one primordial being resting on or emanating from the primeval waters, where Hiranyagarbha, identified with Prajāpati and, in later times, with Brahmā, is said to have arisen in the beginning from the great water which pervaded the universe (RV. 10.121, 129, 826). According to the popular Indian belief the god Viṣṇu goes to sleep for a period of four months on the eleventh day of the bright half of Aṣāḍha but the BP. states that Lord Viṣṇu goes to sleep for a thousand years and at the end of that he manifests himself in order to perform his functions (213.24-25). At the end of the kalpa, all beings together with Lord Brahmā merge in Lord Viṣṇu (I. 60, 62). Lord Viṣṇu helps *prakṛti* and *puruṣa* in retaining their relationship. The power of Lord Viṣṇu forms the *pradhāna* and the *puruṣa*, the source of their equilibrium which is disturbed at the time of creation. (23.29, 32).

### Viṣṇu and other Gods

After having been Indra's assistant and younger brother and playing a secondary role to the mighty god who fights Vṛtra in the Vedas, Viṣṇu emerges as the most powerful god of the epic period, being called the god who is above Indra-Atindra. The BP. provides many references when Indra being afraid of his enemies approaches Lord Viṣṇu for protection (19. 71, 73). Viṣṇu also killed the demon Śārdūla, and brought back Suvarṇā, the daughter of Lord Śiva, whom the demon had carried away (129.64-69). The demon Śambara, a sort of replica of Vṛtra, who in the RV. is vanquished by Indra, is said to be killed by Viṣṇu in the BP. (134. 10-13). Indra worships Viṣṇu, and Śiva prays to him when confronted by doubts regarding his frequent dethronement (122.68, 88). Lord Viṣṇu kills the demon Mahāśani when Indra requests him to do so (129. 94-100). Again it is said that Indra obtained the kingdom of the three worlds by praying to Lord Viṣṇu, and therefore Lord Viṣṇu was called Govinda according to the etymology : *indram gāṃ avindayat* (122. 95-97).

The relation of Lord Viṣṇu with Śiva is very significant. Though Viṣṇu is considered to be the supreme god, he is said to

worship Lord Śiva. Thus Viṣṇu is said to have received back his *cakra* which was swallowed by Virabhadra, an attendant of Lord Śiva, by praying to Lord Śiva (122.95-97).

The BP. relates an interesting anecdote about the quarrel between Brahmā and Viṣṇu regarding their relative superiority. It states when they were quarrelling a *Śiva-liṅga* rose between the two and the divine speech declared that whosoever finds out its end, would be considered superior to the other. Both of them were unable to find out the end, and thereupon Viṣṇu declared his ignorance, but Brahmā spoke a lie with his fifth head and he was cursed by Lord Śiva (chapter 135). Once it is said that Lord Indra and others practise penance out of fear for him (109.41-42).

### Incarnations

The theory of incarnation presupposes the recognition of Viṣṇu as a Supreme God, the creator and the ruler of the universe, the upholder not only of the cosmic, but also of the moral order of the world. When the enemies of this rule endanger the order of the world, the God incarnates himself for the purpose of defending it. Thus the BP. says : 'Whenever there is a decline of law and an increase of inequity, I put forth myself in a new birth.'

Originally, therefore, the number of these appearances was regarded indefinite and the BP. goes to the extent of saying that there were 1000 incarnations of Lord Viṣṇu (213.20), but theological speculation tended to fix the number of incarnations and also to define more clearly their relation to the laws of natural evolution. Thus after making the statement regarding the 1000 incarnations, the BP. starts with Lord Brahmā as a manifestation of Lord Viṣṇu (213.31) and continues to mention Varāha, Narasimha, Vāmana, Dattātreya, Jāmadagnya, Rāma, Keśava and Kalkī which is now to come, as incarnations (chapter 213). It is noteworthy that in this place the incarnations are called *prādurbhāva* or 'manifestation' and not *avatāra*, though elsewhere (180.39), they are called the *avatāra*, which has become the current term.

The BP. also mentions the following incarnations : Matsya, Kūrma, Varāha, Narasimha, Vāmana. Dattātreya (180.27-32; 203.106-112), Parasurāma, (180.27, 312; 213.113-122), Rāma, Kṛṣṇa (180.213), Kalkī and some others like Śiva, (56.20), Haya-

śirāḥ, Puṣkara, (213-31), and Buddha (122.65, 69). Further it states that in the different verses, Viṣṇu is worshipped in different forms, Thus in the Bhadrāśvavaṛṣa, he is worshipped as Haya-śirāḥ, in Ketumāla as Varāha, in Bhārata as Kūrma, in Kurupradeśa as Matsya, and in the form Viśvarūpa, he is worshipped everywhere (18.57-58).

The BP. deals at length with some of the incarnations, and the descriptions are worth noting :

*Matsya* : The fish which in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa (I. 8. I. 1) delivers Manu from the flood appears in the Mahābhārata (III. 187) as a form of Prajāpati, and becomes in the Purāṇas an incarnation of Viṣṇu. The BP. states that Matsya was the first incarnation of Lord Viṣṇu, and when he took this incarnation, he was known as Matsyamādhava (60.1-2).

*Kūrma* : In the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa (7.51.5 cf. Tait. Ār. 1.23.3), Prajāpati about to create offspring turns into a tortoise moving in primeval waters and, in the Purāṇas, this tortoise is an *avatāra* of Viṣṇu who assumes this form to recover various objects lost in a deluge. The BP. does not provide a detailed description of this incarnation.

*Varāha* : The myth of the Varāha incarnation can be traced to Vedic literature. It says that Viṣṇu having drunk Soma and on the suggestion of Indra having carried off a hundred buffaloes and a brew of milk belonging to the boar, left Indra flying across the mountain to slay the fierce boar (RV. 1.61-7; 8.66.10). This story is developed in the Taittiriya Saṁhitā (TS. 6.2.4.23), Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa (I. 4.1.2.4) and the Taittiriya Brāhmaṇa (II. 1.3.5). In the post-Vedic mythology of the Rāmāyaṇa and the Purāṇas, the boar which raises the earth has become one of the *avatāras* of Viṣṇu. In the Rāmāyaṇa, Brahmā, not Viṣṇu, is represented as taking the form of the boar.

The BP. states that this incarnation of Lord Viṣṇu is *veda-pradhāna* and is in the nature of a sacrifice. The Varāha form having a thousand hands entered the ocean. and held the whole earth in his jaws and saved it from disaster (213.32-43; 180.27-32; 56.20). Narakāsura was born to Pṛthivī when Lord Viṣṇu touched her in the Varāha incarnation. Narakāsura was afterwards killed



by Lord Viṣṣu in his incarnation as Lord Kṛṣṇa (202.23-25). Elsewhere it is stated that Viṣṣu brought out the *pitṛs* from the river Kokā in his Varāha incarnation (chapter 219). When the demon Sindhusena carried away the sacrifice to Rasātala, Lord Viṣṣu took the form of Varāha and brought back the sacrifice to the earth (79.8-16). The reason for Viṣṣu's forms as a tortoise and a boar seems to be that his primitive worship had been of a therianthropic character, at least with some class of people.

*Narasimha* : The incarnation of Narasimha, or the man-lion, stands by itself. It refers to a popular legend of Viṣṣu killing in the form of a man-lion, the demon Hiraṇyakaśipu—a legend which is alluded to once in the Vedic literature, i.e. Taittirīya Āraṇyaka (X. 1-6).

The BP. states that after the Varāha incarnation, Lord Viṣṣu assumed the shape of a creature half-man, half-lion, to deliver the world from the tyranny of a demon called Hiraṇyakaśipu. His colour, roar and lustre are like those of a dark cloud. When the demon Hiraṇyakaśipu became invincible, lord Narasimha emerged from the pillars of his assembly-hall and killed him and all his retinue with his claws. He killed the *daityas* living in the *rasātala*, sky, forests and at other places. His nails were stronger than the thunderbolt and there were long hair on his neck and face (56.20, 213.80-106).

*Vāmana* : The Vāmana incarnation's origin lies in a legend developed from a mythical feat of Viṣṣu, frequently mentioned in the RV., regarding the three strides with which he measured the three worlds (RV. 1.65.6). In the Aitāreya Brāhmaṇa (6.15) it is stated that Viṣṣu and Indra, engaged in conflict with the Asuras, agreed with the latter that as much as Viṣṣu could stride over in three steps should belong to the two deities. The Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa (I.2.5) refers to the dwarf form of Viṣṣu. This Brāhmaṇa story forms the transition to the myth of Viṣṣu's dwarf incarnation in the post-Vedic literature.

*Dattātreyā* : The reference to Dattātreyā as an incarnation comes down from the epic period. The BP. states that Lord Viṣṣu took the Dattātreyā incarnation as a son of the sage Atri (180.31), at a time when the Vedas were destroyed, sacrifices

were neglected, the four castes were intermingled, righteousness waned and truth disappeared. He brought the atmosphere of righteousness together with the Vedas, religious rites and sacrifices and he brought the four castes in their proper order. On Kārtavīrya Arjuna he conferred the rule of the whole earth (213.106-112).

In some parts of India, a saint Dattātreyā is worshipped as uniting the Hindu Trinity in himself.

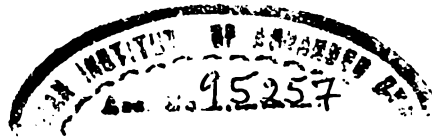
*Paraśurāma* : The story of Paraśurāma, as told in the Mahābhārata (III. 115; XII-49) has no reference to Viṣṇu, but the first book of the Rāmāyaṇa, which is a later addition to the epic, contains a continuation of his story. According to it the hero was in possession of Viṣṇu's bow and met the young Rāma, son of Daśaratha, expressly to subdue him; but the latter, who had already broken Śiva's bow, now bent Viṣṇu's bow and deprived Paraśurāma of his victory. This legend, apparently a late invention, would be absurd on the supposition that both are incarnations of Viṣṇu. The BP. clearly distinguishes the incarnation of Viṣṇu as Paraśurāma from that of Dāśarathi Rāma. It states that in this incarnation, Lord Viṣṇu was born as the son of the sage Jamadagni and was a descendant of Bhr̥gu. He cut off the thousand hands of Kārtavīrya Arjuna and cleared the earth twenty-one times of the kṣatriya class. In order to expiate his sins, he performed a horse-sacrifice and gave much *dakṣiṇā* and he gave the whole earth together with elephants, horses and chariots to the sage Kaśyapa. Even at present, he practises severe penance on the mountain Mahendra for the welfare of the whole world. It seems proper to conclude that the origin of this incarnation lies in the idea of restraining the kṣatriyas, from their ambition or attempts at overpowering the Brahmanical caste.

*Rāma* : Rāma as an incarnation of Viṣṇu seems to be a later addition. In the original parts of Rāmāyaṇa (viz. Kāṇḍas II to VI) the poet regards his hero as essentially human and seems entirely to ignore his divine character. But later his divinity is fully acknowledged in Kāṇḍas. I and VII which by common agreement are later additions. The BP. distinctly eulogizes Rāma as an incarnation of Viṣṇu. It states that in the twenty-fourth *yuga* Lord Viṣṇu divided himself into four parts. In order to grace the world, to establish righteousness and to control the demons, Lord Viṣṇu was

born in the form of the four sons of Daśaratha. Rāma is described as *śyāma*, young, having red eyes, brilliant, long-armed, strong, having a back as strong as that of a lion and *mitabhāṣī*. His wife is Sītā who was Lakṣmī before her incarnation as Sītā. Rāma, Sītā and Lakṣmaṇa went to the forest and practised penance for fourteen years. Residing in the Janasthāna, he worked for the gods and killed Rāvaṇa and his army. He also killed the demons Vālī, Lavaṇa, Mārica, Subāhu, Virādha, Kabandha, and others. Rāma ruled the world for 10,000 years and the BP. gives a peaceful account of his reign, popularly known as *Rāmarājya*. After completing a hundred sacrifices, Rāma went to heaven. He was the jewel of Ikṣvāku family (213.124-158).

Elsewhere he is glorified as a powerful hero but no mention is made of his being an incarnation of Viṣṇu. Thus it is said that Rāma built a great bridge over the ocean, killed Rāvaṇa, brought back Sītā and purified her with fire but owing to the slanders of some *anāryas*, he abandoned her near the hermitage of Vālmiki. Later when Rāma performed a horse-sacrifice, Lava and Kuśa, the son of Rāma appeared there and sang the whole of the Rāmāyaṇa. Rāma blessed and embraced them. The monkeys, Sugrīva, Hanūmān, Aṅgada and the bear Jāmbavān came there and all of them went to the river Godāvarī and worshipped Śiva (chapter 154). Elsewhere it is said that after reigning over the world for a long time, Rāma attained the status of Lord Viṣṇu (176.50).

*Kṛṣṇa* : During the Brāhmaṇa period, prajāpati, the creator was believed to assume various forms like those of a boar and a tortoise in order to rescue creation in times of danger. After him came Nārāyaṇa and he was identified with Viṣṇu, the slayer of demons. About the end of the Vedic period a popular deity, Vāsudeva, came to be acknowledged as a form of Viṣṇu. Now the race of the Yādavas, whose clans were settled both in the north and the in the west of India revered as their tribal hero, Kṛṣṇa, the son of Devakī, who had the reputation of having been an earnest seeker of religious truth. It may be assumed that about this time the worship of Vāsudeva as a form of Viṣṇu had become the popular religion of these tribal people and the worship of Viṣṇu and Kṛṣṇa intermingled in such a way that Kṛṣṇa came to be believed as a manifestation of Viṣṇu—a human incarnation of the Supreme God. Jacobi states that the widespread worship of Kṛṣṇa as a



tribal hero and demi-god, and his subsequent identification with Nārāyaṇa gave birth to the theory of incarnation and therefore, the incarnation of Viṣṇu as Kṛṣṇa is the most significant to the theory of incarnation as such.

The BP. provides a myth which connects his incarnation bodily with Lord Viṣṇu. When Lord Viṣṇu was implored by the gods to save the earth from the oppression of her enemies, Nārāyaṇa plucked out two of his own hairs, a black one and a white one. Descending to the earth and entering the womb of Devakī, the black hair was born as Kṛṣṇa, and the white hair as Baladeva. It is to be noted that this myth makes Baladeva too an incarnation of Viṣṇu, whereas he is said to be an incarnation of Śeṣa, the snake-god (chapter 181).

*Buddha* : The Brahma {Purāṇa does not provide us with a description of Buddha as an incarnation but just mentions his name in the list of incarnations.

*Kalkī* : This incarnation is yet to appear for the welfare of the world. He is to be born as Kalkī by the name Viṣṇuyaśāḥ in the village Sambhala.

Monier Williams has rightly concluded, 'loking more closely' at the ten incarnations, we may observe that in the first three Viṣṇu is supposed to be present in the body of animals, and in the fourth to take the form of being half-animal half-human; this last may be regarded as a kind of link, the object of which is to prevent too great abruptness in connecting the deity with the higher forms of worldly existence. From the mixed manifestation of half a lion, half a man, the transition is natural to that of a complete man. The divine essence passing into human forms commences with the smallest type of humanity, represented by a dwarf. Thence it rises to powerful sages and mighty heroes who deliver the world from the oppression of evil demons and tyrants whose power increases with the deterioration of mankind during the four ages. We see in all this the working of the Hindu idea of transmigration. Even in Manu's time, it was an accepted dogma that the souls of men popularly regarded as emanations from deity, might descend into the bodies of animals, or rise to those of higher beings. It was therefore an easy expansion of such a doctrine to imagine the divine soul

itself as passing through various stages of incarnation for the delivery of the world from the effects of evil and sin and for the maintenance of order in the whole cycle of creation'.

**THE KRṢṆA LEGEND :** The Kṛṣṇa legend is central to the theogony of the BP. We shall, therefore, describe at some length the place of Kṛṣṇa in the mythology of BP.

According to traditional history as given in the Purāṇas, Kṛṣṇa belonged to the Sātvata sect of the Yādavas, who formed the lunar dynasty, and was 94th in descent from Manu. However, some Purāṇas represent Kṛṣṇa as coming from the solar dynasty (cf. Harivaṁśa II. 38.31). The BP. states that Kṛṣṇa belonged to the lunar race of the Vṛṣṇi family of the Yādavas (12.50, 196.23-24). Thus both the solar and the lunar dynasties claimed Kṛṣṇa as their own.

In the RV. (VIII. 85.3-4) Kauṣītaki Brāhmaṇa (XXX. 9) and Chāndogya upaniṣad (III. 17.6) Kṛṣṇa is referred to as a Vedic seer, as a human personality. Pāṇini (IV. 3.98) indicates that Vāsudeva and Arjuna, originally kṣatriya heroes, were raised to the ranks of gods before his time and Patañjali shows that they had attained divinity by his time. In the oldest nucleus of the Mahābhārata there are clear references to the human character of Kṛṣṇa. In the later portions, he is represented as a semi-divine being, whereas the parts of the epic that come still later, regard Kṛṣṇa as the Supreme God (Mahābhārata V. 79.5-6). The Purāṇas also present various stages in the development of the Kṛṣṇa legend. Thus the BP. states that when Kṛṣṇa performed wonderful deeds like *kāliyadamana*, *govardhanadhāraṇa* and the killing of Pralamba, in the form of a cowherd boy, the simple-minded villagers were perturbed and began to doubt about his human personality and said that such deeds were difficult to be performed even by the gods. He cannot merely be a simple mighty human being and that surely Kṛṣṇa was either a god or a *dānava* or a *yakṣa* or a *gandharva*; and Kṛṣṇa, though representing an incarnation of Viṣṇu, assures them that he was neither a god, nor a *gandharva*, nor a *yakṣa*, nor a *dānava*, but their brother (89.2-12).

Among the Purāṇas, the Harivaṁśa, Brahma, Viṣṇu, Bhāgavata and Brahmavaivarta deal exhaustively with the life of Kṛṣṇa

and the accounts in the different Purāṇas are not only inconsistent but mutually contradictory.

As regards the problem of identifying Vāsudeva Kṛṣṇa with the Gopāla Kṛṣṇa, it should be stated that the BP. represents a stage when the legend about the cowherd Kṛṣṇa must have already been current and his identification with Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa been effected. In the Nārāyaṇīya section of the Mahābhārata, the avatāra of Vāsudeva is mentioned for the destruction of Kāmsa but for none of the demons whom the cow-herd Kṛṣṇa killed in the cow-settlement, whereas in the statement of the BP. (181.8-12) the avatāra of Kṛṣṇa is meant to destroy all the demons that appeared in the cow-settlement as well as that of Kāmsa. In this respect, the BP. is at par with the Harivamśa ( VV. 58.76-58.78 ) the Vāyu Purāṇa ( 98. 100-102 ), and the Bhāgavata Purāṇa (II. 7).

