4.0. METAMORPHOSIS

Metamorphosis or shapeshifting is a very popular subject in almost all the cultures of the world. Its comprehensive treatment is found in the arena of both Mythology and folk lore. Evolution theory of Science confirms the fact that some creatures assume their final form through the process of metamorphosis. Caterpillar metamorphoses into butterfly. Many birds and reptiles reach their final form through oval shape. Chameleons change their colour to protect them in the struggle for existence. Somekind of change in colour and shape are also noticeable in the world of Vegetation, the underlying cause being self defence and self existence. This can be called as natural metamorphosis for it occurs automatically without others' intervention. Man, since the time of its creation, is inseparably linked with his environment. He must have learnt the ways of living, self-protection, protected growth of his species from the environment and nature as far as practicable.
He must have been attracted and rejoiced at the accidental shapeshifting in the creatures and vegetation world. To his utter unconsciousness a hidden desire of metamorphosis might have been reared in him, may not be an impossibility and that very hidden desire might have given birth to fantasy. Co-existing with the animals and birds in the nature, having an idea of feeling one with them due to deep acquaintance with their life style might have created a sense of interest to imitate their sounds and actions. However, in course of time, the discerning ability in him must have urged to feel different and the best, giving up the infantile mentality gradually, living behind only a faint reminiscence of indifference. According to Monier Williams, in Indian life and Mythology it is difficult to draw a line of demarcation between gods, men and animals.¹

The closeness of gods, men and animals is evident from the Rāmāyaṇa, the Mahābhārata and the Purāṇas. Association of the elephant with Indra, Garuḍa with Viṃśu, serpent and the bull with Śiva, (Śiva is also known as ‘Paśupati’ - lord of the animals), elephant head and mouse with Gaṇeśa, Peacock with Kārttikeya, lion and tiger with goddesses Durgā, swan with Brahmā, owl with Lakṣmī, cows with kṛṣṇa and the relation of dog, cat, mongoose, cow, parrot, swan, pigeon, peacock etc, with men, speak of their close affinity. These animals express the power and strength of the gods with whom they are connected and also their subjugation to the deity concerned. Moreover Viṃśu’s incarnation of fish, tortoise, boar and

¹. M. Williams; Religious thoughts and life in India; P. 315.
manlion provides to think whether there can any line of difference be drawn between the God and animal. Of course it was a belief among the primitive men that all men were animals first.² Some primitive people of India and China had a belief that human souls could assume the form of animals and men.³ That Metamorphosis constitutes a subject matter and belief in the Mythology and Folklore of various countries is evident from the itinerary of the itinerants and missionaries. Gods and men were depending on the animals and this mutual dependence might have been the basis of the concept of metamorphosis for such a belief was not as strange to an ancient Indian as it is felt to us today. The Śāntiparvan also tells that in the beginning, when there was neither king nor government, men and animals lived in perfect harmony. They protected each other before they finally got wearied of this. Indian Vedanta philosophy which advocates the unity of individual soul (Jīva) and the ultimate soul (Brahman) also believes in the doctrine of karma (action) which causes birth in different bodies consequent upon good and bad deeds. A being can take the form beginning from insects to gods according to his actions. Monier William's view that no limit can be drawn between gods, men and animals, appears true. The doctrine

2. Hastings : *ERE* Vol. III. P. 594 : “All animals were men”
   “Certain tribes had belief in multiple souls. The Ho-Nāgas, the purumus of Manipur, Chhota Nagpur and Madhya Pradesh etc. Share this belief.”
of karma which determines the assumption of different bodies by a being is related with metapsychosis. Curse as a cause of metapsychosis is described abundantly in the Rāmāyaṇa, the Mbh. the purāṇas and folktales. Gods like Indra, Vāyu, Dharma taking birth as Pāṇḍavas, the vasus as Bhīṣma etc., the demigods (gandharvas) and the nymphs (apsaras) being born as human beings, birds, animals, demons, trees and stone due to curse are examples plentily available in Indian literature. In all these cases metamorphosis is caused according to the action performed.

Sometimes taboo determines metamorphosis. Mbh. Śāntiparvan, XIII-12 depicts the story of king Bhaṅgāśva who on account of entering a tabooed lake had metamorphosed in to a woman and become mother of hundred sons. Purāṇas like Matsya, Brahmāṇḍa, and Padma narrate the prohibited garden i.e. Śanībhuvanam entering which Ila, the son of Manu had transformed in to a woman Iliā and his horse in to a mare. The story of ‘Frog maiden’ of Mbh. (critical ed. III-90) is another instance of this kind. King Parikṣit of Ikṣhvāku dynasty, hearing an enchanting melody reached near a lake, in course of hunting expedition. He came across a beautiful maiden and proposed her to marry. She agreed on one condition to marry that the king should never tell her to touch water at any time. One day the king while wandering in the forest got thirsty and went to drink water. The queen by chance came in contact of water and metamorphosed in to a frog again.
Kālidāsa in his *Abhijnānaśākuntalam* describes about the tabooed amulet, which sage Mārica had given to Sarvadamana, the son of Śākuntalā with a condition that anybody except the parents of the lad, if touches it, the amulet shall turn in to a serpent and shall bite him. Many such instances are found in the folktales of other countries. A witch in the tree turns one of the two brothers and his animals in to stone by the touch of her magic wand has been described in the ‘Tale of two brothers.’

The story of king Midas is a popular one. Avaricious Midas asked for a boon from the god of wealth that all things touched by him shall turn in to gold. All foods, drinks and even his daughter whom he embraced out of affection turned in to gold.

Primitive people by taking recourse to herbal medicines and potions were metamorphosed in to beasts like tiger, wolf etc. inorder to fulfill their desires. Sages could also transform them in to animals to get their desires fulfilled. In the *Mbh.* we come across Kindama who being a rṣi could not accomplish his sexual desire, transformed himself in to a deer to copulate. King Pāṇḍu not knowing the sage in guise shot him dead with his arrow and was cursed by the later to be deprived of life while copulating. Here the ascetic power causes metamorphosis.

Another means of transformation is māyā, the deceptive art. Here curse has no role to play. By this delusive lore gods and asuras could make them disappear. Siddhas and gandharvas were known to expertise this lore. It is also known as ‘Devajanavidyā’ or

demonology. The demon king Rāvaṇa assuming the form of an ascetic abducted Sītā from Paṇcavatī. Mārīca deceived Rāma and Sītā wielding the form of a golden deer. Mbh. and the purāṇas narrate the story of Vātāpi and Ilvala, the demon brothers who having assumed the form of a rām and a brāhmin were killing the travelers. By dint of deceptive art Ilvala was feeding the travelers the meat of the ram (Vātāpi). After the end of eating Ilvala was calling Vātāpi by his name and vātāpi was coming out by tearing the belly. And thus they feasted on the dead body of the travelers.

The demoness Hiḍimbā assuming the form of a butiful maiden, by deceptive art, married Bhīma (Mbh. Vanaparva).

Perfection obtained through penance also causes metamorphosis. Hitopadeśa deals with a story, i.e. 'Be a mouse again' 'Punarmūṣiko bhava' where sage Mahātapā is said to have transformed a mouse into a cat, a dog, a tiger respectively. When the tiger wanted to attack the sage, the later again transformed it into a mouse by his ascetic perfections.

The Yakṣas posses perfections (siddhis). Kālidāsa has hinted about the lost perfection of the yakṣa (astaṅgamitamahimā) due to the curse of his master kubera.

In Indian tradition, as people believe, a means is followed to know what birth a person obtains in his next birth after death. On the eleventh night after the death of a person, a small altar of sand is made. Lighting a candle on the sandy altar an earthen pot is covered
over the lamp. On the next morning the earthen pot is taken away and the spot or trace if any on the sand is deciphered to guess the birth which the deceased will obtain. This is a belief in Orissa. The *Mbh.* and the Purāṇas are considered as folk literature. As a store house of the ways of living, thoughts and beliefs of common man, they also reflect the causes and types of metamorphosis. Curses causing metamorphosis being the topic, some curse episodes from the purāṇas explaining transformation shall be discussed in this chapter.

