

KANYAKĀGUṆA. A place of habitation of ancient India. (Chapter 9, Bhīṣma Parva).

KANYĀKUBJA. (KĀNYĀKUBJA).

1) *General information.* A city of Purāṇic fame on the banks of the river Gaṅgā. This is the same place which is now known as Kanauj. Viśvāmitra was the son of Gādhi, King of Kanyākubja.

2) *Origin of this city.* Once there was a great sage named Kuśa who was the son of Brahmā. He had of his wife Vaidarbhī four sons named Kuśāmba, Kuśanābha, Asūrtarajasa and Vasu. Kuśa asked them each to rule a country and so each of them built a city of his own. Kuśāmba named his city Kauśāmbī, Kuśanābha gave his city the name of Mahodayapura, Asūrtarajasa called his city Dharmāranya and Vasu called his city Girivraja. Of these Mahodayapura, city of Kuśanābha, became later famous as Kanyākubja. (Bāla Kāṇḍa, Vālmiki Rāmāyaṇa).

3) *How Mahodayapura became Kanyākubja.* Kuśanābha begot a hundred daughters of the nymph Ghṛtācī. Those beautiful girls were once playing in the forests when the wind-god fell in love with them. The girls rejected his love and Vāyu getting angry with them cursed them and made them hunchbacks. Because the hundred Kanyās (girls) became Kubjās (hunchbacks) at that place, the place became known as Kanyākubja.

When the daughters returned to the palace as hunchbacks Kuśanābha was greatly distressed. Weeping, the girls told him what had happened. At that time a sage named Cūlī was performing penance in a forest nearby. Somadā, daughter of Ūrmilā, a gandharva lady, married Cūlī and they got a son named Brahmadata. This Brahmadata married the hundred hunchbacks of Kuśanābha and the very touch of Brahmadata transformed the hunchbacks into beautiful girls.

After having given his daughters in marriage Kuśanābha conducted a Putrakāmeṣṭi yāga to get a son. In that Yāga Brahmā appeared in person and blessed Kuśanābha and he got a son. The son was named Gādhi.¹ Gādhi got a son and a daughter. The son was named Viśvāmitra and the daughter, Satyavatī. R̥cika married Satyavatī. Gādhi and Viśvāmitra were the rulers of Kanyākubja. See under 'R̥cika, Viśvāmitra'—(Sargas 32 to 34, Bālakāṇḍa, Vālmiki Rāmāyaṇa).

4) *Nārada and Kanyākubja.* There was a very big lake in Kanyākubja. Mahāviṣṇu once showed Māyā to Nārada at that place. (See under 'Nārada').

5) *Viśvāmitra and Indra take wine together.* Viśvāmitra and Indra took wine together at Kanyākubja. (Śloka 17, Chapter 87, Vana Parva).

KANYĀKUMĀRĪ (KANYĀKŪPA; KANYĀTĪRTHA)

1) *General information.* Mahābhārata makes references in many places to Kanyākumārī, the southern extremity of former Kerala and Gokarṇa, the northern boundary. It must, therefore, be surmised that these two holy places were very ancient ones. Vana Parva, praises Kanyākumārī at many places. If any one bathes at this place one will become very famous. (Anuśāsana Parva, M.B.).

Chapter eightyfive of Araṇya Parva, of Bhāṣā Bhārata speaks praisingly of Kanyākumārī and Gokarṇa among other places. It says thus:

"If you visit R̥ṣabhācala of Pāṇḍyadeśa you will get the benefit of conducting an Aśvamedhayāga. Then you must go farther south and take a dip in Kanyātīrtha. The touch of that water absolves you of all sins. Then visit Gokarṇa situated in the ocean famous in all the three worlds and worshipped by all."

From this it is to be understood that at the time of Mahābhārata Kanyākumārī was part of Pāṇḍyadeśa and that Gokarṇa was an island.

2) *Purāṇic stories about Kanyākumārī.* There are several stories regarding the origin and renown of Kanyākumārī in the Purāṇas. The most important ones are given below.

(1) *Absolver of sins.* The wife of a brahmin named Apaṅcika living in Kāśī became unchaste and to wash away her sin she came to Kanyākumārī walking all the way and did penance there, daily bathing in its waters. She attained Salvation and it is believed that a bath in its waters would absolve anybody of all his sins. (Mañimekhala).

(2) *Cakra tīrtha of Kanyākumārī.* Puṇyakāśī, daughter of Mayāsura, once went to Kailāsa and worshipped Śiva. After three yugas Śiva appeared before her and asked her what she wanted. She replied that she wanted to be merged in Śiva always. Śiva then said 'Three hundred and sixtyfive days would make a year. Four lakhs and thirtythree years would make a Kali Yuga. Kṛta, Tretā, Dvāpara and Kali are four Yugas and when two thousand such Yugas are over Brahmā finishes a day. Such thirty days make one month and twelve months, a year for Brahmā. When such hundred years of Brahmā are over the great deluge comes. Such ten deluges make a nāzhikā (twentyfour minutes) of Viṣṇu. Counting thus when you pass ten Viṣṇu deluges Śiva passes a second. Then is the time for the fulfilment of your desire. Till that time you sit in meditation on the shores of the south seas. Your hermitage would be known as Kanyākṣetra or Tapaḥ Sthala. During your stay there you must kill all the wicked people like Bāṇāsura and give relief to the people. I will also come and stay with you there then.'

Puṇyakāśī after prostrating before Śiva went to the south seas. Taking a Japamālā (necklace for prayer) in her hands she assumed the name Kanyākumārī, and started her penance. After conquering all the three worlds demon Bāṇa was having a wicked rule over his people when he saw Kanyākumārī and asked her to be his wife. He approached her with his wicked servants Durmukha and Durdarśana. But Kanyākumārī flatly refused and in the battle that ensued, Bāṇāsura fell dead by the Cakrāyudha (Discus) of Devī and at that spot is the Cakratīrtha. (Skanda Purāṇa).

(3) The phantom child which escaped from the hands of Kāṁsa at the time of the birth of Śrī Kṛṣṇa was that divine lady, Kanyākumārī. (Padma Purāṇa).

3) *The Geographical view.* It is said that there was an extension of the present continent to the south and that expansive land called Lamūria was later submerged in waters. There is a description of such an extended land in some of the old literature like Cilappadikāram." Kanyākumārī which was called 'Kumārī-ambādi' also was the first setu; Dhanuṣkoṭi the middle setu; and Koṭikkara, last setu. (Setu Purāṇa)

1 Gādhi—This is found as 'Gādhi' in Mahābhārata and 'Gādha' in Rāmāyaṇa.