

CHAPTER TWO HUNDRED FIFTYFOUR

Tāṇḍava Dance of Śaṅkara

Śudra said:

1-3. These words of yours appear to be mysterious to me, O sage of excellent Vratas. It is my great luck and it is due to my previous merits that you have come to my house. Ever-imbibing the nectar-like words of yours, by the narrative of Gaurī, rich with special good features, I do not become satiated. How did Maheśvara perform the dance surrounded by the Suras?

4. How did all this happen in Cāturmāsya? What is called the Vrata to be observed? How did she bless? What is the blessing?

5. How is the Lord who grants me the benediction worshipped in the world? O excellent Brāhmaṇa, even as I ask, describe this in great detail.

6. O sage of excellent Vratas, be pleasant-faced and comfortable and narrate.

On hearing it, Gālava became delighted and said again:

Gālava said:

7. O sinless one, I shall narrate unto you this meritorious story that yields the fruit of ten thousand Yajñas. Listen with attention.

8. At the advent of Cāturmāsya, Hara observed the holy vow of celibacy devoutly and gladly.

9. He remembered the Devas and the great sages. Thereupon, the Devas arrived there and stood on the Mandara mountain.

10. They bowed down to Maheśāna with palms joined in veneration. On seeing that all of them had arrived, Hara said to them:

11-12. He told them what had been told by Pārvatī in another context: "At the advent of Cāturmāsya when the dance is begun by me, all of you with Indra as your leader should assist me."

They were delighted. After bowing down to the Trident-bearing Lord, they said, "So it shall be."

13-14. They returned to their respective abodes by means of aerial chariots resembling the sun. Then on the fourteenth lunar day in the bright half of Āṣāḍha, Maheśvara began to dance for the satisfaction and pleasure of Bhavānī, on Mandara, the most excellent of the mountains. The great sages went there:

15-17. They were: Nārada, Devala, Vyāsa, Śuka, Dvaipāyana and others. Aṅgiras, Marīci, Kardama the partriarch, Kaśyapa, Gautama, Atri, Vasiṣṭha, Bhṛgu, Jamadagni, Uttānka, Bhārgava Rāma, Agastya, Pulomā, Pulastya, Pulaha, Pracetas, Kratu and other great sages.

18. There were Siddhas, Yakṣas, Piśācas, Cāraṇas, Ādityas along with Cāraṇas, Guhayakas, Sādhyas, Vasus and Aśvins.

19. All these as well as Indra and others with Brahmā and Viṣṇu as their leaders arrived there with an eager desire to witness the dance of Maheśa.

20. Then the Gaṇas, the chief of whom was Nandin, duly gave jewels, ornaments and garments to the sages and others in due order.

21. Then thousands of musical instruments were played. "Be victorious", said everyone to the Lord who ordered the Vrata.

22-23. Bhavānī looked at Mahādeva with a delighted mind. The lady of splendid countenance shone in the midst of the four lady companions, Jayā, Vijayā, Jayantī and Maṅgalāruṇā. In her proximity the world shone with added lustre.

24. The splendour of her body is impossible to be described.

Īśa was also keenly observed by crores of the Gaṇas with multiple countenances.

25. He was surrounded by groups of Piśācas and goblins. At the head Nandī with his face resembling that of a monkey shone holding the golden wand (staff).

26. There were present Vidyādharas and Gandharvas like Citrasena and others. Nāgas and eminent sages were also present. They appeared as though they were painted in a picture.

27. There came Rāgas (musical compositions), the chief of whom was Śrīrāga. They are the sons of the Lord of great vigour. There were the *Amūrta* (incorporeal) sons born of Lord Hara.

28. Each of them had six wives (viz. Rāginīs) and the father of all of them was Pitāmaha. Along with those wives those Rāgas assumed graceful forms.

29. On being remembered by Śaṁbhu they appeared instantly. I shall tell you their names. Listen, O affluent one.

30. Śrīrāga, the most charming one, is the first son of Īśvara. He occupied a seat in the middle of the eyebrows. He is the giver of the supreme Brahman (Parabrahman).

31. In the centre thereof is the excellent Gaṇa born of Māheśa.

The second (Rāga) originated from the waist region. It is Vasanta of great repute.

32. Pañcama (name of a Rāga) is the third one, the ornament of the universe. It originated from Viśuddhi Cakra (situated in the inner throat). It is marked by the principle *Mahat*.

33. The Anāhata Cakra originated from the heart of Maheśvara. The Rāga Bhairava which itself is Bhairava (terrible) originated from the region of nostril.

34. This Cakra is named Maṇipūraka¹ and it is indeed the bestower of salvation. The fifty Varṇas (letters) named Aṅka originated from Maheśvara.

35. The twelve Rāśis (signs of the zodiac) and the constellations originated from Svādhiṣṭhāna (Cakra) along with the seeds of the universe.