4.1 : TRANSFORMATION OF SEX OF ILA :

The story of transformation of sex of Ila has been narrated in various purāṇas\(^5\) like Matsya (*Mtp.*) Brahmāṇḍa (*Bmd.*) Padma (*pdm.P*) and Liṅga (*Lg.P*) It is the will of Pārvatī that caused the transformation. Though the term 'abhiśāpa' is not used, yet the intention of curse is well reflected in the expression *Umāyat samayah kṛtaḥ*. As curse has been explained as a spoken wish and always effects something undesirable, the will of Śiva and Pārvatī which resulted in the change of sex may be accepted as the effect of curse. Bearing this in mind the episode of Ila has been discussed under this title.

According to *Mtp.*\(^6\) Vaivasvata Manu had ten powerful sons. Ila the eldest was born by the performance of Putreṣṭi Sacrifice. Ariṣṭa, Dhriṣṭa, Nariṣyanta, Kāruṣa, Saryāti, Prṣadhra and Nābhāga were his

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5. *Mtp.* XI; *Bmd.* P. 11.60; *Pdmp* 1.8.75; *Lg.* P. 1.65.18.
Valiant brothers. Manu after entrusting the reign of the kingdom to IIa repaired to the forest for practising tapasyā. One day IIa started on an expedition of conquest and visited several countries. Following the horse he happened to enter Saravāṇa, the pleasure garden of Śiva and Pārvatī. At that time they were enjoying themselves in the pleasure garden and they had willed it that any male being coming within a radius of ten yojanas of their forest would be transformed into a female being. IIa had no knowledge of this will and was suddenly transformed into a woman the moment he entered the limit of the penance grove. All the characteristic features of woman started appearing in him. He was transformed into a complete woman with exquisite beauty, sonorous voice, long black tress of hairs, well-shaped teeth, moonlike face and breasts. IIa began to roam about in the forest. He had lost all his memory. On seeing IIa of matchless beauty, Budha, the son of moon was fired with lust and started devising plans for marrying her. Remaining at a distance from the limit of Saravāṇa, he called IIa near him and told cunningly that it was not the proper time for her to roam in the forest neglecting the arrangements of agnihotra. IIa could not understand what Budha said. He could remember nothing and asked Budha, 'Lord! I know not why I forgot to do what you have just said. I am in a peculiar state of forgetfulness; so much so that I am unable to recognise neither myself nor yourself. Tell me where you live, O pious one!' Budha replied that her name was IIā and that he was a kāmuka, who, owing to his versatile genius and deep lore, was known as Budha. His father was the lord of the brāhmaṇas. Hearing these words of Budha, IIā accompanied him to
his residence and enjoyed herself in the house of Budha. When, after a long period, Ilā did not return to the kingdom, his brothers set out in quest of him. Wandering a lot they chanced to pass by the Saravaṇa, where they came across the mare with saddle and decorations. They recognised the horse Chandraprabha, the famous horse of Ilā and became astonished at its change in to a mare. They asked their priest Maitrāvaraṇa (Vaśiṣṭha) about it. The sage drove into trance and knew all that had happened for which Ilā and his horse had been transformed in to female sex. The brothers of the transformed monarch requested the great sage to do something by which Ilā could be restored to manhood. Vaśiṣṭha advised them to propitiate Śiva and the brothers pleased Śiva by great devotion. The God then said that He could not go against His own will, but assured that if Ikṣvāku should perform Āśvamedha sacrifice, then Ilā would become a kimipuruṣa, though it would be impossible for him to get back his previous form. The brothers performed accordingly and Ilā became a Kimipuruṣa. On becoming a kimipuraśa Ilā used to remain in male and female form in alternate months. Ilā in his female form conceived in the house of Budha and gave birth to a notable son named purūravā. The region where Ilā was transformed came to be known as Ilāvṛta varśa. Purūravā became the founder of the lunar race. Ilā in his Kimipuruṣa form came to be known as Sudyumna and became the father of Utkal, Gaya and Haritāśva.

The Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad. P. Version of the episode is slightly different. It narrates that Manu impelled by Prajāpati instituted a horse sacrifice with an
intention of obtaining progeny. He offered oblation to Mitrā-varuṇa. A daughter was born to him named Ilā. She was the first among the off springs of Manu. As she was born from the portions of Mitrā Varuṇa, she went to them. Mitrā Varuṇa told her that she would be famous as Sudyumna in the three worlds. Getting this boon Sudyumna returned to his father Manu. On a hunting expedition, when Sudyumna entered the pleasure garden of Umā (Umāvana) which had previously been willed by Śiva and Pārvati that should any male being enter the garden would turn in to a female. Sudyumna unaware of this fact entered the limits of the pleasure grove and got metamorphosed into a female named Ilā. Sudyumna on account of his female hood was deprived of parental share (Kanyābhāvāttu Sudyuman naiva bhāgamavāptavān). It is the Bmd.P. which tells the cause of the so-called will of Umā. One day four kumaras wishing to visit Mahādeva entered the pleasure garden and found Siva and Pārvati engaged in love sport. At this Pārvati felt ashamed and told her lord that a caution should be laid so that any male entering the grove should be transformed into a female. And from that day all beings present in the garden became females.

Pdm.P. has the same episode as that of Mtp. with a change of few words like ‘Puṣkara Saṃitapovanam’ in place of Mahendravanālayam. However Liṅga P. refers to this episode very briefly and follows the account of Bmd.P. as regards to Ilā being born first to Manu by Putreṣṭi sacrifice.
From this episode the following facts can be observed.

1. That Ila being a descent of Manu is the founder of Lunar race in his female hood. Because Budha is the son of moon and he got Aaila Purūravā from Ila. The Lunar race is carried forward by Purūravā. Hence it can be said that the inception of lunar race was founded by a descent of solar race (Ila). So Ila is connected with both the solar and lunar race.

2. The will of Umā, the consort of Śiva, which caused the transformation of Ila acts as a cause of the origin of lunar race.

3. Though the term curse (śāpa) is not mentioned in the text, the will (Samaya) of Umā and Śiva which is clearly a spoken wish, serves as curse and causes metamorphosis of sex.

4. Only the Bmd. P. refers to the reason of the will (Samaya) of Śiva and Pārvatī.

5. Daughters were being deprived of the parental share in the purānic age. The sentence ‘Kanyābhāvāttu Sudyumna naiva bhāgamavāptavān’ stands testimony to that effect.

4.2. : BHARATA CURSED URVASĪ AND PURŪRAVAS :

The legend of Purūravā and Urvasi is very famous and ancient one. In Rv. 1.31.4 Purūravā is mentioned for the first time, where he is told as a beneficent and a friend of Agni. His love for the apsaras Urvasi is described in Rv.X95 in which he requests the nymph once more to bless him with her company, thus implying his previous
separation. The gods address him as the son of Ida (llā) and promise him happiness in heaven and their company if he would propitiate them with oblations. *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa (Sp.Br.) 11-5-1* contains the interpretation of the hymn X.95., Sāyaṇa’s exposition of which helps in understanding the story some what clearly.

