

CHAPTER - VII

GARUḌA IN FOLKLORE

Garuḍa occupies an important place in folk tales and in other components of folklore. For example, the *Garuḍa-mantra* is employed as an antidote for snake-bite. Now we have to find the different aspects about Garuḍa found in folklore.

In *Tantrasāra* we have found a *mantra* relating to *Garuḍa-daivata-*

Cf: *saṁvartako netrayutaḥ pārśvastāro agni sundarī |*

gāruḍa asurakhyāto viṣadvayavināśanaḥ ||

smaran garudātmānaṁ mantramenaṁ japennaraḥ |

viṣamalocanenaiva hanyānnāgabhayaṁ kutaḥ ||¹

The *mantra* is – “*Kṣip om̐ svāhā*” (*Tantrasāra*). By this *mantra* one gets relief from pain and have no fear from snakes.

According to the said verse of *Tantrasāra* Garuḍa has cloudy eyes and his *mantra* can destroy two types of poison (i.e., static and dynamic). The poison penetrated by snake-bite disappears at the sight of the person, who chants mentally, this *mantra* contemplating himself as Garuḍa.

¹ *Tantrasāra*, P.617

Garuḍa is identified with the all consuming sun's rays and is also the devourer or destroyer of serpents and so it is found that his epithet is Nāgāntaka and Sarpārāti. Garuḍa is called Tārksya. Numerous stories regarding Garuḍa, the mythical bird are in the *Mahābhārata* and Purāṇas.

Popular belief credits Garuḍa with the power to cure those suffering from snake-bite² or threatened by disease, and hence in his *mantra*³ 'Om Tārksya (Garuḍa) etc. it is said – "cast down my enemies, trample the diseases and venom that might invade me." The emerald traditionally regarded as the foe of poison, is also associated with Garuḍa.

Cf: *tasmin marakatasthāne yat kiñcidupajāyate*

*tat sarvaṃ viṣarogāṇāṃ praśamāya prakīrtate.*⁴

A dictionary of Hinduism, its mythologies, folklore and development speaks about a graceful winged human figure, which forms

² *A dictionary of Hinduism, its mythologies, folklore and development, P.95.*

³ *Ibid*

⁴ *Garuḍa Purana, Purvakhaṇḍa, Chapter 71, Page 105.*

the capital (all that remains) of a Garuḍa temple pillar, which if embraced cures anyone suffering from snake bite.⁵

The *etymological significance* of Garuḍa's name is further illustrated by another of his epithet Vināyaka⁶, an epithet he shares with Gaṇeśa, both being the remover or destroyer of obstacles, and thus probably of hindrances to the attainment of knowledge. As such Garuḍa appears in the Sattvata list of the thirty nine *avatāras* of Viṣṇu as Vihāṅgama (the ninth) and as Amṛtaharaṇa (the eighteenth).⁷

The word 'Gārudī' is found in the Garuḍa Purāṇa⁸ relating to (or coming from 'Garuḍa', a *mantra* against poison.

In *Atharvaveda* also the word Garutmat means an eagle which protects one against poison and poisoned arrows.⁹

According to *Agni Purāṇa* – “the *mantras* full of occult energy of perfect truth and divine communion, disclosed by the devarṣis and

⁵ *A dictionary of Hinduism, its mythologies, folklore and development*, P.95

⁶ Vināyaka is the name of the female counterpart of Garuḍa and Gaṇeśa (quoted from the book “A dictionary of Hinduism, Page No.95-96)

⁷ *The development of Hindu Iconography* by J.N. Banerjea, Page-529.

⁸ *Garuḍa Purāṇa*, Ch.203, Page.275

⁹ *Atharvaveda*, IV, 6, 3.

brahmarsis of yore, never fail to eliminate poison from the system, more speedily than by the use of drugs. A blow from a fist charged with the *Garuḍa mantra* is an antidote to all snake-poison¹⁰; and it cures all other diseases, as well as persons suffering from possession of an evil spirit.”¹¹

In Buddhism, *Garuḍa* (*Garuḍa*, Pali) is regarded as a kind of harpy. *Grunwedel* comments that the parrot and the West Asian Griffin were the bases on which the modern iconography of *Garuḍa* was developed.¹²

In some cases *Garuḍa* means demonic forms which appear in battle, sometimes as great birds of prey.

In *Maharashtra*, *Garuḍa* means a caste of snake-charmers.¹³

Persons suffering from snake-bite at *Purī*, Orissa, embrace a *Garuḍa* pillar in the temple.¹⁴

¹⁰ *Agni Purāṇa* II, Page-1095

¹¹ *Agni Purāṇa* I, Page-530

¹² *Dictionary of Hinduism, Its mythology, Folklore and Development*, Page.95-96

¹³ *Ibid*, Page-96

¹⁴ *Standard Dictionary of Folklore, Mythology and Legend Vol-I (A-I)*, Page-441.

Garuḍa is the eternal enemy of snakes and it devours the snakes. It means Ġaruḍa is the devourer of evils. From the Vedic evidence Garuḍa is represented as Sun-god which is identical with Lord Viṣṇu.

In modern times, Garuḍa is taken as the official emblem of the State of Indonesia. Now Garuḍa is further away from the Hindu Origins. He is started as a god and a religious tool of power in Bali. When Islamisation came, he lost gradually his godly quality. After independence in Bali (1945) Garuḍa is found to be both the emblem and instrument of cohesion and power. The modern Garuḍa symbol is to fulfill the social and political needs of a modern society.