36. The organ of generation of Īśa gets enlarged in a moment. Then Retas (semen virile) issues forth and the universe is created from the Retas.

1. According to Patañjali, this Cakra is in the navel region Svādhiṣṭhāna Cakra is two finger breadth above Mūlādhāra Cakra and Mūlādhāra or Ādhara Cakra is (internally) two finger breadth in the middle part between penis and anus.

37. From the Ādhāra Cakra the great sixth (Rāga) named Naṭa Nārāyaṇa originated. It is the favourite son of Maheśa. It is Nīla (blue in colour) and it has the exploit of Viṣṇu.

38. These personified Rāgas assisted by their wives (Rāgiṇīs) originated thus. Their wives originated from the region of the head of the Pināka-bearing Lord.

39-46. They are altogether thirty-six in number. Listen to them.¹

The following (Rāgiṇīs) are the wives of Śrī Rāga: (1) Gaurī, (2) Kolāhalī, (3) Dhīrā, (4) Drāviḍī, (5) Mālakausīkī (mod. Mālakaṁsa?), and the (6) Devagāndhārī.

The following are the wives of Vasanta: (1) Āndolā, (2) Kauśikī, (3) Caramamañjarī, (4) Gaṇḍagirī, (5) Devaśākhā, and (6) Rāmagirī (the note in the original text is confusing).

The following are the six wives of Pañcama: (1) Triguṇā, (2) Stambhatīrthā (current in the region about modern Cambay, (3) Ahirī, (4) Kunkumā, (5) Vairatī, and (6) Sāmaverī.

The six wives closely following Bhairava are: (1) Bhairavī, (2) Gurjarī, (3) Bhāṣā, (4) Velāgulī, (5) Karṇāṭakī, and (6) Raktahaṁsā. (No. 2 and 5 were local to those regions).

The six wives following Megharāga are: (1) Baṅgālī, (2) Madhurā, (3) Kāmodā, (4) Akṣinārikā, (5) Devagirī, and (6) Devālī.

The following are associated with Naṭanārāyaṇa: (1) Troṭakī, (2) Moḍakī, (3) Narā, (4) Dumbī, (5) Malhārī, and (6) Sindhumalhārī.

These bowed down to Giriśa and Maheśvarī and stationed themselves along with their husbands and also their forms and vehicles.

Brahmā propitiated Śaṅkara by means of Mṛdaṅga.

47. Keśava displayed the *Tālakriyā* (procedure for beating time) to Maheśa. Brahmā made a melodious note by means of the four-syllabled musical instrument.

48. Vāyus (Winds) played on the instruments melodiously and majestically.

Mahendra played the *Suśira* instrument Vaṁśa (flute) and created very melodious note.

1. This seems to be the information available to the Purāṇa author. The Rāgiṇīs were named after geographical region or the Tribals who developed them e.g. Drāviḍī, Ahirī (special to Abhīra Tribe).

49. Vahni made the sound from the winnowing basket and Aśvins played on the Paṇava drum. Soma and Sūrya (went) round and played on their instruments by way of support to the other players.

50-51. Hundreds and thousands of the Gaṇas made sounds from bells. The eminent sages as well as the goddesses in the company of Pārvatī seated themselves on auspicious golden thrones and watched.

Vasus along with the great Urugas played on the Śṛṅgas (horns).

52. Sādhyas sounded Bherī drums and the other excellent Suras played on other instruments such as Jharjharī, Gomukha etc. Thus Sādhyas took active part in the great festival.

53. Gandharvas of melodious voice produced sweet notes from the strings of lutes. Siddhas around sounded golden horns.

54. Then the Lord assumed the body (dress, guise) of a great dancer. The crowns on the five heads were rendered splendid by serpents.

55. He let loose his entire tresses of matted hairs. The entire body was smeared with ashes. He wore necklaces and armlets on all his ten arms.

56. The Lord's physical form had the lustre of crores of Suns and it pervaded all the three worlds. With this form the Lord danced splendidly on that great mountain.

57. The instruments beginning with Viṇā (lute) are grouped as *Tata* (stringed ones). *Kāṁsyatāla* (Cymbals) etc. are *Ghana* (solid). *Vamśa* (flute) etc. are (*Suśira*) and *Vāditra* is the name for Tomara etc.

58-59. Thereafter, the four types of musical instruments sounded tumultuously. The form (splendour) of everything shone well such as the *Tālas*, *Paṭahas* etc. *Hastakas* (clapping of the hands), the *Mānas* (measurements and *Tānas* (a way of producing the different notes). The sound was full-throated, melodious, unfettered (uninhibited) and loud.

60. Viśvāvasu, Nārada and Tumburu, the leading Gandharvas, were the vocalists. The celestial damsels too had sweet voice.

61. The musical composition was divine and pure as well as well-conceived. It had the full complement of the three *Grāmas* (varieties of groups of Rāgas) and the seven notes.