The episode is described fully and in orderly manner in the *Viṣṇu P.* 7 and *Bhāg P.* 8. The former closely relates to the vedic version. Urvaśī a nymph of Indra’s court incurred the anger of Mitra and Varuṇa who cursed her to become the consort of a mortal, forfeiting the pleasure of heaven. Seeing her descended on the earth in a human form of matchless beauty, Purūravas the king of lunar race fell in love with her. She agreed to be his wife in two conditions. That he should assure her to guard her two pet rams safe and she should never see him nude. Purūravā agreed to the conditions. When a long time elapsed the denizens of heaven felt the absence of Urvaśī and decided to bring her back to heaven as soon as the curse ended. The Gandharvas entered the bed room of the king and took away the rams tied to the foot of the bed. Their bleating roused the king and Urvaśī. Thinking the darkness of the night shall not reveal his nudity before Urvaśī the king jumped up naked from the bed and followed the Gandharvas. There upon the Gandharvas produced a flash of lightning which revealed his nakedness to the view of Urvaśī. Urvaśī, then, according to the condition left the king and disappeared.

with the Gadharvas. When Purūravā came to know this loss, he wandered several years in quest of her in intense grief. Finally he came to a lake in Kurukṣetra, where he saw Urvaśī sporting with other nymphs. Recognising her he implored her to come back to him. Urvaśī refused but promised to pay him yearly visit. To fulfill the king’s desire of permanent association with Urvaśī, the Gandharvas gave him a brazier with fire to perform a sacrifice as a means of attaining his goal. The king brought the brazier and putting it in a thicket went in search of Urvaśī. Not finding her he came back to the spot, where in the place of the brazier he found two trees (śami and Aśvattha) grown up. Purūravā broke a branch from each and returning to his palace rubbed them together and generated fire. With this fire he performed several sacrifices and getting the rank of the Gandharvas and being elevated to the heavenly regions, he enjoyed the eternal society of his beloved nymph.  

This story is also found in the Kathā Sarita Sāgar (Taraṅga. 17) in a totally different manner from the VP. and Bhāg.P. version. Here it is narrated that Purūravā chanced to see Urvaśī in the Nandan grove and both of them fell in love with each other. As the king was a devotee of Viṣṇu, the latter knowing the heart of the former sent word by Nārada to Indra, asking him to bestow the nymph on the monarch. Then they were united. There was an occasion of festivity on account of victory of the gods over the asuras in Indra’s court which was accompanied with music and dance. The heavenly preceptor Tumbaru was Supervising. Rambhā, who was dancing
there committed a mistake, where upon, the king laughed at her. Tumbaru got annoyed at the audacity of the king and cursed him to be separated from Urvaśī until he would propitiate Viṣṇu. When the king came down to the middle world he found Urvaśī carried away by the Gandharvas. The king went to Bādarīkāśrama, gained the favour of Viṣṇu by penance and afterwards Urvaśī was restored to him by the Gandharvas.

The Purūravā & Urvaśī episode in the Mātp. some how comes nearer to the account of K.S.S. Purūravā the son of Budha and Iḷā was a valiant and virtuous king. He had performed hundred Aśvamedha sacrifices and earned great merit. Keśin and other powerful asuras accepted his supremacy and he became the monarch of seven fold earth. Fascinated by his might and grace Urvaśī became his bride. Virtue, wealth and desire once came to the king to ascertain which of them, according to him is the best. The king received them with great respect, but paid Virtue his deepest honour. Wealth and Desire felt offended and pronounced curse upon him. Wealth cursed him that avarice should cause his fall and desire declared that he should be separated from his bride. For that account he should suffer distraction in the forest of Kumāra on the Gandhamādana mountain. Virute declared that he should enjoy a long and pious life, that his descendants should continue to multiply as long as the sun and the moon endure. King Purūravā used to go to see Indra everyday. One day on his way to the realm of Indra, he met accidentaly demon keśī who was abducting the celestial nymph citrarekhā and Urvaśī. The
king fought with the demon bravely and rescued them by using vāyavyāstra (wind weapon). Subsequently they were handed over to Indra, who in return offered first friendship to the king. The nymphs being highly delighted sang the glories of Purūravā family.

The celestial dramatist Bharata had composed a drama called ‘Lakṣmī Svayamvarva’ in which Menakā, Rambhā and Urvaśī had to play different roles. Urvaśī was acting as Lakṣmī. While performing her part she saw purūravā in the audience. Being fired with passion she forgot the role which Bharata had taught her to play. Bharata in a fit of rage cursed her to be a subtle creeper on the earth and to be separated for fifty five years form Purūravā. He also cursed Purūravā to turn in to a piśāca. Bharata’s curse, in this episode, resulted in the transformation. What could be the justified reason for which Purūravā was cursed to be a piśāca (ghost)? Amarakoṣa explains the term piśāca as piśitarī mānīsām aśnāti iti piśāca. i.e. who eats flesh. In other words who has great attraction for flesh is a piśāca. Purūravā was over whelmed with the peerless beauty of Urvaśī. Probably her fleshy limbs had maddened him and for which he was cursed to have a piśāca form in which passion towards flesh is prominent.

Again Urvaśī was cursed to be a creeper. Creepers possess tenderness and gracefulness of movements like women but with the absence of speech faculty. She was cursed to be so for she had forgotten to speak or perform the part which the director Bharata had desired her to perform. The episodes can be co-related as follow: In the vedic period sacrifice was considered to be the religion
of the people. It was believed that sacrifice could solve each and every problem. Legends had started to be fabricated around this belief. Pururavas and Urvasi legend is one of its kind. King Pururavas was a mortal and the celestial nymph Urvasi was cursed to be a mortal. Both came across each other and enamoured. Pururavas wanted to marry her and longed for lasting union. There cannot be any lasting union between a terrestrial and a celestial, hence the Gadharvas sketched upon a plan and as per the plan Pururavas performed several sacrifices and attained gandharva hood to get permanent union with Urvasi. The pivotal point of this episode is no doubt the sacrifice which was believed to bestow the desired objects.

When this episode came in to the sphere of the Purāṇas the curse element made it serve different purposes. KSS utilised it for the glorification of Vadarikāśrama for its connection with the great Viṣṇu and thus serving a sectarian purpose. Pururavas was told that he will get the company of Urvasi if he propitiates Viṣṇu in Vadarikāśrama. Pururavas did it and got Urvsi. Matsya Purāṇa (Mtp.) like Kathāsarit Sāgar deviates from the vedic object of VP and Bhāg. P. Due to the curse of Bharata both the lover and beloved got separated from each other for the lack of manner and respect. They were cursed to be metamorphosed in to a piśāca and a vine. Here curse has the motif of metamorphosis.
4.3. VEDANIDHI WAS CURSED TO BE A VETĀLA:

SKP.⁹ while narrating the merits and demerits of performing Mahālayā Śrāddha in the dark fortnight of the month of Bhādrava, refers to the account of Vedanidhi having been cursed to assume the form of a ghost (vetāla) for not observing Mahālayā Śrāddha in proper procedure. It is said that Vedanidhi did not perform Mahālayā Śrāddha duely according to the rules of dharma sāstra and hence was cursed by his deceased forefathers to be a Vetāla.

The manes eagerly wait for the advent of Mahālayā for they receive from their inheriters the providence in the form of śrāddha. The rite when gets neglected it is believed that the manes pronounce imprecation on the defaulter, some times causing him metamorphose in to Vetāla. Through the motif of metamorphosis curse emphasises on the performance of Mahālayā śrāddha. Itihāsopaniṣad¹⁰ directs to perform Mahālayā Śrāddha with all care and caution; otherwise the curse of fore fathers is inevitable.

4.4. NAHUṢA CURSED TO BE A SERPENT:

Br.V.P. narrates the episode of curse of Indra and Nahuṣa. Curse to Nahuṣa speaks of the metamorphosis. It is stated that Indra while seated on his throne Bṛhaspati approached there. Indra saw the preceptor but did not stand up to pay homage. Though Bṛhaspati felt insulted by the disregard shown to him, he did not curse Indra

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⁹. S.K.P. 3.1.36.
out of affection for him. But the illtreatment automatically bore fruit. Indra was struck with sin of Brahmahatya and there by lost the lordship of heaven. In the meantime the valiant and pious king Nahuṣa gained over the throne of Indra perforce. One day he noticed the childless Śacī of unmatched beauty proceeding to the heavenly Ganges with a heavy heart. She was in her budding youth. Seeing her bedecked with precious ornaments and speaking sweet words he became over powered with lust and wanted to enjoy her. Prevented variously by Śacī, quoting references from scriptures, Nahuṣa did not desist from his evil intention.

