CHAPTER II

Myths and legends of the Narasimha Purāṇa

There are fourteen different legends in the Narasimha Purāṇa. These legends may be classified under three distinct heads: (a) Vedic legends, (b) Devotional legends and (c) Legends glorifying 'varna-śrama dharma' (duties peculiar to one's caste and āśrama).

(a) Vedic legends

(1) Yama-Yamī samvāda

(2) Birth of Agastya and Vasistha as sons of Mitra and Varuṇa.

(3) Birth of Aśvins

(4) Origin of Maruts

(b) Devotional legends

(1) Sage Markandeya's overcoming Death

(2) Legend of Dhruva

(3) Legend of Śukrācārya's regaining his eye-sight.

(4) Legend of Pundarīka

(5) Raivata-Jayadhvaja-Bahuroman story

(6) Story of king Śāntanu's stepping across the 'nirmālya' of Narasimha.

(7) Indra's release from womanhood through the recitation of 'aṣṭākṣara mantra'.
(c) Legends glorifying 'varnāśrama dharma' (duties peculiar to one's caste and āśrama)

(1) Story of Brahmācarin and the devoted house-wife
(2) Anāśramī myth
(3) Episode of Ikṣvāku's life

(a) Vedic legends

Ṛgveda is the earliest scripture of India. It is the source of religion, the record of early faith and belief of Hindu people. Different myths and legends which we come across in later Purāṇa literature, are found in this earliest scripture in the most rudimentary form. In his 'Ṛgvedic legends through the ages' Hariyappa has shown how through the ages of Brāhmaṇas, Āraṇyakas, Upanisads and Epics the short pithy legends of Saramā, Śunaśēpa and Vasistha-Viśvāmitra have been transmitted from generation to generation till they become full-fledged in the Purāṇa texts. Four such legends relating to Narasimha have their root in the Vedic tradition.

(1) Yama-Yamī saṃvāda

Vivasvat, the sun-god is blessed with two children - Yama and Yamī. Yama is the brother and Yamī is his sister younger to him. In the sweet home of Vivasvat both of them

1. Nar. P. Ch.12
grow up, play as they like and go wherever they desire. In course of time they pass their adolescence period and step into youth. Unbearable is the agony of love! Once it so happens that Yamī tormented by the pangs of love approaches Yama and requests him to take her as his wife. She argues as follows:- "A brother who does not want the company of his worthy sister is worthless. In absence of a spouse for the sister, a brother who does not come forward to be her spouse, should be regarded as a non-entity even though he is alive. The person who tramples over the passionate appeal of his sister is not a brother in the true sense of the term. There is no use if a brother accepts another girl as his spouse when in his very presence his own sister is tormented with love and passion."

Yama replies that it is something contemptible in the world. It is a sin; the act of co-habitation with one's own sister is looked down upon as a great sin. No brother would ever satisfy the carnal desire of a sister tormented by love! This practice is found with animals, but it is not so in the human world.

Yamī argues that they have already been united in the womb of their mother and it is not sinful, so her union with Yama for the second time would never be unholy. Then in support of her point Yamī cites the example of demon Mirīti.
who daily co-habitates with his own sister (सवसारमः
निर्गी रक्षाः संग्राहति का नित्याशं-12.21).

In refuting the argument of Yamī, Yama speaks of the
conduct of the eminent people of the society as the ideal.
In the tradition of Bhagavadgītā (3.21) Yama gives a
fitting reply that whatever the high personages of society
demonstrate by their actions, is to be followed by the
common man. In this context the union of a brother and a
sister is something very abhorring. Therefore she would
do better by choosing some other partner.

But Yamī insists and implores again and again. Yama
sticks to the path of righteousness, the ideal conduct of
the elite and he never surrenders. In consequence he attains
the status of divinity.

Yama-Yamī samvāda is referred to in RV. X.10.1-14,
AV.13.I.1-16, SV. IV.5.3 (repeating the idea of RV. X.10.1),
BD.6.31.154, Nirukta 11.34, N.M., pp.296-298.

(2) Birth of Agastya and Vasiṣṭha as sons of Mitra
and Varuṇa²

Prajāpati Dakṣa is the pre-eminent among the knowers of
Vedic lore. He gives his thirteen daughters in marriage to sage

² Nar. P, Ch.6.
Kasyana. Aditi happens to be the eldest and most distinguished of them. Of her twelve sons known as twelve 'ādityas', the middle son Varuṇa, the guardian of quarters (Lokapāla) presides over the western horizon. In the west in the city 'Visva-vatī' situated on the peak of the lord of mountains (Sailesa), Varuṇa has his abode and attended upon by Gandharvas and heavenly damsels he protects all the worlds.

Once both Mitra and Varuṇa go to the sacred place Kurukṣetra and practise rigorous penance with bark and black antelope skin on their bodies. After their penance is over, in course of wandering in the forest region of Kurukṣetra they come to the lake 'Paundarika' and they happen chance to meet the loveliest Urvaśī taking her bath in the company of other celestial maidens. At the sight of the matchless beauty of Urvaśī both the ādityas overtaken with passion emit the seminal fluid. By the time due to the curse of king Nimi the self of Vasiṣṭha gets separated from his body and takes refuge in the semen emitted by the two ādityas. The seminal fluid falls scattered in three different places—lotus, land and the water. And Vasiṣṭha is born from the semen deposited in the lotus-flower, Agastya from the semen fallen on land and from the semen deposited in the water there is born a fish of shining appearance (jale matsyo mahādyutih -6.35).
Even though Vasistha is spoken of as one of the mind-born sons of Brahma (Nar. P. Ch. 5.13), thus he comes to be the son of both the 'Adityas' - Mitra and Varuna.

The legend of the birth of Agastya and Vasistha through Mitra and Varuna is referred to in RV. VII. 33.9-14, AV. IV. 29.3, Nirukta V.13; BD. V. 143-155; Sarvanukramaṇī I.166; Mbb. XIII. 143.18a; Vāyu 27.3-4a; Bd. P. III. 64.3-4a; Viṣṇu IV. 5.1-12; Bhaṭṭa. P. IX. 13.1-13; D. Bh. P. VI. Chs. 14-15; M. P. Ch. 61, Ch. 200; Viṣṇudh Part I. 117 and Padma I Srṣṭikhandā Ch. 22.

(3) Birth of Aśvins

The illustrious sun-god is the consort of Samjñā, the daughter of Tvastr. The young lady Samjñā endowed with beauty and charm does not have a happy time with her lord because she is unable to bear with his scorching rays. She approaches her father, Tvastr advises her to return to her husband - the sun-god. Not only that Tvastr also assures Samjñā to trim down the hot rays of the sun-god within a few days.

Samjñā comes back and passes her days in the company of the sun-god. From their union are born two sons - Manu and Yama and a daughter - Yamī. Further unable to bear with the scorching rays, Samjñā produces a replica from her body.

3. Nar. P. Chs. 18-19
Chāyā and appoints her as a substitute in her place. She herself starts for Uttarakuru where she wanders about in the form of a mare.

The sun-god fails to differentiate between Chāyā and Samjña, he begets on the former three children - Manu, Śanaiscara and Tapatī. As is natural with a co-wife, Chāyā in course of time neglects the children of Samjña and pays greater care and attention to her own children. Yama brings this point to the notice of his father. The sun-god advises Chāyā to mete out equal treatment to all her children. But when Chāyā is once again detected to be more affectionate to her children, both Yama and Yami behave badly towards her. At this Chāyā curses both Yama and Yami to the effect that Yama would become the king of the dead (pretarāja) and Yami would turn into a river. In a fit of rage the sun-god too imprecates curse upon Śanaiscara and Tapatī - both the children of Chāyā.

Then the sun-god sits in meditation and through meditation he comes to know of his wife wandering about in Uttarakuru in the form of a mare. Instantly the sun-god assumes the form of a horse and proceeds to Uttarakuru to be united with his wife. Their union results in the birth of the twin Āśvins; Prajāpati in person comes to the place, confers upon them the right to divinity, a principal share
in the sacrifice and the status of physician of gods.

Then both the sun-god and Samjña assume their original form. As per his word Viśvakarman too approaches the sun-god and in his honour he sings aloud an eulogy consisting of his one hundred and eight names. Propitiated with his hymns of praise the sun-god permits Tvastr to put him on the lathe and grind off his excessive rays. Tvastr does accordingly and since then the sun-god appears to be cool and soothing for Samjña. It is only for Viśvakarman that in the solar orb Samjña has a happy and blessed life.

The legend of birth of Aśvins is found in RV. X, 17.1-2; AV. 13.1.53, 13.2.33; BD 6.33-7.1-7; Nirukta XII.10-11; N.M. PP. 73.-74, 293-299; Mbh. I.60.33-34; Vāyu II. Uttarārddha, Ch. 22.32-37; Bd. P. II. Madhyabhāja, Ch. 59.33-36; Viṣṇu P. III. 2.2-12; M.P. Ch. II. 1-39; Padma P. I. Srstikhaṇḍa Ch. 8. 37-74; Bhāg. P. VI. 6.40; Viśnudh. I. Ch. 106.61-91; S.P. V. Ch. 35; Märk. P. Ch. 77-79, Chs. 106-109; Br. P. Ch. 6, Ch. 39; Bhav. P. Var. P. Ch. 20; I. Brahma Parvan, Ch. 47.1-44, Ch. 79; Br. P. IV. Ch. 18; Sk. P. IV. Kāśikhaṇḍa Ch. 17; V. Avantīkhaṇḍa I Ch. 67; VII. Prabhāsakhaṇḍa, Ch. 11.63-225 and Sām. P. Chs. 10-11.