As Kṛṣṇa's life in Gokula is not given in the Mahābhārata and in some earlier texts, some scholars take them to be late additions. Dhruva thinks the Purāṇic and Mahābhārata stories of Kṛṣṇa to be a blending of poetic fancy and historical fact and seeks philosophical and symbolical explanations for most of the exploits of Kṛṣṇa in his childhood. Some stories like the approach of Earth to the god and the promise of god to be born for her relief (chapter 181), exaggerated accounts of some of the miraculous feats of the child Kṛṣṇa (chapter 184-192), the fight between Indra and Kṛṣṇa for the Pārijāta tree (chapters 203-204) etc. were evidently added after the deification of Kṛṣṇa was complete. Thus the accounts given in the Purāṇas constitute important landmarks for the development of the Kṛṣṇa myth and the evolution of the Vaiṣṇava religion.

### **Balarāma**

Balarāma, legendary hero of the BP. only next to Kṛṣṇa in his exploits and power, is considered to be an incarnation of Śeṣa Nāga, the mythical serpent who bears the earth on his head.

The serpent-cult is very ancient and is referred to in the Taittirīya Saṁhitā (IV. 2.8.3) Kāṭhaka Saṁhitā (16.15) and Vājasaneyī Saṁhitā (13.6-8). Fergusson traces serpent worship

in the nations of antiquity, such as Egypt, Judea, Greece etc. It occurs very frequently in the Mahābhārata. The Purāṇas are full of the descriptions of shrines of serpents and the BP. states that snakes are the sons of Kaśyapa and Surasā and Kadrū. Surasā gave birth to a thousand serpents—*sarpas*, and Kadrū gave birth to a thousand *nāgas*, the chief of whom were Śeṣa, Vāsuki, Takṣaka, Airāvata, Mahāpadma, Kambala, Aśvatara, Elāpatra, Śāṅkha, Karkoṭaka, Dhanañjaya, Mahānila, Mahākarna, Dhṛtarāṣṭra, Balāhaka, Kuhara, Puṣpadaṁṣṭra, Durmukha, Sumukha, Śāṅkhaṇḍa, Kapila, Vāmana, Nahuṣa, Śāṅkharomā, Maṇi and a thousand others (3.96-101). Garuḍa is their enemy (chapter 90) and devours them whence it has been interpreted that the Nāgas represent darkness which is dispelled by Sun. When Brahmā divided the kingdom, he made Vāsuki, the king of Nāgas and Takṣaka, the king of serpents (4.7). Serpent worship continues to this day particularly in south India, and serpents are worshipped on the fifth of the bright half of Srāvaṇa called Nāgapañcamī. India possesses many more varieties of serpents and the toll of life taken by snake bites is very heavy.

Bhandarkar quotes a passage which mentions the religions prevailing in the fourth century B. C. Among these there is a mention of the worship of Balarāma along with Kṛṣṇa. That sect became coterminous with the race of the Sātvatas. The BP. describes the importance of his worship with Kṛṣṇa and Subhadra at Koṅārka. Even at present, Balarāma is worshipped at Mathurā and there is a celebrated temple in his honour where he is worshipped by the name of Dauji. The idol of Balarāma bears a cup meant for wine to which his addiction is well known. Behind him there is a shrine of serpent Seṣa of whom he is considered to be an incarnation. Even at present he is worshipped as Vrajarāja in northern India.

He is considered to be an incarnation of Śeṣa (181.39) as well as of Viṣṇu. It is said that after the incarnation of Rāma, Viṣṇu snatched out two hairs—one black and another white—from his body, According to him, from these, two incarnations will spring up and save the earth from torment and disaster. Thus Balarāma too, like Kṛṣṇa, is considered to be an *amśavatāra* of Viṣṇu. He was the seventh child of Vasudeva and Devakī but on account of the feat of Kaṁsa he was dragged from Devakī's foetus and was

afterwards transferred to the womb of Rohiṇi. Therefore, he is known as Saṅkarṣaṇa (181.39-42). This story was apparently invented in order to make him a brother of Kṛṣṇa. Probably the two popular gods Govinda-Vāsudeva and Baladeva were closely connected, and, after the former was identified with the Rajput hero Kṛṣṇa, the latter came to be regarded as his brother.

The following anecdotes are told about Balarāma. Śatadhanvā had the jewel Syamantaka. Śrī Kṛṣṇa killed him for it but found that Śatadhanvā did not have it then in his possession. When Śrī Kṛṣṇa related this to Balarāma, Balarāma refused to believe his story. He broke all relations with Kṛṣṇa and entered Mithilā. Duryodhana went to Mithilā and learnt the *gadāvidyā* from Balarāma. Kṛṣṇa then appeased him and brought him back to Dvāraka (17.20-28). Balarāma killed the donkey-faced demon Dhenuka (186). In a game called *hariṇākriḍaṇa*, a demon called Pralamba disguised himself as one of the playmates, carried Balarāma on his back and began to fly. Realizing the trick, Balarāma pressed him down with all his weight and force so that the demon unable to bear it abandoned the disguise whereupon Balarāma killed him with his fist (187.1-30). Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa killed the elephant Kuvalayāpīḍa (193.30). Balarāma killed the demon-wrestle Muṣṭika (193.65). He also killed Sunāmā, the brother of Kaiśa (193.65).

Balarāma is famous for his addiction to wine. Varuṇa sent the wine Vāruṇi to Balarāma for a drink. Balarāma drank to his heart's desire and being intoxicated ordered the river Yamunā to come to him as he wanted to take bath. As the river Yamunā did not come, he dragged her with his plough (chapter 198).

He defeated the kings Pauṇḍraka, Dantavakra, Vidūratha, Śiśupāla, Jarāsandha, Śālva and others when they followed Kṛṣṇa while he was carrying away Rukmiṇi (199.7). On the occasion of the marriage of Anirudhha with his grand-daughter, Rukmi invited Balarāma to gamble. Rukmi was an expert and Balarāma lost much wealth. At this, king of Kaliṅga mocked him. Annoyed, Balarāma staked one crore *mudrās*, Rukmi played his turn and Balarāma won but Rukmi protested saying that he had not agreed to the game. Upon this the divine speech declared that even though Rukmi had not said anything about the betting, his act of



playing his turn amounted to agreeing to the bet; therefore, Balarāma had won the bet. But even then Rukmī did not accept the ruling. So Balarāma got angry and killed Rukmī by throwing at him the *aṣṭapada* (board of dice). He also broke the teeth of the king of Kaliṅga and killed all the kings who were partisans of Rukmī (202.11-25).

Balarāma killed the army of Bāṇāsura when there was a terrible fight between Kṛṣṇa and Bāṇāsura (206.30). Sāmba when attempting to kidnap Lakṣmaṇā the daughter of Duryodhana was caught. Balarāma went to Hastināpura and requested the release of Sāmba. When they did not comply with, he shook the city with his plough and compelled the release of Sāmba (chapter 208). Once when Balarāma was in the company of his wife Revatī, a monkey named Dvivida threw a slab of stone on him and Balarāma smashed him with his fist (chapter 209). At the time of death, Balarāma went into *samādhi* whereupon a serpent emerged from his mouth and entered the ocean and the serpent was worshipped by the *siddhas* and the *uragas* (210.50-53). The BP. deals at length with the worship of Balarāma along with Kṛṣṇa and Subhadra. Elsewhere it said that one who worships Balarāma gets the desired rewards and becoming free from all sins, goes to *Viṣṇuloka* (58.21-26). Balarāma is probably more closely associated with Rudra or Śiva as their characteristics agree in many respects. Rudra is regarded as a god of agriculture in the Vedas and so does Saṁkarṣaṇa's emblem 'hala' indicate. Balarāma is associated with nāga and so is Śiva. Both Rudra and Balarāma are known to have been great drunkards. Saṁkarṣaṇa was thus a god of the Rudra-Śiva cult who was later incorporated into the Vāsudeva cult by identifying him with Kṛṣṇa's brother, Balarāma. Balarāma-worship is referred to in the benedictory stanza of Bhāsa's famous drama *Svapnavāsavadatta*.

## Śiva

The history of Śiva has undergone many vicissitudes. He was the Supreme God of the proto-Indians and was worshipped by them. The early Vṛtyas in the proto-Indian period worshipped the trio consisting of Śiva, Murugan and Amma corresponding to Śiva, Subramanya or Kārttikeya and Pārvatī respectively. He

was held by the proto-Indians both as a philosophical entity, and as a god to be meditated upon. However, with the advent of the Vedic period, the Vedic bards tried to present a new personality by introducing the character of Rudra. As Rudra, he is a minor god in the Ṛgvedic pantheon. He is described there as a malignant as well as a beneficent deity. The epithet Śīva, i.e., auspicious, which begins to be applied to him in the Ṛgveda, grows more frequent in the later Vedas, and finally become his regular name in post-Vedic mythology. Thus the next effort of the Aryans was mainly towards causing an amalgamation of the two gods, Śīva and Rudra. In the later Saṁhitās along with Viṣṇu he becomes one of the two great gods of the brāhmaṇas. The Vājasaneyī Saṁhitā mentions such epithets of god as Giriśa, Paśupati, Kapardī. Sārva, Bhava, Śīva and also as wearing hide-skin garments, and in the AV. he is elevated to a higher position. In the period of the Brāhmaṇas, the power of Rudra was at its height. The gods were afraid of him lest he should kill them. It is, however, in the Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad that Śīva stands alone in the field as the Supreme God and the *bhakti* which manifested itself at that time was mostly directed towards him. But this upaniṣad is not a sectarian work and there is no evidence in it of the existence of a Śaivite sect which worshipped Śīva as its favourite god. The Gṛhyasūtras also do not provide evidence of the existence of a Śaivite sect. From the days of Patañjali onwards, the existence of some Śaiva sects can be taken for granted. In the earlier portions of the Mahābhārata, both sects, viz. Śaivites and Vaiṣṇavites, exist without much antagonism between them but in the later part of the epic such antagonism is clearly visible. The history of Śīva during the epic and Purāṇic periods is of deep interest. In the epics, the formation of the basis of the future mythology takes place and Śīva is not brought into direct contact with the other brāhmaṇic gods. The old characteristics of Śīva during the Indus Valley period are attributed to the new personality of Rudra-Śīva. Thus the epic and Purāṇic Rudra is a combination of the Vedic and non-Vedic notions. Hence the early concepts of Śīva as a dancer, an ascetic and a yogin, a god of the Himalayas, and one possessed of three eyes are all associated with the Śīva-Rudra of the Vedic and brāhmaṇic period. It should be borne in mind that all these elements are not an innovation but they are introduced only as a matter of revision of the past.

Though the BP. is considered mainly to be a Vaiṣṇava Purāṇa, still it does not aim at the exclusive worship of Viṣṇu. On the contrary, it deals at great length with Śiva and considers him at par with Viṣṇu. The following is the picture of Śiva as obtained from the BP.

Śiva is called Vikṛtarūpa (34.100), Dhūrjaṭi (35.1), Nilalohita (35.1), Vilohita (40.13), Śuciromā (40.61), and Śikhaṇḍi (40.79). He is said to have three heads (40.11) or thousand heads. The moon rests on his head and hence the epithets Śaśikhaṇḍa-mauli (110.104), Candrārdhakṛtaśekhara (34.1), Bālendumauli (78.58, 59.15) etc., are applied to him. The crescent on the forehead of Śiva is a mere development of the early representative of the so called 'triśūla-horn' placed on the head of Śiva during the proto-Indian period. His head is either fully shaved or half-shaved (37.14). He keeps matted hair. He is said to have three *jaṭās* (40.11). He has a blue braid or a golden braid (40.16). Elsewhere it is said that he keeps his hair loose and they are set with the water of the river Ganges that rests on Śiva's head (40.33, 39). His hair is yellow in colour (40.37). The epithet Ūrdhva-keśa is also applied to him (40.61).

He is said to have three eyes of which one is in the forehead. The third eye and the crescent moon on it mark the measuring of time by months. According to Father Heras, the idea of three eyes was so well-known that its mention in the inscriptions, revealed to those people the idea of the supreme being. As already noted Śiva is also said to have thousand eyes (37.4, 40.31). His eyes are said to be deformed (40.3). The colour of his eyes is said to be white, yellow, black or red (40.35). He has big ears (40.4) justifying the use of epithets like *śaṅkukarṇa*, *kumbhakarṇa*, *gajendrakarṇa*, *gokarṇa* and *śatakarṇa* (40.4-5).

When Lord Siva presented his ugly aspect to Pārvatī, he appeared with a broken nose (35.5). He had a big and fearful mouth in which Kālāgni resides (40.65). Śiva has thousand tongues (40.5). His tongue is said to be sharp like a sword (40.23). He is called Damṣṭri (43-23). He has fearful teeth (40.23), although again it is said that his face is pleasant like a moon (40.74). His throat is said to be blue and he is called *nilakarṇṭha* (109.31) and *nilagrīva* (40.13). His beard is yellow (40.61); his shoulders

are as strong as that of a bull (40.15); he has ten hands (40.21), and a big belly (40.61). He is also said to have a hundred bellies (40.5). He has a thousand feet (40.30).

His complexion is red like that of the rising sun (40.31). Elsewhere he is said to be Śāratkundenduvarcāḥ (59.14-15). Śiva's white complexion may be due to the fact that the brahmins of Kashmir, who are very fair were the first to worship him. Then as his cult moved southwards his complexion turned more in keeping with that of his worshippers. Śiva's wife Pārvatī is often called Gaurī. The pale-coloured Śiva wears no clothes (38.36-37) or if he does, it is the skin of a lion (chapter 124). He uses white *bhasma* (40.22, 59.14,15) and saffron (chapter 108). He is called *vyālayajñopavitī* (40.37). A serpent adorns his neck. He also wears a necklace of bells; hence the epithets *ghaṇṭakī* and *ghaṇṭī* are applied to him (40.66). He likes the garland of skulls and a *sūtra* of *kapālas* (37.7). The practice of offering human victims to Śiva was long in vogue since the proto-Indian period. This may be the reason why Śiva and Kālī are always represented as wearing a necklace of skulls. The Kāpālikas are the Kālamukhas known as the wearers of skulls.

Śiva rides a bull (40.15, 73), the Nandī, lord of the cows (127.59). In the Epics and the Purāṇas, stories regarding the origin of the bull as a vehicle for Śiva are given. The study of iconography proves that the ideas of the association of the bull with Śiva must have arisen in or somewhere around the territory of the Mahāvṛṣas, situated in the north-west of India. And as Father Heras observes, the idea must have travelled far and wide in India during the regime of the Kuṣāṇa and Pallava rulers. Eventually it must have been introduced in the Mahābhārata Dharma which constitutes the nature of the bull (40.81).

Śiva's weapons consist of a bow called Piṇāka (34.5, 129.68-69) and the Triśūla (40.11,14.5) or the three-pronged trident. He is also said to have a thousand *śūlas* (40.31). He wields the *gadā* (40.51), *daṇḍa* (40.12, 65, 79), arrows (40.51), a non-descriptive weapon called Khaṭvāṅga (40.51), consisting of a kind of staff with transverse pieces surmounted by a skull, the *mudgara* (40.51) and the sword (40.10). His banner is white (40.18) and has the emblem of a bull (34.6, 75.25). The sign of the sun also constitutes

the emblem on his banner (40.14). showing his connection with Sun. He produces the sound 'hum hum' (40.27). He plays the musical instrument by mouth (40.20). The *tumbī* and *viṇā* are dear to him (40.23). He also possesses a *ghaṅṭā* (40.26).

He is called Tryambaka (40.11), one who has three mothers in allusion to the three-fold division of the universe. This epithet which is commonly applied to Śiva in the post-Vedic literature is already applied to Rudra in Vedic texts (VS. 3.58; 50.2.6; 2.9), and once also in the RV. (7.59.12). The simplest explanation of Tryambaka may be not that Śiva has three mothers but three mother-goddesses—Umā, Gaurī, Kālī, who are called Ambikās, each originally an *ambā* or a mother. Among other meanings suggested one is *ambā* in the sense of pupil to agree with the traditional meaning of the god having three eyes.

Among the various names attributed to him some indicate his following among the non-aryan and tribal population. These are Vighneśvara (also a name of Gaṇeśa), Nandinātha, Bhūtanātha (109.29-37). He is identified with various feelings like desire, *dveṣa*, *rāga*, *moha*, *śama*, *kṣamā*, *vyavasāya*, *dhairya*, *lobha*, *kāma*, *krodha* and *jaya*. It is also said that the colours green, red, yellow, blue, white, *kapila*, brown and black belong to him (40.48-50, 55). He is *dānapara* (100.19-21), remover of poverty and unhappiness (122, 195-206), and *annadātā* (40.40). He is called Kilakila, Kubja, Kuṭila, Caṇḍa, killer of enemies and Ugra (40.6.21). He is Kāmada as well as Kāmayāna (40.38) and Bhairava.

Śiva is styled as a yogin par excellence. On some of the proto-Indian seals he is represented seated in a yogic posture. In the BP. he is called the lord of yogins and destroyer of the yoga of the *daityas* (40.36, 37.12). He practises penance in the water. He keeps his mind in tranquility and bestows prosperity as a result of practising yoga (37.15-16). Śiva's connection with water is interesting. The place of Varuṇa as a water-god was, at a later period, to some extent assumed by Kṛṣṇa and Śiva. During the 5th and 6th centuries A.D., on the arrival of the white Huṇas in Gujarat and Kathiawad, the sea began to influence these newcomers as is shown by the fame which grew round Śiva in his form as Somanātha with a shrine to him at a place with the same name. Śiva is worshipped at river junctions. Śiva's connection with water

might have been made in direct opposition to that of Viṣṇu as Viṣṇu too is directly connected with water, the ocean being his abode. Śiva is said to perform *sandhyā* and other five religious practises daily (40.33). He also performs the six *karmas* and the three *karmas* (40.33).

Cemeteries and burning grounds are his favourite haunts; imps and demons are his servants, and ferocity and irascibility on the slightest provocation constitute his normal condition of mind.

Śiva is the best architect and the progenitor of all the artisans (chapter 40). In order to regulate the world, he divided the Vedas and propagated *gāthās*, *Smṛtis*, and the *Purāṇas*, and all of them have the nature of *śabda* (75.8-13). Though Lord Śiva creates protects and destroys the world by his *māyā*, he is not attached to it (119.68-69). Though living the life of a *sādhu*, he is a *gṛhastha*, who gives gifts (37.14). Those who are afflicted by the troubles of the world get peace by worshipping Śiva and Pārvatī. He is considered to be so liberal that when pleased, (107.55) he grants things which one does not even deserve. Hence the epithet *ayuktadātā* is applied to him (110.101-106).

