CHAPTER V
SUPERNATURAL POWER AND MIRACLES
Witchcraft
Belief in supernatural power, omens, portents and
impressions has been common with religious practices. The
belief has been extant in India through all ages. A mass of
superstitions has grown along with religious beliefs and
practices and has ever been their inseparable part. Superstitions
have been so clothed that religion seems to be at the back
of their origin. All belief in them has emanated from religious
fervour and unshakable faith and has affected the practices
in the realm of religion. The records of early mediaeval India
bear out the continuance of belief in the efficacy of witchcraft
and the like. Alberuni observes, "As regards charms and
incantations, the Hindus have a firm belief in them, and they,
as a rule, are much inclined towards them." From the Bilaigarn
plates of the (K.) year 896, we learn that Brahmadeva, a
feudatory of the Kulasuri ruler Prthvideva II of Ratampura,
had acquired the knowledge of the Sākshhari vidyā which was
incomparable in all worlds from one Delhūka whom he regarded
as the sole match for Bhaṣapati, the preceptor of the gods. In
the third act of the Vīdūṣakaabhisājikā of Rājaśekhara, the
vīdūṣaka (buffoon) plays a ghost-trick upon the queen's
confidante Nekhalā. Medhātithi, in his commentary on the
Xamu-maruti, reflects on abhicāra (malevolent rites), magic rites and kṛtṛīya (sorcery) for which Manu had prescribed fines. It is not unreasonable to presume that they were in use in the ninth century A.D., when Kedhātithi wrote his commentary. According to him, abhicāras comprised all incantations and sacrifices, taught either in the Vedas or in secular works, which were intended to destroy life. The magic rites, performed with roots, were those which were intended to bring a person into one’s power. The sorcery comprised such spells as produced diseases, or caused the failure of an adversary’s undertakings.

In Kalhana’s narrative witchcraft and other features of the Kāśmirian superstition play an important part. Kalhana refers to more than one event to demonstrate the effective force of the supernatural power. The account of the resurrection of Sandhimati is in the line of the traditional belief of the people of Kāśmir in the operation of the witchcraft. We are told in the Rājatarangini that Īśāna, after having read a verse in the forehead of Sandhimati, stayed back at the śmaśāna (cremation ground), keeping a watch on the skeleton of the latter, to see the fulfilment of the prediction of the fourth pada of the verse, referred to elsewhere. The account goes on that once in the middle of night, while Īśāna was awake, he smelt a heavenly perfume of incense. He heard terrific noise produced by the ringing
of many hung bells struck with clappers and the violent beating of drums. When he opened the window of his cottage he saw on the cremation ground witches enveloped by a halo of light. Noting their concourses and that the skeletons had been abstracted, he went forth with his sword drawn and watched from behind a tree. He saw that the skeleton of Sandhimati was placed by the witches in the midst of their circle, and was being fitted up with all his limbs. Each one of them put upon the skeleton one of their own limbs, and procuring from somewhere a membrum virile, they quickly completed his body. Then, the witches attracted by magic the spirit of Sandhimati, which was still roaming about without having entered another body, and put it into that body. They covered him with heavenly sentsments and enjoyed themselves with him to their full desire. As the night grew short, Isâma, in order to guard the limbs of Sandhimati which the witches had fitted, approached the place with a shout, and at once the band of witches disappeared saying: "May you not be in fear, O Isâma. We miss no limb, and do not defraud him whom we have chosen as our lover!" Then Sandhimati (known hereafter as Sandhimat) wearing a magnificent dress and a wreath and adorned with heavenly sentsments, recovered the memory of his past and reverently greeted his guru, Isâma.

Of King Ramâditya, Kalhana says that the goddess Râjârambhâ had granted him the magic spell called hâtakesvâra which gave command over the underworld. After
undergoing severe austerities at Īstikāpatha, Raṇāditya went to Nandīśīlā and had the benefit of the magic power of the spell for many years.

Like Manu and Medhatithi, Kalhana also refers to abhīcāra which was practised by a Brāhmaṇa, versed in the knowledge of charms (khārīkhedavidyā), against the king Candraśīpī to bring about his death at the instance of his younger brother Tārāpīḍa. Kalhana observes that thereafter princes lusting for throne in Kāśmīra began to use witchcraft and other evil practices against their elder relatives. Tārāpīḍa’s fate was similar to that of Candraśīpī. When he took to cruelties and punished the Brāhmaṇas thinking that they through their spells caused the power of the gods to be present, the Brāhmaṇas made his life sink through secret witchcraft.