(4) Origin of Maruts

Diti happens to be the wife of the sage Kaśyapa. In days of yore the sons of Diti are put to death by the gods with
Indra as their leader. Then desirous of a son who would defeat Indra in the battle, Diti propitiates her husband — the revered sage Kaśyapa.

In course of time pleased with her rigorous austerities, Kaśyapa impregnates Diti and advises her that in a pure and holy state if she bears the foetus for a hundred years, she would have a son more mighty and powerful than Indra. And accordingly Diti leads an austere life.

Aware of this evil intention of Diti Indra comes down from heaven and in the guise of an old Brahmin he begins to serve Diti. Indra is always alert and watchful to set at naught the purpose of Diti. Once it so happens that without washing her feet Diti falls asleep. Finding it as the most opportune moment, with his thunderbolt Indra enters her womb and cuts the foetus into seven pieces. When the foetus starts weeping, Indra asks it "not to weep" and he again divides each of them into seven pieces. These forty nine pieces remain all alive and they are known as forty nine Maruts since in the beginning Lord Indra has addressed them with the words mā rodih (don't weep). These Maruts enjoy the status of divinities and they become the associates of Indra, the Lord of heaven.

The legend of origin of Maruts is found in Rām.I. Bālakāṇḍa Ch.45-46.1-10; Mbh. V. Udyogaparvan, 109.3; HV. I. Harivamsaparvan 3.97-109; Vāyu II.6.86-135; Bd.P.
(b) Devotional legends

Purāṇas lay great emphasis on 'bhakti'. The word 'bhakti' is derived from the Sanskrit root 'bhaj' meaning to serve and it turns into an abstract noun by the addition of the termination 'kti'. Thus the grammatical meaning of 'bhakti' is service. But normally bhakti implies loving faith and devotion to God.

In RV. I.1.7, IV.17.17 and VII.36.7-8 one can trace out reference to bhakti. It is patently expressed in Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad (6.23), though there is suggestion of it in Katha and Brhadāranyaka.  

5. bhaj sevāyām

6. Yasya deve para bhaktiḥ yathā deve tathā gurau /
tasyaite kathitā hyrthāḥ prakāśante mahātmānāḥ //
Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad 6.23.

7. Kathopaniṣad 2.20; Br. Ār. Up. 2.4.5.
This 'bhakti' has been classified in various ways in the Purāṇas. The Padma (A.S.S. VI. Uttarakaṅhaḍa Ch.126. 5-11) and the Devī-Bḥājavata (VII.37.1-45) divide 'bhakti' into three classes such as 'sātvākā', 'rājasī' and 'tāmasī'. Further Padma gives different classifications of bhakti when it speaks of it as laukikī (common), vaidikī (laid down by the Veda) and ādhyātmikī (philosophical) or mānasī, vācikī (mental) and kāyikī (done with the body such as vratas, fasts etc.).

In Garuda I. Ch.219,1-22 we come across eight types of 'bhakti' (bhaktirāṣṭavidhā eṣa) whereas Bhājavata (VII.5.23) gives nine varieties: sravana (hearing about Lord Visnu), kīrttana (repeating His name), smarana (remembering Him), pādasevana (adoring the feet of the image of Lord), arcana (offering worship), vandana (paying homage), dāśya (treating oneself as the slave of the Lord), sakhya (treating Him as a friend)

and Ātma-nivedana (self-surrender to the Lord). 9

It is the Nārādiya Purāṇa (I.Ch.15.138-151) which divides bhakti into ten types: (1) Tāmasi-bhakti-adhamā, (2) Tāmasi-bhakti-madhyamā, (3) Tāmasi-bhakti-uttamā, (4) Rājasī-bhakti-adhamā, (5) Rājasī-bhakti-madhyamā, (6) Rājasī-bhakti-uttamā, (7) Sāttvikī-bhakti-adhamā, (8) Sāttvikī-bhakti-madhyamā, (9) Sāttvikī-bhakti-uttamā and (10) Bhakti-uttamottamā. 10

9. Besides in the Bhāgavata text there is reference to three-fold devotion (II.1.5), four-fold devotion (I.2.14), five-fold devotion (X.86.46), six-fold devotion (X.10.33) and seven-fold devotion (III.27.21-23). It also makes a mention of ten types of bhakti (II.3.19-24), eleven types of bhakti (IX.4.19-20), twelve types of bhakti (VII.7.30-36), thirteen types of bhakti (XI.29.9-16), fifteen types of bhakti (XI.19.20-23), eighteen types of bhakti (III.27.6-11), nineteen types of bhakti (IV.22.22-25), twenty types of bhakti (III.29.15-19), twenty four types of bhakti (XI.11.34-41), twenty five types of bhakti (III.23.2-7), twenty six types of bhakti (V.5.10-13), thirty types of bhakti (VII.11.3-12) and thirty six types of bhakti (XI.3.23-31).

10. For detailed discussion on these ten types of bhakti see K. Damodaran Nambiar, Nārada Purāṇa - A critical study, pp.182-183.
According to Nārada-bhakti-sutra (83) 'bhakti' is eleven-fold: gunamāhātmyāsakti (love for the glorious qualities of the Lord), rūpasakti (love for His enchanting beauty), pūjāsakti (love of adoration), smaranāsakti (love of constant remembrance), dāsyāsakti (love of service to the Lord), sakhyāsakti (love for friendship with the Lord), vātsalyāsakti (love of Lord as a son), kāntāsakti (love for the Lord as that of a wife for her husband), ātmanivedanasakti (love of self-surrender), tānapayatāsakti (love of complete absorption in the Lord) and paramavirahāsakti (love for the sorrow and grief in separation).

It is in the Bhāgavadgītā, Viṣṇu Purāṇa and Bhāgavata Purāṇa that the cult of 'bhakti' has attained its prominence. Rūpa Gosvāmi's Ujjvala niłamani takes bhakti to be "rasarāja". In Bhāgavadgītā IX.26 Lord Himself declares, "Whosoever with devotion offers me a leaf, fruit, flower or water, I accept that devout gift of the pure-minded." In Viṣṇu I Ch.20.19 Prahlāda, the great devotee of Lord says, "With all

11. Mukhyarasasat pura yaḥ samkṣependitā rahasyatvāt /
Prthūgeva 'bhakti' rasarāt sa vistarecyate madhurāh //

12. Patram puspam phalam tojam yo me bhaktyā prayacchati /
Tadāhāṃ bhaktyupahṛtam āśnāti prayatātmanah //
Bh.3.IX.26
my thoughts centred on thee, may the unswerving faith and devotion which the ignorant feel for the wordly objects, never depart from my heart." It is in the Bhāgavata (III.25.43-44) that Devahūti is advised: "Supreme well-being of human life comes through an intense devotion to God, a firm dedication of mind to the Supreme." Only that action is action which satisfies God and only that learning is real learning which helps us in concentrating our mind on God (Bhāg. IV.29.49). In Ajāmila episode of Bhāgavata (VI.3.22) Yamarāja clearly states that through meditation, through a recital of His names and glories the paramount duty of human beings in this world is to seek 'bhaktī' for the Lord. In the same way Prahlāda advises his friends to cultivate an exclusive devotion for the Supreme and feel His presence anywhere and everywhere (Bhāg. VII.7.55).

Thus in the heyday of bhakti Viṣṇu-dharmottara (I.57.6-8, 10-14) emphatically proclaims:

\[
\text{Maṇaścā taddhi dharmajña Keśāve yat pravartate} / \\
\text{Sa buddhis tad vratāya eva satatāṁ pratitisthati} //
\]

\[13.\text{Yā prītir avivekānām viṣayēsvanapāyini} / \\
\text{Tvām anusmarataḥ sā me hrdayān mā pasarpatu} //
\]

\[\text{Viṣṇu I.20.19}\]
With the steady rise of cult of devotion, the materials of worship needed for the Lord in course of time gained importance. These ingredients like leaves, fruits, flowers, water, incense or perfumes came to have added significance. Recitation of mantra, japa, or dhyana were spoken of as granting liberation to the devotees. On the other hand dishonour and disregard shown to 'prasāda' and 'nirmālya'
of the Lord are said to have serious repercussions in life. People who disrespect them are heavily punished and they are spoken to have undergone sufferings in hell. In the Purāṇa-texts we come across the famous story of Indra, the Lord of gods who, by disrespecting the divine garland offered to him by Durvāsas, becomes destitute of goddess Laksmī.

