

CHAPTER THIRTYONE

Agastya's Departure to the South

PROMPTED BY HIS DESIRE TO KNOW THE POWER OF
SUVARṆAMUKHARĪ ARJUNA ASKS BHARADVĀJA
ABOUT THE SAME

Śrī Sūta said:

1-2. The prominent scion of the family of Bharata (Arjuna) bowed down to the leader of sages who had concluded his evening holy rites. He had a splendour like that of fire and was comfortably seated. He was pleased by his gladdening (words) of nectarine sweetness and cooling fragrance. Then he uttered the following words of decorous gravity full of humility:

Arjuna said:

3. O most excellent sage, I am the only blessed one in this world, since I have been enthusiastically honoured by you as though I am not at all different from your own son.

4. My mind, the curiosity of which has been aroused by your affection and encouragement, strongly urges me to imbibe the divine nectar of your words.

5. From which mountain has this great river originated? By whom was it brought? What is the merit obtained if the holy rites of bath, charitable gift etc. are performed there?

6. It behoves you, O good sage, to recount to me, your humble (follower), the origin and power of this (river). A devotee has to be blessed by you.

7. On hearing the words of Arjuna Bharadvāja, the excellent Brāhmaṇa, a skilled speaker, looked at his face and spoke these words:

Bharadvāja said:

8. O mighty-armed Arjuna, you are the sanctifier of the family of Kurus. You are specially worthy of my honour because you are the younger brother of Dharmaputra.

9. Many kings have been seen (by me), but, O Phālguna, they are not endowed with grace, rectitude, kindness, liberal-mindedness, courage and sagacity like you.

10. Nobility (of birth), learning and affluence are (usually) the cause of haughtiness in strong men. But in the case of excellent persons like you they are the cause of (greater) modesty and courteousness.

11. In spite of the abundant pleasures and vast kingdom, O descendant of Kuru, who else other than you can resist the tendency to deviate from normal decency?

12. O son of Kuntī, I am overcome by your extraordinary good qualities. What is it that should not be disclosed to you, O (noble one) with a mind full of such keen curiosity?

13. O king, listen to the divine story heard by me from a sage. On hearing this story all creatures are liberated from the afflictions born of sins.

STORY OF ŚAṄKARA'S MARRIAGE AS NARRATED
BY BHARADVĀJA

14. Formerly the Goddess, the daughter of Dakṣa, was subjected to insult by her father. After forsaking that body she became the daughter of the Snow-clad Mountain (Himālaya).

15. The Mountain (Himālaya) was approached and requested by the Seven Sages. Hence he was ready to give his daughter in marriage to Mṛtyuñjaya (Śiva).

16. The Bull-emblem Lord of the universe came to the residence of Himavān, named Oṣadhīprastha,¹ in order to marry Sārvamaṅgalā (Pārvatī).

17. At his bidding all the living beings, both mobile and immobile, came there to rejoice in the felicity and prosperity of the Lord of Bhūtas (goblins).

18. The earth in the northern region became heavily burdened with their weight and caved in to such an extent that it reached the nether worlds.²

19. The southern region became very light because there was no burden on it. Hence it went up, on seeing which everyone became frightened.

20. On realising this change in the position of the earth, Maheśvara turned towards Agastya and said, "Come here, O highly intelligent one." Then he spoke these words:

21-22. "Since all the Bhūtas have come down here, the earth has become over-burdened by their weight. It has undergone a great alteration. Hence it behoves you, O highly intelligent one, to level up the earth. How can this be done by anyone other than you?"

23. Indeed you are born of my splendour. You are engaged in the protection of the worlds. Hence, O my dear one, at my instance level up this earth.

24-26. You must not stay here among all those persons who have come down here eager to witness my marriage celebration. If you stay here, no one will be competent to set right the change in the level of the earth. Hence, O sinless one, you must go. Wherever you stay, I shall reveal unto you this form of mine resplendent in my marriage with the daughter of the Mountain."

1. A significant name as Himālaya has been traditionally famous for medicinal plants, some luminous even by night, (vide *Kumārasambhava* I.10).

2. Imbalance of the earth is a novel reason in this Purāṇa for sending sage Agastya to the South.

**AGASTYA'S DEPARTURE TO THE SOUTH OF THE HIMĀLAYA
FOR THE LEVELLING OF THE EARTH**

27. After saying this Maheśvara embraced him and bade farewell to him. Saying "So be it", the sage bowed down to him and went in the direction of South.

28. When Agastya, a tiger among sages, went to the southern region after crossing the Vindhya mountain, the earth became level.

29. Suras, Gandharvas and Kinnaras experienced the thrill of delight (at it) and eulogized the Pot-born Sage who stayed on there (even) after removing the imbalance of the earth.

30. He then proceeded from that place and saw a lofty mountain standing upright in front of him, sustaining the earth by means of its extensive foothills.

31. It appeared like a veritable mine of great medicinal herbs and all types of gems and jewels, all with unimpaired brilliance and created by the Self-born Lord (Brahmā).

32. By means of its lofty peaks having extensive currents of water it appeared to hold up the sky permanently (preventing it from) falling upon the earth.

33. Agastya, the eminent sage, slowly climbed up the mountain and decided to reside in the beautiful region of its summit.

34-37. He built his excellent hermitage on a charming piece of land on the northern bank of a lake on that (mountain) with water that could be compared with nectar. The lake was surrounded by many trees and had the brilliance of clusters of lilies and lotuses.

He propitiated the Pitṛs, the celestial sages and the presiding deity of architecture in accordance with the injunctions.

Accompanied by multitudes of sages, he stayed there for a long time on that mountain frequented by Devas, Siddhas, Gandharvas and celestial damsels.

As the Pot-born Sage stayed in a penance grove with his mind

engrossed in penance, the mountain became possessed of excellent sublimity and therefore acquired the name Agastyaśaila.¹