

CHAPTER THIRTYNINE

*The Glory of Kapītīrtha:
Rambhā and Ghṛtācī Liberated from their Curse*

Śrī Sūta said:

1-8. Henceforth, I shall recount the glory of Kapītīrtha.¹ That Tīrtha was formerly created by all the monkeys on Gandhamādana for helping everyone, O Brāhmaṇas. After Rāvaṇa and other demons were killed, the monkeys made the Tīrtha and joyously took their baths there. The monkeys, who could assume any form they desired, granted this boon unto the Tīrtha:

“All those who take their holy bath in this Tīrtha with their minds devotionally inclined, shall attain salvation. They will be liberated from great sins. Those who take their holy plunge here in this Tīrtha need not be afraid of Narakas. All the men who take their holy bath here, will never meet with poverty. Those who take their holy plunge here in the Tīrtha will not be harassed by Yama. He who always utters “I shall go to Kapītīrtha”, and goes a hundred paces, O Brāhmaṇas, shall attain the highest region. A Tīrtha on a par with this Tīrtha has never existed before nor will there ever be.”

9-10a. After granting this boon to this Tīrtha, all the eminent

1. This Tīrtha is a tank at Pamban.

monkeys bowed down to Rāma, the son of Daśaratha and requested him: "O lord, let some wonderful boon be granted to this Tīrtha by you."

On being requested by the monkeys, O Brāhmaṇas, Rāmacandra became delighted very much. In order to please the monkeys, he granted this boon:

10b-13. "Those who take their holy plunge here in this Tīrtha will attain the merit of holy bath in Gaṅgā. They will get the merit arising from holy bath in Prayāga as well as the benefit of all the Tīrthas. They will get the excellent merit of Agniṣṭoma and other Yāgas. They shall get the merit of reciting Gāyatrī and other great Mantras. The people will attain the unimpaired merit of those who make the gifts of a thousand cows. They will get the merit of reciting the four Vedas. They will get the merit of the worship of Brahmā, Viṣṇu, Maheśa and other Devas."

14-18. Thus Rāma granted the boon to Kapitīrtha, O Brāhmaṇas. When the boon was granted by Rāma thus, the following persons began to praise the Tīrtha to which Rāma had granted the boon: the three-eyed Lord Śiva, Brahmā, Indra, Yama, Varuṇa, Agni, Vāyu, Kubera, the Moon-god, the Sun-god, Nirṛti, Sādhyas, Vasus, all other Devas, Viśvedevas and others, Atri, Bhṛgu, Kutsa, Gautama, Parāśara, Kaṇva, Agastya, Sutīkṣṇa, Viśvāmitra and many other sages, Sanaka and other Yogins as well as Nārada and other celestial sages. All these praised the Tīrtha in various ways.

19-22. They took their holy bath in that Tīrtha that bestows all desired objects. All those Devas and sages said this also: "Since this excellent Tīrtha has been created by the monkeys, it will become famous in the world as Kapitīrtha."

Hence all those who are desirous of salvation should certainly go to Kapitīrtha. Rāmbhā who was turned into a stone by the curse of Kauśika¹ formerly, O Brāhmaṇas, took her bath there and regained her own form and went to heaven. I cannot adequately recount the greatness of this Tīrtha.

The sages said:

23. Why did Kauśika curse Rāmbhā, O Sūtanandana? How did the celestial damsel who had become a stone go to Kapitīrtha? Describe all this in detail, O excellent sage.

1. For the story cf VR, I. 64.1-15; Mbh, *Anuśāsana* 3.11.

Śrī Sūta said:

24-29. Formerly there was a king named Viśvāmitra in the family of Kuśika. Once that powerful great king who was eager to see different kingdoms, wandered over the earth, surrounded by his army.

After wandering over many lands, he went to the hermitage of Vasiṣṭha. He was invited by the noble-souled Vasiṣṭha to enjoy his hospitality. The king agreed and prostrated before him like a rod.

Due to the power of Kāmadhenu, O Brāhmaṇas, Vasiṣṭha, son of Brahmā, extended his hospitality to Viśvāmitra, the king. On knowing the power of Kāmadhenu, the scion of the family of Kuśika requested Vasiṣṭha for Kāmadhenu, the bestower of whatever is desired. When it was refused by Vasiṣṭha, Viśvāmitra dragged the cow by force.

30-33. He was defeated by the Mlecchas and others sent forth by Kāmadhenu.¹ Then the king propitiated Mahādeva and secured many missiles from him. He went to the hermitage of Vasiṣṭha (again) and discharged all the missiles and miraculous weapons as well as the Brahmā missile. By the power of his penance, Vasiṣṭha, son of Brahmā, struck down all those miraculous weapons with a single Brahmaṇḍa (divine rod of Brahmā). Viśvāmitra who was defeated became extremely ashamed. In order to achieve Brāhmaṇahood for himself, he went to forest for performing penance.