When the cult of devotion reached its pinnacle, by rendering mere service to the Lord in the form of casual offering of lamp, casual observance of vrata or fast, casually sweeping the floor of Visnu temple, a sinner is said to have been absolved of all his sins. Not only that, by this mere involuntary service to the Lord, he (or she) even attains rich rewards in the form of his (or her) birth in a high family as a prince (or princess), as a wise and learned person in a good society or as a great devotee of the Lord. According to Agni Purāṇa Ch.200 in her past life Lalita was but a she-mouse living in the hole of a certain Visnu temple, once out of fear for the cats the she-mouse nudged the wick of the lamp and re-excited its faint light. And because of the merit of this involuntary act of piety in

15. Visnuparta ICh.9; Padma (A.S.S.) III. Brahmakhanda Ch.259; Bhāj. P. VIII. 5.15-16; D. Bh.P. IX. Ch.40; Br.Vai.P.II. Prakrtikhandhā 36.15ff.
the Visnu temple, she was born as princess Lalita, who afterwards came to be the blessed queen of king Carudharman. Nārada Purāṇa I.36.33-40 describes as to how by casually plastering the premises of the Visnu temple and passing out only a night there in his previous birth, Yajñamālī has attained the good fortune of a prosperous present life. Other parallel instances may be cited from Padma III. Brahmakhanda Ch.2, Ch.3, Ch.6, Ch.7 and Visnudharmottara part I. Chs. 169-170.

Thus we find that quite a number of Purānas glorify 'bhakti' and narrate stories relating to it. Seven stories of the Narasimha text come under the purview of this group.

(1) Sage Märkandeya's overcoming Death

Mrkandu is said to be the son of Bhṛgu born from Khyāti. Märkandeya is the son of Mrkandu born from Sumitra. Just after the birth of Märkandeya a certain astrologer comes and predicts that the boy will certainly meet his death on completion of the twelfth year. In spite of being definite about the death, his father performs the rite of initiation in the residence of his preceptor. Märkandeya studies the holy scriptures and finally he returns home with complete

mastery over the Vedic lore. After his return from the residence of his teacher, Markandeya is now a high-minded personality endowed with divine wisdom. But instead of rejoicing at the return of the boy, the parents are rather pulled down with sorrow and grief. On being enquired by Markandeya, the mother discloses the forecast of the astrologer. With courage and confidence Markandeya advises his parents to have the least of worries for his sake. By practising penance he is sure to overcome death.

At once the boy proceeds to the forest 'Vallivata' where he meets his grandfather Bhrgu seated in the company of sages. On being questioned by Bhrgu the boy speaks out the purpose of his visit: "You are my only refuge, I am determined to overcome death, please suggest me the means." Bhrgu advises him to take refuge in Visnu. Only by propitiating the eternal Lord through severe austerities, can one attain immortality. By adoring the great Lord Narasimha he would definitely overcome death.

The illustrious Bhrgu gives him the definite advice to instal the image of Kesava beneath the tree 'Bhadravata' on the bank of the river Tungabhadra and adore the Lord chanting the twelve-syllabled mantra "Om namo bhagavate Vasudevaya". As per the advice of Bhrgu, Markandeya starts for the penance-grove situated on the bank of Tungabhadra. Without food and sleep he continues his penance for full one
year and meditates on Visnu. In course of his meditation on Visnu with great devotion Mārkandeya is completely absorbed in Him.

In the meantime the attendants of Yama approach him with noose in their hands. But the messengers of Visnu strike them with spikes and put them to flight. When the attendants of Yama fail in their mission, 'Death' personally appears there. Then the high-souled Mārkandeya with all his attention centred on Visnu is engaged in chanting hymns of praise in honour of the Lord. On listening to this hymns of praise in honour of Visnu, "Death" too leaves the place. Thus the wise Mārkandeya overcomes death.

Very much demoralised in their failure to fetch the life of Mārkandeya, the messengers of Yama including "Death" narrate the pathetic story of their harassment. Yama gives out the secret of Mārkandeya's strength in the meditation of Visnu (Haridhyāna mahādikṣāñabalam tasya mahāmuneh - 3.13). Because of his constant meditation on Visnu, the sage is in eternal union with the Lord. It is the only cause for which Mārkandeya is untouched by his messengers.

Then Yama gives a warning to his messengers that they should never approach a man devoted to Visnu. His messengers should remain at a distance from those persons who devotedly adore Lord Narasimha. There is a change of heart in Yama too. Convinced of the efficacy of devotion
to Visnu, Yama reprimands the beings tortured and tormented in hell for not taking to the adoration of Lord Visnu. Further Yama as a teacher instructs his messengers on the hymns of praise, the recitation of which would lead to the propitiation of Visnu. Even the beings tormented in hell overhear the hymns of praise in honour of Lord Visnu and continue to recite. In consequence, the beings so long tormented in hell are released. Besmeared with fragrant substance and dressed in divine garments and ornaments, they assume the form of Visnu and seated in divine chariot proceed to the abode of the Lord.

Markandeya overcomes death and starts for his home. On the advice of Bhṛgu he gets married and is blessed with a son Vedaśiras by name. As a full-fledged householder he performs sacrifices in honour of Lord Nārāyaṇa, he propitiates his ancestors by offering Śrāddhas and honours the guests by gift of food. Then the sage Markandeya proceeds to the sacred Prayāga, takes a dip there and practises penance beneath a banyan tree nearby. With the grace of Lord Visnu he has overcome death. With a view to having a vision of the Lord, he engages himself in severe austerities. Without food and drink, with air as the only means of subsistence the sage goes on chanting hymns of praise in honour of Lord Visnu. When he concludes the recitation of the hymns of praise, there is a heavenly voice which declares that the
vision of Lord Visnu would be possible only when he takes a dip in all the sacred *tirthas*. As directed Markandeya takes a dip in all the tirthas, but still he fails to have a vision of the Lord. Then the heavenly voice further directs him to propitiate Lord Visnu by reciting a particular hymn of praise (Ch.10. 21-28). As soon as Markandeya chants the particular hymn of praise as directed by the divine voice, there appears before him Lord Visnu endowed with conch, mace and discus.

At the sudden appearance of Visnu, Markandeya humbly prostrates himself before Him. And with folded hands he goes on reciting prayer to Lord Visnu. Lord Visnu pleased to listen to the hymn of praise asks Markandeya to solicit boons. The sage Markandeya prays for long life and steadfast devotion to Him as well. The Lord assents to his prayer. Besides the Lord assures him that he would again show a favour to him when Markandeya would have the good fortune of beholding Him lying in 'yoga-nidrā' in the milk-ocean.

With these words the Lord vanishes then and there. Markandeya with his thoughts centred on Visnu continues to spend his time in adoring the Lord and reciting His names. Once reminded of Visnu's assurance to afford him the opportunity of His vision, Markandeya proceeds to the milk-ocean. There he beholds the Lord resting on the serpent Ananta and
chants hymns\textsuperscript{17} of praise in His honour! Lord Vis\textnu very much pleased with Markandeya offers him further boons. Markandeya repeats the boon which he had already asked for: "For all time to come, may I have steadfast devotion to your lotus-like feet."\textsuperscript{13} The second boon asked for by Markandeya is with regard to the efficacy of hymns of praise he chanted on beholding the Lord in the milk-ocean: "Anybody O Lord, who propitiates thee by daily reciting the hymns of praise recited by me, would get a place in thy world." After asking for the boons the sage Markandeya expresses his anxiety to live there in the milk-ocean engaged in the adoration of the lotus-like feet of the Lord. Visnu is pleased to declare that because of his steadfast devotion in course of time he would definitely attain liberation. And the person who would recite the particular hymn of praise both in the morning and evening, would get a place in His abode. Evading the prayer of Markandeya for living in the milk-ocean in the company of the Lord, Visnu says that He is very much attached to His devotees. Naturally He would be present anywhere Markandeya would remember Him. When Lord Visnu remains

\textsuperscript{17} The hymns recited by Markandeya constitute 52 verses of Ch.11 of Narasimha Pur\text\textacute{}\textnu. 

\textsuperscript{13} It is the same boon asked for in Ch.10.44.
silent after giving this assurance to Mārkandeya, the latter is able to behold the Lord anywhere and everywhere he wanders about.

This legend of Mārkandeya is traceable in Sk.P.VI. Nāgarakhandha Ch.21.1-34, VII. Prabhāsakhandha I. Prabhāsa-ksetra māhātmya 209.1-44, VII. Prabhāsakhandha III. Arbuda-khanda māhātmya 41.1-43, V. Avantikhandha II. Caturasitiliṅga māhātmya 36.1-44; Padma I. Srstikhandha 33.1-47; Padma (A.S.S.) VI. Uttarakhanda Chs.235-236; Nar. P. I. Chs. 4-5 and Brhannāradīya P.Ch.4.50, Ch.5.66.

(2) Legend of Dhruva

King Uttānacaraṇa is the son of Manu Svāyambhuva. He has a son Uttama by his favourite wife Suruci. By his queen Sunīti he has another son Dhruva.

One day it so happens that when the king Uttānapāda has taken his seat on the royal throne, Uttama goes up to the throne and takes his seat in the lap of his father. At the sight of Uttama being fumled by his father, Dhruva cannot resist his temptation of sitting in his lap. Conscious of the presence of his dear wife Suruci nearby, the king hesitates to permit Dhruva sit in his lap. At the

sight of Dhruva anxious to get on to the lap of his father, Suruci makes the taunting remark that it is Uttama, not Dhruva who deserves to sit on the throne; even though the son of a king, he does not deserve the throne because she has not given birth to him.

