

confused. I am the beloved wife of Śaṅkara, the daughter of Himālaya mountain.

65. O son, do not entertain any doubt because of your error in noting the present state of my body. This whiteness of my complexion has been granted to me by the Lotus-born Lord who had been propitiated.

66. You have been cursed by me because the events brought about by the Daitya had not been known. It was thought that a woman entered (the place) while Śaṅkara was seated there alone.

67. It is impossible to revoke the curse, but I shall tell you this. You will be born of Śilāda in a rock of human shape.

68-73. In the holy forest of Arbudāraṇya¹ which yields heavenly pleasures and liberation unto men, O Vīraka, there is the *Liṅga* called *Acaleśvaraliṅga*. It yields the same benefit unto men as the Viśvanātha liṅga at Vārāṇasī. Its benefit is equivalent to that of ten pilgrimages to Prabhāsa. It is said that by taking one trip to the great mountain Arbuda, the same can be acquired. By performing penance in this place and by casting off the essential ingredients of the body (i.e. by dying) in this place, men will never become *Samsārin* (i.e. subjected to births and deaths), as Maheśvara himself has uttered. If (a pilgrimage to) Arbuda could be (performed) by persons who are miserable due to frequent births and they can resort to it, why should they remember Vārāṇasī and Kedāra? It is not necessary. There you shall propitiate Lord Bhava. Bearing the name Nandin, you will come here quickly and will attain the status of gatekeeper.”

On being told thus, Vīraka experienced the greatest pleasure. His hair stood on end. He bowed down to her, eulogized his mother with various words and spoke to her:

74-75. “I am blessed, O Goddess, because I will get the rare (blessing of) human birth. This curse is in the form of a blessing, particularly in the Arbuda Mountain, because very near it is the holy meeting place of Mahī and the ocean.

1. Arbuda is Mount Abu in the Aravali range in Rajasthan. Vasiṣṭha's hermitage was here. It is a sacred hill to Jains also.

76-77. (If the earth had the form of a cow) this region would constitute the udder of the earth. It is between the mountain and the sea. I shall go there and attain great merit, thanks to the devotion to Bhava. Then, O mother, I shall return." After saying this, he became the son of a rock.

The goddess entered the abode of the Moon-crested Lord.

The end of the narrative of Arbuda

78-81. On seeing her, the Three-eyed Lord said to her, "Fie upon women!" She bowed down to him and said, "This is true. Not false. Women who constitute the insentient part of *Prakṛti* surely deserve censure. It is by the favour of *Puruṣas* (men, souls) that they are liberated from the ocean of worldly existence."

Thereupon, the delighted Hara said to her, "O splendid lady, you are a befitting one now. I shall confer upon you a son, O splendid one, whereby you will attain fame."

Thereupon Hara, the abode of many mysterious features, sported with the goddess.¹

82. Thousands of years (passed by). Devas who were impatient-minded urged Fire-god to know about the activities of Śaṅkara.

83. In the form of a pigeon, Fire-god deceived the gate-keeper stationed at the entrance and entered the place near Hara.

84-85. The Lord of Devas saw him. Observing that Pārvatī had bent down, he said to Fire-god, "What has been done by you is not proper. O vicious one, my excellent semen virile has been emitted from its source. Take it or I will burn you down with my fury."

86. He (Fire-god) became frightened and imbibed it up. Since he was the mouth of all Devas, those Suras were made bewildered and excited along with Fire-god.

87. Breaking open the bellies of these (Suras) the semen virile of Maheśvara came out and that became a lake of mercury extending to a hundred *Yojanas*.

1. The following story of the birth of Skanda, the parental claim of Śiva, Pārvatī, Agni, Svāhā, the river Gaṅgā and six Mothers forming Kṛttikā (Pleiades) in the sky is repeated twice in Mbh, *Vana* 225, 226, 231; *Anuśāsana* 85, 86.

88. Vahni (Fire-god) too became excited. He discharged it (i.e. Śiva's semen) into Gaṅgā. Burning within herself that goddess cast it off by means of her waves.

89-90. Thereby it became the Śveta (white) mountain famous in the three worlds.

In the meantime, Vahni was called to Himālaya by the Seven Sages who were performing *Homas*. They invoked him through the power of *Mantras*. After coming there, Vahni accepted his share of what was offered as *Homa*.

91. On another day (still) stationed there, he saw their wives who were on a par with the trunk of the golden plantain tree (in complexion). They were like the digit of the moon (in beauty).

92-95. Looking at them with full-blown eyes, Vahni was overcome by sexual desire. He thought again, 'It is not justifiable (i.e. proper) that I should be excited too much (at the sight of these ladies). I am loving the chaste wives of the Brāhmaṇas. Those ladies do not entertain love for me in return. This is a very serious sinful crime. It is clear that I will perish like a blade of grass. By committing this, my fame will be destroyed. The ignominy will last as long as the moon and the stars stay.'

