

not at home, it was Amoghā who received the guest with due reverence. Fascinated by the irresistible charm of Amoghā, Brahmā had an involuntary emission of seminal fluid. He felt ashamed of his own weakness and left the Āśrama immediately. The Mahārṣi who returned to the Āśrama soon after, came to know from his wife whose semen it was. He asked Amoghā to accept Brahma Deva's precious semen and not to let it be wasted. Being a devoted wife, she accepted it, but unable to bear the divine pregnancy, she deposited it in the water lying in the valley of the Yugandhara mountain. From that time, it became a place of holy bath, known as Lohita. It was by bathing in this holy water that Paraśurāma washed away his sin of annihilating the Kṣatriyas. (Padma Purāṇa, Sṛṣṭi Khaṇḍa, 55).

AMPITṬA. A name for barbers. 'Ampitṭa' is derived from the Sanskrit word "Ambiṣṭhaḥ". The word Ambiṣṭhaḥ means Physician. In olden days barbers were physicians also. Going about from house to house, they could easily practise both these professions. Since barbers practised physic also they were called Ambiṣṭhas. Ampitṭa is a corrupted form of Ambiṣṭha. (Dravidian Philology).

Barbers sometimes style themselves as "Pandits". It is on the basis of this that we have today, "All Kerala Pandit Sabha" and other similar names. There is a legend on the basis of which this community has assumed the title of "Pandit".

Long ago when Śrī Buddha was about to go to the forest for performing Tapas, thousands of people flocked together to have his darśana. Buddha wished to continue his journey after shaving his head. Buddha asked loudly whether anyone in the crowd was prepared to shave his head. Only a single man came forward cheerfully to do that work. Buddha turned to him and said: "My dear friend, you are the only Pandit in this crowd. You have the wisdom to understand that there is nothing disgraceful in shaving one's head."

He shaved Buddha's head. From that day his descendants came to be known as "Pandits".

AMRTĀ. Daughter of a King of Magadha. She was the wife of Anaśva and mother of Parikṣit. (M.B., Ādi Parva, Chapter 95, Verse 41).

AMRTAM. (See PRĀMRTAM).

AMRTAM. A delicious and precious food obtained from the ocean of Milk when the Devas and Asuras churned it. In Chapter 152 of Agni Purāṇa, the word "Mṛtam" is defined as wealth received by begging and "Amṛtam" as wealth received without begging, and "Prāmṛtam" as another kind of wealth obtained without begging.

1) *Cause of Kṣīrābdhi-mathanam.* (Churning of the Sea of Milk)—Once when Mahārṣi Durvāsas was travelling through a forest, he met the Apsarā woman, Menakā, with a garland of Kalpaka flowers in her hand. The fragrance of the flowers filled the whole forest. Durvāsas approached Menakā and requested her to give the garland to him. The Vidyādhari (Apsarā woman) prostrated before the Mahārṣi with reverence and presented the garland to him. Wearing that garland on his hair, Durvāsas went to devaloka.

There he saw Indra riding on his elephant, Airāvata, accompanied by his retinue of Devas. The Mahārṣi took the rare garland from his head and presented it to Indra, the King of Devas. Indra received the garland and placed it on Airāvata's head. The elephant was attracted by the fragrance of the garland and took it in

its trunk, examined it by smelling it and then threw it on the ground.

Durvāsas, who became angry at the way in which his garland was slighted by Indra said to him: "Since you have treated my garland with disrespect, the glory and prosperity of devaloka will perish!" On hearing the curse, Indra alighted from the elephant, frightened. He begged pardon of the Mahārṣi. The furious Muni continued: "I am not soft-hearted; nor am I of a forgiving nature. Other Munis may forgive. Remember, I am Durvāsas. You have become so haughty because other Munis like Vasiṣṭha and Gautama have been flattering you too much." Having said this Durvāsas went his way. Indra returned to Amarāvati.

From that day the glory of devaloka began to decline. The three worlds became dull. Even the plants and shrubs began to wither. The performance of yāgas came to an end. The Devas began to be affected by the infirmities of old age. Taking advantage of this situation, the Asuras started preparations for opposing the Devas. Under the oppression of the Asuras, the Devas groaned in distress. Led by Agni Deva they sought refuge under Brahmā. Brahmā led them to Mahāviṣṇu. They all joined in praising Viṣṇu who appeared and told them like this: "O Gods! I shall enhance your glory. Do as I tell you. Along with the Asuras bring all kinds of medicinal herbs and deposit them in the ocean of Milk. Obtain Amṛtam from it by churning it with Mahāmeru as the churning staff and Vāsuki as the rope. The Amṛtam (Amṛta) which will be produced by churning the Milk sea, will make you strong and deathless. I shall see that the Asuras will share in your troubles but not in enjoying Amṛtam."

2) *Churning of the Milk Sea.* After Viṣṇu had vanished, the Devas made a treaty with the Asuras and began to work for getting Amṛtam. All of them joined together in bringing various kinds of medicinal herbs and after putting them in the Milk sea which was as clear as the cloudless sky, began to churn it, using Manthara Mountain as the churning staff and snake Vāsuki as the rope. The party of Devas was posted at the tail-end of Vāsuki while the Asuras took their stand at the head. The Asuras became enervated by the fiery breath coming out of Vāsuki's mouth. The clouds which were blown by that breath invigorated the Devas.

Mahāviṣṇu transformed himself into a tortoise, and sitting in the middle of the Milk Sea served as the foundation for the Manthara Mountain, the churning staff. Assuming another form, invisible both to Devas and Asuras, Mahāviṣṇu pressed down the Manthara Mountain from above.

While churning the Milk Sea like this, the first object that rose to the surface was Kāmadhenu. Both Devas and Asuras were strongly attracted towards Kāmadhenu. While all were standing spellbound, Vāruṇidevī with her enchanting dreamy eyes next appeared on the surface. Pārijātam was the third to appear. Fourth, a group of Apsarā women of marvellous beauty floated up. The Moon appeared as the fifth. Śiva received the Moon. The venom which came out of the Milk Sea as the sixth item, was absorbed by Nāgas. After that arose Bhagavān Dhanvantari, dressed in pure white robes and carrying a Kamaṇḍalu in his hand filled with Amṛtam. All were delighted at this sight. Next Mahā-lakṣmī made her appearance in all her glory with a