Having heard of the cutting remark of his step-mother, Dhruva proceeds to the apartment of Sunīti and repeats before her the arrogant speech of Suruci. Deeply moved by the report of the incident Sunīti consoles him. As Sunīti pacifies his son, she tells Dhruva that it is the fruits of the merits or demerits in a former existence which a person has to enjoy in this world. Uttānapāda's love for Suruci and her son Uttama is nothing but the reward of her merits in the past life. A royal umbrella, a dignified throne, lordly elephants, fast-galloping horses, a calm peaceful life free from sickness of both body and mind, and a kingdom free from rivals — all these are attained only with the grace of Lord Visnu.

At this suggestion of his mother Dhruva at once becomes anxious for getting an elevated position in life higher than the royal status of his father. He convinces his mother that in spite of his not being the son of Suruci, he is sure of attaining the revered position in the whole world. For propitiating Lord Visnu through penance Dhruva seeks the permission of his mother and proceeds to the
forest. To his good fortune in the city-park he met the seven famous sages seated on the skin of a black antelope. With great humility Dhruva bows down to them. After disclosing his identity he submits to them as to how tired and disgusted with worldly life he has sought refuge in them.

Apprised of the identity of Dhruva, the seers fail to find any reason for the disappointment of Dhruva with the worldly life. Dhruva is born in a royal house-hold free from want of any kind. Besides he is hale and hearty. Therefore the seers not convinced with his sincerity of purpose put him surprising questions as to the cause of his disgust with the world.

Dhruva relates to them the misery in the royal house-hold specifically the ill-treatment of his step-mother and his father's decision to offer the throne to his brother Uttama. Convinced of Dhruva's sense of detachment with the world, the seers are inquisitive to know as to what the young boy has decided to do in retaliation of the wrongs done to him by his father and the step-mother.

In plain and simple language Dhruva makes his position clear. He desires neither wealth nor kingdom. He aspires after a position which no one has attained before. To enable him to attain the object of his desire, all the seven sages are unanimous in recommending to him the adoration and propitiation of Lord Visnu.
On being further questioned as to the method and procedure of adoring Lord Visnu, the seven seers advise him to meditate on Visnu with the twelve syllabled 'mantra' "Om namo bhagavate Vasudevaya." Whether standing or moving, whether asleep or awake, whether resting or sitting, they lay emphasis on constant meditation of Lord Narayana.

Pleased to know the method and procedure of adoring the Lord, Dhruva repairs to 'Madhuvana' located on the bank of river Yamuna. The young boy begins his rigorous penance with all his attention centred on Lord Visnu; deeply absorbed in recitation of the mantra - "Om namo bhagavate Vasudevaya" Dhruva has in his heart the direct vision of the lotus-eyed Lord. No physical suffering like hunger or thirst affects him. Excessive heat or cold, sun or rain, wind or darkness do not prevail upon him who has attained oneness with the Lord.

The Lord Visnu, dear to His devotees and bestower of boons appears before Dhruva. He advises Dhruva to ask for boons. Dhruva opens his eyes and to his utter delight he beholds the Lord standing before him with the conch, mace, lotus and discus in His hands!

He bows down to the Lord and overjoyed at His sight he becomes confounded to speak out a word! He surrenders to the Lord and the boon he asks for is that he would be endowed with the power of singing aloud His glory!
At this prayer of Dhruva, Lord Viṣṇu touches him with the tip of His conch-shell and immediately he starts chanting a long hymn of praise in honour of the Lord! Very much gratified at the sight of the Lord, Dhruva does not care to ask for any boon. To put it in his own words, he is not in need of any other object since in course of searching for a piece of glass he has come to acquire the divine jewel (kācāṃ vicīrvannīva divyaratnāṃ svāmin kṛtārtho’smi varān na yāce - 30.90).

But the sight of Lord Viṣṇu never goes in vain. Therefore, the Lord confers on him the boon that he would attain the highest position as he has desired, he would be the support of all the planets; and both of them - he and his mother would have a place beside Him.

Thus blessed by Viṣṇu, Dhruva occupies an exalted position; endowed with glory and splendour he even shines now adored by the divinities!

The legend of Dhruva is referred to in A.P.13.1-5; Vāyu II Uttarārddhā Ch.1. 72-82; Bd. P. I Ch.36.34-96; H.V. Ch.2.7-13; Br. P. 2.5-13; K.P. I. 13.1-3; G.P.I. 6.1-2; M.P. Ch.4.33-37; L.P. I. Ch.62; Viṣṇu P. I Chs.11-12; Bhāg. P. IV. Chs. 8-12; The Svarṇākhandha of Padma Purāṇa (A.I.K.T.) Chs.12-13; Sk.P. IV Kāśikhandha Chs.19-21; VII. Prabhāsakhandha Ch.131; Bhav. P. IV.Ch.17.42-47; Brhad dharma P. II Uttarakhanda Ch.13.4-7 and Saura P. Ch.27.1-3.
(3) **Legend of Sukrācārya’s regaining his eye-sight**

The demon king Bali is very much renowned in Purāṇa literature for his munificence. In his sacrifice he is said to have made bountiful gifts to the suppliants. When Lord Viṣṇu in the form of a dwarf approaches the sacrificial hall of Bali to accept gifts from him, Sukrācārya, the preceptor of Bali dissuades the latter from making any gift to Vāmana because it would reverse the cause of the demons. But Bali is indifferent to the advice of Sukrācārya. At the advent of Vāmana he makes a promise to offer him anything he asks for. Not only that when Bali pours down water from his golden pitcher as a mark of ensuring his promise, at that time his preceptor Sukrācārya hides himself in the pitcher and obstructs the flow of water. Enraged at this mischief, with tips of kusa grass Vāmana pierces one of his eyes. And this is how Sukrācārya becomes blind of one eye. 20

In order to expiate for the sin thus committed Sukrācārya goes on a pilgrimage to many holy places. In course of visiting different holy places, once he goes to the river Ganges. He remains standing in the midst of its sacred waters and keeps himself engaged in adoring Lord

20. For details see Nar. P. Ch.45.20-37.
Vāmana. With all his thoughts centred on the Lord, he meditates upon Visnu and chants a hymn of praise in His honour.

At long last there appears Lord Visnu with the conch, mace and the discus shining in His hands. When the Lord enquires of Śukrācārya as to the cause of his prayer and eulogy, Śukrācārya humbly relates his woe as to how he has been blind of one eye because of his sin against Him. Pleased with the devotion and prayer of Śukrācārya, with His conch 'Pañcajanya' Lord Visnu touches the eye which he has lost. And instantly his eye becomes radiant and lustrous as before. Thus Śukrācārya who has been suffering so long, in consequence of his adoration of Lord Visnu gets back his eye-sight.21

(4) Legend of Pundarīka22

Pundarīka is a righteous Brahmin well-versed in Vedic lore; not only in Vedas and Vedāṅgas but also in all the diverse scriptures, he is very proficient. He is full of regard for his preceptors; with senses under control and anger subdued, he is daily engaged in prayers in the morning,

22. Nar. P. Ch.64.
midday and evening. Everyday in the morning and evening he kindles sacrificial fire; always absorbed in penance and Vedic studies like the divine sage Narada, he duly adores Visnu, the Lord of sacrifice. By providing the precentors with their necessities, he keeps them pleased and treats them as if they are his own parents. He is used to subsist on the food that he begs; thus due to his noble conduct of life he is dear to one and all.

Pundarīka is in the habit of practising different exercises leading to control of breath; identifying himself with all the different objects of the world, he leads a life of complete detachment and is worthy of liberation. He deserts all his near and dear relations as vain and useless; convinced of the transitoriness of youth, beauty, life and wealth, he regards all the three worlds as useless as a clod of earth; having undertaken the great religious observance of visiting all the holy places he goes to the sacred rivers - the Ganges, Yamunā, Gomati, Gandakī, Śatadrū, Payosṇī, Sarayū, Sarasvatī, Prayāga, Narmadā and many other places of pilgrimage. In course of his wanderings the noble sage Pundarīka reaches the sacred spot Śālagrāma.

This sacred spot isolated from human dwellings has a charm of its own. The calm and tranquility of the wide expansive spot is pleasing to the eyes. The sages and seers reside in a lovely hermitage there; encircled by the river
'Cakranadi', the slabs of stone in that holy spot bear the mark of discus. In and around the place there also roam about many animals with the mark of discus on their bodies; and even the sight of these animals endows one with religious merit. Therefore, many devotees congregate in this place and move about at their will.

In Śalagramā Pundarīka is pleased to visit these holy spots; as per the direction of the Śāstras, he takes a dip in the holy 'Devarahada', 'Cakrakunda', 'Cakranadī' and in the river Sarasvatī; besides he visits other places in and around Śalagramā; and the sanctified environment of these holy places (of Śalagramā) has a soothing effect on him. With his mind cleansed of all sins, Pundarīka takes up his residence there for a long time, practises meditation and adores Viṣṇu. Endowed with the highest devotion for the Lord, free from opposites he has the same regard for one and all. With his inner self concentrated on Viṣṇu, Pundarīka devotes his full time and energy to His adoration with a view to getting His highest blessings.

In Śalagramā when he is thus absorbed in the profound meditation of the Lord, the revered sage Nārada bent upon doing good to the devotees of Viṣṇu, comes to meet him. At the approach of Nārada looking so graceful and lustrous, Pundarīka at first fails to recognise him and he enquires of his identity. Afterwards on getting his identity
Fundarika is overjoyed to meet Narada, the devotee of Lord Visnu. With proper offerings he propitiates him and falls at his feet. With Narada's presence in his hermitage, he thinks himself to have been blessed and purified.