Another king, Lalitāditya-Murtāpīḍa, of Kāśmīra had brought from the Tukkhāra land Gaṅkūna who was versed in supernatural power. Kalhana records that he produced plenty of gold in the king’s treasury by magic power. Once Lalitāditya was stopped in the country of Panjāb (Panjab) by streams, which had united and could not be crossed. Finding his army arrested on the bank, Lalitāditya was filled with apprehensions. Gaṅkūna threw a charm (manī) into the water. The water of the streams parted asunder through the force of that charm and the king with his army crossed the streams. Thereafter Gaṅkūna drew
that charm out again by means of another charm, and the streams were united again. Lalitāditya's son Kivalayapīda had secured supernatural perfection (siddhi) by the unbroken intensity of his quietism.

An event of the reign of the king Jayāpīda, the grandson of Lalitāditya, cements the belief that sorcery was practised not only in Kāśmīra, but persons of different parts of India also practised it. A Dravidian sorcerer is represented using his spells to take away the Nāga (snake)-prince called Mahāpadma from a lake. He made a demonstration of his supernatural power before the king Jayāpīda.

Of king Cippatajāyapīda, we learn from Kalhana that his maternal uncles, in order to secure regal power, contrived against his life through sorcery. Another king of Kāśmīra, Gopālavarman (902-904 A.D.), lost his life because of witchcraft. Kalhana records that after Gopālavarman had come to know that his treasury was plundered by his minister Prabhākaradeva who was the superintendent of the treasury (Koṣādhyakṣa) and a paramour of his mother surreptitiously, he insisted on an inspection of the treasury-chests. This filled the treasurer with dismay who caused his relative Ramadeva, versed in Khārkoda, to use witchcraft against the king. Through this bewitchment, the king fell into a hot fever and died after a rule of two years.

The use of witchcraft had become common in
Kāśmīra to contrive against the life of a ruling king.

Parvagupta, who wielded power during the minority of the child-king Saigrāhadeva (948-49 A.D.) employed witchcraft to exterminate the king. The widow queen Diddā is represented as using witchcraft against Mah scoreboard, who had become a leader of a confederacy against her, and her grandsons, Nandagupta (972-73 A.D.) and Tribhuvana (973-75 A.D.). For queen Śrīlekha we learn that she had used witchcraft against her son Harirāja (1023 A.D.), for the latter was dissatisfied with her conduct.

Omens and Portents

We find Kalhana allotting no small importance to omens and portents of all sorts. Harṣa (1089-1101 A.D.), one of the sons of the king Kalāsā (1063-1089 A.D.), is represented by him as proficient in interpreting omens. Harṣa, who was thrown in captivity, while taking bath heard the sound of music accompanying the abhiṣekāna (coronation), together with shouts, "May Be victorious! He interpreted it as a good omen and felt that he would obtain the regal dignity which, as recorded by Kalhana, he obtained subsequently. The sight of a slain hare was considered as a good omen for one who was to start on conquest. Capturing of a horse of auspicious marks coming from enemy's force was a good omen representing the royal fortune. The falling of a garland on the head of an individual from the head of an image of god or goddess was looked upon as a sign of success.
As regards bad omens, we learn from Kalhana that when Harsa in his misfortune after losing to his enemies was entering in the courtyard of a cottage of a mendicant his right foot struck against a stone and bled. He took it as an evil omen portending his death. Another illustration of a bad omen is in the case of king Sussala (1112-20 A.D.) who becoming apprehensive at the approach of Bhikṣācara, his rival, decided to send his family members to the castle of Lhara. As he was following them, Leṣṭha and other Brāhmānas fell into the Vitstā by break of the bridge, and were drowned. This was treated as a bad omen. According to the Yādastilaka of Somadeva, the moon of the fourth lunar day was believed to cause disputes. A dove alighting inside a house was supposed to forebode its destruction. The trumpeting of a female elephant at the commencement of a journey and the braying of a donkey from behind were evil portents. A shower of crested turpuses on a house was a bad omen indicating destruction of wealth and prosperity. Alberuni records that sneezing was considered by the Hindus as a bad omen. That omens from the flight of crows were drawn in India is borne out by the Arab writer Abu Zaid.

