

Harita - Cuñcu - Sudeva - Bharuka - Bāhuka - Sagara-Asamañjas-Amśumān*-Bhagīratha.

2) *Recluse*. Many years had not lapsed after his coronation as King when, in the heart of Bhagīratha spiritual thoughts began to crop up. A great sage called Tritula was his guru. Once Bhagīratha asked the guru what was the means to get rid of worldly sorrows, and the guru replied as follows:—

The ego will be annihilated when the tendencies and cravings towards objects of the senses are absolutely suppressed and the whole and perfect truth is realised through knowledge, the practice of concentration etc. The ego will not disappear as long as one does not become one's real self by completely overcoming the sense of pride, shame etc. which form the outer case of worldly life. The egoless state is the ultimate achievement and most supreme state. Oh ! Bhagīratha ! if you would get rid of sentiments like pride etc., give up all attachment to material objects, become fearless and gift away, with thoughts concentrated on the inner self, all your wealth to enemies, and then move among those enemies, without any sense of ego and pride about this material body, and take alms from them (enemies) and also give up me, who am your preceptor in the matter of knowledge ; then you will become the most sublime Brahma". This advice of the guru affected him so much that Bhagīratha, holding his duties firmly in mind, engaged himself in spiritual practices, and after spending some time thus he performed, according to rules, the Agniṣṭoma yajña aimed at gifting away everything. All wealth like cows, land, horses, gold etc. were distributed in gifts to noble brahmins and the poor folk according to their eligibility for the same. Within three days he had gifted away everything except the clothes he was wearing. And, then he invited his neighbouring enemy king and gave to him, without the least hesitation, the kingdom which had been bereft of all wealth. The ministers and other citizens felt very sorry about the whole thing. But, Bhagīratha left the country at once for other places having with him only the clothes he was wearing. He spent his days in various places and forests where he was not known even by name. Ere long, Bhagīratha attained ultimate spiritual solace. And, then he accidentally came to his former kingdom, which was then being ruled by the enemy King. The ministers and other citizens to whose houses he went begging for alms recognised him, and with sorrow unbearable they appealed to him to accept the throne again and rule the country. Bhagīratha rejected their request, and, after staying there for some time, he started for other places. During this wandering of his he met his old preceptor, Tritula, and both of them, in company, toured for some time cities and forests. They felt it very painful to keep on to their body like that. They thought like this : "Why should the body be kept like this. What if this material object continues to exist or perishes ? But let it (the body) continue as long as it exists without in any way being against the order of things and ethical practices". And, in this frame of mind they traversed the forests. Now, the minister of a distant kingdom who was on the look out for a

successor to the King who had died heirless, persuaded Bhagīratha to accept the Kingship of that country. The ministers of Bhagīratha's former Kingdom also now requested him to resume his old kingship, especially since its new ruler had already expired. Bhagīratha obliged them, and became once again King of his own country. (Jūānavāsiṣṭham).

3) *Bhagīrathaprayatnam*. (*Himālayan or Herculean effort*). Sagara, an old predecessor of Bhagīratha had two wives called Keśinī and Sumati. Keśinī had one son named Asamañjas and Sumati 60,000 sons. Sagara once conducted an Aśvamedha yajña in the Indo-Gangetic plane, when Indra stole away the sacrificial horse and kept it quite near to sage Kapila who was doing tapas in Pātāla. The 60,000 sons of Sagara set out in search of the horse and found it out in Pātāla. At the sight of the horse they shouted themselves hoarse. Enraged at this sage Kapila reduced those sons of Sagara to ashes in the fire which emanated from his eyes.

After entrusting Asamañjas with the duty of performing the funeral rites of his 60,000 sons Sagara expired. Asamañjas transferred that duty on to Amśumān, and he to Bhagīratha. Bhagīratha did penance on the sea-shore concentrating his mind on Gaṅgādevī. The Devī appeared before Bhagīratha and asked him to choose what boon he would, and he requested the Devī to perform the funeral rites of 60,000 sons of Sagara remaining in the form of ashes in Pātāla. To this Gaṅgādevī replied that the earth will not be able to withstand the impact of her powerful flow, but she shall, if Śiva permits, flow into his matted hair. And, Gaṅgādevī asked Bhagīratha to first get that permission. This did not dishearten Bhagīratha, who went to mount Kailāsa to do penance so that Śiva might grant him his prayer. He thus did penance for 1000 years. Śiva appeared to him and agreed to receive the rushing flow of Gaṅgā water on his matted head. And, accordingly Śiva stood in position to receive the rushing waters of Gaṅgā, and Gaṅgā flowed on to his head. Even the most powerful flow of Gaṅgā water on his head did not cause Śiva to move from his position even by a hair's breadth. This awakened the conceit in Gaṅgādevī, understanding which Śiva contained her on his head. Without finding any outlet the waters of river Gaṅgā flowed along the matted hairs of Śiva for thousand years. So, Bhagīratha had once again to please Śiva. Thus pleased again Śiva shook his matted head and one drop of water fell on the ground, and that is the river Ganges in North India. The Gaṅgā flowed along plane ground to Pātāla and performed the funeral rites of Sagara's sons. (M.B. Vana Parva, Chapter 108 ; Vālmiki Rāmāyaṇa, Bāla Kāṇḍa, Canto 42 ; Brahmāṇḍa purāṇa, Chapter 97 ; Bhāgavata, Navama Skandha, Kāmpa Rāmāyaṇa (Tamil), Yuddha Kāṇḍa ; Padma Purāṇa, Part 4, Chapter 21).

4) *Other Information*.

(1) Bhagīratha is a member of Yama's assembly and serves him. (M.B., Sabhā Parva, Chapter 8, Verse 11).

(2) Śiva bestowed boons on him. (Vana Parva, Chapter 180, Verse 1).

*According to verse 12, Chapter 25, of Vana Parva, Bhagīratha is the son of Dilīpa. But most of the Purāṇas refer to him as the son of Amśumān.