Fundarika prays for some special favour. He asks the sage to advise him on the means of release from the fetters of samsara.

Then relating his own experience with Brahma as to how he has learnt the supreme knowledge and supreme yoga from Him, Narada says: "Narayana is the Supreme Brahman, Narayana is the supreme principle, He is the supreme light and Supreme Self. He is greater than the great, there is nothing in this world greater than Him. Prakriti in conjunction with Purusa gives birth to twenty three products; Prakriti is the twenty fourth principle; Purusa being the twenty fifth principle exists in the bodies of all animated beings and is designated as 'nara'; the principles born from 'nara' are known as nara and the entity in which all these principles like 'Mahat', 'Ahamkara' etc., exist is called Narayana.

At the time of creation all the universe originates from Narayana; and at the time of deluge everything again goes back to Him. Though primary cause of the world, He is without beginning and end; He is Self-existent; He brings to existence all the beings. The eternal omnipresent Lord
Nārāyaṇa cannot be conceived of in the mind. He is of the nature of existence and non-existence.

As the Lord is the abode of the whole universe (jagadvāsah), He is called 'Vāsudeva'; as all the three worlds consisting of the animate and inanimate continue to exist only because of Him, the Lord is called 'Vīṣṇu'. Some speak of Him as Supreme Brahman; some speak of Him as mere knowledge (vijnāna); some speak of Him as 'Kāla', some speak of Him as eternal self (sanātana jīva); some speak of Him as pure and sublime (anāmaya); some speak of Him as kṣetrajña. Thus in different scriptures sages have referred to Him in different ways.

It is because of this that people are deluded as to the true nature of Vīṣṇu. Had there been a single scripture, it would have been easy to take that as authoritative, but because there are many different scriptures and because each scripture propounds a different doctrine, it is extremely difficult to know the truth. Still in this mire of utter confusion after a thorough study of all the scriptures the final truth has been enunciated that Nārāyaṇa is worthy of constant meditation (idamekaṁ suniṣpannam dhīyo Nārāyaṇāḥ sādā - 64.30). As all roads lead to Rome, all doctrines of all the different scriptures centre around Lord Nārāyaṇa. He is the subtle, unmanifest, and eternal god inherent in everything. There is no use in making gifts, visiting holy places and offering sacrifices.
Meditation of Lord Narayana is the supreme knowledge; and there is no other 'yoga' superior to it.

Thus the sage Narada advises Pundarika to take recourse to the meditation of Narayana and the recitation of the eight-syllabled mantra - "Om namo Narayanaya" as the infallible means of attaining his desire. Besides in his advice he also points out that if Pundarika aspires for the vision of the Lord, he should be calm and pacified; self-controlled and self-contented, objective and impartial. He should be free from desires, egoism, anger, malice and all kinds of volitions and worldly connections.

Having said so the foremost devotee of Lord Visnu disappears then and there and the sage Pundarika takes his advice in good spirit.

Sālagrāma is the holy penance-grove where ascetics practising penance attain success without fail. So for his prayer and meditation the ascetic Pundarika selects Sālagrāma where he lives for a pretty long time. Pure in body and mind, he leads a life of continence and continues practising penance. Devoted to Lord Narayana he regularly keeps on chanting the mantras - "namo'stu Keśavāya" (obeisance to Lord Keśava) and "prasīdasva mahāyogin" (O great yogin, be gracious). Even in dream the great ascetic has the vision of none other but Keśava; his very sleep also is not detrimental to the four objects of life. Due to the grace of
the Supreme Lord, he is cleansed of all sins and attains the highest bliss.

At long last Lord Nārāyana appears before Pundarīka; with the conch, mace and discus shining in His hands the Lord looks splendorous with the *Śrīvatsa* mark on His chest; at the sight of the Supreme Lord, Pundarīka overtaken with awe and humility falls prostrate and touches His feet with the head. Long since Pundarīka has been anxious for the sight of the Lord. Utterly confounded at His sudden presence, he as if drinks Him in with his eyes and is overjoyed at heart. The Lord asks Pundarīka to solicit any boon of his choice; but indifferent to boons Pundarīka prays the Lord to tell him what would be beneficial for him. Then the Lord announces that in His company Pundarīka would go to heaven; endowed with His form for all time to come he (Pundarīka) would be attending upon Him (*madṛūpadhārī nityātma mamaiva pārsado bhava - 64.116*).

As soon as the Lord announces His favour for the devout Pundarīka, the kettle-drums sound in heaven and Siddhas, Gandharvas, and Kinnaras sing aloud His glory. All the gods including Indra exclaim in joy and pay their homage to Lord Nārāyana. Then the Lord takes Pundarīka with Him; mounted upon Garūḍa He starts for His heavenly abode. Thus because of his unflinching and unswerving devotion to Visnu,
Pundarīka attains the favour of the Lord.

The legend of Pundarīka as narrated in the Narasimha text is almost the same as Padma P. VI. Uttarakhanda Ch.30 (vide Appendix pp.107–118).

(5) Raivata-Jayadhvaja-Bahuroman story 23

There lives a Brahmin Raivata by name. Always he takes pleasure in performing sacrifices for Śūdras and other out-caste persons (ayājya yājaka); habituated to dishonouring the revered Brahmins, he deals in articles which are not saleable (apanyānām ca vikraya). Given to debauchery and stealing he finds delight in killing animals. Addicted to drinking the Brahmin spends his time in molesting the poor innocent travellers. Because of leading such an ignoble life he is deserted by his friends and relatives.

In course of leading such a despicable life once at night he forcibly leads some Brahmin women to the precincts of a deserted Visnu temple, with a view to satisfying his carnal desire. With that end in view with the skirt of his garment, he sweeps a part of the temple premises and lights a candle inside the premises of the temple. Even though he does all this in order to rape and seduce the noble ladies,

23. Nar. P. Ch.33.
all his sins are washed off because of sweeping the premises of the temple and lighting the lamp there.

Thus for sometime Raivata remains busy in getting himself prepared for fulfilling his malafide intention. In the meantime at the sight of the unusual light in the deserted temple, the guardians of the city arrive there. Quite convinced of his evil intention they behead him then and there. But because of his righteous deed of sweeping the temple premises of Visnu and lighting a candle there, seated in a divine chariot he proceeds to the heaven and the Gandharvas sing aloud his glory.

Endowed with divine body, blessed with divine pleasures and happiness, he resides in the heaven for more than hundred Kalpas. But even then his religious merit that accrued to him is not exhausted. Therefore, as a recompense for his meritorious deeds he is born as king Jayadhvaja in the Lunar race. As a king he is blessed with the rare quality of remembering his past. Well aware of the religious merit that is earned by cleaning the premises and lighting the candle, Jayadhvaja makes it a habit of adoring Lord Visnu in both these ways. Having noticed this surprising behaviour of the king, when the righteous priest Vīśottara enquires of him as to why he prefers these two ways of adoration to Lord Visnu, the king Jayadhvaja justifies his stand by relating to him the story of his
previous life.

In course of time the king Jayadhvaja meets his death and goes to the abode of Indra. Next he attains the world of Rudra. From the world of Rudra once when he is proceeding to the world of Brahmā, he meets the revered sage Nārada. Instead of paying him respects, puffed up with pride he laughs at the sage. Enraged at his unbecoming conduct, the sage curses the king to the effect that he would be born as a demon in his next birth.

Thus worried for the distressing curse, king Jayadhvaja tries to assuage his anger and appease him. Then Nārada pleased with him relaxes the curse to the effect that he would be released from his curse only when in course of leading the life of a demon on the bank of river Revā he would be abducting Draupadī, the lawful wife of the Pāndavas.

In consequence of the curse, the king Jayadhvaja takes his birth as the demon Bahuroman. Bearing in mind the condition of his release from the life of a demon, with the sole intention of abducting Draupadī he lies waiting in the dense forest close to the river Revā. And to his good fortune in their search for holy and sacred spots, the Pāndavas arrive there. At the notice of Draupadī in their company, assuming the form of an ascetic the demon Bahuroman appears before them. As is natural, the Pāndavas
reverentially bow down to the so-called sage. And Yudhisthira enquires of the sage about the holy spots of the region.

In the meantime moved at the distressing call of another ascetic, all on a sudden the Pāndavas leave the place leaving Draupadi all alone. Taking advantage of the helplessness of Draupadi, the demon Bahuroman abducts the poor lady. At the ghastly sight of Draupadi being carried away, Arjuna gives a chase. Terrified to notice Arjuna following him, the demon Bahuroman leaves Draupadi behind and tries to flee away. But accidentally he slips on the forest path and falls to the ground. When Arjuna comes running to catch hold of him, he is surprised to find the demon assuming the form of the four-armed Lord Viṣṇu. Taken aback at this splendorous form of the Lord with conch, discus etc., shining in his hands, Arjuna bows down and fervently appeals to him to disclose his identity.

In disclosing his identity the demon Bahuroman speaks of his past life as king Jayadhvaja and the present life of a demon which has befallen to him because of the curse of Nārada. Besides he tells Arjuna as to how the abduction of Draupadi has helped him to be released from the life of a demon.