The BP. gives a detailed description of Pārvatī's marriage with Śiva (36.70). The BP. narrates how Pārvatī formed conspiracy with Vināyaka and Jaya to bring down Gaṅgā from the head of Lord Śiva (chapter 74). He is called Umāpriyakara and Ambikānātha (34.1,37.3,40.38). Ambikā, a post-vedic name of Śiva's wife, is mentioned for the first time in Vājasaneyī-saṁhitā (3.5) appearing here, however, not as Rudra's wife, but as his sister Umā, and Pārvatī, the regular name of Śiva's wife, seems first to occur in the Taittiriya Āraṇyaka and the Kena-Upaniṣad.

Śiva makes his abode on the mountain. He is called Giriśa and Giritra 'lying on a mountain', probably because the thunder-bolt he hurls, springs from a club, which is often compared to a mountain and on which he is believed to dwell. He is said to reside on the Jyotiṣṭhala peak of the mountain Meru which was studded with jewels. Further the Śatarudriya refers to Rudra-Śiva as Giriśa, Giritra, etc. This idea must have developed later on. And it is thus that Śiva is endowed with the Kailāsa as his abode.

Śiva lives among the Ādityas, Vasus, Aśvinikumāras, Kubera, *guhnyakas*, Sukrācārya, Sanatkumāra and others (39.4-8). The *rākṣasas*, *piśācas* and *pārṣadas* sit near him. The Mahābhārata and the Purāṇas give a detailed description of the *gaṇas* of Śiva. Pārvatī sits by his side and Gaṅgā serves him (39.4-8). He is surrounded by the naked *gaṇas* (38.36.37). He is the destroyer of *pramathas* (40.15). He lives in the beings residing in ocean, river, mountains, canes, unapproachable places, cow-settlements, cross-roads, old houses, in *rasātala* and in the places where elephants, horses and chariots are kept (40.93, 96). He also earned a reputation for destroying sacrifices : once when the sacrifice was fleeing in the form of a deer, he destroyed it by becoming a hunter (39.35-36; 37.9). He also destroyed the sacrifice of Dakṣa (chapter 109).

*Rudras* : Śiva is represented with eleven armlets in the Indus valley period. The BP. states that Rudra was created out of anger of Brahmā (1.45) and that Rudras are the sons of Kaśyapa and Surabhi. The names given are Ajaikapāda, Ahirbudhnya, Tvaṣṭā, Hara, Bahurūpa, Tryambaka, Vṛṣākapi, Śambhu, Raivata, Kapardī, Śarva and Kapālī. They were born by the grace of Lord Mahādeva (3.46-48). The expressions Ajaikapāda and Ahirbudhnya occur in the Ṛgveda. In the opinion of Karmarkar ekapād is indicative of the image standing on one leg in the Indus valley period. The expression Ahirbudhnya throws light on the close association of Śiva and the Nāga, which was supposed to be in the depths of the world, the later Pātāla.

*Virabhadra* : Virabhadra is said to have been born from the anger of Śiva to destroy the sacrifice of Dakṣa in the form of a lion (39.75-77). From his pores he created so many Rudras that darkness prevailed on all the sides and the lustre of sun and moon became dim (39.40-58). Virabhadra is a favourite deity of the Kurumbhas, a tribe of hunters and shepherds in southern India. Virabhadra destroyed the sacrifice of Dakṣa with the help of Bhadrakālī, who too was created out of Pārvatī's wrath (39.72).

*Jvara* : He is said to have been created out of the perspiration of Śiva's forehead. When Śiva was angry with Dakṣa, he wanted to destroy his sacrifice which grew afraid, took the form of a deer and began running away in the sky. Śiva followed him with bows and arrows. At that time Jvara arose from his perspiration

and he is described as short, red-eyed, yellow-bearded, terrible, hair raised upwards, awe-inspiring, having red ears and a terrible or bad colour and wearing red clothes. He burnt the sacrifice and the gods were so afraid of him that they fled from him in different directions. The earth began to tremble and Lord Brahmā then declared that he would be known in the world by the name of Jvara (39.77-87), which literally means fever.

*Manyu* : In the Ṛgveda, Manyu, wrath, is a personification suggested chiefly by the fierce anger of Indra, and is invoked in two hymns (RV. 10.83. 84). In the BP. he is believed to have emerged from the third eye of Śiva. He is the *puruṣa* in men, the *ahankāra* in all beings and the anger of all. He is within all but no one knows him. The gods conquered the demons with his help. He is a representative of Lord Śiva and burns everything with his brilliance at the time of destruction and at that fierce time, he holds all the weapons, increases joy and conquers everything (162.20-29).

### Kārttikeya

Among the post-Vedic gods, Kumāra or Kārttikeya is a deity of high rank. He is sometimes called Skanda and Mahāsena also. The popularization of the cult of Śiva involved a process of synchronization, the adoption of various local gods as his manifestations. Skanda, a deity of the same class, who was the family god of some west Indian dynasties, now under the name of Subramanya, is most popular in South India, where his association with the mother-goddess shows that he is connected with the non-Aryan cult. It is a cult special to the Tamil and Malayalam peoples. He is first mentioned in the Chāndogya Upaniṣad (vii. 26.2), where he seems to be identified with Sanatkumāra. Hopkins surmises that Skanda is not a later addition to the epic but a god rapidly increasing in importance as the epic expanded, or more particularly, as the Śiva-cult expanded. Jacobi infers that Kumāra as the lord of the army was introduced as a new god probably due to a change in the form of government in the country where instead of the king holding both the offices of ruler in peace and leader in war, the office of a general became separate and distinct.

The myth of the birth of Kumāra is variously related, his father being given as Śiva (81.2) and Agni (82.10, 3.40), his



mother as Umā (81.2), Gaṅgā (82.10) and various other minor deities like the wives of the sages (42.6) and others. These rival claims to parentage had to be settled and this was effected by the assumption of a sort of joint parentage, and by making some of the female deities his nurses or adoptive mothers. The strange myth about the birth of Kumāra appears to be best interpreted on the assumption that in different parts of India there were several popular representatives of the war-god and that these were combined into one, Kumāra, the war god common to all Indians. For there are three variants or altar egos of Kumāra,—Viśākḥā, Śākḥā and Naigamī—and the BP. identifies Viśākḥā (81.4) with Kārttikeya who is known to have received popular worship.

The following is the story related in the BP. about Kārttikeya's birth. When the gods were oppressed by the danger of the demon Tāraka, they requested Agni to bring it to the notice of Śiva. Thereupon Agni took the form of a parrot and with great hesitation went to the place where Lord Śiva was in privacy with Pārvatī. Lord Śiva released his semen into Agni who unable to bear it transmitted it into Kṛttikās on the bank of the divine river. The child that was thus born to them was known as Kārttikeya (128.1-25; 3.41). Elsewhere it is said that Agni drank up the virile semen of Lord Śiva and preserved it in six of the wives of the seven sages, i. e. all excepting Arundhatī. These wives released their foetuses in the Ganges where they were mixed together by the wind and out of them a child with six-faces destined to kill the demon Tāraka was born (82.1-12). Therefore, he is called Kārttikeya, the son of the six Kṛttikās, the wives of the sages, and Ṣaṇmukha, because he was born with six faces. Also Gāṅgeya, as the foetuses were released into the Gaṅgā, the son of Śiva as the semen originally belonged to Śiva and Agniputra as Agni drank the semen.

Among the feats of Kārttikeya the most important is the destruction of the demon Tāraka (81.2). In this connection an interesting story is told about Kārttikeya's lust for women. After the destruction of Tāraka, Lord Śiva and Pārvatī were so pleased with Kārttikeya that they permitted him to enjoy himself as much as he pleased. Kārttikeya took under advantage of the permission

and began to sleep with the wives of gods. The gods complained to Pārvatī about her son's misdeeds. When, inspite of Pārvatī's insistence to check himself, Kārttikeya was unable to restrain himself, Pārvatī took the form of every god-wife so that Kārttikeya saw the form of his mother in every woman and took an oath to look upon every female as his mother (82.1-15).

The BP. further states that the holy place, Kārttikeyatīrtha or Kumāratīrtha on the bank of the river Godāvārī is dedicated to Kārttikeya. By visiting it one attains grace and beauty and even great sins like sexual relations with the wife of one's teacher are expiated (81.20-21).

A Liṅgāyata tradition reports that Kārttikeya was the founder of a *gotra* and was a form of Lord Śiva himself. On the reverse of the coins of the Kuṣāṇa prince Kaṇiṣka, there are figures with names of Greek letters of Skando, Mahaseno, Kumaro and Bizago. Several observances and vows in the name of Kumāra and Kārttikeya are mentioned in Hemādri's Vrata-khaṇḍa. His worship has not become obsolete even to this day.

In Thailand, a great festival was celebrated in honour of Kārttikeya and the Piciades who fostered him. It took place at the time of the moon's conjunction with this star-cluster, i. e. shortly before full-moon. It was a fire-festival in agreement with Kārttikeya's legendary birth from fire. Similarly a worship is offered in honour of Kārttikeya in southern India on the full-moon day. The BP. also states that one who takes a bath at Kārttikatīrtha in the Kārttikayoga of the Kārttika month gets the merit of all the sacrifices and becomes a religious king (82.15-16).

### Gaṇapati

Originally known as Vighneśvara, a trouble-maker for the Aryan gods and a leader of the '*gaṇas*'—the indigenous tribal groups—was Aryanized and transformed into the god of success, in the Purāṇas.

In the Atharvaśirāḥ Upaniṣad, Rudra is identified with many gods, among whom one is called Vināyaka, another name for Gaṇapati. In the Mahābhārata (Anuśāsana 151. 26, 57) many Gaṇeśvaras and Vināyakas are mentioned. In the Mānavagṛhyasūtra (2.14) and the Yājñavalkyasmṛti ( 1.271 ff. ) an account

of Vināyakas is given but the difference between the two shows that during the period that had elapsed between the composition of the Sūtra and that of Smᅇti, the four Vināyakas had become one Gaᅇapati-Vināyaka, with Ambikā for his mother. The ceremony occurring in the Gᅇhyasūtra mentioned above suggests that the Vināyakas were objects of faith before the Christian era, but the one Gaᅇapati-Vināyaka, the son of Ambikā, was introduced in the Hindu pantheon much later.

There are groups of images of Kalā, Kālī and seven mothers or *śaktis*, and Gaᅇapati in the caves at Ellora which are referred to the later part of the eighth century. Thus it seems that the rehabilitation of Gaᅇapati as a Hindu god must have taken place between the end of the fifth and the end of the eighth century. In another inscription dated Vikrama Samvat 918 corresponding to A.D. 862, found at a place called Ghatiyala, 22 miles north-west of Jodhpur, an obeisance is made to Vināyaka.

About his birth, the BP. states that Pārvati created him by meditation. Many gods came to see the newborn child Gaᅇśa. Ignoring his mother's advice, he grasped the moon in his father's forehead. Because he sucked the milk in large gulps out of a childish feat that his brother Kārttikeya might get more of it, Pārvati called him Lambodara (114.4-18). Interestingly enough it is also stated that he was created out of dirt (97.22).

In one hand he holds the Vighnapāśa and on the other shoulder he rests an axe and when he does not receive homage he creates obstructions. He is said to have thrown obstructions in the deeds of his mother. He is very proud of his abilities. His vehicle is a rat. It is probably more than a coincidence that the rat is a totem of at least one Dravidian tribe, the Oraons. He is called Ambikānandana, Ādideva and Gaᅇśvara. In all the rites, all the deities, Brahmā, Viᅇᅇu and Maheśa worship him, mediate on him and bow down before him. None can equal him in bestowing the desired fruits. Thinking thus, did Lord Śiva worship him before killing Tripura. In the works dealing with *dharma*, *artha* and *kāma*, he should be worshipped first. The merit of his worship never decreases. The gods and the deities worship him daily (114.4-18). Gaᅇśa obstructs the path of anyone who goes on a pilgrimage to the Ganges. The reason given in BP. is that

he does not like Śiva's affection for his mother's co-wife, the Gaṅgā (A. 176). These and other myths are also referred to in other works.

He is called Gajavakra (175.37). It is difficult to determine how the god came to have the elephant's head. The images in the cave-temples at Ellora show him with it and Bhavabhūti in the beginning of the eighth century describes him with that head in *Mālatimādhava*. Bhandarkar infers that as Rudra-Śiva and other gods allied with him were found, it perhaps suited the fancy of some men to place the head of that animal over the body of a god originally mischievous.

His symbols, the rat and the elephant, the description of his prowess, the stories about his origin all connect him with the non-Aryan indigenous population although subsequently he emerged as the most popular god of the Hindus. The Purāṇas contribute a great deal to his adoption in the Hindu pantheon.

Six varieties of the Gāṇapatya sect are mentioned by Ānandagiri in his *Śaṅkaradigvijaya* and by Dhanapati in his commentary on the corresponding work of *Mādhava*.

### **Brahmā**

Brahmā, known as Prajāpati, in Vedic times, is celebrated in RV. (X. 121) as the creator of heaven and earth, of the waters and all that lives,—He is one who was born as the one lord of all that, is the one king of all that breathes and moves, the one god above all the gods, whose ordinances all the gods and beings follow, who embraces with his arms the whole world with all creatures. In the *Vājasaneyi* and *Artharvaveda Samhitās* quite regularly in the *Brāhmaṇas*, he is recognized as the chief god. In the *Sūtras* (*Āśvalāyana-grhya* 5.3-4) Prajāpati is identified with Brahmā. In the place of this chief god of the later Vedic mythology, the philosophy of the Upaniṣads puts in the impersonal Brahmā, the universal soul or the absolute.

There are reasons to believe that in the pre-Vedic days when religion and magic were inseparably connected, there were various forms of Rātra cults in which the gods worshipped were water, earth, fire, air and ether. Some worshipped any one or two, and so all of these came to be regarded as creators of the world. The worshippers of earth gave rise to the worship of the mother

goddess and later on to the Śākta or Tāntric religion. Gradually these religions gave rise to the idea of a single creator-Brahmā. The old god of the water-worshippers was perhaps known as Nārāyaṇa and he was now identified with Brahmā. The worship of Dharma, Śiva, Sūrya and other minor gods was also gradually assimilated by the Brahmā cult. The Śraddhā cult was also thus amalgamated.

It is probable that the worship of the gods known to the early Vedas also existed in the pre-Vedic period. Besides the god or goddess of earth, a water-god, a fire-god (pre-Vedic Agni), a wind-god, and Vyoma were worshipped. They were the Rātra gods. But, for reasons, now lost, the cult of sacrifices gradually across in India, many of the old gods were incorporated in the Vedas, and their worship was to be performed with sacrifice. Hence followed a great religious schism, the Vedic people forming one group and the worshippers of the old Brahmā (Rātra gods) another. The Vedic gods were called Diva (from which came the word 'deva') and the gods of the Brahmā cult were known as 'Rātra' gods. Symbolic representation of the Schism was the struggle between the *devas* and the *asuras*. The Brahmā or Rātra cults were for a long time regarded as *asura* or non-orthodox chiefly followed by the lower class people in some parts of India. The older religions gradually changed the character of the Vedic religion. In the eastern parts of India (from Brahmāvarta and Kurukṣetra to Orissa), where the Vedic cult spread slowly, the majority of the people followed the Brahmā cult. In the north-west the great personality of Kṛṣṇa-Vāsudeva gave rise to the Vaiṣṇava-Vāsudeva-pāñcarātra cult. Later arose Jainism and Buddhism which gave a death blow to both the Vedic and the Non-Vedic cults, including that of Brahmā. But Buddhism fell a prey to the old religions and Vaiṣṇavism became the predominant religion. Along with that arose the worship of Śiva, Śakti goddesses, Sun and other gods, which gave rise to the modern form of Hinduism. The Vaiṣṇava religion assumed the form of the Bhāgavata-pāñcarātra religion, and religious sects arose out of the five gods of the old Brahmā cult. But Brahmā disappeared altogether. Thus we find Kṛṣṇa being called 'Bhagavān' himself or Nārāyaṇa or Śiva. The Vedic sacrifices were forgotten. But the old beliefs in image-worship, ancestor worship, tree worship, sanctity of water,

the old exclusiveness among the pre-historic sects in the form of the caste system, the sacred places of Brahmā and Śiva—all survived in the Indian religions. The philosophy of the Rātra cult gave rise to the Sāṁkhya. The Vedic sacrifice, whose power was called Brahman (after Brahmā), gave rise to the Upaniṣads and Vedānta philosophy. But the Sāṁkhya was followed by all religious sects. Many problems of Indian philosophy, religions and art may thus be solved if further investigation is carried out about the Brahmā cult.

The BP. takes its name after Brahmā who is its narrator. It does not give as high a position to Brahmā as it has given to Viṣṇu and Śiva. It describes him as follows :

He is called the self-created Svayambhū (I. 37,40). At the same time he is also said to have emerged from the navel-lotus of Lord Viṣṇu at the end of his *yoganidrā* (45.29-39). Again, it is said that the cause which is *avyakta*, *nitya* and *sadasad* and which is called Pradhāna, created Puruṣa and Puruṣa created the world. The Puruṣa is Brahma. He is then called Ādya, Suśūkṣma and Lord of the world (1.27). From him he created first the waters and from them the *vīrya* was created, from the waters an egg emerged which was of golden colour and in it Brahmā created himself. After living there, Lord Brahmā divided the egg into two parts, sky and earth, and in between them he created the atmospheric region. The whole earth was surrounded by water. Then he created *kāla*, *manaḥ*, *vāk*, *kāma*, *krodha* and *raṭi*. He then created the seven *mānasa*-sons, Marici, Atri, Aṅgirāḥ, Pulastya, Pulaha, Kratu and Vaśiṣṭha. Out of his anger he then created Rudra; then Sanatkumāra and Skanda. After all these he created lightning, clouds, rainbow and birds, followed by Ṛks, Yajuḥ, Sāmas, and Sādhyas. Then Brahmā divided his body into two parts, one-half constituting the female form. The two together created all the beings (I. 33-52) and from that time onwards, sexual intercourse between man and woman began (45.29-39, chapter 161). Mythological and theosophic notions inherited from the Vedic period have thus been combined with notions of later origin—genealogic legends, the evolutionary system of Sāṁkhya and the scheme of the ages of the world—in order to give a rational theory of the origin and development of the world in harmony with the teaching of the Vedas.

He is called Hiraṇyavarṇa (1.40). He is always surrounded by gods, *dānavas*, *gandharvas*, *yakṣas*, *vidyādharas*, *uragas*, *munis*, *siddhas* and nymphs (26.31), His lustre is insupportable (1.24). He is also called Padmakeśarasamkāśa (45.29). Besides the seven *mānasa*-sons he had five daughters, Sāvitrī, Gāyatrī Śraddhā, Medhā and Sarasvatī (102.1-2). As regards his rising from the navel-lotus, there is a myth in the Taittirīya Āraṇyaka (I. XXIII.1) which says that when the universe was still fluid, Prajāpati alone was produced on a lotus-leaf.