Śacī sought the protection of the preceptor Brhaspati. Brhaspati knew that the merits of this haughty king could only be perished by impious activities. He, therefore, advised Śacī to tell the king that she could only afford to concede to his request, if he could manage to come to her being carried by a palanquin drawn by seven sages. The passionblinded Nahuṣa easily agreed to the proposal and immediately sent for the sages to fulfill his desires. The sages led by Durvāsā carried the palanquin very slowly as they were not habituated to the practice of carrying any load. Impatient at the delayed progress of the carriage Nahuṣa speaking harshly sarpa sarpa to move fast, stamped by his feet at the head of the sage Durvāsā. Durvāsā enraged at this misconduct and illtreatment cursed the king to turn in to a serpent. Nahuṣa metamorphosed into a python at once and fell down on the ground. When he prayed the sage for release. Durvāsā told him that he would be free from his serpentine body at the sight
of Dharmaputra yudhiṣṭhira. The account of Nahuṣa’s being metamorphosed in to a huge serpent is also narrated in the Sk.P. The episode is stated very briefly with a little variation in description. It is stated that Indra killed Viśvarupa for he offered oblation in favour of the asuras and obtained the sin of brahmahatyā. Followed by brahmahatyā he left heaven. The meritorious king Nahuṣa was enthroned in the heaven by the gods. Then Nahuṣa wanted to see Śacī by his side. When Bṛhaspati told Śacī the evil intention of Nahuṣa, Śacī denied to sit beside him for he had performed one short hundred sacrifices. But when Nahuṣa insisted, Śacī told that she could only offer to sit beside him if he would come to her mounting a carriage drawn by those unworthy of drawing carriage (avāhya vāhana). Nahuṣa thought that the sages were unworthy of carrying a carriage and hence sent for them. Among them was sage Agastya. The sages could not draw the carriage as speedily as Nahuṣa wanted them to draw. Saying ‘Sarpa, Sarpa’ to move fast he kicked Agastya by his feet. Agastya unable to tolerate the illtreatment cused the king to metamorphose into a python and Nahuṣa immediately became so. Skp. does not mention the release of curse.

Devi Bhāgavata P. (DB) also narrates the curse of sage Agastya to Nahuṣa. The content of this episode does not differ from Brvp.

11. Brv. P. Kṛṣṇajanma Khaṇḍa, Chap. 59 & 60
12. Ibid. 60.42-43 : “Kruddhā śaśāpa Durvāsāścāgragāmi ca vartmani (42) Mahānajagaro bhūtvā pata vai mūḍha mānasa. darśanāddhamaputrasya tava mokṣo bhāviṣyati.”(60/43)
13. SkP. 1.1.15.
14. DB. 6.9.
and Sk.P. The only difference noticed is the mention of Nahuṣa’s whipping the sages instead of kicking by feet. This episode is also narrated in the *Mbh.*\(^{15}\) having no different content. Here Agastya is said to have pronounced the curse on Nahuṣa.

In all the episodes the illtreatment to the sages is the cause of curse which resulted in metamorphosis. Another explanation can also be given. Nahuṣa urged the sages saying ‘Sarpa, Sarpa’. The word ‘Sarpa’ has two meanings, i.e. to move fast and a serpent. Hence he was turned into a serpent. Serpent is the symbol of sex. Sexual desire in Nahuṣa was so predominant that he did not hesitate to engage the pious sages to the carriage for approaching Indrāṇī. His blinding passion urged him to misbehave the sages which resulted in the severe infliction of curse metamorphosing him in to a huge serpent. *Br.V.P.* says acting immodestly to the spouse of a god is a great sin equal to the sin incurred by outraging the modesty of a mother (among 16 mothers wife of god is one). This sin can only be averted by the contact of pious personality like dharmaputra Yudhiṣṭhira.

*Lg. P. 1.29.28* makes only a passing reference to the metamorphosis of Nahuṣa due to the curse of the sages. (*Ṛṣiṇāṁ caiva śāpena nahuṣaḥ sarpatāṁ gataḥ*).

\(^{15}\). *Mbh.* 3.179.
The story of Tulasī cursing lord Viṣṇu to metamorphose into a stone is narrated in the Śiva Purāṇa. Tulasī was the wife of illustrious Śaṅkhacūḍa. In the previous birth, Śrīdāmā was cursed to be a demon Śaṅkhacūḍa by Rādhā. Kṛṣṇa had blessed him to be invincible by gods and asuras. He would only be killed by Śiva. When the battle between the gods and asuras broke out, finding Śaṅkhacūḍa invincible, Viṣṇu carried off his excellent armour in the guise of a brāhmin at the behest of Śiva taking recourse to Māyā. He then assumed the appearance of Śaṅkhacūḍa and went to the palace of Tulasī. He caused the dundubhi drum to be beaten at the palace gate to create an impression of victory in the mind of Tulasī. On hearing the sound of the victory drum Tulasī peeped through the windows and knowing her husband returned she prepared all auspicious rites and gave gifts to brāhmīns. Then she decorated herself to welcome the victorious husband. Viṣṇu then assumed the form of Śaṅkhacūḍa by deceptive art and went to the harem of the queen. Tulasī being delighted at heart offered him worship making him sit on the gemset throne and took herself granted as the most virtuous woman for she was the wife of one who had fought against Śiva the annihilator of the universe. She asked Śaṅkhacūḍa to tell her as to how he could fight against the all powerful Śiva, whose commands are strictly observed by Brahmā, Viṣṇu and other gods. Hearing Tulasī’s query the guise Viṣṇu laughed and spoke sweet

16. Śiva, P. Rudrasārthi, Yuddha Khanda, Chap. 41.
words to her. That in the great battle when the gods were defeated by the asuras, I went to the battle ground and defeated the powerful gods. They took refuge in Śiva. Śiva inorder to help the gods came to fight. Our fight continued for years when Brahmā mediated us to peace. Then Śiva went to Śiva loka and I returned home. Saying this guised Viṣṇu lied on his bed and out of joy indulged in sexual intercourse. Tulasī suspected on observing the change of endearment and attraction asked him as to who he was ? Tulasī asked, ‘Tell me quickly who are you ? I have been enjoyed by you. My modesty has been outraged. Hence I will curse you.’ On hearing the words of Tulasī Viṣṇu re-assumed his real form. On recognising Viṣṇu, she being infuriated due to the violation of her chastity cursed him,” O Viṣṇu, you are ruthless. Your mind is like a rock. Since my chastity has been outraged, my husband is doomed. O wicked one being ruthless you are like a rock. Hence I curse you to be a rock.”¹⁷

After cursing Viṣṇu Tulasī lamented again and again. Seeing this Viṣṇu remembered Śiva. Śiva, then appeared and consoled Tulasī that as penance had been performed by her, the fruit there of shall also be attained. Now she should give up her body and asume a divine one and indulge in dalliance with Viṣṇu for ever and be equal to Lakṣmī. The body that she should cast off should become a


“*He Viṣṇo te dayā nāsti pāṣāṇa sadṛśam manah/
patidharmasya bharigena mama svāmī hataḥ khaḷu.//
Pāṣāṇa Sadrāstvanīca dayāhino yataḥ khaḷaḥ/
tasmāt pāṣāṇa rūpastvamī matsāpena bhavādhunā."//
famous river Gaṅḍāki in Bhārata. Viṣṇu assuming the form of a rock on the bank of river Gaṅḍakī should preside over the same. Crores of terrible sharp toothed germs should penetrate and erode the rock and crave rings on it. Those pieces should be known as śālagrāma rocks. These śālagrāmas should signify Viṣṇu’s contact with Tulasī.