The modern Garuḍa emblem of Indonesia strongly differs from the traditional Garuḍa. It is obviously an eagle, and not the anthropomorphic figure for the mythological character. Its face is stern-looking and harsh, like the German Eagle, it looks side-ways, instead of straight-ahead.

In modern times, in Indonesian culture, Garuḍa means one which *steals away the elixir of immortality and it is meant the unending energy of the nation*. It is assumed that Indonesia has taken this emblem to suggest that the country will prosper without defeat or failure. It will kill

the enemies like snakes. The stern expression of Garuḍa indicates the strength of the nation.¹⁵

From a minute Study of the various literatures it is found that Garuḍa is the vehicle of Lord Viṣṇu. It devours all evils of the world. The enmity with the snakes shows how Garuḍa dislikes evils. Lord Viṣṇu symbolizes power and accordingly the vehicle of Viṣṇu, Garuḍa symbolizes power.

The folk-lore has a jurisdiction in Assamese literature. In the stories when Lord Viṣṇu is depicted then Garuḍa invariably comes. Among the *Ojāpālis*, in *Kīrtan Ghoṣā*, the utterance of Garuḍa is expected to carry the sovereignty.

The *Kīrtan-Ghoṣā* is the milestone of Assamese literature and we have found in *Kīrtan-Ghoṣā*, the mention of Garuḍa in every sphere where, Kṛṣṇa or Viṣṇu appears. *Kīrtan-Ghoṣā* describes Garuḍa as the vehicle or mount of Viṣṇu –

Cf: *sāṅkha-cakra gadā padma cāru vāru asi*

sāraṅgākā dhāri āchā garuḍata vasi

bṛāhmāye vōlāntā sūniyo munigaṇa

¹⁵ <http://goarchi.com/archo/mag/garuda.html>

*bhailanta garuḍadhvaja stotrata prasanna.*¹⁶

The meaning is : seated upon Garuḍa, you are taking the conch-shell, wheel, mace, lotus, beautiful sword and the bow.

Brahman addressed to the sages – Garuḍadhvaja (one on the peak of whose chariot, Garuḍa shines as the flag) was pleased with the eulogium.

Again, when the king Indradyumna prayed kṛṣṇa for salvation, we have found in a *ghoṣā* where Garuḍa is also mentioned as a semi-god.

Cf: *valadeva ādi mūrti yateka*

garuḍa pramukhye aṅga aneka

savāko karo moi nomaskār

*hari hari vuli haiyo nistāra.*¹⁷

The meaning is : I salute all the statues of Baladeva etc. along with many limbs, prominently Garuḍa. Be rescued chanting Hari, Hari (the name of God).

In another *ghoṣā*, where there is a prayer of kṛṣṇa, there is a reference of garuḍadhvaja as—

¹⁶ *Kīrtan Ghoṣā* – Ureṣā varṇan – Kīrtan – 10 , Kḥaṇḍa – 25 , page – 584, 583.

¹⁷ *Kīrtan Ghoṣā*, Ureṣā Varṇan, Kīrtan – 8, Page-576.

Cf— *gopāla garuḍaketu praṇāmo caraṇe*

*niyoka nistāri hari paśilo sarāṇe.*¹⁸

The meaning is : I salute at the feet of Gopāl and Garuḍaketu (whose Ġaruḍa is the flag-mark). I submit to Lord Hari (God), let him rescue me.

In Daraṅ district, folklore plays an important part and the people are devoted to possess their culture fully of their own.

The oral creation which comes from traditions is called folk-lore. This oral creation is from man to man coming towards being a living culture and is without having a writer. This may be called a famous writing without a writer's name. The main root of the folk-lore is mainly related with the people who are living with stern labours and so their life related songs, stories, phrases, quiz and examples are included in the folk-lore. Such collection of the Daraṅgi folk-lore is found in a book edited by Dr. Kanak Ch. Saharia.

¹⁸ *Kīrtan Ghoṣā, Ureṣā Varṇan, 4th Kīrtan, Khaṇḍa – 25, Page-566.*

In such a song the pathetic sense is found regarding the mount of Lord Viṣṇu, Garuḍa –

Cf: *garuḍar hāte valik karāilā vandhan*

*dekhi vṛndāvanī satī karilā krandan.*¹⁹

The meaning is : *Vṛndāvanī*, the sacred lady started crying to see that *Balī* was fastened by *Garuḍa*.

The songs of *deodhani* dance which are sung by *Sūkānānī Ojāpāli*, also mention *Garuḍa* –

Cf: *garuḍata cari āilā devanārāyaṇa yār yi vāhana āhe devagaṇa.*²⁰

In another song where the source of pandel is found, there also along with Lord Viṣṇu, the mount *Garuḍa* is depicted.

Cf: *garuḍata cari āji āsibo śrīhari*

*padmar asanata vasivo saṅkha-cakra dhari.*²¹

The meaning is : *Śhree Hari* will come today ascending upon *Garuḍa* and will sit at lotus-seat taking conch-shell and the wheel.

¹⁹ *Daraṅgī Lokagīt Saṅgraha*, Page – 346

²⁰ *Daraṅgī Lokagīt Saṅgraha*, Page – 488.

²¹ *Daraṅgī Lokagīt Saṅgraha* – Page – 491.

In the Darāṅgī Lokagīt culture, the people sing the birth-story of *Khol* and *Tāl*. Here also, the importance of Garuḍa is found –

Cf: *garuḍar pakhāi āhi cān kher bhailā*

*aṣṭādaśa purāṇe āhi gāthi hai railā.*²²

The meaning is : The feathers of Garuḍa transformed here into thatches and the eighteen purāṇas became the knots.

²² *Darāṅgī Lokagīt Saṅgraha* – Page – 499.