He is called Ādideva (9.24), Jagannātha, Jagadyoni, Jagatpati, Jagadvandya, Jagadādhāra and Īśvara (25.31). He is Sanātana (9.24-25), Avyaya, lord of the worlds and Pañcabhūtasamāyukta (45.30). He is the knower of past, present and future (122.53, cf. Rām. 7.54.32).

The *māyā* form of Brahmā is *aja* and is red and black in colour. She keeps her hair loose. Kāma constitutes her nature. She infatuates three worlds. She is called Maheśvari and Mahāmāyā and is very proud of her greatness (134.6,10).

The main function of Brahmā is creation. By the powers of his mind, he created Marīci and other great sages, Sthūlabhūtas, Sūkṣmabhūtas, all the four types of beginnings, Māricas, sages, gods, *pitṛs*, *yakṣas*, *vidhyādharas*, rivers, men, monkeys, lions, birds, *jarāyujas*, *aṇḍajas*, *svedajas*, *udbhijjas*, *brāhmaṇas*, *kṣatriyas*, *vaiśyas*, *śūdras*, *antyajas*, *mlecchas*, *tr̥ṇa*, *gulm* and ants (45.29-30).

The BP. describes Brahmā in the capacity of a bestower of boons. Thus Brahmā granted a boon to Bali that he would be a great yogin and that no one would equal him in strength (13.32-34). When Pārvatī practised penance, Brahmā granted her the husband of her desire (34.98). At the same time, Brahmā would not tolerate injustice. Thus when Sarasvatī loved Purūravāḥ for many years without Brahmā's knowledge, he cursed that she would be a river in the Mṛtyuloka seen at some places and not seen at other places (chapter 101).

Many a time, has Brahmā helped the other gods and the sages. Thus in the *svayamvara* of Umā, Brahmā came with a retinue of yogis and siddhas and performed the rites of marriage

of Śiva with Umā (36.4, 134, 135). Again, when the Moon refused to give back Tārā to Bṛhaspati, Brahmā intervened and brought about a reconciliation (9.24-25). Elsewhere it is said that Brahmā took the form of a maiden and infatuated the demons who obstructed a religious sacrifice (134.5). The relation of Brahmā with Viṣṇu is to be noted. At the beginning of a *kalpa*, when many demons wanted to kill Brahmā, He prayed to Lord Viṣṇu and killed the demons (chapter 156). Elsewhere it is said that Brahmā is dependent on Viṣṇu (1.24) and that at the end of a *kalpa*, all the gods along with Brahmā enter into Nārāyaṇa (5.61).

The BP. relates some suggestive stories about Brahmā. While performing the marriage rites of Lord Śiva, the virile-semen of Brahmā spilled on seeing Lord Śiva touch the thumb of Pārvatī for the performance of the marriage rite and from it the Vālakhilyas were created. Brahmā was abashed but Lord Śiva gave him a water-pot consisting of holy waters for expiation (chapter 72). Another story relates how Brahmā developed a passion for his eldest daughter and followed her in the form of a deer when she attempted to escape in the form of a female deer. Then Lord Śiva took the form of a hunter and threatened to kill Brahmā. Thereupon Brahmā desisted (chapter 102). A similar myth is told in RV. X. 6 and is referred to several times in the Brāhmaṇas. The basis of this myth seems to be two passages of the RV. (1.71. 5; 10.61. 5-7), in which the incest of a father with his daughter is referred to and an archer is also mentioned.

Another myth relates how in the dispute between Brahmā and Viṣṇu, Brahmā lied that he had seen the end of the Jyotirmaya liṅga of Lord Śiva (chapter 135). However, during the later epic period, his superiority is set aside in favour of Viṣṇu or Śiva and the temples of Brahmā are now very few, the most well-known being the one at Puṣkara. There is a temple of Brahmā in the Idar State and another at Sadhi near Baroda in Gujarat.

### The Sun

The Sun was worshipped as Sūrya, Mitra, Savitā, and Pūṣā in Vedas. Though, all of them represented basically the same phenomenon, yet they were considered to be distinct deities as



their concepts revealed different powers of the Sun. As Savitā, he is the giver and sustainer of life, who each morning awakes the universe and men from sleep; as Mitra, perhaps the most ancient cult of all he is associated as a member of an early triad, symbolized by the sacred syllable Om, the triad being Agni, Vāyu and Mitra. He is invoked also as Pūṣā, the guardian and preserver of the cattle, the companion of travellers, and guide of the soul on its perilous way to the lower world. In later times these several sun-gods were merged in one and he continued to be worshipped as a Sun-god even after the rise of the supreme gods. In the seventh century, Mayūra prayed to Lord Sun in one hundred verses and in the eighth century, Bhavabhūti eulogized Lord Sun in his *Mālatīmādhava*. Thus the Sun has been adored since the Vedic times for the removal of sins and as the bestower of riches, food, fame, health and other blessings.

In mythology Sūrya is the son of Dyauḥ, the wide spreading sky but according to the BP. he is the son of Aditi, and the myth regarding his birth and how he came to possess the name Mārtaṇḍa is related. Aditi gave birth to gods but the *daityas*, *dānavas*, the sons of her co-wives Diti and Danu, troubled them. Therefore, she prayed to Lord Sun and requested him to be her son. During her pregnancy she observed several *vratas*. Her husband scolded her saying that she was killing the child by observing fasts. At that very time, she gave birth to a child and the divine speech declared that as Kaśyapa had charged Aditi with the words "*tvayā mārītam aṇḍam*" the child would be known as Mārtaṇḍa (32.9-45). In the fight with the *daityas*, the *daityas* were scorched by the Sun's rays and the gods obtained their sacrificial share and Sūrya is also said to have restored Sampāti and Jaṭāyuḥ, the sons of Aruṇā and Garuḍa, when they burnt their wings while going near the Sun (chapter 166).

Another myth is related about the family of the Sun. Viśvakarmā, who is regarded as Prajāpati, gave his daughter Saṁjñā to the Sun for wife. She bore him two sons Manu Vaiva-svata and Yama and one daughter Yamunā. As mentioned earlier, Saṁjñā unable to bear the splendour of the Sun, substituted for herself 'Chāyā' her shadow, and thus deceiving her husband, she went away to her father's house but as Viśvakarmā was determined

to send her back to her husband, she fled in the shape of a mare to the Uttarakurus. Meanwhile Chāyā bore to the Sun two sons, Sāvarnī and the planet Saturn, and a daughter, the river goddess Tāptī also called Viṣṭī. Chāyā preferred her own children to those of Samjñā, and this displeased the Sun. He went to Viśvakarmā and asked him to reduce his splendour so that Samjñā (also called Uṣā) might bear his light. Viśvakarmā, therefore, put him on his lathe and pared down the body of the Sun. The sun learning from Viśvakarmā, the shelter of his wife, went in the shape of a horse to the land of the Uttarakurus. There he met Samjñā and from their nostrils were produced the two Aśvīs (chapter 5, 32. 49-81, chapter 89). There are other myths described in other works also.

In the BP. Lord Sūrya shines on a white lotus (28.30). The association of the Sun with the lotus seems to rest upon the natural observation that the flower opened when the Sun rose and closed at sunset. His eyes are yellow (28.30) and he is decorated with ornaments, and is very beautiful (28.31) and he has two hands and his complexion is red. His clothes are like a red lotus (28.30).

Further it is said that he is worshipped with one hundred and eight names. Some of them are Sūrya, Aryamā, Bhaga, Tvaṣṭā, Pūṣā, Arka, Savitā, Ravi, Gabhastimān, Aja, Kāla, Mṛtyu, Dhātā, Prabhākara, Pṛthvī, Apaḥ, Tejaḥ, Kha, Vāyu, Soma, Bṛhaspati, Śukra, Budha, Aṅgāraka, Indra, Vivasvān, Dīptāmsu, Śuci, Sauri, Śanaiścara, Brahmā, Viṣṇu, Rudra, Skanda, Vaiśravaṇa, Yama, Vaidyuta, Agni, Jāṭharāgni, Aindhana Tejaḥpati, Dharmadhvaḥ, Vedakartā, Vedāṅga, Vedavāhana, Kṛta, Treta, Dvāpara, Kali, the resort of all the Gods, Kalā, Kāṣṭhā, Mahūrt, Kṣapā, Yāma, Kṣaṇa, Samvartakākāra, Aśvattha, Kālacakra, Vibhāvasu, Puruṣa, Śīśvata, Yogī, Vyakta, as well as Avyakta. Sanātana, Kālādhyakṣa, Prajādhyakṣa, Viśvakarmā, Tamonuda (the remover of darkness), Varuṇa, Sāgara, Amṣā, Jimūta, Jivana, Arihā, Bhūtāśraya, Bhūta-pati, bowed down by all the worlds, creator, destroyer of all the things, Alolupa—one who has no temptations (this is an epithet of Śiva applied to Sun), Ananta, Kapila, Bhānu, Kāmada, Sarvatomukha, Jaya, Viśāla, Varada, Sarvabhūtanīṣevita, Manaḥ, Suparṇa, Bhūtādi, Śighraga, Prāṇadhāraṇa, Dhanvantari, Dhūmaketu, Ādideva, Aditiputra, Dvādaśātmā, Dakṣa, Pitā, Mātā, Pitāmaha, means of getting heaven, progeny and liberation, Triviṣṭapa, Devakartā, Praśāntātmā, Viśvātmā, Viśvatomukha, Carācarātmā,

Sūkṣmātmā, Maitreya, and merciful (33.34-45). One who recites these names gets the desired results (33.48-49).

There are twelve general names of the Lord Sun : Āditya, Savitā, Sūrya, Mihira, Arka, Prabhākara, Mārtaṇḍa, Bhāskara, Bhānu, Citrabhānu, Divākara, and Ravi (31.15-16). Sūrya possesses twelve names for each of the months of the year, viz., Viṣṇu, Dhātā, Bhaga, Pūṣā, Mitra, Indra, Varuṇa, Aryamā, Vivasvān, Amśumān, Tvaṣṭā, and Parjanya (31.17) and it is said that Viṣṇu shines in Caitra, Aryamā in Vaiśakha, Vivasvān in Jyeṣṭha, Amśumān in Āṣāḍha. Parjanya in Śrāvaṇa, Varuṇa in Prauṣṭha, Indra in Āśvayuja, Dhātā in Kārttika, Mitra in Mārgaśīrṣa, Pūṣā in Pauṣa, Bhaga in Māgha and Tvaṣṭā in Phālguna (31.19-21). Another list of twenty-one names is given. The recitation of these gives one freedom from sins and bestows health, wealth and prosperity (31.34-35). The names are Vikartana, Vivasvān, Mārtaṇḍa Bhāskara, Ravi, Lokaprakāśaka, Śrīmān, Lokacakṣuḥ, Maheśvara, Lokasākṣī, Trilokeśa, Kartā, Hartā, Tamisrahā, Tapana, Śuci, Saptāśvavāhana, Gabhastihasta, Brahmā and one who is bowed down by all the gods (31.31-33). The derivation of the word Vivasvān is given in the Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa where it is said that Āditya Vivasvān illumines (*vivaste*) night and day. Vivasvān goes back of the Indo-Iranian period being identified with Vivanhvant, the father of Yama.

After creating the Prajāpatis and other beings, the Sun divided himself into the forms of twelve Ādityas. The form known as Indra destroys the enemies of gods. Dhātā is a Prajāpati and creates various beings. Parjanya resides in clouds and showers rain. Tvaṣṭā resides in vegetables and herbs. Pūṣā stays in food, Aryamā in all the deities, Bhaga in all the beings. Vivasvān resides in fire and helps the digestion of food. Viṣṇu too destroys the enemies of gods. Amśumān gives happiness to all by residing in Vāyu. Varuṇa resides in waters and maintains all the beings. Mitra practises penance for the welfare of all. The Sun pervades the whole earth by his twelve forms (30.24-39).

Functions : He pours down the rain, maintains all beings, gives light to the world, measures time and divides the seasons (31.4-9). In different seasons, the Sun shines in different colours. In spring, it is *kapila* (twany), in summer it is golden, in rainy

season, it is white, in autumn, it is yellow; in Hemanta, it is red like copper; in winter it is red (31.12-13).

The different forms of the Sun have different numbers of rays. Thus it is said that Viṣṇu shines with 1,200 rays, Aryamā with 1,300 rays, Vivasvān with 1,400 rays, Amśumān with 1,500 rays, Parjanya with 1,400 rays, Varuṇa with 1,300 rays, Tvaṣṭā with 1,100 rays, Indra with 1,200 rays, Dhātā with 1,100 rays, Mitra with 1,000 rays and Pūṣā with 900 rays (31. 22-26).

He is higher than the gods Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva, since they are known through the Vedas whereas the Lord Sun is directly perceptible (30. 19). Ṛk and Yajuḥ and Sāmas constitute his form and he is also known by the name Om (32.15-16). He is the life of all beings, gods, *gandharvas*, *rākṣasas*, sages, *kinmaras*, *siddhas*, *uragas* and birds (33.10).

It is said that the form of the Sun known as Mitra is indestructible, unmodified, manifested as well as unmanifested, and eternal. It is the upholder of the world and the highest abode. It is birthless. The past, the present and the future are established in it. It is the father and mother of all the beings (30.41-43). Mihira is the Sanskritized form of the Persian Mihr, which is a corruption of Mitra, the Avestic form of the Vedic Mitra. The cult of Mihira had originated in Persia and it spread up to Asia Minor and even Rome, and the proselytizing energy which characterised its first adherents must have led to its extension towards the east also, and of this extension the figure of Mihira on a coin of Kaniṣka is an evidence.

Bhandarkar is of the view that there were six classes of the devotees of Sūrya who interpreted the Vedic hymns as setting forth the greatness and the supremacy of the Lord Sun. These sects were devoid of any trace of foreign influence but from the early centuries of the Christian era such an outside influence contributed to the growth of Sun-worship in northern India. In the Bṛhat-saṃhitā (60.19), Varāhamihira expressly tells that the installation and consecration of the images and temples of the Sun should be caused to be made by the Magas and this shows that the Magas were the special priests of the Sun-god. There is a legend in the Bhaviṣya Purāṇa (chapter 139) which relates how Sāmba brought Magas from Śakadvīpa and installed them as priests of the temple

he had built in honour of the Sun. A reference to Sāmba and Magas is found in an inscription at Govindapur in the Gaya district dated Śaka 1509 (1137-38 A.D.) and in Rajasthan and other countries the brāhmaṇas of that name are found. These Magas are the Magi of ancient Persia and Alberuni speaks of the Priests Magas existing in India. As the Indians had been familiar with the foreigners, the Śakas, since the 2nd or the 3rd century B.C., the idea of associating Magas with Śakadvīpa must have arisen as they too were foreigners like the Śakas. Thus the worship of the Sun was brought into India by the old Persian priests Magi but at whose instance and under what circumstances it is difficult to say. The story of Sāmba was prevalent in the first half of the 12th century.

Bhandarkar makes a survey of all the records available on Sun-worship and suggests that the Mihira cult was introduced into India from Persia and the construction of temples is also a foreign influence and this cult is entirely different from the Saura systems. Gradually, the Magas were assimilated and Hinduized by the new cult and became indistinguishable from the other Hindus and formed only a separate class.

The evidence of the copper plate grant of Harṣavardhana styling his father, grand-father and great grand-father as the great devotees of Āditya proves that the Sun-cult, probably made up of a mixture of the indigenous and foreign forms prevailed in the beginning of the sixth century and was professed by great princes. The BP. mentions Mihira (30.41-43) in the names of the Sun and emphasises the Mitra form of the Sun (31.15).

Not many temples dedicated to the Sun have survived. The one at Konarka in Orissa is the best known and is architecturally of great interest. The BP. eulogizes the worship of Koṇāditya in the holy temple of Konāraka situated in the Auḍradeśa on the northern shore of the Lavana ocean (chapter 28). There is another temple at Gaya and a small but much frequented shrine at Banaras where the fire sacrifice is performed in honour of the Sun.

The BP. deals with Sun-worship in chapters 28-38. Hazra has made a comparative study of the Saura upapurāṇas and states that many verses are common to Brahma Purāṇa, Śāmba Purāṇa

and Bhaviṣya Purāṇa and there is reason to say that the BP. borrowed these common verses from the Sāmba Purāṇa. Some other source, however, is shown by the fact that though in chapter 28 of BP. Brahmā begins to describe the place of Koṇārka or Koṇāditya situated in Utkala on the northern shore of the salt-ocean at the request of sages, in chapters 29-33 he is found describing Mitravana situated on the bank of the Candrasarit almost in the same verses as those in the Sāmba Purāṇa and the Bhaviṣya Purāṇa with no reference to Koṇāditya, of Utkala, or to the ocean.

### Indra

Indra is the favourite national god of the Vedic Indians. He is celebrated in 250 hymns. As the name, which dates from the Indo-Iranian period and is of uncertain meaning, does not designate any phenomenon of nature, the figure of Indra has become very anthropomorphic and surrounded much by mythological imagery, more so than that of any other god in the Veda. He is primarily the thunder-god, the consequent liberation of the waters or the winning of light forming its mythological essence.

The importance of Indra, the Vedic hero, had waned by the time of the Purāṇas, and in the BP. he is nothing but a deity of secondary importance, constantly seeking the help of either Lord Viṣṇu, Śiva, Brahmā or some great sage in order to ensure safety from the demons and other forces. In Purāṇic literature, he is described more as a mighty king, a kṣatriya ruler, than as a cosmic god.

He has thousand eyes and a beautiful form. He wears a necklace and mounts the famous elephant Airāvata (36.8-10). Śacī sits by his side and Jayanta adorns his lap (140.4-6). In the Svayaṁvara of Umā, he comes with great pomp (36.8-10). He is surrounded by gods and is praised by *siddhas* and *sādhyas*. Nymphs sing and dance and wave fans round him (140.6-8) He wields the thunderbolt in his hand (124.5) and the thunderbolt is the weapon exclusively of Indra. He is called Śakra, Maghavā (10.20), Mahendra and Varada, Jiṣṇu (140.6-8, 124.5), Purāṁdara (10.26), Vṛtrahā, Namucihantā, Purāmbhettā and Gotrabhid (124.5).

The court or hall of Indra is the rendezvous of the other gods and is called the Sudharmā and by Lord Kṛṣṇa's order Vāyu carried it to Dwaraka when Ugrasena was coronated. When the Yādava family came to an end, it was given back to Indra (115.14-15; 212.7). According to Hopkins the 'hall' is a late description in the epics (a supposition favoured by other evidence of the same nature regarding their inhabitants)—perhaps a loan from the Jains, who have a heaven with gods called the Saudharma.