It is not desirable to outrage the modesty of a woman which is regarded as a great sin. It is more heinous when gods like Viṣṇu take recourse to deceptive art for vilifying pious woman. Viṣṇu incarnates to set dharma, sadacāra in the world when they are in a state of decline. One can molest dharma, knowing its importance fully only when one is ruthless and emotionless like a rock. The only punishment for such a ruthless sinner, who violates satidharma, is to metamorphose into a rock. Viṣṇu’s assuming the rock form is a fitting punishment.

Killing the husband by vilification of wife’s chastity has been narrated in the story of Jalandhara in Sk.P.

4.6. KING MITRASAHĀ CURSED TO BE A DEMON:

The episode of king Mitrasaha of Ikṣvāku dynasty having been metamorphosed into a rākṣasa due to the curse of his preceptor is depicted in the Śiva purāṇa.¹⁸ It is stated that Mitrasaha, who was foremost among the archers had gone to the forest for hunting with his army. There he killed a demon named Kamathā, who was very wicked and an afflicter of pious men. His younger brother wishing

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¹⁸. Śiva. P. 4. Kotirudra Samhita, Chap. 10
to take revenge on the king came to him in a guised form and managed to act as the chief of the royal kitchen. The king could not know his real nature. One day the king invited his preceptor Vaśiṣṭha on the annual Śrāddha day of his father. The guised demon offered him cooked human flesh in the dish. Vaśiṣṭha got very much annoyed and cursed the king telling, "Fie to you O wicked king. You have served me human flesh by fraud and hence you will be a demon."

But when he knew that the guised demon in the kitchen was the real culprit, he made a correction in his statement, that the king would be demon for twelve years only. Now the king came to know that he was cursed by his preceptor to be a demon for no reason. In a fit of anger he decided to curse the preceptor. His queen Madayanti desisted him when he was about to utter the curse holding water in his palm. The king gave up the idea of cursing and poured the charmed water in his own feet which turned black. From that day he came to be known as Kalmāśaṅghri or kalmāśapāda. Then the king in his demoniac form went to the forest and started eating the animals and human beings. One day while roaming in the forest he killed and ate a newly weded hermit inspite of the repeated prayer of his bride. The poor hermit bride prepared funeral pyre for the dead hermit and consigned herself in that fire. While entering the fire she cursed the king that from today onwards if at all he unites with a woman, he would die. After the lapse of twelve years Mitrasaha being relieved of the demoniac form went home. He sought for the sexual pleasure of his queen, who was aware of the misfortune that followed the king. Madayanti was, though childless, out of fear of
widowhood desisted the king from sexual relation. Mitrasaha again wandered in the forest followed by brahmahatyā. He resorted to all measures to ward off brahmahatyā but failed. One day he came across the sage Gautama and expressed his plight before him. Gautama advised him to proceed to Gokarnatīrtha and to worship Śiva who was famous there in the name Mahāvala. Mitrasaha did accordingly and got released from brahmahatyā.

Variants of this episode are found in the Sk.P.,19 Viṣṇu (vp)20 and Mbh.21 The episode of Sk.P. is quite similar to that of Śiva.P. In the Mbh. and Viṣṇu P. it is delineated differently. It is king Saudāsa in the Mbh. who was cursed to metamorphose. The dish of human flesh was served to a brāhmaṇa named Mitrasaha. But in other texts it is Mitrasaha who had undergone shapechange. As our discussion relates to metamorphosis, other motifs of the episode like glorification of tīrtha are not taken up here. As narrated in Viṣṇu P. king Mitrasaha killed one tiger out of two, who assumed his earlier form of a rākṣasa. The other tiger who disappeared out of fear, wielded his previous demonic form and decided to take revenge by dint of fraud. He however, managed to became the cook of the king’s kitchen and served human flesh in the food meant for Vaśiṣṭha.

Another aspect which the episode in SK.P. and V.P. reflects, is the birth of Asmaka from Madayanti by Vaśiṣṭha by the way of

20. VP 4.4.
21. Mbh. 13. Chap. 6
Niyoga, as Mitrasaha was forbidden from intercourse due to the curse of the hermit bride. But this motif does not relate to metamorphosis.

As to the cause of shape shifting, Śiva P. says that out of ignorance Vaśiṣṭha cursed the king mistaking him as the culprit. Serving human flesh in meal to the vegeterian sage, the special attraction of the server towards flesh is clear. Rākṣasas are fond of human flesh. The king was thougt to be the server of the food and hence the server of the human flesh was cursed to be a rākṣasa. In the VP. it is Saudāsa Mitrasaha, who by hunting killed a tiger out of two. When killed the tiger assumed the form of a terrible demon. The other tiger disappeared promising a revenge against the king. The king one day instituted a sacrifice where Vaśiṣṭha was the priest. After the completion of the sacrifice Vaśiṣṭha went outside. In the meantime seeing Vaśiṣṭha going out the demon who had disappeared assumed the form of Vaśiṣṭha and telling that he should be served human flesh in the meal went away. Then he assumed the form of a cook, prepared human flesh at the behest of the king. When real Vaśiṣṭha returned the king served human flesh in golden plate. Vaśiṣṭha understood the crookedness of the king and by meditation knew that human flesh was served to him. He cursed the king to be a rākṣasa for he had served human flesh to the vegetarian sage knowingly. But when the sage knew the real culprit and understood the innocense of the king, he wished the curse to last for twelve years. The rest of the story is like that of Śiva P.
From the above episodes it is known that rākṣasa could metamorphose them in to various shapes. Tiger assuming the rākṣasa form, rākṣasa wielding the form of a cook and Vaśiṣṭha explain that there is a close relationship between metamorphosis and deceptive art (māyā) in which asuras and rākṣasas are proficient. It seems metamorphosis works on the principle of means determines end (yadṛṣi bhāvanā yasya siddhir-bhavati tādṛṣi.) Attraction towards human flesh makes one a rākṣasa who is fond of human flesh. Curse can effect metamorphosis is evident from this episode.

4.7. KING NṛGA CURSED TO BE A CHAMELEON :

*S.K.P. (7-4) Chap. 10* narrates how king Nṛga metamorphosed in to a chameleon (kṛkalāsa) by curse while explaining the glory of *Kṛkalāsa tīrtha*. This episode was related to praḥlāda. It is stated that there was a mighty king named Nṛga, who was very intelligent, patient, skilled and endowed with all virtues. Hundred thousands of kings had accepted his sovereignty. He was renowned as a great giver. One day the king wanted to give away a cow with its horns clad in gold, hoof covered with copper and the body with white garment to an illustrious brāhmin Jaimini, who was reluctant to receive any gift. Any how the king could manage to make him ready to accept the gift. Jaimini accepted the gift and tying it in a rope went home. One day he took the thirsty cow to the tank in midday. Seeing a camel in the way it got frightened and slipped from his hand. The brāhmaṇa searched it every where and did not find. The cow ran away and got mingled in the large herd of cattle of the king.
On the next day the king again called a brāhmin Somaśarmā and gave away the cow decorating it as before, not knowing that it was the same cow. Jaimini in course of searching saw and recognised the cow taken by Somaśarmā. He claimed the cow as his own. Somaśarmā told that it was his as he got it from the king. A conflict followed over the cow as to its ownership. Thus quarrelling over the cow they approached the king for solution. But the king who was mentally disturbed with lust did not come out of his place to hear their appeal. They felt insulted as the king did not respond and give justice to them. In a fit of rage they cursed the king to be a kṛkalāsa (chameleon). When the king heard this he fell at their feet and propitiated them to relieve him off this misfortune. They being pleased told that in the end of Dvāpara age when Hari would take his abode in th house of Vasudeva, the king would be redeemed from the curse by his (Kṛṣṇa’s) touch. Nṛga then enjoyed the rest of his life by giving away gifts, instituting sacrifices and rejoicing. At the end of his life he went to the abode of yama, who told the king whether he should enjoy the pleasure of merits or miseries of demerits first. Nṛga opted for the miseries first. Yama told him to be born as a Kṛkalāsa for thousand years. One day yadus with Kṛṣṇa came for hunting, while searching for water being thirsty they came across a great chameleon in a pit. It was so huge that they could not pull it out. When Kṛṣṇa looked at it and knew him as Nṛga, he play fully threw him by his left hand. By the touch of Śri Hari the chameleon gave up his reptilian form and prayed him. Hari pleased with him wanted to offer a boon. Nṛga begged that the pit should be famous
as Kṛkalāsa tīrtha and those who would offer libation to their manes should attain Hari’s abode.\textsuperscript{22}