Imprecations

Belief in the efficacy of imprecations seems to be deep-rooted. They were believed to have effects in this life as well as in the next. There is hardly any grant of the
Kalachuri of Tripuri and Ratampura of the period under review which in its record towards the end does not contain imprecatory verses for those who might disturb the grant. According to Kalhana, the king Jayapida lost his life because of the curse of Brahmana Ittila. Similar was the fate of those who were cursed by queen Suryamati. The latter while ascending the funeral pyre of her husband Amanta (1028–1063 A.D.) to immolate herself was aggrieved to see that her son Kalasa had not turned up at the cremation ground because of the dissension created by some between the son and his parents. In her grief she pronounced the curse: "May those who have caused the fatal enmity between us two and our son quickly be destroyed together with their descendants? Kalhana records that through this unfailing curse of the afflicted queen Jayamanda, Jinduraja and others found an early death.

Propitiatory Rites

Worship of the Grahas (Planets)

To ward off the malefic effects of witchcraft, bad omens and portents, rites were performed. It was believed that they could be made ineffective by worshipping the Grahas. Elaborate method for the worship of the Grahas, nine in number, viz., Sūrya (the Sun), Sema (the moon), Mahiputra (the son of the earth, Mars), Senaputra (the son of the moon, Mercury), Bhaskati (Jupiter), Sukra (Venus), Sani (Saturn), Rāhu (the ascending node) and Ketu (the descending node), was laid down.
The images of these planets were to be made respectively of copper, crystal, red sandal wood, and gold (for the Mercury and Jupiter), silver, iron, lead, and bell-metal, or they could be inscribed on a piece of cloth in their respective colours or could be painted on the ground with sandal wood pastes of different colours. The Matsya Purana, however, states that all planets were to be drawn with uncooked white rice powder. As regards the form of the image of the planets, the Matsya Purana says that the image of the sun was always to be made as seated on a lotus having a lotus in his left hand, and having the yellow colour of the pollen of lotus and seated on a chariot drawn by seven horses, and having two arms, one holding a lotus and the other in the posture of blessing. The figure of the moon was to be made having two hands, the left hand holding a club and the right hand raised in the posture of blessing. His colour was to be white, dressed in white raiments, putting on white ornaments, and seated on a chariot drawn by ten horses. The figure of the Mars wearing red garments with garlands of red flowers was to have four arms holding a spear, a lance, and a club, with the fourth hand raised in the posture of giving blessings, and a sheep for his vehicle. The image of the Buddha (Mercury) was to be made as seated on a lion, and as having four arms holding a sword, a shield of hide, a club and the fourth hand raised in benediction. He was to be represented as wearing yellow...
raiment and adorned with yellow flower garland and his colour was to be that of karnikāra (the yellow pericarp of a lotus).
The figures of the Jupiter and the Venus were to be made of yellow and white colours respectively, each having four arms holding a staff and a benediction in the right hands and a rosary and a kumandalu in the left hand. The Saturn's figure was to be made of the colour and lustre of an emerald, having a vulture for his conveyance, and having four hands armed with a lance, a bow and an arrow and the fourth raised in the posture of giving blessings. The image of Rāhu was to have a terrible mouth and was to be seated in a liem-posture, having blue colour and four hands armed with sword, a leather shield, a spear and the fourth hand raised in the posture of blessing. The image of Ketu was to be made of smoky colour, with a vulture for his conveyance and having two hands, one holding a nace and the other raised in the posture of giving blessings, and a distorted face. All planets were to be made with a crown on their head and all images were to be one hundred and eight times of the size of one's (i.e., worshipper's) own thumb finger. The order of the location in which the planets were to be placed was that the sun was to be located in the centre, the Mars in the south, the Mercury in north-east, the Jupiter in the north, the Venus in the east, the moon in the south-east, the Saturn in the west, the Rāhu in the south-west and the Ketu in the north-west.
Raiments and flowers of the respective colours of the planets along with bracelets, scents, incense and guggulū were to be offered to them at the time of worship. Garu was offered to them and thereafter fire-sticks (śanidhas) in the fire in their honour with the Vedic mantras, viz., with the mantra beginning with ākṣaraṃ rajasa, etc., to the sun; with īśana devah to the moon; with again mūrdhā divah nukut to the Mars; with udābhayaśva to the Mercury; with Brihaspatī atiyālayah to the Jupiter; with smāt parasūrataḥ to the Venus; with āmudevi to the Saturn; with kāpāṭ to the Rāhu; and with ketuṁ kṛṣṇaṁ to the Ketu. These fire-sticks for the sun were of arka plant, for the moon of palāśa, for the Mars of khadira, for the Mercury of apāmārga, for the Jupiter of peepal, for the Venus of udumbara, for the Saturn of āmā, for the Rāhu of dūrva, and for the Ketu of kusa. They were to be fresh saplings, moist, unbroken, having bark upon them and of the length of one pradesā (span or nine inches). One hundred and eight or twenty-eight fire-sticks were to be offered for each planet, moistened with honey, clarified butter, milk, or curds before throwing into the fire.