Many anecdotes about Indra are related in the BP. He killed the demon Namuci with the foam of the ocean (chapter 124). He was deprived of his throne three times, once on account of the sin of killing Vṛtra, again for the sin of killing Sindhusena and the third time when he seduced Ahalyā in the guise of the sage Gautama. When he discovered the deception the sage Gautama cured Indra with thousand signs of the female organ to erupt on his body but on being prayed by Indra, the thousand signs were turned into the form of eyes. Hence he is called Sahasrākṣa (chapter 87). Indra asked Lord Kṛṣṇa to protect Arjuna who was a part of himself (chapter 188). He pierced the foetus of Diti into 49 pieces on the advice of the demon Maya and the Maruts were born from them. Thereupon Diti cursed him that he would be dethroned and would be defeated by a woman and the sage Agastya cursed him that he will turn and run in battle (chapter 124). Indra deceived Rāji by flattering him and thus deprived him of becoming the king of gods (chapter 11). There was a terrible fight between Indra and Lord Kṛṣṇa for the Pārijāta tree and Indra had to give up the tree to Lord Kṛṣṇa (chapter 188). By the killing of Vṛtra, Indra was polluted with the heinous sin of Brāhmaṇa murder (*hatyā*) and he fled in great terror to the end of the world. There he entered waters and concealed himself in the figure of a lotus. After many years, he was purified by the water of the river Gautami (chapter 96). In the Mahābhārata (V. 11. ff.) it is stated that Bṛhaspati cleansed him by a horse-sacrifice from the sin of *brahmahatyā*.

In the Ṛgveda and the Brāhmaṇas there are innumerable stories which relate the intrigues of the gods with married women, e.g., of Indra with the wife of Vṛṣṇasva, with Apālā Ātreya, etc. The conduct of the gods here is not made a matter of reproach and

adultery and is not much considered from the ethical point of view. It is because the brahmin is in possession of the secret knowledge whereby he can inflict harm that a man must refrain from illicit intercourse with his wife. In the BP. it is said that when the sage Gautama entered his hermitage Indra was in the company of Ahalyā; Indra out of fear of the sage became a cat and was later cursed by the sage (chapter 122).

Indra in the brāhmaṇical mythology is the ruler of heaven and represents the kṣatriya or warrior class. Indra is always afraid lest some saint should by severe austerities wrest his power from him, and when there is a danger of his kind, he sends one of the apsaras or heavenly nymphs, to seduce the saint from his ascetic exercises. Thus the BP. states that Indra sent the nymph Pramlocā to disturb the penance of the sage Kaṇḍu (chapter 178).

Indra, in the Purāṇas, thus represents a kṣatriya confrontation with the brāhmaṇas as well as with the rulers of foreign and indigenous tribes.

There are no temples of Indra. His images and niches dedicated to him, however, are found within temples of other gods.

*Arjuna* : When the ancient gods ceased to appeal to the masses of the people in the form in which they were represented in the Vedas, a particular aspect of the same god became popular in some cases, and was therefore regarded as a separate god, demi-god, or a hero connected with the original god. A popular godling, with functions similar to those of an ancient god, grew up as a kind of duplicate or when he was not accepted as a god proper, he came by the anthropomorphic influence of the epic poetry, to be regarded as a hero, whose resemblance to the ancient god was explained by the assumption that he was an incarnation of that deity.

Thus, Arjuna in the BP. is represented as an incarnation of Indra and Indra personally requests Lord Kṛṣṇa to protect Arjuna as he was a part of himself. He recommends Arjuna for his great courage and suggests to Kṛṣṇa that he should take his help in destroying evil factors (188.40-46). According to the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa (II. 1.2.11), Arjuna is a mystical name of Indra and



according to Pāṇini (IV. 3.98) he was worshipped just as Vāsudeva was. But Arjuna is one of the principal heroes of the Mahābhārata (3.41 ff) and is intimately connected with Iodra.

Further, it is related that before Lord Kṛṣṇa passed away from the world he instructed Arjuna to take care of his wives and to install his grandson Vajranābha on the throne (211.2). Arjuna performed the funeral rites and installed Vajranābha on the throne. He took the widows of Kṛṣṇa with him and was passing with them through Pañcanada when he was confronted by the Ābhīras. They fought and defeated him. To his great dismay, Arjuna found that he had lost his prowess and the skill of using his favourite bow Gāṇḍīva. He found himself unable to save the widows of Kṛṣṇa whom the Ābhīras successfully kidnapped. Deeply distressed Arjuna resorted to Vyāsa for consolation (212.1-12, 14.33).

*Maruts* : In the RV., they are said to be storm-gods, the sons of Rudra and Pṛṣṇī, also often called Rudras, a group of either three times seven or three times sixty deities, the constant allies of Indra in his conflicts.

In the BP. an anecdote is told about their birth. In the war between the gods and daityas, when many of the sons of Diti had been slain, she asked her husband Kaśyapa for a son who would kill Indra, and Kaśyapa granted her request on the condition that she would observe strict purity during the term of her pregnancy. Once, however, when she slept without washing her feet (elsewhere it is said that she slept facing the north at the time of twilight), Indra availed himself of this opportunity, and entered Diti's womb, cut into seven pieces the child with which she was pregnant. When the seven parts began to weep, Indra told them not to do so with the words '*mā rodihī*' (elsewhere '*ma ruta*'), and again cut each piece into seven pieces. Hence they were called Maruts and became a troop of forty-nine gods. On seeing this Diti and the sage Agastya cursed Indra, and Kaśyapa prayed to Śiva who granted the boon that wherever Indra gets a share, the Maruts would be the first partakers and that they would be the constant helpers of Indra and no one would be able to vanquish Indra when he was helped by the Maruts. (3.110-123, 124.17-26). This and other anecdotes regarding the Maruts are given in other works.

*Yama* : Yama in the RV. is a deified hero and is considered to be the chief of the dead. In the RV., it is implied that he is a god, though expressly he is not called a god but only a king who rules over the dead. (RV. 9.1.3; 10.14). In brahmanical mythology he has become the dreaded god of the nether world and the sovereign of the demons, and the regent of the south (24.4). He is the son of the Sun-god Vaivasvata, brother of Manu and Yamunā (6.8). In the RV. it is said that his father is Vivasvān (10.14.5) with whom Śaraṇyu is mentioned as his mother (10.17.1). In the BP. it is said that Samjñā or Uṣā was his mother (6.7, 89. 3-5). Yama is often called by his patronymic Vaivasvata (7.22,89.5). The trait of Yama being called by his patronymic Vaivasvata is Indo-Iranian for in the Avesta Vivanhavant, as the first man who pressed Soma, is said to have received Yama as a son in reward.

His vehicle is the buffalo (94.16). He is the guardian of the world (94.32). All men are afraid of him and practice *brahmacarya* out of fear for him. Fear of him makes people behave better, perform religious rites, observe fasts, go to the forests, drink soma, give *annadāna* and *godāna* and the *mumukṣus* discuss the *brahmavāda* (125.23-24).

Several myths are related regarding Yama in the BP. It is said that when Chāyā, co-wife of Samjñā, Yama's mother, preferred her own children to those of Samjñā, Yama raised his foot to kick Chāyā but Chāyā cursed that his foot should fall off. Yama's father modified the curse by saying that though the foot might not fall off, it would be eaten by worms and insects (6.23-29). Once on seeing the unhappy condition of a vaiśya family over the death of their child, Yama gave up his work of killing and practised penance but on the advice of Sun, he resumed his work (chapter 86). When Mṛtyu tried to take the life of Śveta, a devotee of Śiva, he was killed. But hearing of his death Yama was very angry and a terrible fight ensued between Yama and Nandī and Vaināyaka. In the end Kārttikeya killed Yama. Viṣṇu and other gods pleaded with Śiva and Śiva brought him back to life on the condition that Yama would have no control over Śiva's devotees (chapter 94). Here Yama and Mṛtyu are identified separately and the superiority of Śiva over Yama is emphasised. Yama's messengers fetch the

souls of dying men and lead them to Yama's court where Citra-gupta, the record-keeper reads out an account of their deeds, for the god to give his judgment on. The BP. gives a terrible description of Yama's court and the way that leads to it (chapter 214, 215). Many details about Yama are given in other works too.

*Agni* : In the Ṛgveda, Agni is the personification of the sacrificial fire. He is therefore the god of the priests of gods. The Vedic conceptions of Agni are partly retained and occasionally revived in later mythology.

In the BP. it is said that he is the husband of Svāhā. He is the consumer of all sacrifices, hence the mouth of gods. He is the first god, for he takes the offerings to the gods and he is their messenger. He is a means of performing the sacrifice and has a visible form. The deities enjoy the offerings through him. He resides within the body in the form of the bestower of food (125.15-17, 98.15). With the help of the other gods, Agni gained the power to go everywhere (49.17). He is called Jātavedāḥ, Bṛhadbhānu, Saptārciḥ, Nilalohita, Jalagarbha, Śamīgarbha, Yajñagarbha, Vibhāvasu (88, 17-18), Hutāśana and Havyavāhana (128.16-17). As already mentioned when the gods were in danger from Tāraka, they sent Agni to Lord Śiva and as at that time, Lord Śiva was in privacy with Pārvatī, he threw the virile-semen into Agni who had come in the form of a parrot and was unable to bear it. Agni threw it into Kṛttikā from which Kārttikeya was created. Agni threw the remnant of semen into his wife Svāhā and from it were created Suvarṇa and Suvarṇā who were married to Saṁkalpā and Dharmarāja respectively (128.1-28).

*Kāmadeva* : Originally Kāma is desire—not of sexual enjoyment only, but of good things in general—and as a personification of desire he is invoked in AV. (IX.2). But in another hymn. (III. 25) he is conceived as the god of sexual love, in which function alone he is known to later mythology.

In the BP. he is described as god of love (71.25). His wife is Rati, the impersonation of sexual enjoyment (38.6) and his friend and companion is the spring (71.32). He is also called Madana, Kandarpa (71.29), Manmatha (28.1) and Kusumākara (71.32). He carries a bow formed of flowers (71.29). There are five arrows (71.31) allegorically representing the infatuating powers of love.

Some disparaging epithets are also applied to him like crooked, cruel, ill-behaved, badtempered, a disgrace to his family, troublesome to the worlds, obstructive to the sages, an enemy (38.1-4) and scorching the world (38.7).

In the BP. it is said that when the gods were confronted with the danger of the demon Tāraka, they directed Kāmedeva to disturb the penance of Lord Śiva. Śiva reduced Kāma to ashes but on hearing of the dejection of Rati over husband's death, Lord Śiva and Umā granted her the boon that even though Kāmadeva was deprived of a body, he would be able to do his work as usual (the term of the epithet 'Anaṅga' seems to lie in this myth), and further granted that Kāma would be reborn as Pradyumna (38.413, 71.34-37). Accordingly; Kāma was born as Pradyumna, Kṛṣṇa's son but as a baby he was stolen by Sambara, whose wife Māyāvati, brought him up. Māyāvati however, was Rati, who had assumed the form of Māyāvati in order to deceive the Asura, and thus caused his destruction by Pradyumna. Eventually, Pradyumna killed Sambara and married Māyāvati. These and other stories about Kāma are given in the other works too. Apparently, Pradyumna is but a variant of Kāma, or to be more accurate, a god of love popular in those parts of India where the worship of Kṛṣṇa prevailed. Kāma has also been identified with Māra, the temper and the devil of Buddhist legend; hence, in later Sanskrit, Māra becomes a synonym for Kāma. He is still the subject of a mystery play in South India.

*Soma* : Soma, as an intoxicating plant of north-west India which was pressed and allowed to ferment (root *su*, 'press', *soma* 'the pressing'), is supposed to be *Asclepias acida* or *sarcostema viminale*, the juice of which produces a peculiarity astringent, narcotic, and intoxicating effect. As such it was regarded as a divine power, and as in Mexico and Peru the octri and similar intoxicating plants were deified, so in Indra and in Persia the Soma, identical with the Zoroastrain Haoma, was regarded as a god. Before the end of the RV., the yellow plant became esoterically identified with the yellow swelling and water-cleansed moon, and in some of the last hymns of the RV., there is no question that Soma means the moon. From this time onwards Soma was thus used in two senses, either as the divine plant or as the moon-god, until as in the epics, unless specified as the plant, the word Soma means the moon.

In the BP., Soma is considered as the moon and is the son of Atri. An interesting story is told about its birth. The sage Atri practised a penance called *anuttara* for 3,000 divine years. During that period, his virile-semen rose upward and came out of his eyes and began to brighten the ten directions in the form of the moon. When the Moon was thus falling, Brahmā placed him on his chariot and the sons of Brahmā as well as other sages began to worship him. Being pleased, he spread his lustre in all directions for the welfare of the world and went round the world 21 times. At that time from his lustre, corn and such other things as maintained the world were created. Then the moon practised penance for many years and Lord Brahmā being pleased with him made him the king of herbs, seeds, water and brāhmaṇas (9.1-12). Elsewhere it is said that he was made the king of sacrifices and penances (4.2). Then the moon performed a Rājasūya in which he gave a *dakṣiṇā* of lakhs of things. The nine goddesses Sini, Kuhū, Dyuti, Puṣṭi, Prabhā, Vasu, Kirti, Dhṛti and Lakṣmī attended on him and worshipped all the gods and sages (9.13-17). He was married to the 27 *nakṣatras*, daughters of Dakṣa, i. e., the 27 mansions of the moon and their children were of immeasurable lustre (3.59). Elsewhere it is said that Soma married *oṣadhis* (chapter 119).

The BP. relates the following story about Soma. He abducted Tārā, the wife of Bṛhaspati. Uśanāḥ, the teacher of the asuras and the enemy of Bṛhaspati, Rudra and Aṅgirāḥ sided with Soma in his conflict with the gods. Soma was finally compelled to give up Tārā. After some time she gave birth to a boy whose parentage was doubtful; and she declared, when pressed that he was the son of Soma. The boy was named Budha (the Planet Mercury), who afterwards married Ilā, the daughter of Manu. Their son was Purūravāḥ with whom the lineage of the lunar kings begins (9.18-36). Bṛhaspati cursed the moon with a spot and a crooked form (152.27-29).

Soma is once said to be *amṛta* and the Brahma Purāṇa states that one who takes a bath and gives *dāna* at Somatirtha goes to heaven (119.19). The BP. introduces an interesting stotra (chapter 105) which states that Soma originally was in the possession of *gandharvas*. The gods wanted it and so gave Sarasvati to the *gandharvas* and took Soma from them in exchange. Afterwards Sara-

svatī also returned to the gods without the permission of the *gandharvas* and the BP. lays down a rule that as Sarasvatī-‘speech-had returned to the gods without the knowledge of the *gandharvas*, under the effect of Soma, one would speak slowly losing one’s power of speech to some extent.

The moon plays an important part in ancient belief about life after death. The souls of the dead are supposed to go to the moon. At full moon, the moon sends some spirits to the world of Brahma (*Devayāna*) and sends the rest as rain down to the earth to be born again i.e., Pitṛyāna.

Though he was a deity of great holiness, he seems scarcely to have received popular worship as a separate god; at least no temple seems to have been dedicated to him.

*Viśvakarmā* : Visvakarmā, ‘all-creating’, appears as the name of an independent deity, to whom two hymns of the last book of the Ṛgveda (X. 81-82) are addressed. In the Brāhmaṇas (SB. 8.2.1.10; 3.13; AB 422), Viśvakarmā is expressly identified with the creator Prajāpati, while in post-Vedic mythology he appears, doubtless owing to the name, as the artificer of the gods.

In the BP. he is called the best among the architects (50.40-43.) He constructed the idols of Kṛṣṇa, Balarāma and Subhadṛā, for the king Indrayumna (50.48). He protected the sacrifice of Dakṣa (108.19-20).

*Tvaṣṭā* : He is one of the obscurest members of the Vedic pantheon. He is a skilful workman producing various objects showing the skill of an artificer. (RV. I.85. 9, 3.54. 12). In the BP. he is said to have constructed the whole city of gods for the sage Atri. He is there called the creator of beings, all-pervading and Viśvakarmā (140.12,18). In the Ṛgveda he is also the ancestor of the human race in so far as his daughter, Śaraṇyā, wife of Vaivasvān, becomes the mother of the primeval twins Yama and Yamī (10.17.1.2; 5. 42.13). In the BP. too, he assumes the role of a practical father advising the daughter Samjñā to go back to her husband Sūrya (6. 16, 89.10). Since Tvaṣṭā pared the sun on his lathe and lessened his brilliance, he is called Prajāpati (6.39,89.42).

*Aśvīs* : Next to Indra, Agni and Soma, the twin deities named the Aśvīs are the most prominent in the Ṛgveda. Though

they hold a distinct position among the deities of light and their appellation is Indian, their connection with any definite phenomenon of light is so obscure, that their original nature has been a puzzle to Vedic interpreters from the earliest times. This obscurity makes it probable that the origin of these gods is to be sought in a pre-Vedic period.

The Aśvīs have lost, in Brāhmaṇical mythology, whatever cosmical element they had in the hymns of the Ṛgveda. They continue to be regarded as beautiful youths (6.45) and physician (6.44). The anecdote from the BP. (6.41-45) regarding their birth from the nostrils of Sūrya and Saṁjñā, relates how they have come to be called. Another epithet applied to them is Dasra (6.44). In the Ṛgveda also both epithets Dasra 'wondrous' and Nāsatya are applied to them, the latter generally explained as 'not untrue' (*na asatya*) but other etymologies, such as the 'savers' have been proposed. These two epithets in later times became the separate proper names of the Aśvīs. Elsewhere it is stated that they were created in the river Godāvārī from the mouths of Sūrya and Ūṣā (89.36).

*Śanaīścara* : Śanaīścara is said to be the son of Sūrya and Chāyā (6.20, 89.14), and is said to have obtained the position of the planet Saturn (6.50). It is said that he killed the demons Aśvattha and Pippala who troubled people in the form of brāhmaṇas (chapter 118). References to Śani are met with in other works also.

*Varuṇa* : Varuṇa is the greatest of the Vedic gods besides Indra. He dates from an early period, for in name he is probably identical with the Greek 'Ovpavos', and in character he is allied to the Avestic Ahura Mazda. In the Vedas, he is the chief upholder of the moral and physical order (ṚV. 8.42.1, 7. 61-4, 5. 62-1). With the coming into prominence of Prajāpati as creator and supreme god in the later Vedas, the importance of Varuṇa waned, till in the post Vedic period he retained only the dominion of the waters as god of the sea.