It is interesting to note that the king was cursed to metamorphose in to a chameleon. Chameleons do not like to expose them. They always confine themselves to an isolated and secured place. The king clung to voluptuousness in his royal palace. As a protector of the people he should solve the problems and give justice to them. He did not come out of the palace to settle the dispute over the cow gifted by him. He caused the brāhmins to wait for three days at the palace door and finally harassed them. The idea of Naciketas staying three days without food and water in the palace of Yama, we get from Kathopanisad. It is hinted there that a brāhmin is like a fire (vaiśvānara) and he should be pacified. Moreover if a guest returns from the door of a householder being harassed, he takes away the merits conferring all his demerits to the house holder.\textsuperscript{23} A king being the knower of scriptures should never indulge in such sinful activities. Nṛga violated the rules of piety in case of the brāhmins. His confinement became responsible for his being cursed to be a Chameleon.

Another point which is explicit here is the pit motif and touch motif. Falling in the pit indicates misery, downfall and taking out

\textsuperscript{22} Variants of this curse episode are found in the Bhāg. P. 10.64. Lg. P. 1.66. 45; Mbh. Āstika P. etc. The content of all the texts are almost similar. Lg.P. makes only a passing reference to it.

\textsuperscript{23} “Atithi yasya bhagnāśo grhāt pratinvartate/ sa tasmai duśkrtam datvā Puṇyamādāya gacchati”// VP. 3.9.15
shows elevation, freedom etc. Nṛga's remaining in the pit as a Chameleon is his misery. Kṛṣṇa's touching and pulling out of the pit is Nṛga's extrication from Chameleon form and hence freedom from misery. This pit motif is current in other episodes like Gajendramokṣa\textsuperscript{24} and glorification of Paṅcāpsara tīrtha.\textsuperscript{25} In Gajendramokṣa, the alligator and the elephant were brought out of the lake by powerful pulling by Viṣṇu and thereby redeemed from their curse. The nymphs who were cursed to metamorphose into alligators in five different lakes were released from the curse and alligator's shape when lifted and taken out of the lakes by the mighty Arjuna.

4.8. VAŚIŚṬHA AND VISVĀMITRA CURSED EACH OTHER:

The story of Vaśiśṭha and Visvāmitra cursing each other to be crane is narrated in the Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa (Mark. P.). It depicts how both the illustrious sages endowed with wisdom pronounced imprecation on each other to be metamorphosed into birds coming under the sway of wrath and egoism. Metamorphosis is an unfailing consequence of curse and the cause of which is wrath and jealousy. This is what the episode reveals.

After coming out of all perils of tests and ordeals by Visvāmitra, when Hariścandra ascended heaven the illustrious preceptor Vaśiśṭha came off his twelve years watery sojourn. He heared about Hariścandra's misery of Candaḥood and selling of his wife and son. He had great likes for the pious king and hence was very much

\textsuperscript{24} SK.P. 2. Vaiśṇava Khaṇḍa, Kārttika Māhātmya, Chap. 28.
\textsuperscript{25} Sk.P. 1.2.1.
annoyed with sage Visvāmitra. He had never been pained so much at the death of his hundred sons in the hand of Visvāmitra as he felt at the misery of Hariścandra caused by Visvāmitra. Disgusted with the wicked hater of brahmins and the sacrificehater Visvāmitra, Vaśiṣṭha cursed him to assume the body of a crane. When Visvāmitra knew this he also without any delay cursed Vaśiṣṭha to be an Ādi (an acquatic bird). As the sages were powerful, their curse immediately took effect and they were turned in to birds. Fight between them continued longer causing devastation in nature. Seeing no sign of their fight coming to an end, Brahmā interfered and brought them to their earlier form and a stop to their quarrelling. Finally they gave up their enmity and become friends.

No visible cause is found for assuming the bird form by the sages is found in this episode. It is rather the egoism, jealousy and wrath which urged the sages to curse each other. These are all qualities of tama. In birds tamoguṇa is predominant. They quarrel and fight for anything. Ignorance gives rise to tamoguṇa. Intertia ruled supreme over the wise sages and shrouded their discernment. Sattvaguṇa was suppressed by tamoguṇa. Like birds they were engaged in fight. Birds symbolise tamoguṇa and hence assuming the bird form is befitting punishment for them.

4.9. SĀHASIKA VALĪ (VALA) CURSED TO BE AN ASS:

A passage of the Br. Vp.⁴²⁶ narrates how Vala son of Vali assumed
the form of an ass named Dhenukāsura by the curse of sage Durvāsas. Metamorphosis proves the fatality of curse.

Once Sāhasika Vala, son of Valī was allured by the charm of the celestial damsel Tilottamā, who was skilled in amorous sport. She was going to be united with Candramā (moon) at his request and hence turned down the prayer of Vala telling that she would attend him after attending the moon. But when she knew that Vala was expert in amorous sporting, she could not avoid the temptation and got united with him. Both were engrossed in various love sports. The gingling sound emitting from the anklets and bangles of unconcious Tilottamā broke the trance of sage Durvāsas, who was seated in the yogic lotus posture, covered by anthill with his mind fixed at the feet of Kṛṣṇa in a cave of mount Gandhamādāna. Mad in love and unconscious of day and night they could not feel the presence of the sage. Beholding them unaware of time, space and person, the angry sage born of Rudra's portion cursed Vala saying: "O you wretched being, shameless as an ass, being the son of great devotee Vali, you are behaving like a beast. All the gods, demons, gandharvas and human beings except beasts feel shame in open love within their groups. Particularly the specie of ass is foolish and shameless in the matter of sex. Hence O you beast of asuras, asume the form of an ass." Tilottamā was also cursed to be born as a demoness. Then Sāhasika Vala implored variously to the sage. Durvāsas felt that he (vala) being the son of Vali, a great votary of Kṛṣṇa, devotion has not run short of him. He advised Vala to live in the palm grove
in Vṛndāvana where he would be liberated by Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma. Tilottamā was born as the daughter of asura Bāṇa. She got united with Aniruddha and became purified.

Here it is the anger of Durvāsas, caused by the disturbance and the open display of animal instinct act as the reason of curse causing metamorphosis in to an animal.

4.10. CITRASAMA CURSED TO BE A BUFFALO :

_Sk.P._27 narrates the episode of Citrasama’s curse to be a buffalo. It is stated that the sages asked sūta to narrate as to how kātyāyani became the destroyer of Mahiśā demon. Sūta explained thus:

In ancient time Mahiśā son of Hiraṇākṣa was ruling over three worlds. Earlier he did not have this buffalo form. He was endowed with all virtues. He had long arms and strong fat neck. He was known as Dīrghavāhu Citrasama. From the very child hood he used to mount on the buffaloes instead of horses. On one occasion ascending a buffalo, while he was killing the acquatic birds on the bank of Ganges, sage Durvāsas meditating in lotus posture was hurt by the buffalo hoof, unnoticed by him. The sage’s meditation was disturbed. He noticed Dīrghavāhu citrasama mounted on a buffalo. Citrasama did not pay honour to the sage. Durvāsas got agitated and holding water in his palm cursed him to assume the form of a buffalo, as he was hurt by his buffalo and his meditation was disrupted. Immediately citrasama assumed the buffalo form. When

he failed to divert the curse having entreated Durvāsas, he approached his preceptor Śukra who advised him that non except Maheśvara could release him from such catastrophe. He propitiated Hātakēśvara Liṅga, but knowing that the curse cannot be redressed, he asked for a boon by which he could not be killed by any means. As none is immortal in this creation, Maheśvara granted a boon that he would be killed by none except a woman. In the pride of invincibility and indestructibility he occupied heaven by defeating the gods. At last kātyāyanī born of Kārttikeya’s and god’s wrath killed him.