Then in the very presence of the Pāndavas the demon mounted upon Garuḍa goes to the eternal abode of Lord Viṣṇu.
The story is closely related to Nār. P. I. Ch. 39.10-46 and Brhan nārādīya Purāṇa Ch.37.9-45 (vide Appendix pp.64-71 ).

(6) Story of Śāntanu's stepping across the 'nirmālya'
of Narasimha.

Śāntanu, the famous king of lunar dynasty is a devotee of Narasimha (the Man-lion form of Lord Viṣṇu). As per the advice of Nārada, he is always devoted to the worship of Lord Viṣṇu. Unfortunately once it so happens that Śāntanu unconsciously steps across the nirmālya of Narasimha and as a result he loses his strength and power; he becomes too weak to get into the chariot. Very much worried and aggrieved at the sudden loss of his energy, Śāntanu accidentally meets Nārada and the divine sage convinces him that his mishap is due to the sin he has committed by stepping across the Narasimha nirmālya.

In order to teach him the means of expiating for the sins (committed by disregarding the Narasimha nirmālya), Nārada advises the king to go to the sacrifice of Paraśurāma (Paraśurāma-satra) where he would expiate for his sin by removing the remnants of food of the Brahmīns. Śāntanu follows the advice of Nārada and he is blessed with strength and vigour as before. With a view to convincing the utility of removing the remnants of the food of the Brahmīns, Nārada brings in the episode of a florist.

24. Nar. P. Ch.23.
In the holy land between the river - Ganges and Yamuna (known as Antarvedī) there lives a poor florist named Ravi. Along with different groves of different flowers he has a garden of *tulasi* plants. This garden is the only source of his livelihood. Everyday he is used to pluck flowers from the garden and prepare wreaths and garlands; at first he keeps apart some wreaths and garlands to be utilised for adoring Lord Narasimha. And he maintains his livelihood with the income that he gets by selling out the remaining wreaths and garlands.

For the protection of the garden, the clever florist constructs a high expansive wall all around it. And inside the compound he builds up his residence. The protecting wall around the garden has been so constructed that nobody would be able to enter it except through his residence.

In spite of the thorough protection of the garden Indra's son Jayanta makes it a habit of stealing away the flowers from the garden. Very much worried over this matter the florist keeps a strict watch on it; but as before Jayanta comes down in his heavenly chariot and goes away with all the flowers of the garden.

When the florist comes to know of Jayanta, the son of Indra as doing all the mischief, he remains non-plused. Powerless to do anything against Jayanta, in great worry and anxiety the florist falls asleep in his residence in the
garden, in the meantime he gets the vision of Lord Narasimha who directs him to scatter His nirmālya all around the garden for warding off the trouble of Jayanta.

The florist does accordingly. And as usual Jayanta seated in an invisible chariot comes to the garden; in course of plucking the flowers inadvertently he tramples over the nirmālya. As a result he becomes too weak to get into his chariot.

The charioteer refers to his utter disregard and dishonour of Narasimha nirmālya as the cause of his weakness and fatigue; as per his advice Jayanta goes to the sacrifice of Parasurāma where he remains busy in removing the remnants of food of the Brahmins. And as a result of his service in the cause of the Brahmins, Jayanta absolved of all his sins, goes back to the heaven.

(7) Indra's release from womanhood through the recitation of astāksara mantra

Indra rules over the kingdom of gods. Fed up with its rule there develops a sense of detachment in him. Desirous of liberation he starts for the mount Kailāsa with the sole motive of adoring Lord Śiva.

In course of his wandering around Kailāsa once he comes to the bank of the lake Manasarovara; he accidentally

25. Nar. P. Ch.63.
meets there Kuvera's wife Citrasena, engaged in adoration of the goddess Pārvatī. Indra is charmed at her exquisite beauty; smitten with love he loses his composure of mind; and finally he takes refuge in Cupid, the god of love.

Here on the mount Kailāsa Cupid has been once burnt down to ashes by the wrathful Lord Śiva. Hence afraid of his life Cupid slowly proceeds to Indra and enquires of him his duty. Then Indra asks Cupid to exert his influence over Citrasena, so that she would be longing for her union with him.

Thus commanded by Indra, Cupid shoots his arrows at the young woman while recalling to his memory the 'parimohana mantra'. Enraptured with the flower-arrow of Cupid, Citrasena is excessively intoxicated with love; instantly she ceases to adore goddess Pārvatī and smiles at Indra. Having noticed her smiling face, Indra enquires of her identity. She tells him that she happens to be the wife of Kuvera, the lord of Yakṣas. Disclosing his own identity Lord Indra requests her to get united with him. As there is no way left for Citrasena exceedingly tormented and tortured by Cupid, she gets into the chariot of Indra and immediately embraces him by his neck.

Then in the company of Citrasena all atonce Indra repairs to the caves of Mandara mountain. The passage leading to the Mandara mountain is unknown both to the gods and the demons. Without caring for the well-being
of his subjects — the divinities, in the company of Citrasena Indra (the lord of heaven) spends his time in love and dalliance. Expert in the art of sensual gratification in the company of the woman he feels happy and blessed; and the pleasure and happiness that he derives by closely embracing the wife of Kuvera appears to him to be greater than the bliss of liberation.

After the departure of Indra for the Mandara mountain, the friends and companions of Citrasena hastily approach Kuvera and report to him as to how a stranger has caught hold of Citrasena and has speedily carried her away in his chariot. Having heard of this distressing news, Kuvera becomes very much depressed; Kanthakubja, the minister of Kuvera, informed of this incident comes there in order to assuage the suffering of his lord; Kuvera unable to bear with this humiliation decides to commit suicide by entering the fire; but his minister Kanthakubja consoles him not to lose heart at this calamity. In his opinion at the loss of his wife Citrasena, it is unbecoming on his part to give up his life; rather he advises Kuvera to seek assistance from his younger brother Vibhisana at this disaster.

Because of their past enmity in the beginning, Kuvera is reluctant to seek shelter with Vibhisana, but Kanthakubja explains to him that "kinsmen fighting among themselves are
always prone to be united in the face of an attack from an external enemy. (Parasparam ghnanti ca te viruddhah tathani loke na parabhavo'sti, parabhava'nanyakram sahante - 63.55).

With this reply of Kanthakubja, Kuvera is satisfied and concedes to his suggestion.

Thus advised by Kanthakubja, Kuvera at once approaches Vibhisana. Vibhisana welcomes him with all honour and humility. When he enquires of the woes of Kuvera, Kuvera goes inside and privately discloses his worries to him.

Having heard of the news of abduction of Citrasena, Vibhisana appoints the demoness NādiJaṅghā in the task of searching her out. Through her magical powers NādiJaṅghā converts herself into a paragon of beauty and at once starts for heaven in order to trace out Citrasena in the palaces of Indra and other divinities.

Just at that time at the behest of Citrasena, Indra has left the Mandara mountain and is present in the heaven looking for some divine flowers of the 'Nandana' garden. The demoness NādiJaṅghā, the paragon of beauty appears in that very heaven singing aloud sweet and melodious songs. At the sight of this bewitching lovely lady present in his own kingdom, Lord Indra is once again overtaken with passion; he deputes both the Aśvins, the divine physicians to fetch her to his harem by any means. The two Aśvins approach
Nādījaṅghā and request her to come to Indra. But Nādījaṅghā directs them to tell Indra for approaching her all alone. Then both of them go to Indra and convey the message of Nādījaṅghā.

Now Indra smitten with love approaches Nādījaṅghā and pledges her to fulfill all her desires. The shrewd demoness takes advantage of this situation and asks Indra to show her all his wives. Having agreed to do so, Indra takes her to his harem and shows her all his wives except Citrasena who is left behind in the Mandara mountain. Finally in his aerial chariot in the company of Nādījaṅghā, Indra starts for Mandara mountain just to show her Citrasena, the wife of Kuvera.

While proceeding in his chariot, Indra meets Nārada who confers his blessings on him. Nārada, fully aware of the identity of Nādījaṅghā enquires of the well-being of her brother Viṃśiṣana and other demon chiefs. At this accidental disclosure of her sinister motive, Nādījaṅghā gets depressed and her face assumes dark colour.

Taken aback at the sheer fraud and trickery of the demoness, Lord Indra feels insulted and he decides upon killing Nādījaṅghā. After reaching the Mandara mountain, he rests there for a moment. In the vicinity of the hermitage of the sage Trnavindu in the Mandara mountain he takes the life of Nādījaṅghā by striking her with his thunderbolt.
Then Trnavindu furious at the sight of a woman killed in his hermitage, curses Indra to be converted into a woman.

The curse of the sage never goes in vain; Indra all at once turns into a woman; bereft of strength and valour he goes back to heaven; in the heaven he avoids taking his seat in the assembly of gods. The gods are very much worried to see Indra in this form. In the company of Indra, Śacī and all other divinities go to the abode of Brahmā and put forth their complaint regarding the curse of sage Trnavindu.

In reply Brahmā tells them that the fault does not lie with Trnavindu; Indra has done the most unholy deed of abducting Citrasenā, the wife of Kuvera. Besides he has also killed the demoness Nādijāṅghā in vicinity of the hermitage of the sage Trnavindu. And that is why he has been punished with the curse of womanhood.