In the BP. he is said to be the lord of the waters and his daughter was married to king Janaka. He seems to be a great philosopher for he gave a discourse on the comparative superiority of enjoyment and liberation to king Janaka and sage Yājñavalkya (chapter 88). His constant association with Mitra in Ṛgveda is not

much alluded to in post-Vedic mythology, but in the BP. it is stated that Manu performed a sacrifice, with a view to obtaining a son. He offered an oblation in the name of Mitravaruṇa and a maiden, Ilā, arose from the sacrifice who married Budha and propagated the lunar race (6. 3-6). The BP. relates the story of how on account of the fear of the daitya Mahāśani, Indra agrees to serve Varuṇa. The demon Mahāśani defeated Indra and went on to conquer Varuṇa who gave him his daughter Varuṇā and saved himself. Further on Varuṇa's request he released Indra on the condition that thenceforth Indra should be ready to serve Varuṇa (chapter 129). Elsewhere Vāruṇī is said to be the goddess of wine and Varuṇa advises her to go to Balarāma whose favourite drink was wine and Balarāma, it is said, after drinking her dragged the river Yamunā with his plough. There she is addressed as Madirā or one who is the beloved at all times (198.1-5) Varuṇa possesses a miraculous umbrella which pours down rain and the BP. states that earlier it was in the possession of the demon Naraka. Kṛṣṇa killed him and got the umbrella (202.10,34). He is called a king (88.9), an epithet frequently used in the Ṛgveda and it is said that Varuṇa sent a garland of unfading flowers to Balarāma (198.16).

*Vāyu* : Vāyu, the god of wind, is not a prominent deity in the Ṛgveda, and under his more anthropomorphic form, he is chiefly associated with Indra. Since the invisible element of wind does not lend easily itself to anthropomorphism, scarcely any myths are told of Vāyu; nor did the god receive popular worship. In the BP it is said that on being asked by Kṛṣṇa, he bought the 'Sudharmā Sabhā' from Indra for the king Ugrasena (194.14-17).

*Hanūmān* : With the monkey-god, Hanūmān, Indra claims to be the chief home of the cult of monkeys. It has been argued that this cult has been borrowed from some tribes. There are no traces of worship of the monkey in the Veda, except for a stray reference to Vṛṣākapi (Rv. X. 76) which may be regarded as a common name given to monkeys.

In the BP. Hanūmān is said to be the son of Vāyu (157.22). Rāma calls him his brother and asks him to dispose of the Śivaliṅga established by him (157.11, 22). Elsewhere it is said that Hanūmān was the son of Vāyu and Añjani who was the wife



of the monkey Keśari and who by her best limb also was a monkey originally. She was a nymph but through the effect of a curse she was deformed. Hanūmān takes her to the river Godāvārī and she regained her original form (84.2-3,17). There Hanūmān is called Vṛṣākapi.

*Nandī* : Nandī, the divine bull, is the vehicle of Lord Śiva and his idol is always placed facing Śiva in the temples constructed in honour of Lord Śiva. In the BP. it is stated that he carried away the divine cow but on being asked by the gods, he returned them (91.6-9).

*Kubera* : Kubera is mentioned in the Atharvaveda as chief of the 'good people' (puṇyajana), or the other people (itarajana) and as concerned with acts of concealment. In the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa and in later Vedic texts he is mentioned as king of the rākṣasas, and in the Taittiriya Āraṇyaka (1.316) he is mentioned as the lord of wishes and as possessor of a wonderful car (apparently the later Puṣpaka). In later mythology, he is the king of the yakṣas as well as of the kinnaras and guhyakas, while the rākṣasas are the subjects of his half-brother, Rāvaṇa.

According to the BP. Dhanada (Kubera) is the son of Viśravāḥ, grandson of Pulastya, Prajāpati's son (97.2,15). It is said that Viśravāḥ had two wives and by the former he had one son, Kubera. The second wife was a Rākṣasī, and by her he had three sons,—Rāvaṇa, Kumbhakarṇa and Vibhīṣaṇa. Kubera was the lord of Laṅkā and possessed the aeroplane which was given to him by Lord Brahmā, but being advised by the mother, Rāvaṇa fought with Kubera, defeated and expelled him from Laṅkā, and made it his own capital. Kubera, then by the advice of Pulastya, went to the river Gautamī and worshipped Lord Śiva and obtained from him the boon of becoming the lord of treasures (chapter 97). References to Kubera are met with in other works also.

*Sāgara* : He is the god of the sea, the lord of rivers and jewels. The mountains, the demons and nectar are held by him. Lord Viṣṇu resides with Lakṣmī in the ocean and nothing is impossible for him (172.6-7, 9-10). It is said in the BP. that the river Ganges divided herself into seven parts and merged in the ocean (172.18).

## GODDESSES

The BP. does not propagate Śaktism as a cult but eulogizes Pārvatī and refers to Lakṣmī, Sarasvatī, Oṣadhis, Mātaraḥ, Yogamāyā, Suvarṇā, Aditi, Subhadrā, Virajā, Mātā and other goddesses. It deals at great length with the river-goddess Godāvairī.

In Vedic literature down to the Gṛhyasūtras no female goddess of predominant power is mentioned. Such names as Rudrāṇī and Bhavāṇī are available but they do not hold a brief for the existence of independent powerful goddess. But we see that one whole hymn is addressed to Durgā in the Mahābhārata (Bhīṣmaparva, chapter 23) which shows that at the time it was inserted in the Mahābhārata, Durgā had acquired the importance of a powerful goddess. In the BP., it is said that Śakti is the mother of Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Maheśa (131.47).

**Pārvatī**

Śiva's consort Rudrāṇī or Mṛḍāṇī is known by many names as Devī, Umā, Gaurī, Pārvatī, Durgā, Bhavāṇī, Kālī, Kapālinī, Cāmuṇḍā and others. She is a very prominent figure in classical mythology.

According to the BP. Pārvatī, in her former birth, was the eldest among the eight daughters of Dakṣa, and was known as Satī. She was married to Tryambaka and when her father did not invite her husband to his sacrifice, she felt insulted and threw herself in the fire and died. Himālaya practised severe penance and obtained Satī as his daughter. As she observed fasts, Menakā tried to draw her away by the expression 'u mā' and thenceforth she was known as Umā. She practised severe penance in order to attain Śiva as a husband. Once Lord Śiva took an ugly form and appeared before her but she knew his identity through yogic powers and welcomed him (35.1-7). Lord Śiva created an illusion before Pārvatī of a child struggling to be released from an alligator. The alligator agreed to release the child on condition that she should give the merit of her penance to him. When Pārvatī expressed her willingness to do so the alligator released the child and showed her his real form (35.35-61). The *svayamvara* of Umā with Śiva was celebrated with great pomp and all the gods participated in it

(chapter 36. 1-72). Śīva's wooing and wedding of Pārvati and their conjugal life and conversation are often narrated at great length, yet always in a wholly human fashion.

In the BP. Śīva himself eulogizes Pārvati. It is said that when the evil factors like sin, greediness, poverty, infatuation and other worldly pains superseded in the world Lord Mahādeva was astonished and asked Pārvati to find a solution. At that time, she was called Lokamātā, the protector of all, the highest successor of all the essence of prosperity and the upholder of the world. She was also called Bhogā, Samādhi, Vāṇi and Buddhi. She is beginningless and endless; and in the form of Vidyā she protects the three worlds. On being thus addressed, Pārvati smiled and merged half of her body into that of Śīva. Her equality of rank with her husband is expressed in the dual form of Śīva, viz, the Ardhanārīśvara, of which one half is male and another half is female. She then sprinkled the ground with the perspiration of her fingers and from it were manifested Dharma, Lakṣmī, *dāna*, the highest type of rain, the quality *sattva*, corn, flowers, fruits, *sastras*, weapons, *tirthas*, forests, and the moving and the non-moving worlds (129.70-80).

She is the cause of the creation of the three worlds and is the mother of gods and *asuras*. She is called Parā Prakṛti in Purāṇa (36.24-26). She is of the form of Prakṛti and helps lord Śīva, the cause of the world, in creation as his wife (36.41-42). This has been supplied with a philosophical justification, being a popularised version of the Śāṅkhya principle of the union of the soul of the universe-puruṣa—with the primordial essence—prakṛti. On this theory, the belief is more closely connected with Śaivism than with any other religious system, originates in philosophical brahmanism, and traces back its history through brahmanism to the earliest Vedic conceptions. Pārvati is called Buddhi, Prajñā, Dhṛti, Medhā, Lajjā, Puṣṭi and Sarasvati (71.21-23). She is also called Bhavāni (109.52).

As Śīva is the lord of the mountains (Giriśa), so is his spouse, the lady of the mountains—Pārvati. According to Purāṇic mythology she is the daughter of Himālaya, but in the Kena Upaniṣad, where she is first mentioned, Umā Haimavati appears as a heavenly woman, conversant with Brahman. Apparently, she was

originally an independent goddess, or at least a kind of divine being, perhaps a female mountain-ghost haunting the Himalayas who was later identified with Rudra's wife. A similar mountain-goddess had her home in the Vindhya, she was of a cruel character, as a goddess of the tribes living in those hills. Her name is Vindhyaśinī and she too is identified with Śiva's wife. It can safely be concluded that several goddesses from different parts of India and worshipped by different classes of people have, in course of time, been combined into one great goddess, the spouse of Śiva, adored as his Śakti or energy.

### Lakṣmī

She is the consort of Lord Viṣṇu, but she seems originally to have been an independent deity impersonating beauty and wealth. According to classical mythology, she rose from the ocean, when the gods and demons churned it for making nectar and thence she was made over to Viṣṇu.

According to BP. a great quarrel took place between Lakṣmī and the goddess of poverty called Daridrā regarding superiority over each other. Daridrā accuses Lakṣmī of always being associated with sinners, wicked men, political personalities, cruel, mischievous, greedy, indecent, faithless violators of righteousness and traitors. Also that Lakṣmī is of a fickle nature, popularly known as fortune, the fickle goddess who stays long nowhere. At the end of this quarrel the river Godāvarī declares the superiority of Lakṣmī over Daridrā and states that nothing is possible without her and that she pervades everything in the world. She pervades all the splendour like Brahmaśrī, Tapaśśrī, Yajñaśrī, Kīrti, Dhanaśrī, Yaśaśśrī, Vidyā, Prajñā, Sarasvatī, Bhukti, Mukti, Smṛti, Lajjā, Dhṛti, Kṣamā, Siddhi, Tuṣṭi, Puṣṭi, Śānti, Mahī, Ahamśakti, Oṣadhis, Śruti, Vibhāvarī, Dyauḥ, Jyotsnā, blessings, fortune, Vyāpti, Māyā, Uṣā and Śivā (chapter 137).

### Sarasvatī

From being a river goddess in the Ṛgveda, she became the goddess of wisdom and eloquence and as such she is most frequently invoked by the poets of classical Sanskrit literature. She has been identified with vāk 'speech' and as such she is the wife of Brahmā.

The BP. relates that Sarasvatī secretly slept with Purūravāḥ, and had a son Sarasvān by him. When Lord Brahmā came to know about this he cursed her to change into a river but on her pleading, the curse was modified so that she would be seen at some places and would not be seen at others. But the BP. calls her the daughter of Brahmā and the divine river (chapter 101). Once the gods played a trick on the Gandharvas by taking from them Soma in exchange for Sarasvatī and afterwards taking her away too. She is regarded as their guardian deity by the people of Kashmir.

### Yogamāyā

It is related in the BP. that Viṣṇu descended into the Pātāla and asked Nidrā to keep the six sons of Hiraṇyakaśipu with the foetus of Devakī so that they would be killed by Kāṁsa. After they had been killed the seventh child would be born of Lord Viṣṇu's own *aṁśa* and would be known in the world as Saṅkarṣaṇa as he was to be taken to Rohiṇī's foetus after dragging him out of Devakī. Lord Viṣṇu would take birth as the eighth child of Devakī on the eighth day of the black half of Śrāvaṇa and he instructed Yogamāyā to take birth as the daughter of Yaśodā on the ninth day. She would be carried away by Vasudeva and Kāṁsa would throw her, on a slab of stone and she would attain her original place. Lord Indra would consider her as his sister. Then she would kill Śumbha and Niśumbha and thousand other *daityas* and she would be worshipped at many places (chapters 181.31-48).

She is called Yoganidrā, Mahāmāyā of Lord Viṣṇu, Bhūti, Kīrti, Śānti, Pṛthivī, Dhṛti, Lajjā, Puṣṭi, Āryā, Durgā, Vedagarbhā, Ambikā, Bhadrā, Bhadrakālī, Kṣemyā and Kṣemāṅkarī. She was worshipped with wine and meat and she always fulfilled the desires of men (181.37). In the Harivaṁśa a similar account is given.

### Subhadrā

Subhadrā is the sister of Vāsudeva. She has a *rukma* (golden) colour, and all good qualities. In the BP. she is worshipped along with Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma. The colour of her idol is golden. She has eyes like the lotus, she wears clothes of variegated colours and is decorated with ornaments. She goes everywhere. She is called Kātyāyanī, Jagaddhātṛī, Varadā, Śivā and is engrossed in the welfare of all beings.

### Aditi

She is a purely abstract deity in the Ṛgveda whose main characteristic is the power of delivering one from the bonds of physical suffering and moral guilt. She, however, occupies a unique position among the abstract deities owing to the peculiar way in which the personification seems to have come about. She is the mother of the small group of deities called Ādityas, often styled 'sons of Aditi'.

In the BP. it is said that she is the daughter of Dakṣa and was married to Kaśyapa (3.25, 51). But according to the older mythology of the Ṛgveda (2.27.1) Aditi is the mother of Dakṣa as an Āditya, though in a cosmogonic hymn (10.72.4-5) she is said to be his daughter as well as his mother by the reciprocal generation which is a notion not unfamiliar in the Ṛgveda. In the BP. also she is said to be the mother of the twelve Ādityas, viz., Viṣṇu, Śakra, Aryamā, Dhātā, Tvaṣṭā, Pūṣā, Vivasvān, Savitā, Mitra, Varuṇa, Amśa, Bhaga (4.57, 58). When the demons defeated her sons she prayed to Lord Sūrya and obtained him as her son Mārtaṇḍa after practising severe penance (chapter 32). The demon Narakāśura had robbed Aditi of her ear-rings. Lord Kṛṣṇa defeated Narakāśura and deprived him of the ear-rings. He then went to the heaven and returned the ear-rings to Aditi. Thereupon Aditi granted him a boon that he would be invincible in the world and to Satyabhāmā she granted another boon that she would never age or grow ugly (203.22-24). These and other myths are found in other works as well.

### Gāyatri

In the BP. it is stated that she is the mother of all the Vedas. She is very holy and she destroys sin (67.17). Gāyatri is a mantra dedicated to the Sun and is to be recited in sun-worship. She is the first of the metres.

### Virajā Mātā

In the BP. it is said that Virajā Mātā is the mother goddess Brahmāṇi and she resides in the Virajākṣetra in the Utkalapradeśa. One who worships her saves his seven generations and goes to Brahmāloka (42.1-2).

### Kṣudhā

The literal meaning of Kṣudhā is hunger. The BP. states that this goddess emerged out of the mouth of death. She had a terrible form. Her nature is constituted of anger and she torments sinners (85.8-14).

### Oṣadhis

In the BP. it is stated that they are the mothers of the world. The sacrifice, *svādhyāya* and religion are established in them. All diseases are removed by them. They produce food and protect animals (119.1-4). They have the form of Brahmā and Prāṇa (120.10). Soma is their husband.

### Mātarah

The BP. states that at the time of war between the gods and the demons, drops of perspiration fell from Śiva's body and from them the Mātarah emerged. The place where they emerged was called Mātṛtirtha and they were worshipped by gods and men. They killed all the daityas and they are worshipped along with Lord Śiva (112.12, 13).

In general it is said that the goddesses Śraddhā, Puṣṭi, Tuṣṭi, Śānti, Lajjā, Sarasvatī, Bhūmi, Dyauḥ, Śarvarī, Kānti, Ūṣā, Āśā, Jayā, Mati, and others attended the sacrifice of Dakṣa and the goddesses Sinī, Kuhū, Dyuti, Puṣṭi, Vasu, Kīrti, Dhṛti, and Lakṣmi attended the Rājasūya sacrifice of Soma (9.16). The goddesses Kīrti, Prajñā, Medhā, Sarasvatī, Buddhi, Mati, Kṣānti, Siddhi, Mūrti, Dyuti, Gāyatrī, Sāvitrī, Maṅgalā, Prabhā, Kānti, Nārāyaṇī, Śraddhā, Kauśikī, Vidyuti, Saudāmini, Nidrā, Rātri, Māyā surrounded Lord Viṣṇu (68.56-58).

### Gautamī

The BP. establishes Godāvarī as the Ganges of the south. It devotes a long portion consisting of 106 adhyāyas (chapters 70-175) to the glorification of the river Gautamī. In the Vedic literature, the river Godāvarī is not referred to. There are numerous references to Godāvarī in the epics and the Purāṇas but it is in the BP. that Godāvarī and the subsidiary tirthas on it have been lauded at great length. The BP. generally refers to Godāvarī as Gautamī. It is stated by the BP. that the Ganges to the south of the Vindhya

mountain is called Gautamī and that to its north is Bhāgīrathī (78.77). It is said to be 200 *yojanas* long and there are three crores and a half of *tīrthas* on it. (77.8-9). A bath in the Godāvārī when Jupiter enters the sign of Leo has been regarded even up to the present day as very meritorious. The BP. says that three crores and a half of *tīrthas* that exist in the three worlds come for a bath in the Godāvārī when Jupiter is in Leo and that bathing in the Bhāgīrathī every day for sixty thousand years confers the same boon as a single bath in the river Godāvārī when Jupiter is in the Zodiacal sign of Leo (175.83-84; 152.38-39). Jupiter is in Leo for one year once in twelve years. Crowds of pilgrims throng at Nasik in their thousands from all parts of India in the Simhastha year.

The BP. eulogizes Gautamī in the following way. She is called Pāvanī, Paramārtihārīṇī, Śreyaskarā, Pāpapratarīṇī, Śāntīrūpā, Śāntīkarī, Maṅgalā, Śubhā and Aghanāśīnī (85.8). She is Jalodbhūta and Maheśvara-jalodbhavā (85.8). She is called Dāridryanāśīnī (85.16) and is also called Brāhmī, Māhesvai, Vaiṣṇavī and Tryambakā (85.12-13). She is the beloved of Lord Śiva and is held by him on his head. She is the goddess of rivers, destroyer of sins, is worshipped by the three worlds, gives the desired fruits, is Brahmamayī, and emerges out of the feet of Viṣṇu and the locks of the hair of Lord Śiva (199.9-12). She is a boat in crossing the meaningless world (131.29). She is Viśveśvarī, Yogamāyā and Abhayadāyīnī (131.30). She is Devanadī, greater than the great and lord of the world. She is worshipped by Brahmā, Iśa and others and sins are destroyed by remembering her (72.3-6). She purifies the three worlds, has a divine form, applies divine ointments, and is called Sarasvatī, Jagaddhātrī, Jagajjādyaharā, Viśvajananī, and Bhuvaneśvarī (164.43-45).