It is the excessive attachment to buffalo (symbol of animal instinct) and disrespect to adorable sage caused Dīrghavāhu to be cursed to metamorphose in to a buffalo. Animalism deserves the appearance of an animal is justified.

4.11. SAHASRĀKṢA CURSED TO BE WHIRL WIND :

Pāṇḍya king Sahasrākṣa cursed by Durvāsas to assume the form of a whirl wind, has been narrated in the Br. Vp.28. In course of narrating the miraculous character of Kṛṣṇa it is stated that the demon Trṇāvarta assuming the form of a whirl wind came to Gokula while Yaśodā was engaged in household work. Kṛṣṇa knowing the arrival of the demon made himself heavy so that Yaśodā put him on the ground and went to Yamunā. In the meanwhile the whirlwind demon carried him hundred yojanas away and was liberated by Kṛṣṇa’s touch. On the query as to why the Pāṇḍya king was cursed by Durvāsas, by Nārada to Nārāyaṇa the later narrates the episode thus :

28. Br. V.P. Kṛṣṇa Janma Khaṇḍa, Chap. II
One day Sahasrākṣa the king of Pāṇḍya enjoyed thousands of women on the Gandhamādanā mountain, on river banks and in flower gardens being afflicted by lust. While engaged in amorous enjoyments, sage Durvāsas with one lakh disciples happened to pass by that way to lord Maheśvara. The king did not honour him being engrossed in enjoyments. Durvāsas in a state of indignation cursed him to assume the form of a demon and told that he would be liberated from the demoniac form and the curse after coming in contact with Śrī Hari. The women were cursed to take birth in various regions of Bhāratavarṣa. Finally the king built a fire altar and immolated himself along with those women meditating Hari’s feet and attained His abode.

Sahasrākṣa was a king. He was expected to be the knower of scriptures. King’s action should be pure, ideal and imitable. Indulgence in open sex enjoyments reveals his voluptuous character. Unrestrained sense enjoyments and disobeying pious sages like Durvāsas, are the unsteady characters of the asuras. Whirlwind is the symbol of inconsistent nature. Sahasrākṣa as a king was not expected to suffer from moral torpitude and unsteady character. As he behaved in reverse manner he was cursed to be a whirlwind demon.

The story of Trnavarta is also narrated in the Bhāg.P.29 Here Trnavarta having been directed by Kaṁsa came in the form of whirlwind and carried away the babe Kṛṣṇa. When Kṛṣṇa became heavier he

could not carry him more and fell dead and got liberated. Here there is no trace of curse.

4.12. KING KALASA CURSED TO BE A TIGER:

*Skp.*\(^{30}\) narrates the account of king Kalaśa having been cursed to assume the form of a tiger. There was a famous king named Kalaśa in the Yadu dynasty. One day at the end of Cāturmāsya vow, sage Durvāsas reached the king’s palace and wanted to end his vow by eating whatever cooked food was available. The king received him with due honour and served him all types of food including meat. Out of great hunger the sage ate all that was served and was very happy. But the appetite being gradually pacified he started feeling the taste of meat. He got infuriated and cursed the king telling, ‘you have broken my vow by serving non-veg. food, and hence you will be a tiger subsisting and non-veg food.’” The king hearing the curse fell at the feet of the sage and beseeched to withdraw the curse as he had acted only according to the direction of the sage and served cooked food. Durvāsas being pleased at the prayer of the king told that when Nandinī cow would show him the Liṅga worshipped by Bāṇa, he would be free from the curse. The king with his tiger form roamed in the forest feasting on beasts and waiting for the day of redemption. One day a herd of cows came there. Nandinī having big udder, was one in the herd. Leading the herd in search of grass she came across a Śiva Liṅga as effulgent as twelve Ādityas in lusture. She milched on the Liṅga with her milk

\(^{30}\) *Sk.P.* 6. 49-51.
with great devotion daily without others knowledge. Another day that tiger came to that spot and saw Nandinī. Nandinī knew that there was no way to escape. She requested the tiger that she would come back by feeding and entrusting her calf to her friends. Citing many references from scriptures she promised to return back. The tiger believed her words and let her free to come back again. Nandinī fed her calf put it to the care of her friends. Though her friends advised her to break the promise as violation of promise in the face of death does not make one sinner. But Nandinī stuck to her promise and returned back to the tiger. The tiger was surprised at the truthfulness and fearlessness of the cow and a feeling of detachment came over him. He wellcomed the cow and requested her to advise him how to earn merit here and hereafter. Nandinī advised him the Yugadharmas, the most important being giving assurance of fearlessness (abhayadānam). The tiger said that it is not possible on the part of a beast like him who lives on animals to promise life to other beings and hence speak what is good for us. Nandinī told, ‘Here exists the great Liṅga established by Bāṇa in ancient time. Wake up in the morning, circumabulate and worship the Liṅga with devotion. All your wishes shall be fulfilled.’ Telling this, Nandinī showed the Liṅga. Now the tiger remembered the words of Sage Durvāsas and seeing the Liṅga got back his previous form.

King Kalaśa who was welversed in the scriptural procedures of religious rites, was expected to know that during Cāturmāṣya vrata non-veg foods are prohibited. By taking non-veg food one spoils
one’s vow. The king should have applied his common sense (when he was asked by Durvāsas to serve whatever cooked food available) whether to serve cooked meat when Durvāsas is going to end his vow. The king proved his ignorance by serving meat. Hence he was cursed rightly to be a tiger living on animal flesh. Curse has the power to metamorphose one in to any form. The story reflects on importance of Liṅga worship, observing scriptural codes regarding foods to be taken in different situation and treatment to be accorded to sages. Actions contrary to these welcome punishment in the form of curse which may result in metamorphosis and degradation.

4.13. SAGE DEVALA CURSED NALAKŪBARA AND RAMBHĀ:

Curse has the efficacy of metamorphosing one in to tree and human being. The episode of Nalakūbara and Rambhā turning in to a tree and human being respectively has been dealt in the Br. Vp.31 It is stated that Yaśodā having prepared milk, curd, ghee and other milk products repaired to Yamunā for a bath. Returning back, to her astonishment, she found all jars filled with milk products, empty. She enquired the matter and came to know that it was all the mischief of Kṛṣṇa. She tied Kṛṣṇa to a tree by her cloth. When Kṛṣṇa dragged himself the tree fell down with a terrible sound. A brilliant celestial form emerged from the tree and ascended a celestial car. Asked by Kṛṣṇa the radiant image narrated that he was Nalakūbara, a son of Kubera. He was cursed by sage Devala to assume the form of a tree. As to the reason for his shape shifting he described thus:

31. Br. Vp. 4. (Kṛṣṇajanma khanda), Chap. 14
One day he was engaged in amorous sport with the celestial nymph Rambhā near a pond in the Nandan grove. At that time sage Devala arrived there. Nalakūbara and Rambhā did not refrain from their love sport. The sage cursed them, “O sinner as you did not get up, you shall be a tree.” Nalakūbara became a tree in the Gokula suplicated by him the sage told that he would be extricated from the tree form by the touch of Kṛṣṇa. How he was relieved is narrated earlier. Then the sage cursed Rambhā for her lasciviousness to be born as a female on the earth and would be extricated when she would be raped by Indra. Rambhā was then born on the earth and became the wife of Janamejaya. Once Janamejaya conducted a Aśvamedha sacrifice. Indra concealed the sacrificial horse and remained there. Rambhā intending to see the beautiful horse when approached there Indra appeared and raped her. Then Rambhā got relieved off her human form.