The yajamāna (worshipper) had to offer food to each planet which differed from planet to planet. To the sun was offered gudāndamā (food or rice mixed with raw sugar); to the moon, pāyasā (milk-rice, viz., rice cooked in milk); to the Mars, hāvyagam (the sacrificial food, like the ascetic's
rice, nivāra, wild grain, etc.); to the Mercury, kāraṣṭikam (the rice-paddy that is grown in sixty days is called ṣaṣṭika; such a rice mixed with milk is called kāraṣṭikam); to the Jupiter, dādhyedmam (the rice mixed with curds); to the Venus, hivah (the clarified butter mixed with rice); to the Saturn, cūrma (powder, viz., powdered sesame mixed with rice); to the Rāhu, mānsa (flesh or meat mixed with rice); and to the Ketu, cītrāṇam (various kinds of edana or rice, or boiled rice of various colours). It was enjoined upon the twice-born yajamāna to give dinner also to twice-born ones. If these materials could not be procured, he was to give according to his means, or as he obtained them, after having honoured the invited Brāhmaṇas.

Dakṣinā was to be given to the Brāhmaṇas in honour of each planet. A milk-cow, a conch-shell, a strong bull, gold, cloth, a horse, a black cow, a weapon and a sheep were to be given respectively for the nine planets. The Mitākṣarā states that these dakṣinās were to be given if one could procure them. If one failed to obtain them, one could give whatever was obtained. If one did not have the means to give these objects, he, according to his power, could give anything else, however little it might be.

Practices mentioned by Somadeva

Somadeva refers to certain practices which were adopted to avert the effects of evil dreams and the like. He
mentions ājyāvekaṇa or looking into clarified butter in the morning to counteract the influence of evil dreams and to obtain other salutary results. It was a practice observed by the kings while the Brahmans uttered blessings. The practice of an mirājan also ceremonial waving of lights was observed as a part of the evening rites to ensure the well-being of the king. A quantity of salt, thrown into the fire, after whirling it over the king's head, was supposed to counteract the evil eye, and this was accompanied by the ceremony of offering boiled rice to the goblins on the roadside.

The latter practice has been also recorded in an inscription of 959 A.D.

1. AI, I, p. 193.
2. It seems to refer to some superhuman power which Brahmadeva attained by propitiating the goddess Śākambhārī. CII, IV, II, p. 460, fn. 1.
3. Ibid., p. 461, v. 15.
4. IX, 290.
5. Supra, p. 198.
6. Rt, I, II, 97-111.
7. Ibid., III, 465, 467.
8. Ibid., IV, 88, 94.
9. Ibid., IV, 112.
10. Ibid., IV, 114.
11. Ibid., IV, 124.
12. Ibid., IV. 246-251.
13. Ibid., IV. 390.
14. Ibid., IV. 593-603.
15. Ibid., IV. 686.
16. Ibid., V. 237-240.
17. Ibid., VI. 121.
18. Ibid., VI. 220, 229.
19. Ibid., VI. 310-312.
20. Ibid., VII. 133.
21. Ibid., VII. 742-44, 796.
22. Ibid., VII. 829.
23. Ibid., VII. 1291.
24. Ibid., VII. 1309.
25. Ibid., VII. 1310.
26. Ibid., VII. 1643.
27. Ibid., VIII. VII. 748.
28. Yt, Bk. III.
29. Ibid.
30. Ibid., Bk. IV.
31. Ibid., II. 72.
32. AI, I, p. 182.
33. HI, I, p. 10.
34. Rt, I, IV. 651-55.
35. Ibid., VII. 475.
36. Ibid., VII. 476.
37. Is., I.297-98.
38. Chap. 93.
39. The form somewhat differs from that suggested in the Bn, see supra, p.90.
40. Mat., chap.93, 94.
41. RV. 1.3.2.
42. Vâj., ix.40.
43. RV. VIII.44.16.
44. Vâj., xV.54.
45. RV. 11.23.15.
46. Vâj., xÌì.75.
47. RV. x.9.4.
49. RV. 1.6.3.
50. Is., I.298-301.
51. Ibid., I.302.
52. Ibid., I, p.387.
53. Ibid., I.303.
54. Ibid., I.304-05.
55. Ibid., I.306.
56. Ibid., I, p.389.
57. Ys, II.96.
58. Ibid., III.476, 477.
59. XI, IX, p.6.