34-38. He performed penance in the three quarters beginning with the East and ending with the West. In all those three quarters (viz. East, South and West) Kauśika (i.e. Viśvāmitra) had to face great obstacles.

Thereupon he went to the northern quarter on the Himālaya mountain devoid of impurities. He performed a very great penance on the meritorious banks of the river Kauśikī that absolves one of sins. For a period of a thousand divine years, he abstained from food. He conquered his sense-organs. He did not see anything. He curbed his breath. He controlled his anger. He was steady (in penance).

During summer, he stood in the middle of five fires. During

1. This quarrel with Vasiṣṭha and Viśvāmitra's defeat by Kāmadhenu is described in VR, I, cantos '52-54, 19-23 and also Mbh, Ādi 174.1-45.

winter, he stood in waters. During rainy season, he stood under the open sky. With his arms raised up, he stood thus without any prop. Thus he performed a very great and severe penance for achieving Brāhmaṇahood. Thereby the heaven-dwellers, Devas accompanied by Indra spoke to Rāmbhā these words:

Devas said:

39-43. O Rāmbhā, do tempt by means of your seductive movements, Sage Viśvāmitra who is engaged in penance on the banks of Kauśikī (modern Kosi) on the Himālaya mountain. Do anything to cause obstacles to his penance.

On being told thus by Devas of whom the leader was Indra, Rāmbhā replied to all the Suras, after bowing down to them with the palms joined in reverence.

Rāmbhā said:

Viśvāmitra, the great sage, is extremely cruel and wrathful. He will curse me in a fit of anger. I am, therefore, afraid of him, O Suras. Save me mercifully. I am your maid-servant.

On being told thus by Rāmbhā, Indra spoke to her:

Indra said:

44-48. O Rāmbhā, you need not be afraid of Viśvāmitra, the ascetic. I too shall come to assist you along with Kāmadeva. Vasanta (Spring) too, sweet on account of the chirping sound of cuckoo, will come. Exceedingly beautiful in form as you are, you do tempt the great sage.

On being told thus by Indra, Rāmbhā went to the hermitage of Viśvāmitra. She assumed a graceful form. Standing within the range of his vision, she tempted the sage by means of her graceful movements. At that time the cuckoo cooed delighting the minds (of all). On hearing the note of the cuckoo and on seeing Rāmbhā, the eminent Sage Viśvāmitra, the ascetic, became suspicious in his mind. On realizing that it was the work of Indra, the sage, rich in penance, cursed Rāmbhā in his anger.

Viśvāmitra said:

49-55. I am desirous of controlling anger. Yet you make me furious. So, O Rāmbhā, become a stone here and remain here for ten thousand years. Should you be saved in the meantime by any Brāhmaṇa, you will attain salvation.

On account of the curse of Viśvāmitra, she became a stone just after. She remained in his hermitage, O Brāhmaṇas for a long time in the form of a stone.

Viśvāmitra of righteous soul again performed a great penance. On the recommendation of Vasiṣṭha, he attained Brāhmaṇahood inaccessible to kings.

Rāmbhā remained in his hermitage for a long time in the form of a rock. In that very meritorious hermitage one honoured disciple of Agastya, the sage named Śveta, performed a great penance as he was desirous of salvation. While that great sage was performing the penance for a long time, a certain demoness, notorious by the name Aṅgārakā, came to his hermitage. She was extremely cruel. Her loud voice resembled thunder.

56. That terrible demoness defiled the hermitage with urine, blood, faeces and other filthy things. She harassed that sage in various other modes of nuisance.

57. The infuriated Sage Śveta fitted the stone, the result of the curse of Viśvāmitra, with a missile having Wind-god for its presiding deity and discharged it against the demoness.

58. When the Vāyavya (having Wind as the presiding deity) missile was aimed at her, the demoness fled. She was pursued by the stone fitted to the Vāyavya missile.

59-60. The frightened demoness fled to the shore of the southern sea. The rock fitted to the miraculous missile chased the fleeing demoness. As she jumped into Kapitūrtha and sank into it, the stone fell on her head and she died by the impact of the stone.

61-66. Thus Rāmbhā, who had been cursed by Viśvāmitra, discarded the form of a stone as it plunged into Kapitūrtha. She regained her form as Rāmbhā.

The charming lady was incessantly showered with flowers by the Devas. She got into a divine aerial chariot. She shone in her divine robes. She was bedecked in necklaces, armlets, bangles and nose-ornament. She was surrounded by her companions, the celestial damsels including Urvaśī. She repeatedly praised the glory