This is how curse effects metamorphosis. Tree is the symbol of immobility. Nalakūbara remained inert even at the presence of the sage. He did not get up out of courtesy and his immobility became responsible for his being metamorphosed in to a tree. Rambhā displayed her extreme passion for sexual enjoyment. All creatures other han human beings, indulge in sex once a year. Bhartṛhari says; Lion the mightiest of the beasts who subsists on the flesh of elephants and boars, indulges in sex once a year, but pegions which lived on small grains become lustful always. Similarly human beings abide by no rules in matter of sex. Probably the nymph was cursed to take a human form inorder to gratify her sex urge free of obstruction.
A variant of this episode is narrated in the Bhāgavata Purāṇa. Here the cursees are Nala Kūbara and Maṇigrīva, sons of Kubera. Nārada is the imprecator. The two yakṣa brothers with unrestrained passion, having drunk wine called Vāruṇī, were strolling one day with women. In the lotus bed of Gangā they sported with damsels. Willed by providence the glorious celestial sage Nārada saw them lying with damsels quite naked. The celestial nymphs uncovered as they were, afraid of curse hurriedly put on their clothes, but the yakṣas remained naked. Seeing them intoxicated with wine and blind with the pride of wealth, Nārada thought to teach them a lesson. He told, since, inspite of being the sons of Kubera, a guardian of the world, the two youths are too immersed in ignorance to recognise themselves as naked, hence they deserve to have the state of a tree that stands rooted to one spot which remains uncovered and unbending. Saying so Nārada went away. Nalakūbara and Maṇigrīva were transformed in to twin Arjuna trees. When Kṛṣṇa tied to a mortar proceded slowly and crawled between the trees, the mortar fell crosswise and dragged by kṛṣṇa, befell the trees. Two celestial figures rose from the trees bowed before Kṛṣṇa, prayed Him and went to th heaven.

In both the episodes the cursers are different (Devala and Nārada). In the Br.V.P. Nalakūbara and Rambhā are cursed, where as in the Bhāg. P Nalakūbara and maṇigrīva are cursed. Maṇigrīva is absent in the Br.V.P. and Rambhā is absent in the Bhāg.P. The

reason for curse in both the episodes is almost same. Bhāg. P. is more pinpointed than Brv.P. as to the reason of metamorphosis.

4.14. HŪHŪ AND INDRADYUMNA CURSED TO BE AN ALLIGATOR AND AN ELEPHANT RESPECTIVELY:

The episode of the liberation of the king of elephants (Gajendramokṣa) is narrated in the Purāṇas. It is stated that there existed a beautiful garden of Varuṇa named Rūmān in the valley, of Trikūṭa mountain. In the garden there was a lake. Once sorrounded by other elephants the chief of the elephant entered the lake to quench his thirst. Having drawn water in the trunk, spraying with it the females and their youngs, the leader of the herd could not foresee the impending danger. Very shortly he was seized in his leg by a powerful alligator. Applying all his strength and by the collective effort of the female elephants he could not release him from the powerful grip of the alligator. When all efforts went invain, the elephant took refuge in the supreme lord Viṣṇu and prayed his favour. Śrī Hari appeared, alighted from the back of Garuḍa, pulled out the king of elephants along with the alligator speedily out of the lake and having rent upon the jaws of the alligator with discus extricated the elephant.

The alligator was a gandharva named Hūhū in his previous birth. It is said that the gandharva was once sporting in a lake with a number of women. The sage Devala too entered the lake for a bath.

33. Bhāg. P. 8. 2-4; Vāmp. 85, 1-84; Var.P. 144. 116-134; Sk.P. 2.4.28. 1-32.
at that time. Seeing him enter the lake, the haughty Gandharva pulled him by the leg under water. The sage who could knew the miscreant, cursed Hūhū that he would be thrown in to the womb of an alligator. Hūhū then metamorphosed in to an alligator. The elephant was in its previous birth a pāṇḍya king named Indradyumna. He, a great devotee of Viṣṇu, took to the life of an ascetic. By observing vow of silence he once proceeded to worship the almighty lord Śrī Hari. Sage Agastya with his disciples arrived there. Finding him silent the sage thinking that the king had neglected to offer him obeisance, grew indignant and pronounced the following imprecation, “This impious, evil minded and uncultured fellow has insulted a brāhmaṇa at this moment. Let him be steeped in blinding ignorance; and since he is dull minded like an elephant, let him be born as an elephant.” Due to this curse of Agastya Indradyumna metamorphosed in to an elephant in the later birth.

Vāmana Purāṇa does not describe the previous birth and the cause of imprecation of the alligator and the elephant. As a vaiṣṇavite purāṇa it eulogizes the glory of Hari, explaining how He liberates his devotees, utilising this episode of ‘Gajendra mokṣa’.

What can be the motif of assuming the form of an alligator? Crocodil or alligator symbolises obstruction of free movement of people in water. Devala was prevented from bathing freely in the lake by Gandharva Hūhū. His action was like that of a crocodile. Hence he was cursed to assume the form of an alligator. As to the metamorphosis of Indradyumna in to an elephant, the reason supplied
was the dull wit. Elephant symbolises calmness, lethargy and dullness. The king behaved like an elephant. Due to the similarity of action he was cursed to be an elephant.

The account of the alligator and elephant which is narrated in the Sk. P.\textsuperscript{34} is an altogether different one. Jaya and Vijaya two votaries of Viṣṇu went to perform the sacrifice of Marut. They were profusely paid by Marut at the end of the sacrifice. The two brothers came back to their hermitage thinking to worship Hari separately. They quarrelled over the sharing of the wealth acquired. Jaya proposed for an equal distribution. Vijaya disagreed to the proposal and pleaded for the sharing of the wealth according to the duty performed in the sacrifice. At the rash behaviour of Vijaya, Jaya cursed him, “Holding all wealth you are not giving me, hence you will be an alligator (grāha). (Grhīṭvā na dadāsyetattasmād grāho bhaveti tān) Thus cursed by Jaya, Vijaya also pronounced the imprecation; ‘Deluded by intoxication as you have cursed me, you will be an elephant. (Madabrāṇto’sāpastvamī mām tasmānmaṭatarīgatām vraja). Thus cursing each other they approached Viṣṇu and prayed him extrication from the curse. Viṣṇu told that the words of his devotees should never go futile and hence they had to assume the form as cursed. Both of them took the shape of the alligator and the elephant and started living near the river Gaṇḍakī. On account of devotion to Hari recollection of previous birth was awakened in them. One day the elephant entered the river for bathing and was caught by the alligator.

\textsuperscript{34} Sk. P. 11 Vaisnava Khaṇḍa, Kārttika Māhātmya, Chap. 28.
forcibly. The elephant recollected the past imprecation and prayed Hari. Hari pleased with his prayer arrived at once and released the elephant killing the alligator by his discuss and extricated both of them. The two brothers regained their original form and went to Vaikunṭha.

This episode is told in the *Sk.P.* to eulogize *kārtikavrata.* Both brothers in their animal form had observed kārttika vow and hence released from the animal form as devotees of Viṣṇu attain mokṣa.

The epithet ‘grāha’ can be explained as “*grahaṇāt grāhah*” i.e. from the sense of holding it became *grāha* an alligator. It is the nature of the alligator to hold firmly in the water. It shows its obstinate character by catching a prey till it is killed. Alligator’s nature being reflected in Vijaya, he was cursed to be so metamorphosed. The egoistic and defiant attitude of the elephant is noted in the person of Jaya for which he is cursed to be an elephant.

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