After thinking thus in various ways, he went into a deep forest. He was unable to restrain his mind even through numerous means. Thereupon that love-lorn one became unconscious.

96. Then his wife named Svāhā understood his misdemeanour. On understanding it, she thought in her mind; she was greatly delighted.

97-98. 'Since I am with him for a long time he is treating me with indifference and contempt. He has abandoned me, his own wife, and has begun to desire carnal gratification from the wives of the noble-souled Seven Sages. Therefore, I shall assume the form of these ladies and sport about with him.'

There was an exceedingly splendid lady named Śivā. She was the wife of Aṅgiras.

99-101. (Svāhā) assumed her form and approaching Fire-god, she said: O Agni, I have been scorched by the god of Love. It behoves you to love me in return. If you don't do so, O Lord, consider me (no better than) dead. O Hutāśana, I am the wife

of Aṅgiras and my name is Śivā. I came here along with all of them. They too will come here in due order. You are our perpetual lover and our mind is constantly fixed in you.”

102. Already afflicted with love, he had his sexual intercourse with her. When he was delighted, that gentle lady too became delighted. She came out of the middle of the forest.

103-107. She thought thus, ‘If they see this form of mine in the forest, they will falsely attribute to the Brāhmaṇa ladies, the fault coming from Fire-god. Hence, I shall protect this and become a *Garuḍī*.’ Assuming the form of *Suparṇā*, she saw the Śveta mountain abounding in stems of reeds (*Śara*) and guarded by Rākṣasas and Piśācas. She soared suddenly to the top of the mountain and deposited the semen virile in a golden pot because she was unable to bear it. She assumed the forms of the remaining wives of the noble-souled Seven Sages and had amorous dalliance with Fire-god. But she could not assume the divine form of Arundhatī.

108-109. It was on account of the power of penance (of Arundhatī) as well as the regular services rendered by her to her husband that Svāhā could not assume her form.

O leading scion of the family of Kuru, Agni’s semen virile was deposited by her like that six times in that pot. It was deposited by Svāhā on the first day in the dark half of the lunar month of Caitra. Thereupon Fire-god bewailed and swooned on account of his misery.

110-113. ‘Alas, sin has been committed by me.’ Thinking thus, he resolved to cast off his physical body. Thereupon an ethereal voice said, “Do not die. This is the inevitable future. O Fire-god, who is free from (the shackles of) future destiny. It was due to the inevitability of the future events that other men’s wives were resorted to by you, though mentally. In the great sacrifice of Śvetaketu you will suffer from indigestion brought about by continuous (pouring in of) offerings of ghee. But give up your sorrow. These were not they (i.e. the wives of the Seven Sages). It was your own wife Svāhā. It behoves you to see your son in the pitcher on the Śvetaparvata.” Thereupon, Fire-god went there and saw his son, the Holy Lord.

Arjuna asked:

114-115. Why did Svāhā assume the forms of those six (ladies), O great sage? They are all devoted to their husbands. They are chaste ascetic women (refulgent) like fire; Svāhā was guilty. Was she not afraid of those six (ladies)? For, O sage, they are competent to burn the entire universe through their devotion to their husbands.

Nārada replied:

116-120. This is true, O most excellent one among the descendants of Kuru. Listen to that reason also why they did not curse her (though) their forms had been assumed by her. Due to their ignorance, those six wives took their baths in Gaṅgā at the place where formerly the semen virile of Rudra had been cast off by Fire-god. Therefore, they got excited with passion and they were deluded by that brilliance (of semen virile). Bashful (to come in the presence) of their husbands, they remained in secret on the banks of Gaṅgā.

On observing this opportunity, Svāhā wanted to fulfil her desire. She entered their bodies and took away their refulgence (semen virile). The wife of Vahni sported with him as has already been mentioned by me.

121. It was because they remembered this service, O descendant of Bharata, that she was not cursed by them. For curse should not be given to a person who has helped.

122. On coming to know by means of their (spiritual) knowledge that they had become impure, the great sages abandoned the six of them except (the seventh) the gentle lady Arundhatī.

123. The holy lord Viśvāmītra sought refuge in Kumāra. He composed a divine hymn to Mahāsenā.

124. It consists of one hundred and eight names. By repeating them, sins are destroyed and one shall attain perfect knowledge.

Hymn to Mahāsenā¹

125. You are *Brahmavādī* (expounder of the Vedas); you are Brahṁā and Brahman, *Brāhmaṇa-vatsala* (one who loves

1. Although Skanda is hailed here as the highest and the most prominent deity in this hymn, in Vedic literature he has little prominence.