Then all the gods decide upon getting back Citrasenā from the cave of the Mandara mountain and restoring her to Kuvera. Since Citrasenā is the cause of Indra’s misery, Indra’s wife Śacī secretly guides her to Kuvera and leaves her in his palace.

Just by this time the messenger of Kuvera arrives in Laṅkā and informs Kuvera of the return of Citrasenā. Kuvera very happy to hear this glorious news returns home with all his worries gone.
Then the gods unitedly pray Brahma, the progenitor of the world to suggest them the means, so that Indra would be freed from womanhood and would attain his own self. Expressing his inability to thwart the effect of the curse, Lord Brahma tells them that the adoration of Lord Visnu is the one and only way for getting rid of the curse. Indra should duly adore Lord Visnu and for two hundred thousand times he should chant the eight-syllabled mantra "Om namo Nārāyaṇāya" with faith and devotion.

As advised by Brahma, Indra does accordingly and through the grace and favour of Lord Visnu he is freed from the curse of womanhood. The auspicious eight-syllabled mantra is so efficacious that it removes all sins; it wards off all evil influence and by reciting this mantra one gets the fruit of performing all the sacrifices. Therefore, it is desirable that (Narasimha), the Supreme Lord should be daily worshipped with the help of this eight-syllabled mantra.

(c) Legends glorifying 'varṇāśramadharma' (duties peculiar to one's caste and āśrama).

Varṇāśramadharma consists of duties pertaining to one's caste and āśrama. Smṛtis lay emphasis on 'varṇāśrama-dharma. Following them in the Purāṇa-texts adherence to duties in keeping with one's own caste is regarded as pious
whereas violation of it is said to be leading to vice. Likewise performance of āśramadharma is given due importance and of the four āśramas it is the second one - 'grhasthāsrama' which is very much lauded. In speaking highly of varnasramadharma Harita Samhita or Laghu Hāritasmṛti (Ch.1.1) declares - 'Ye varṇāśramadharmasthās te bhaktāḥ Keśavam prati' - only those who stick to their duties peculiar to their castes and stages of life, are regarded as the devotees of Lord Keśava'. One can notice, the same importance is given to 'varṇāśramadharma' in the Puranic passages. Matsya 22.30 says - 'Varnāśramānām gehe'pi tīrthantu śmudāhrtam' the holy places are really the homes of those who abide by the rules of castes and āśramas.

As regards the stages of life Manusmṛti says, as all living beings subsist on air, so the members of other three stages of life are supported by the house-holder. The householder daily supports them with food, gifts etc. and that is why it is the most important of all the four āśramas of life.26

26. Yasmāt trayo'py āśramino jñānen ānnena ānavahaḥ / Grhaṁsthena eva dhāryante tasmāt jyeṣṭhāśramo grhī //
Sarveśāṁ ani caiteśāṁ Veda Śmrīti vidhānaṭah / Grhaṁsthau ucyate sreṣṭhaḥ sa trīn etān vibhartti hi/
Manusmrī 3.78
Manusmrī 6.89
A reader can notice the impact of these passages very often occurring in the texts of Purāṇas. As an illustration we may cite Kūrma Purāṇa where the same theme is echoed.

Trayanāṃ āśramāṇāṃ tu yonir ucayate //
Anye tam upajivanti tasmāt śreyān āśrami //
Aikāśramyaṃ ērasthasya trayanāṃ Śrutidarsanāt //
Tasmād ērasthyam evaikam vijñeyam dharmasādhanaṃ //

Kūrma I.2.49-50

Hazra studies the Śmruti records in the Purāṇas and he rightly asserts that due to the influence of Buddhism and Jainism "When Brahmanism became very insecure, the Brahmanists felt it necessary to make an attempt to re-establish the varṇāśrama-dharma, the authority of the Vedas and the moral rules among women, Śūdras and those members of the upper three castes...."27 It was the only objective for introducing Śmruti matter to the Mahābhārata and the Purāṇas. According to Hazra, the Śaṅkara Vaisnavas and Śaṅkara Saivas introduced the Śmruti materials to the Purāṇas to preach Visnusim as against the heretical religions, but as we observe, these propounders of Visnusim and Sivaism were not merely contented with just inserting the dry and insipid Śmruti passages to the Purāṇa-texts, rather in order

to impress people easily, by way of illustration they fabricated instructive myths and legends in keeping with their theme and gospel. And this is how many interesting stories glorifying the 'varṇadharma' and āśramadharma came to have a place in the Purāṇas. Examples of it may be cited from Purāṇas like Garuda, Mārkandeya, Viṣṇu, Devī-Bhāgavata and so on.

In the Garuda (I. Chs. 33-39) and Mārkandeya (Chs. 95-93) there is an interesting story which runs as follows:—Desirous of liberation once Prajāpati Ruci leaves his hearth and home; he is used to subsist only on one meal a day and sleep on the bare ground. Free from love, attachment and self-conceit he continues to wander about fearlessly like a Sannyāsin but his Pitṛs appear before him and convince him of the need of a partner; they add that the performance of the daily duties of a house-holder is necessary for freeing oneself from the debts one owes to the gods, fathers, men and others. Perturbed by the advice of his forefathers, Ruci offers worship to Brahmā, takes a wife and by performing his house-hold duties he becomes free from three debts. And at last he attains final release from the world.

In the Devī-Bhāgavata (I. Chs. 13-19) Śuka firmly believes that the first three stages of life are impediments to the attainment of liberation, but Janaka instructs him
to pass through all the stages in succession until he loses all attachment for the world, because only the man who is absolutely free from worldly attachment, is entitled to take up 'sannyāsa'. Suka however contends that it is all right with a person, who, without entering the first three stages of life, becomes indifferent to the world through knowledge and wants to become a Sannyāsin. To this Janaka replies that a person desirous of going higher up in life should start from the lowest rung of the ladder. In course of passing through the stages, he should practise abstinence in the midst of manifold objects of enjoyment. Thus he would gather experience in the real taste of enjoyment and acquire greater strength of mind. It is the mind which is the cause of bondage or release. Hence control of the mind by following the directions of the Veda is the prime objective. Mere abandonment of hearth and home does not lead to liberation, because even after abandonment physical needs persist and in the forests too there are various objects to divert the mind. Hence Janaka asserts, acceptance of 'sannyāsa' is not the sure means for attaining liberation.

At last convinced of the utility of 'varṇāśrama-dharma', Suka gives up the idea of taking to sannyāsa and repairs to the hermitage of his father Vyāsa where he lives with him.

The authors of the Purāṇas have adopted various means to establish and popularise the varṇāśramadharma. Often
the sages, gods and goddesses are made to extol the varṇāśrama-
dharma. In Visnu (III.3.9,11-12) in reply to the query of
king Sañjara as to how Lord Visnu can be adored, sage Aurva
affirms - "A person loyal to the duties pertaining to his
(her) own caste and stage of life, is worthy of adoring the
Supreme Being. There is no other way of satisfying Him."28
The same doctrine is propounded in Nārada (I.15.52-57) in
the same vein.

As pointed out above, the performance of varṇāśramadharma
is said to be elevating and productive of happiness both in
this world and the next. And the violation of it leads to
misery or suffering in hell. In order to warn people of the
dire consequences of violating varṇāśramadharma the redactors
of Purāṇas have woven numerous stories. For example, we may
refer to the story of the sons of Raji.29 Deluded by
Brhaspati they are made to go astray by the acceptance of

28. Varṇāśramacāravatā puruṣaṇa paraḥ pumān /
Visnur ārādhyaṃ panthā nānyas tattosakārakah //9
Tasmāt sadācāravatā puruṣaṇa Janārdanaḥ /
Ārādhyaṃ svavarnokta dharmanuṣṭhāna kāriṇā // 11

29. For details see Vāyu II. Uttarārdadh, Ch.30.76-100;
Bd. P. II. Madhyabhāṣa Ch.67.30-105 and H.V. I.Harivamsaparvan,
heretical religion. In consequence of forsaking Vedic dharma i.e., 'varṇāśramadharma' they become impotent and consequently they are all killed by Indra. For neglecting the 'varṇāśramadharma' the king Vena too meets the same fate (Viṣṇu I.13. 11-29). In Mbh. XII. Śāntiparvan Chs.253-256 the episode of Tulādhāra-Jājali clearly brings out the fact that even a merchant devoted to his duty is more worthy of honour and adoration than Jājali, a devout sage endowed with the fire of acsecticism. The Narasimha text relates three such stories which go a long way in glorifying 'varṇāśramadharma.'

(1) Story of Brahmācārin and the devoted house-wife

Sāvitrī - a high-minded lady happens to be the wife of Kaśyapa, a righteous Brahmin proficient in Vedic lore. The blessed lady leads an unblemished life spending major part of her time in attending upon her husband and as a result she is endowed with the occult power of knowing things beyond the senses. Kaśyapa too devotedly performs his duties and thus both of them continue to live happily in Nandigrāma.

At that time in the land of Kośala there lives a Brahmin Yajñāśarman along with his wife. In course of time he is blessed with a son named Devasārman and he duly

performs his birth-rites. At the age of eight when the boy is invested with the sacred thread, he takes to the study of the Vedas. After he attains mastery over one Vedic text, his father Yajñasarman leaves for heaven. Consequently Devasarman performs the obsequies of his father and very much grief-stricken he follows the life of a mendicant. And in course of his wandering, he reaches the village Nandigrāma where he earns great reputation as a Brahmacārin. Actively engaged in the recitation of the Vedic mantras and performance of the sacrifices, he lives on alms collected from different house-holders in Nandigrāma. But at home his poor mother without any support leads a very wretched and miserable life.