Various anecdotes are related to glorify the river Gautamī. Once the gods sent Agni to inform Lord Śiva of danger of the demon Tāraka to himself. At the time Lord Śiva was in privacy with Pārvatī and in his great wrath, Śiva threw his virile-semen into Agni who threw it into two parts in his wife from which the twins Suvarṇa and Suvarṇā were born. As there was the 'anyonyaretovyatisaṅgadoṣa' in the case of the twins, they took the forms of various gods and goddesses and enjoyed freely with



them. On seeing this, the gods approached Agni and all of them worshipped the river Gautamī and the children were cleansed (chapter 128). Again on praying to the river Gautamī, a brahmin Ajigarta was released from hell when he had sold his son Śunaḥśepa owing to his inability to maintain the family (chapter 150). A brāhmaṇa Sanājjāta was enjoying with his mother Mahī, both being unaware of the identity of each other. When the sage Gālava revealed their relationship, both of them went to the river Gautamī and purified themselves by taking a bath in it (92.2-48). A bird Ciccika had two mouths on account of the bad deeds in its past birth and had no happiness in the present birth. The king Pavamāna took it to the river Gautamī and by giving it a bath in it, enabled the bird to go to heaven (chapter 164). A brāhmaṇa Gautama was freed from the sin of gambling in the same way (chapter 170). Madhucchandāḥ, a *purohita* of the king Śaryāti revived king Śarayāti by praying to Gautamī (chapter 138). A hunter who had killed a female-pigeon went to heaven in a flying vehicle after taking a bath in the river (chapter 80). Even such grave sins as adultery with the wife of one's teacher are expiated by taking a bath in the river Gautamī. Lord Indra was freed from the sin of brāhmaṇa-murder by the sprinkling of the water of the river Gaṅgā (chapter 96). Pṛthuśravāḥ, son of Kakṣivān, got freedom from his triple debts by taking a bath in the river Gautamī (chapter 9).

The river Gautamī is also said to lessen the effects of a curse. The sage Gautama is also said to have cursed his wife Ahalyā to become a dry river as Indra had slept with her by taking the form of the sage Gautama; but Ahalyā regained her original form on joining the river Gautamī (chapter 89). Añjanā and Adrikā, the mothers of Hanūmān, were deformed on account of some curse. They got back their original beauty by praying to the river Gautamī (chapter 84). A Havyaghna, who had become black on account of some curse, regained his complexion on being sprinkled by the water of the river Gautamī (chapter 133). Kaśyapa had cursed his wives Suparṇā and Kadrū to become rivers as they had violated his instructions to be observed during their pregnancy. On praying to the river Gautamī, they regained their original form (chapter 100). Kadrū was in addition cursed with blindness as she laughed at a sage during a sacrifice. She too

regained her eyesight by the grace of the river Gautamī (chapter 100).

Gautamī is said to fulfil all wishes. Harṣaṇa, son of Sūrya and Chāyā, worshipped Gautamī and made his parents happy. A brāhmaṇa Vṛddhagautama married a lady older than himself. As some sages made fun of them they prayed to the river Gautamī and she became younger (chapter 107). The *oṣadhīs* got their desired husband Soma on worshipping the river Gautamī (chapter 119). Once the Āṅgirasas started practising penance but as they had not taken the permission of their mother before starting it, their penance was not fruitful. They then worshipped the river Gautamī and became the Vyāsas (chapter 158). By praying to Gautamī, Pramati released his father from prison (chapter 171) and Lord Viṣṇu killed the demoness. Kaṅkālinī who was troubling Āsandiva (chapter 167). By worshipping Sarasvatī on the bank of the river Gautamī, the *rākṣasa* Paraśu went to heaven (chapter 163). The river Gautamī declared the superiority of Laksmī over Daridrā when there was a dispute between them (chapter 137). She also granted a boon to Kaṇva that no one will suffer from hunger in his family (chapter 85). The *dāna* given at Daśāśvamedhatīrtha on the banks of Gautamī results in endless merits (chapter 83).

### DEMONS

Probably the earliest Sanskrit expression for a 'demon' is *asura* and though this word is used in later literature as a general term for demons for a malignant disposition, it was originally restricted to beings of a god-like nature, and even applied to the gods themselves. In the Ṛgveda, the word *asura* is used as an epithet of Rudra and other deities and is an especial attribute of the ancient deity Varuṇa, who is first an impersonation of the vault of heaven, and then identified with the supreme being. In Avesta, Ahura is the name of the highest god. In the Taittiriya Saṁhitā it is said that Prajāpati created them with his breath. In the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa the seventh Manu is made to produce gods, *asuras* and men. On the other hand, in the Vedas various orders of evil beings are spoken of under the names of *dasyus* (RV. 3.4.56) *rākṣasas*, (RV. 7.104, 10.87) *yātudhānas*, (RV. IV. 87) *piśācas*, (RV. I. 133) and *paṇīs*.

The BP. recognises four types of demons, viz. *daityas*, *dānavas*, *rākṣasas* and *asuras*. The sons of Diti were called *daityas* and those of Danu were called *dānavas*. Apart from these, other demons who are not the progeny of either Diti or Danu have also been given the names of *daityas* and *dānavas*, e.g., Ariṣṭa is called a *daitya* (189.46-58) and the demon Mitha though not mentioned in the genealogy of Danu is designated as *dānava* (127.7-8). Sometimes a demon is called the lord of *daityas* (134.16) as well as an *asura* (199.12).

The genealogy of *daityas* and *dānavas* is given in the BP. as follows : Diti, the daughter of Dakṣa, was married to Kaśyapa and she had two sons Hiraṇyakaśipu and Hiraṇyākṣa and a daughter, Simhikā, who was married to Vipracitti. Hiraṇyakaśipu had four sons, Hrāda, Anuhrādha, Prahrāda and Samhrāda. Hrāda had two sons Śiva and Kāla. Prahrāda was given the kingdom of *daityas* and *dānavas* (4.5). Virocana was born to Prahrāda and Bali was the son of Virocana. Bali had hundred sons of whom Bāṇa was the eldest. They practised penance and the names of some of them were Dhṛtarāṣṭra, Sūrya, Candramāḥ, Candratāpana, Kumbhanābha, Gardabhākṣa and Kukṣi. The sons of Hiraṇyākṣa were learned and strong. Their names were Bharbhara, Śakuni, Bhūtasantāpana, Mahānābha and Kālanābha. Samhrāda gave birth to Nivātakavacas, and they had three crores of children and resided at Maṇivati. They too were indestructible by the gods and eventually Arjuna killed them (3.90-92).

Danu gave birth to a hundred sons by Kaśyapa. They were brave, strong and practised penance. The names of some of them were Dvimūrdhā, Śaṅkukarṇa, Hayaśirāḥ, Ayomukha, Śambara, Kapila, Vāmana, Mārica, Maghavān; Ilvala, Svasṛma, Vikṣobhaṇa, Ketu, Ketuvīrya, Śatahrada, Indrajit, Sarvajit, Vajranābha, Eka-cakra, Tāraka, Vaiśvānara, Pulomā, Vidrāvaṇa, Mahāśirāḥ, Svarbhānu, Vṛṣaparvā and Vipracitti. As the progeny of all these is innumerable it is indescribable. The daughter of Svarbhānu was Prabhā, that of Pulomā was Śaci; that of Hayaśirāḥ was Upaditi; that of Vṛṣaparvā was Śarmiṣṭhā and those of Vaiśvānara were Pulomā and Kālikā.

The progeny of Mārica consisted of 60,000 *dānavas* and there were other 1,400 *dānavas* belonging to Hiraṇyapura. These along

with Paulomas and Kāleyakas were also indestructible and by the grace of Lord Brahmā, Arjuna killed them. Vipracitti, the son of Danu, married Sīmīhikā, the daughter of Diti and by the *saṁyoga* of daitya and dānava elements thirteen best types of dānavas were born. They were very brave and were called Sainhikeyas. They were called Vamśya, Śalya, Nala, Vātāpi, Namuci, Ilvala, Svaṣṭma Añjika, Naraka, Kālanābha, Saramāna and Surakalpa. They had hundred thousand grandsons. Though the above-mentioned sons of Diti are called daityas, the maruts whom Diti gave birth to were called gods, and though originally they were meant to kill Indra (3.109-122), eventually they became the greatest helpers of Indra.

Elsewhere it is said that at the time of milking the earth, Madhu was the milker of *asuras*, their milk consisted of Māyā, Virocana was their calf and their vessel was made of iron; the milker of *rākṣasas* was Rajatanābha, blood was their milk, Sumālī their calf and a skull their vessel (4, 104, 106). There is no clear line of demarcation to distinguish groups of *rākṣasas*, *asuras*, *piśācas*, etc. though the *piśācas* are too mean and low to be confused with demons of the highest type. The *nāgas*, though distinct from the *asuras*, are a group affiliated and usually mentioned alongside.

The meaning of the terms *ādityas*, *dānavas*, *rākṣasas* and *asuras* is as follows. The *rākṣasas* are sometimes regarded as produced from Brahmā's foot, sometimes with Rāvaṇa as descendants of Pulastya, elsewhere they are styled children of Khasā or Surasā. According to some they are distinguished into three classes, one king of a semi-divine benevolent nature and ranking with *yakṣas*, etc., another corresponding to titans or relentless enemies of the gods; an a third answering more to nocturnal demons, imps, fiends, goblins, going about at night, haunting cemeteries, disturbing sacrifices and even devouring human beings. This last class is the most commonly mentioned. Their chief place of abode was Laṅkā. The *dānava* are a class of demons often identified with the *daityas* or *asuras* and held to be implacable enemies of gods or *devas*. The *daityas* are known as the sons of Diti and the *asuras* are regarded as children of Diti by Kaśyapa. As such they are demons of the first order in perpetual hostility with the gods, and must not be confounded with *rākṣasas* or imps who animate dead bodies and disturb sacrifices.

As regards their general description it could be said that they were ugly and deformed. The names Śaṅkukarṇa (chapter 3), Ekākṣa (213.90) etc., suggest that they were deformed. Many a time they were animal-shaped; the names Kūrmakukkuṭavaktra, Śaṣolukamukha, Kharoṣṭravādāna, Varāhavādāna, Mārjārasikhivaktra, Nakrameṣānana, Gojāvimaḥiṣānana, Godhāśallakivaktra, Kroṣṭuvaktra, Ākḥudarduravaktra, Vṛkamukha, Makaravaktra, Krauñcavaktra, Aśvānana, Kharamukha, Mayūravādāna, etc. suggest this (213-93-97). They lived in Rasātala, mountains, oceans, rivers, villages, forests, sky, air and Jyotirloka (149.4-5). They wore various types of dresses and decorated themselves with garlands and used ointments. They wore diadems, earrings, turbans, *kiriṭa* and wore the skin of elephants and black deer. They were also called *nīlakavāsāḥ*. They had wide cheeks. They wielded various weapons like *śataghñī*, *cakra*, *muṣala*, *bhīndipāla*, *aśvayantras*, *āyudhas*, *śūla*, *ulūkhala*, *pāśa*, *mudgara*, *parigha* and great slab stones. They had long hair, their necks were like *kambu* (conch) and some of them were lustrous (213.90-99).

Some *daityas* were religious. The BP. states that the great demon Bali was indestructible and that he protected the kingdom with righteousness and there were no troubles in his kingdom. He was a great devotee of Viṣṇu and when the gods approached Viṣṇu to protect them from Bali, Viṣṇu said that Bali was too dear to him to be killed and therefore Lord Viṣṇu took the form of Vāmana and made him the king of Rasātala (chapter 73). Some demons practised severe penance. Hiraṇyakaśipu, the ancestor of the *daityas* practised great penance and got the power to remain indestructible by the gods (139.11-12). Meghahāsa, the son of Rāhu, practised severe penance in order to avenge the death of his father who was killed by the gods when he tried to acquire a portion of the nectar that was obtained from churning the ocean. The gods pacified him and placed Rāhu in the sky and made Meghahāsa the king of Nairṛta direction (chapter 142). By the power of penance, the demon Hiraṇyakaśipu had made himself invincible; Lord Viṣṇu had to take the form of Nṛsiṃha to kill him (chapter 149).

The main work of the demons was to obstruct the sacrifices of sages, kings and gods. Thus Sindhusena, a great demon, defeated the gods and carried away the sacrifice to Rasātala. Thereon

Lord Viṣṇu took the form of Varāha, killed him and brought back the sacrifice (72.8-15). A demon Hiraṇyaka obstructed with his retinue the sacrifice of king Priyavrata; thereupon the sage Vaśiṣṭha killed them with his rod (chapter 103). Mārīca and Subāhu obstructed the sacrifice of brāhmaṇas, so Rāma killed them (213.138). The *rākṣasas*, Aśvattha and Pippala, were the sons of the *rākṣasa* Kaiṭabha. They obstructed the sacrifice of Agastya, took the form of Brāhmaṇas and devoured the other brahmaṇas. Lord Śami found out their trick and using the same principle ate them up (188.11-12). The *dānava* Mithu obstructed the sacrifice of king Ārṣṭisena and carried away the king together with his retinue to Rasātala. Thereupon Devāpi, the son of *purohita*, prayed to Lord Śiva and brought them back (chapter 127). The tendency to obstruct sacrifices went to such an extent that a demon was named Havyaghna and he was granted a boon by Brahmā to devour any sacrifice at will. His whole family was black in colour by the curse of Lord Brahmā. When he obstructed the sacrifice of the sage Bharadvāja and ate the sacrificial cake, Bharadvāja asked him about his blackness and on learning from him about the curse sprinkled the water of river Gautamī and gave him back his fair skin (chapter 133).

The demons were in state of continuous war with the gods. They were generally very strong and the gods were always defeated. Indra felt helpless before the strength of the demons and had to seek the protection of Brahmā, Viṣṇu or Śiva. Thus the demon Tāraka obtained a boon from Lord Brahmā that he would remain invincible. Even Lord Viṣṇu expressed his inability to defeat him. Thereupon the gods approached Himālaya and with the help of Kāmadeva disturbed the penance of Lord Śiva and Śiva married with Pārvatī, the daughter of Himālaya, and requested them to create a son who would kill the demon Tāraka (chapter 71). Another story tells how Mahāśani defeated Indra and asked his father Hiraṇya to look after him. Then he attacked Varuṇa, but Varuṇa offered him his daughter, and on Varuṇa's advice, he released Indra and ordered Indra to consider Varuṇa his lord. This shows how powerful the demons were and how Indra had to agree with them (chapter 129). Namuci was a great enemy of Indra and there was a terrible fight between them. Indra eventually cut off the head of Namuci with foam (129.4-6). A *daitya*,

Ambarya, was also invincible. He was the lord of Daṇḍaka. He possessed a strong army and a terrible fight ensued between him and Lord Nṛsimha at the end of which Nṛsimha killed him (149.10-12). As a boon was granted to Rāvaṇa, he was unconquerable by gods, *rākṣasas*, *yakṣas*, *rakṣases*; he was very brave and was always surrounded by crores of *rākṣasas*. He was black as collyrium and brave as a lion (213.129-135).

Disturbing the penance of some sage was also considered the work of the demons. A great *asura* took the form of a beautiful maiden and disturbed the penance of king Dhanvantari (12.8-15). When Brahmā sent his *māyā* to distract the attention of the demons who were obstructing the sacrifice of the sages, Śambara, the lord of the *daityas*, devoured her (134.9-11). There was another *rākṣasa* named Paraśu. He had a deep hatred for sacrifices and brāhmaṇas. He had the capacity to take various forms according to his liking. Sometimes he took the form of a brāhmaṇa, sometimes a tiger, sometimes a god, an animal, a woman, a deer, or a child. He took the form of a brāhmaṇa and went to the sage Śākalya and expressed his desire to devour the sage but he saw Lord Viṣṇu in the form of the sage and refrained from killing him (163.7-10).

Sometimes the gods befriended demons. An interesting story relates how after killing Namuci, Indra befriended Maya, the brother of Namuci, by the use of a trick. Maya who wanted to avenge his brother's death, now advised Indra to pierce the foetus of Diti which contained a son who was meant to kill Indra (chapter 124). Rāvaṇa was a great devotee of Lord Śiva (Chapter 143). Bāṇa was a great devotee of Śiva and when Kṛṣṇa came to fight with Bāṇa, Śiva and Kārttikeya fought on behalf of the *asura* Bāṇa (chapter 206).

In his life Kṛṣṇa had to face many demons. In his childhood, he killed Pūtanā, a demoness who killed children (184.7-10). Again, he killed the demon Ariṣṭa, who had come to him in the form of a bull (189.46-58). He also killed Keśi (190.29-37) and Dhenuka (186.4) the donkey-shaped. The *asura* Naraka was born to Pṛthvī by Lord Viṣṇu in his Varāha incarnation (220.23). Lord Viṣṇu killed him in his incarnation as Lord Kṛṣṇa and took away all his possessions and married all his 16,000 wives (220.30.35).

Narakāsura was very powerful. He was the king of Prāgjyotiṣapura. He had imprisoned the daughters of the *daityas*, *siddhas* and kings, and had in his possession the *chatra* of Varuṇa, the Maṇiparvata, the Mandara mountain, and the ear-ornaments of Aditi (202.8-11). Again, Lord Kṛṣṇa killed the *daitya* Mura and his 7,000 sons, Hayagrīva and Pañcajana (292.18-19). Lord Kṛṣṇa killed another demon by the name of Pañcajana who had carried away the son of sage Sandīpani to the ocean and after killing him made a conch, Pāñcajanya out of his bones (194.27, 28). Pradyumna, the son of Lord Kṛṣṇa, killed the *asura* Śambara who had thrown him in the ocean after the sixth day of his birth (200.2,3.19).

Elsewhere it is said that Viṣṇu in his different forms killed the various demons, Hiranyakaśipu (180-28), Tāraka (179.21-24), Kālanemi (179.25), Vipracitti (180.29), Madhu and Kaiṭabha who wanted to kill Brahmā and who had emerged out of his ear (180.37). Kālanemi was again born as Kamsa, the son of Ugrasena who was killed by Kṛṣṇa (chapter 181). In his incarnation as Rāma, Lord Viṣṇu killed the demons Yamahasta, Prahasta, Nikumbha, Kumbha, Narāntaka, Yamāntaka, Mālāḍhya, Mālikāḍhya, Indrajit, Kumbhakarṇa and Rāvaṇa (176.44-46). As Rāvaṇa had become too impudent on account of boon, Rāma killed him (213.137). Rāma freed Virādhā and Kabandha from their state of being demons as they had obtained that form due to a curse though originally they were *gandharvas* (213.140). In his Vāmana incarnation, Lord Viṣṇu killed the demons Vipracitti, Śiva, Śaṅku, Ayaḥśaṅku, Ayaḥśiras, Aśvaśiras, Hayagrīva, Ketumān, Ugra, Vyāghra, Puṣkara, Aśvapati, Pahrāda, Kumbha, Saṁhrāda, Śalabha, Kupatha, Krodhana, Kratha, Bṛhatkīrti, Mahājihva, Śaṅkukarṇa, Mahasvāna, Diptajihva, Mṛgapāda, Namuci, Śambara, Vikrasa, Gariṣṭha, Variṣṭha, Pralamba, Naraka, Indratāpana, Vātāpi, Ketumān, Asilomā, Pulomā, Bāskala, Pramāda, Mada, Svāmiṣṭa, Kālavadana, Karāla, Keśi, Ekākṣa, Candramāḥ, Rāhu, Śambara, and others (213.82-90).

Thus it could be said that the BP. gives a fairly broad idea of demonology as it deals extensively with the *dānavas* Hiranyaka, Mitha, Dhenuka, Pralamba and Lavaṇa; the *daityas* Bali, Tāraka, Maya, Namuci, Hiranya, Śambara, Hiranyakaśipu, Ambarya, Madhu, Kaiṭabha, Keśi, Pañcajana and Mura; the *rākṣasaḥ* Sindhusena, Aśvattha, Pippala, Havyaghna, Rāvaṇa, Paraśu,



Virādha, Kabandha; and the *asuras* Tama, Namuci, Śambara and Naraka.

### Sages

The BP states that there were different groups of sages in different *manvantaras*. Thus it relates that the seven sons of Brahmā, viz., Marici, Atri, Aṅgirāḥ, Pulaha, Kratu, Pulastya and Vaśiṣṭha were the sages of the Svāyambhuva *manvantara* and they resided in the northern direction (5.8-9). The *maharṣis* of the Svārociṣa *manvantara* were Aurva, Stamba, Kaśyapa, Prāṇa, Bṛhaspati, Datta, Atri and Cyavana (5.11-12). In the Uttama *manvantara*, the sages were the seven Vaśiṣṭhas, the sons of Vaśiṣṭha, and Ūrjāḥ, the sons of Hiranyagarbha (5.16-17). The sages of Raivata *manvantara* were Devabāhu, Yadudhra, Vedaśiras, Hiranyaromā, Parjanya, Ūrdhvbāhu, the son of Soma, Satyanetra, the son of Atri (5.20-21). The sages of the fourth, i.e., Tāmasa *manvantara* were Kavya, Pṛthu, Agni, Jahnu, Dhātā, Kapivān, Akapivān (5.25-26). The sages of the sixth, i.e., Cākṣuṣa *manvantara* were Bhṛgu, Nābha, Vivasvān, Sudhāmā, Virajāḥ, Atināmā and Sahiṣṇu (5.29-30). The sages of the Vaivasvata *manvantara* were Atri, Vaśiṣṭha, Kaśyapa, Gautama, Bharadvāja, Viśvāmitra, Jamadagni (5.34,35).

The BP. then states that the sages are meant for the maintenance of *dharma* and protection of the world. At the end of every *manvantara*, four sages move to Brahmaloaka while four others take their place (5.39-41). Further it enumerates the future sages of the future *manvantaras*. The sages of Sāvarni *manvantara* would be Paraśurāma, Vyāsa, Ātreya, Aśvatthāmā, the son of Droṇa born in the Bhāradvāja family; Śaradvān born in the family of Gautama, Gālava born in the Kauśika family and Aurva, the son of Kaśyapa (5.43-45).

Some sages were very learned, and had studied all the *śāstras*. Thus Vyāsa is highly eulogized. About him it is said that he was well-versed in all the *śāstras*, an expert in the Vedas and Vedāṅgas, the composer of the Mahābhārata, the speaker of Purāṇas and Āgamas, engrossed in the welfare of all beings, meditating on *adhyātma*, and the best among the intelligent (26.6-7). He knew the past, the present and the future (26.26). He is also praised for composing the Brahma Purāṇa (chapter 245). The great sages

(26.9-14) like Kaśyapa, Jamadagni, Bharadvāja, Vaśiṣṭha, Jaimini, Dhaumya, Mārkaṇḍeya, Vālmiki, Viśvāmitra, Śatānanda, Vātsya, Gārgya, Āsuri, Sumantu, Bhārgava, Kaṇva, Medhātithi, Māṇḍavya, Cyavana, Dhaumya, Asita, Devala, Maudgalya, Tṛṇayajña, Pippalāda, Saṁvarta, Kauśika, Raibhya, Maitreya, Hārīta, Śāṇḍilya, Vibhāṇḍa, Durvāsāḥ, Lomaśa, Nārada, Parvata, Vaiśampāyana, Gālava, Bhāskari, Purāṇa, Sūta, Pulastya, Kapila, Ulūka, Pulaha, Vāyu, Devasthāna, Caturbhujā, Sanatkumāra, Paila and Kṛṣṇa went to sage Vyāsa to solve doubts about worldly troubles. Elsewhere (chapter 145) it is said that the sages Mārkaṇḍeya, Bharadvāja, Vaśiṣṭha, Atri, Gautama Yājñavalkya, Jābālī and other *munis* were the propagators of *śāstras* and proficient in the Vedas. Vedāṅgas, Purāṇas, Nyāya and Mīmāṃsā. They discussed with Lord Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva whether karma was higher or jñāna was higher and came to the conclusion that as nothing can be attained without performing an action, karma should be given prime importance. Again it is said that when the *munis* killed king Vena as he had behaved in unrighteous way, the sages Vāmadeva and others approached sage Kapila who was a knower of the highest essence, engrossed in penance and vrata and who was cruel as well as kindhearted and asked him what they should do. The sage advised them to cut the arm of Veṇa out of which Pṛthivī, the righteous, would be created (chapter 141). The sage Āpastamba asked a very interesting question to the sage Agastya (130.5-14) as to who among the three gods Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva was the highest. Sage Agastya's remarkable answer establishes the identity and non-difference of the three gods and thus blends the theories of many gods with the theory of one god, and concludes by saying that the forms of the three gods are different and the Vedas are the authority on this but regarding the formless, there is only one, non-dual, and no other. Still, however, for the sake of achieving success, one should worship Lord Śiva. Once it is asserted that the sages Sanaka and others know the inner secret of Vedānta (129.69). Vāhlika, the son of Kaṇva, was well-versed in the Vedas and the Vedāṅgas (148.4). Śunaḥśepa, the son of Ajigarta, was a knower of Brahma (151.3). The god Dhanvantari was born to Dhanu as a result of severe penance and he learnt the Āyurveda from the sage Bharadvāja and divided it into eight parts and taught it to his pupils (11.36-38). Elsewhere it is said that the sages like Vaśiṣṭha, Jābālī, Yājñavalkya, Aṅgirāḥ,

Dakṣa. Mārica who were devoted to Viṣṇu, others like Śātātapa, Śaunaka, Devavrata, Bhṛgu, Agni, Veśya, Atri, Marīci, Manu, Gautama, Kauśika, Tumburu, Parvata, Agastya, Mārkaṇḍeya, Pippala and Gālava who were engrossed in the practice of yoga and the sages Vāmadeva, Aṅgirāḥ and Bhārgavas who were proficient in the Smṛti, the Śruti and the Purāṇas worshipped the river Godāvāri (154.2-4). The sage Sandīpani was an expert in Dhanurveda and Lord Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma learnt it from him (194.22-25).

The sage Kapila was considered to be a manifestation of Lord Viṣṇu and the fire emanating from his eyes burnt the progeny of king Sagara (8.55-56). The sage Nārada was considered to be the best among the Devarṣis (69.70).

The performance of sacrifice was one of the main functions of the sages. Thus many sages had gathered together in the Naimiṣa forest for the performance of the sacrifice that was to last for twelve years (1.11). The sage Ātreya performed sacrifices with the help of many sages and at the completion of them, he obtained the power to move everywhere (140.2-4). The sage Bharadvāja performed a sacrifice and offered the sacrificial cake for the Agniṣomiya and the Aindrāgna and then he transformed the black form of the demon Havyaghna by sprinkling the water of the river Gautamī on him. The sage Vaśiṣṭha and others performed a sacrifice on the banks of the river Godāvāri (134.2).

Another most important function of the sages was to mind the welfare of the world. When being harassed by Rāhu, the sun was falling to the earth the sage Prabhākara blessed him and saved the world from the calamity of darkness (13.8-14). When it did not rain in the kingdom of Kāśī, the sage Śvaphalka was called and after his arrival, it began to rain (14.4-8). When the unrighteous Veṇa harassed the people, the sages killed him and created Pṛthvi out of his right hand (4.42, 49; 2.21). The mountain Vindhya was rising higher and higher and in order to avert the calamity, the sage Agastya went up to him and requested him to promise not to rise till his return. Ultimately he never returned and the mountain remained where it had stopped (118.3-5).

Sometimes the sages helped the gods. In the marriage of Lord Śiva with Pārvatī, the sages Vaśiṣṭha, Agastya, Paulastya

and Lomaśa had gone to the Himavān mountain (72.3). The sages Māṇḍavya, Vaśiṣṭha, Gautama, Agastya, Atri, Kaśyapa and others freed Indra of the sin of brahmin-murder. Dadhici gave his bones to gods in order to prepare a weapon out of them (chapter 110). Dadhici was a great devotee of Lord Śiva and was enraged when Dakṣa did not invite him to his sacrifice (39.28, 29). When Indra was dethroned for the third time owing to his undesirable union with Ahalyā, he went to the sage Bṛhaspati for advice (122.51). When Saramā lied about the theft of dogs to Indra Bṛhaspati found out the truth and held Saramā to be the cause of it all (131.9-13). The sage Maudgalya was a staunch devotee of Viṣṇu and Viṣṇu manifested himself to him every day (136.5, 6). When there was a great famine in the world, the sage Gautama supported the world and the gods by the power of his penance (7.27-30). When Śiva concealed the river Ganges in his locks, Pārvatī, requested Skanda and Gaṇeśa to find a way out by which Śiva could be made to release her. At that time Gaṇeśa thought that none was capable of bringing the Ganges down except the sage Gautama (74.39-42). Finally the sage Gautama prayed to Śiva and brought the river Ganges to the earth (chapter 75).

The sages served as the *purohitas* or priests of the kings and advised them on all important matters. By the grace of the sage Vaśiṣṭha, king Sagara obtained sons (78.10). By the favour of the sage Ṛṣyaśṛṅga, king Lomapāda had a son, Caturaṅga (13.88) and king Daśaratha had his famous four sons, viz. Rāma and the others (123.84). All sages acted as *purohitas* at sacrifices and helped the kings. Thus the sage Kaśyapa acted as a *purohita* in the performance of the ten Aśvamedhas of king Bhauvana (82.3). Vaśiṣṭha acted as a *purohita* in the sacrifice of king Priyavrata (103.3) and Dakṣa (109.14) in the reign of the king Daśaratha (123.5). The sage Madhucchandāḥ was a *purohita* in the reign of king Śaryāti and he accompanied him when he started to conquer the world (138.3, 4). When king Aila was distressed on account of the separation from Urvśī, the sage Vaśiṣṭha consoled him (151.12-16). The sage Viśvāmitra taught Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa the great *māheśvarividyā*, *dhanurvidyā*, *śastravidyā*, *astravidyā*, *laukikividyā*, *rathavidyā*, *gajavidyā*, *aśvavidyā*, *gadāvidyā* and the recitation of *mantras* (123.97-98)

and gave them divine weapons (213. 142). By the advice of the sage Uttanka, the sons of king Kuvalāśva killed the Dhundhu and the sage Uttanka granted them boons (7.74-85). King Indradyumna performed a sacrifice with great pomp after calling the priests who were experts in the performance of sacrifice (47.35-36).

The lives of pious sages made a deep impression on the lives of people. The sages practised severe penance and restrained their senses. Thus the sage Atri practised acute meditation and fully controlled his sense organs. Atri practised further penance called *anuttara* for 3,000 divine years and his virile-semen manifested itself in the sky in the form of the moon, and the tears falling from his eyes brightened the ten directions (9.2-6). Sage Viśvāmitra, the son of king Gādhi, was a great ascetic and he became a great *brahmārṣi* (10.55-60). He had many famous sons like Devarāta, Kātyāyana, Hiranyākṣa, Reṇu, Reṇuka, Kacchapa and Hārīta. They were the promulgators of the *gotras* Pāṇini, Babhru, Dhyanajapya, Pārthiva, Devarāta, Sālaṅkāyana, Bāskala, Lohitāyana, and Hārīta (10.58-63). The sage Śākalya practised severe penance on the mountain Śubhra (163.4). The *siddhas* like Sanandana and others meditated on Kṛṣṇa with concentration on the tip of their nose (193.42). There is an interesting example of the Āṅgirasas who though they practised severe penance did not achieve success as they had not asked the permission of their mother before practising it (158.8-11).

The sages were unable to bear *adharmā* and cursed those who stopped the proper path of action. Thus when Śāmba and his friends wanted to make fun of the sages Viśvāmitra, Kaṇva and Nārada and had dressed Śāmba in the role of a pregnant woman, the sages cursed that Śāmba would give birth to a *muṣala* (club) which would bring disaster to the whole Yadu family (chapter 210). Another anecdote says that when the nymphs Rambhā, Tilottamā and others pleased the sage Aṣṭāvakra, he granted them a boon that they would get Lord Puruṣottama as their husband but when they laughed at his crooked limbs, he cursed them that they would be carried away by the *dasyus* (212.79-84). When Indra cohabited with Ahalyā after taking the form of her husband Gautama, the sage Gautama cursed him to have 1,000 signs of the female organ on his body and cursed Ahalyā to become a dry river (87.59). King

Kārtavīrya gave his whole kingdom in *dāna* to Agni and Agni devoured it. In this disaster, the hermitage of the sage Āpava was also burnt, so he cursed Kārtavīrya that he would be killed by the ascetic brāhmaṇa, Paraśurāma (13.192-197). When Pippala, the sister of Viśvāvasu made fun of the sages at a sacrifice, they cursed her to change into a river (132.3). Kadrū was cursed to lose one eye as she poked fun at the sages (100.28).

Sometimes the gods had to intervene in the affairs of the sages. Thus when Soma carried away Tārā, the wife of sage Bṛhaspati, Lord Brahmā brought about a reconciliation (9.19-25).

Many a time the sages grew jealous of each other and great rivalry arose among them. Thus the rivalry between the sage Vaśiṣṭha and the sage Viśvāmitra is well-known (147.5). A sage Kaṇva was very envious of the prosperity of sage Gautma and he prayed to the river-goddess Godāvari in order to attain prosperity (chapter 85).

About sages Vaśiṣṭha, Atri, Pulastya, Aṅgirāḥ, Pulaha, Kratu, Bṛghu and Marīci who were the sons-in-law of Dakṣa, it is said that they were great religious yogins, observers of *vratas* who meditated on Brahma (34.16-17), and about the sages Bṛghu, Atri and Pulaha that they worshipped sun (33.17).

Some sacred places were ascribed to the *ṛsis*. Thus Prabhāsa, Prabhāsa, Bhārgava, Agastya, Nara, Nārāyaṇa, Vaśiṣṭha, Bharadvāja, Gautama, Kaṣyapa and Manu were called the Āṛṣatīrthas after the name of the sages (70.37, 38).

Various anecdotes are given in the BP. regarding different sages. Thus it is said that in the marriage of Lord Śiva with Pārvatī. Brahmā's semen-virile fell on seeing the beauty of Pārvatī and from it the sages Vālahilyas were created (72.18, 19). The sage Atri obtained the power to move everywhere at will by the performance of sacrifice, and he went to Indraloka. He then asked Tvaṣṭā to build as imilar Indraloka for himself. He enjoyed his pleasures but when he was confronted by the troubles of the *danavas* he requested Tvaṣṭā to destroy the Indraloka (chapter 140). Elsewhere it is said that Atri worshipped Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Maheśvara and requested them to be his sons. Later on they were born to him as Datta, Soma and Durvāsāḥ (chapter 144). The sages

Āṅgirasas saved people when the earth devoured them (155.4). Lord Viṣṇu protected the sage Mārkaṇḍeya at the time of the great deluge (chapter 53). By the grace of Lord Śiva, the dead child of the sage Kapālagautama was brought back to life (59.8). The sage Yājñavalkya had discussions with king Janaka regarding *bhukti* and *mukti* (88.5-15). When Brahmā created Ahalyā, he had a problem before him as to who should be given the charge of bringing her up. He selected the sage Gautama and later on married Ahalyā to him (87.5, 6, 29). The sage Gālava was well-versed in the Vedas and the Vedāṅgas and he showed the proper way of behaviour to Sanajjāta and his mother (92.40-41). The sage Māṇḍavya consecrated Indra in the country of Mālava (96.18, 19). King Hariścandra asked the sage Nārada and Parvata about the importance of a son in one's life (104,4-14). The sage Veda was a great devotee of Lord Śiva (169.4). The seven sages came with their wives to see the merging of the river Gaṅgā into the ocean (chapter 172) and divided the river Gaṅgā into seven parts and called the seven parts after their seven names, viz. Vāśiṣṭhī, Dakṣiṇeyī, Vaiśvāmitrī Vāmadevī, Gautamī, Bhāradvājī, Ātreyī and Jāmadagnī, (173.3-5). The sage Viśvāmitra explained the philosophy of karma to Viśvarūpa (173.10-25). Lord Viṣṇu in his incarnation as the sage Dattātreya taught the *aṣṭāṅga yoga* to the sage Alarka (183.32-33). The sage Vaśiṣṭha drank the semen-virile of Śiva and deposited it in the six wives of the seven sages excluding Arundhatī. Afterwards a child with six faces was born who later on killed Tāraka (82.1-12). When the sage Jahnu did not accept the river Gaṅgā as his wife, she drowned the sacrificial altar of the sage. Thereupon, the sage was full of wrath and decided to drink up the Ganges, but on being requested by other sages, he accepted her as his daughter and she was thereafter known as Jāhnavī (10.14-21, 13. 82-88).

Thus the gods, the goddesses, the demons and the sages constituted the belief-system of the Purāṇic Hindus which represented their hopes and aspirations, fears and frustrations, and provided variegated sources of norms, values and ethics for the functioning of highly pluralistic society. A belief system, however,

acquires its meaning and function through the practices of the believers. It can therefore be easily conjectured that the society as envisaged in the Brahma Purāṇa had actually witnessed such deity-reverence and subtle deification emitting through all its excretory organs.

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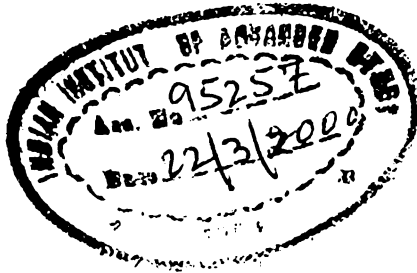


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Besides these all printed editions of the Brahmapurāṇa—its Bengali rendering edited by the present writer and published from Calcutta, 1984 in particular.







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Printed at the Ratna Printing Works, Kamachha, Varanasi.