One day it so happens that Devasarman after taking his bath in a river, spreads his wet cloth on the ground for drying up. Then a crow and a crane come and fly away with his wet cloth. At the sight of them, Devasarman who is seated in meditation abuses the birds. The birds when abused excrete on the piece of cloth and fly away dropping it then and there. Then the Brahmin Devasarman looks at them with wrathful eyes and the birds in consequence are burnt up by the fire of his anger.

Very much puffed up with the power of his penance, Devasarman hastily leaves for the village for procuring alms.
He approaches the devoted housewife Sāvitrī whom he asks for alms. By the time directed by her husband she is engaged in washing his feet with warm water and only after her husband is refreshed and relaxed, she proceeds to offer alms to Devasārman. Then Devasārman desirous of burning down Sāvitrī by the power of his penance, casts his angry look at her. But the devoted wife Sāvitrī laughs at his conduct and suddenly retorts that she is not the crow or the crane to fall a prey to his anger. Thus humiliated and insulted he collects the alms from her and silently repairs to his hermitage.

When the midday meal of Sāvitrī is over and her husband is out, Devasārman again approaches her and enquires of her occult power of knowing distant things.

The devoted wife Sāvitrī is very clear on the point when she says that constant devotion to her husband is the only cause of her acquisition of occult power. Attendance upon husbands is the established duty of women. Except that she knows of no other duty.

In narrating the past history of Devasārman Sāvitrī creates further surprise. She refers to the most distressing aspect of his life when she says that after the death of his father, a wandering mendicant, he has ignored his hapless widowed mother. The mother who with fondling care and affection had brought him up is left stranded. The
religious merit that he has acquired by holy bath, visit to
different sacred places, meditation and sacrifice. has been
set at naught by the suffering of his mother. Therefore it
is his immediate duty to leave for his village and look after
his aged mother.

Besides reminding the wrongs he has done to his
mother, Savitri apprises him of the events of the future.
On his return to Kāśala, a certain Brahmin would offer him
his daughter in marriage. After necessary rituals he would
get her married; in course of time he would be blessed with
a son who would be perpetuating his race. Only after the
exoiry of his wife, he would take to the life of a wandering
mendicant in keeping with the tradition of his family.

Devasarman follows the advice of the devoted house-wife
(pativratā) in toto; her prophesy comes to be true. After
begetting a son he renounces the world when actually his
wife expires. After renouncing the world, absolutely free
from attachment with the blessings of Lord Narasimha, he
attains liberation.

The story of Brahmacārīn and the devoted house-wife
finds mention in Mbh. III. vanaparvan, Chs.197-206; Padma
I. Sṛstikhandā Ch.52; Brhad dharma P. I. Ch.3; and Sukasaptati
pp.3-6.
(2) **Anāśramī myth**

There lives a Brahmin proficient in Vedic lore; unfortunately he loses his wife; tired of the world he goes out on a visit to different holy places and makes it a habit of taking a dip in the sacred rivers. He maintains himself on the food that he gets as alms from different householders. Besides practising penance he recites the name of Lord Visnu.

After taking his bath in the holy rivers like the Ganges, Yamunā and Sarasvatī etc., the Brahmin leaves for sacred Gayā where he offers libations of water in honour of his departed ancestors. Then he repairs to Mahendra mountain. After taking a dip in a reservoir of the mountain, once again he offers libations to his manes. Afterwards he enters a forest destructive of all sins (pāpaharam vanam - 14.5). In the forest there is a mountain with a great stream of water descending from it. The Brahmin sprinkles the holy waters of the stream on the Narasimha image standing nearby. Thus with a body pure and sanctified, with a view to attaining emancipation he offers the lovely flowers of the mountain at the feet of Lord Narasimha. In this way for a pretty long time the learned Brahmin continues to live there keeping the habit of adoring the Lord everyday.

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After long lapse of time pleased with his devotion Narasimha appears before him. The Lord points out that the Brahmin does not deserve His favour because his wandering life does not come under the purview of any āśrama. Convinced of the worthlessness of a wandering life, the Brahmin brings a change in his mode of conduct and takes to the life of a yati.

He makes the daily practice of taking a dip in the river (destructive of all sins); with three staves and the rosary of akṣa beads, standing in the midst of water he continues to mutter the auspicious Gāyatrī mantra; with forest as his residence and the fruits and roots of the forest as his food he keeps on the habit of adoring the Narasimha form of Lord Visnu with his mind centred on Him.

Finally as a jivana-mukta he merges in Brahman, the eternal world - soul of the universe. And when his span of life is complete, he leaves the samsāra for good never to be born again.

(3) Episode of Ikṣvāku's life

Ikṣvāku, the mighty king of Solar race rules over Ayodhyā. In the past he has humbled down many powerful

32. Nar. P. Ch.24-25.
kings and has annexed their territories to his kingdom. He has instituted a number of sacrifices and has made generous gifts to the priests. The king is not only famous for his invincible might and strength, but he is also well-versed in all the Sāstras. Therefore it is figuratively said:

"With his strong and sturdy arms he bears the earth; in the tip of his tongue he has held Sarasvatī, (the goddess of learning); on his wide and expansive chest he supports Padmā (Laksmī) and in his heart he has the devotion to Lord Visnu."33

Though ruling over this earth extending as far as the sea, king Iksvāku is not mentally happy. Anxious for permanent bliss he looks upon the royal pleasure as vain and useless. On a canvass he has painted the pictures of Lord Hari in a standing pose, Lord Mādhava (Lord of Laksmī) in a sitting pose and Lord Ananta in the pose of resting. He rejoices to adore these three forms of the Lord three times a day. The great pleasure that he derives by adoring the Lord, brings home to him the worthlessness of the royal pleasures; and there arises in him the intense desire of beholding the divine form of Lord Hari. He enquires of his family priest Vasistha the means. The priest advises him to entrust the administration of his kingdom with his minister and to take recourse to penance and recitation of the twelve syllabled mantra – 

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\text{Om namo bhagavate Vāsudevāya} \quad (\text{Om obeisance)}
\]

33. Bāhudvayena vasudhāḥ jihvāgreṇa Sarasvatīṃ / Babhāra Padmāṃ urasāḥ bhaktim cittena Mādhavā // 24.23
to Lord Vāsudeva). By the by he suggests that before taking
of penance, for success in his undertaking the king should
proicitate Vināyaka.

Ikṣvāku follows the advice of Vasistha; he entrusts
the government of his kingdom with his able minister Arjuna;
after offering prayers to Lord Ganeśa, he leaves the palace
with the sole motive of practising penance.

Instead of crown bedecked with gold and jewels the
king bears matted locks of hair on his head; in place of
bracelets and ornaments he holds the rosary of 'akṣa' beads
in his hands; leaving aside the precious silken garment he
bears around his waist the rough and stiff barks. Thus
putting on the garb of a hermit, he enters the penance-
grove and begins his rigorous austerities living on fruits,
roots and leaves of the forest.

In summer in the midst of four blazing fires with
his attention centred on the sun-god, he practises penance;
in rainy season in the open field without any support
overhead he resorts to his austerities; and in winter
standing in the midst of water he continues his ascetic
practices. Thus with all his senses under control, he
meditates upon Lord Viṣṇu and goes on reciting the twelve-
syllabled mantra. Finally with air as the only means of
sustenance, the king is deeply absorbed in penance and there
appears Lord Brahmā before him. Lord Brahmā enquires of
him the cause of his penance. The king tells Him his intense desire of beholding Lord Visnu.

Then Lord Brahma in referring to an episode of his life narrates to the king as to how at the beginning of creation he himself failed to have the vision of Lord Visnu. In the beginning he was quite anxious to behold the Lord; with that motive he took to rigorous austerities; but in spite of all his efforts, it was impossible for him to get His sight. Lastly as per the direction of a heavenly voice he started the work of creation and that is how he was able to have a vision of Lord Visnu.

Citing this incident from his own experience, Lord Brahma dissuades the king from practising penance; he advises him to go back to his capital where he should righteously rule over his subjects, for in case of kings the protection of subjects is the true 'tapas'-(prajānām pālanām dharmah tapas caiva maṁihṛtām - 25.56). Besides Lord Brahma makes a gift of an aerial car with the image of Lord Nārāyana installed on it, the adoration of which would lead the king to liberation.

Having said so Lord Brahma disappears then and there. And when the king Ikṣvāku ponders over these words of Lord Brahma, there appears the aerial car with the images of Lord Nārāyana and the serpent Ananta carved on it.
The king starts for his city along with the aerial car; the citizens welcome him and lead him to his palace. The aerial car of Brahma is stationed in his beautiful palace. Besides carrying on his duty of ruling over his kingdom, the king regularly continues to adore Lord Hari installed on the car; the king keeps himself engaged in propitiating Lord Hari by worshipping Him with flowers and perfumes three times a day. After begetting children the king in deep meditation of the Supreme Brahman forsakes his mortal body and goes to the abode of Lord Visnu.