

of Sūrya brought rains to the country. (Bhaviṣya Purāṇa, Pratisargasamhitā).

MEGHASVANĀ. A female follower of Subrahmaṇya. (Śloka 8, Chapter 46, Śalya Parva).

MEGHAVĀHANA. A King. He was a dependant of Jarāsandha. (Śloka 13, Chapter 14, Sabhā Parva).

MEGHAVĀHINI. (MEGHAVĀSINI). A female follower of Skandadeva. (Śloka 17, Chapter 45, Śalya Parva).

MEGHAVAR. A I. A character in a story of Pañcatantra. (See under Pañcatantra).

MEGHAVARṆA II. A son of Ghaṭotkaca. Meghavarna was also present with Arjuna when he went to protect the sacrificial horse of the Aśvamedha conducted by the Pāṇḍavas.

MEGHAVĀSA. An asura. This asura sits in the council of Varuṇa and worships him. (Śloka 19, Chapter 9, Sabhā Parva).

MEGHAVEGA. A very brave soldier who fought against the Pāṇḍavas on the Kaurava side. Abhimanyu killed him. (Śloka 15, Chapter 48, Droṇa Parva).

MEKHALA (MEKALA). Mekhala was a country which had attained Purāṇic fame in ancient India. The inhabitants of this place were called Mekhalas. They were the bodyguards of Bhīṣma. (Chapter 51, Bhīṣma Parva). They formed a separate division in the army of Bṛhannala, King of Kosala. (Chapter 87, Bhīṣma Parva). Once Karṇa conquered this country. (Śloka 8, Chapter 4, Droṇa Parva). Mekhalas were Kṣatriyas formerly. But they became persons of low caste when they showed jealousy towards the brahmins. (Śloka 17, Chapter 35, Anuśāsana Parva).

MENĀ I. Wife of Himavān. Beautiful Menā was the daughter of Mahāmeru.

Himavān lord of the mountains and the seat of many minerals and fossils had two daughters of unparalleled beauty and their mother was the lovely Menā, daughter of Mahāmeru and wife of Himavān. (Sarga 35, Bāla Kāṇḍa, Vālmiki Rāmāyaṇa).

Rāmāyaṇa states that Menā had two daughters of extraordinary beauty named Gaṅgā and Umā. They were both married by Śiva.

But Vāmana Purāṇa in chapter 51 states that Menā had three beautiful daughters and a son named Sunābha. Menā's first daughter was Rāgiṇī with red body and eyes and wearing a red dress. Her second daughter named Kuṭilā was white in colour, had lotus eyes, and wore white dress. The third was a girl of enchanting beauty named Kālī. She was blue-black in colour with eyes like the blue lotus leaf.

It can be surmised that the Umā of Rāmāyaṇa and Kālī were one and the same person by the following verse in the Amarakośa.

Umā Kātyāyanī Gaurī

Kālī Haimavatīśvarī //

When the statements of the two Purāṇas are taken together Menā should have had four daughters, Gaṅgā, Rāgiṇī, Kuṭilā and Kālī and a son named Sunābha.

MENĀ II. Daughter of the Pitṛs (Manes). Pitṛs are of two kinds : Anagnis and Sāgnis. Anagnis are those who do not perform yāgas and those who perform yāgas are called Sāgnis. Anagnis are called Agniśvāttas and Sāgnis are called Barhiṣadas. Svadhā was the common wife of all the Pitṛs. Svadhā got two daughters, Menā and Dhāriṇī. They were both very well-

learned, virtuous girls and were Brahmavādinīs (expounders of Vedānta philosophy). (Chapter 10, Amśa 1, Viṣṇu Purāṇa).

MENAKĀ. A nymph of extraordinary beauty. Taking instructions from Indra, Menakā used to entice many sages and destroy their power of penance. There are innumerable stories of this kind in Purāṇas. Some important events connected with Menakā are given below :

1) *Mother of Pramadvārā*. Once Menakā became pregnant by a Gandharva named Viśvāvasu. On the day she delivered she threw the child on the banks of a river and went to Svarga. A sage named Sthūlakeśa who was doing penance nearby took the babe and brought it up. When she grew up she was named Pramadvārā and Ruru married her. (See under Pramadvārā).

2) *Birth of Śakuntalā*. When Viśvāmitra was performing penance in the forests, Menakā, under instructions from Indra, went and enticed Viśvāmitra and broke the continuity of his penance. A girl was born to Menakā and became later the celebrated Śakuntalā. (See under Śakuntalā).

3) *Again with Viśvāmitra*. Once again when Viśvāmitra was performing penance in Puṣkaratīrtha, Menakā approached him and again Viśvāmitra fell in love with her and they lived together for ten years. Then one day Viśvāmitra realised his folly and leaving her went again to the forests for penance.

4) *Mañkaṇa was enticed*. See under Mañkaṇa

5) *Other details*.

(i) When once Durvāsas visited Devaloka it was Menakā who presented him with a flower garland. This incident led to the churning of the milk ocean at a later period. (See under Amṛta).

(ii) Menakā was one among the six prominent celestial maidens. Urvaśī, Pūrvacitti, Sahajanyā, Menakā, Ghṛtācī and Viśvācī are the six. (Śloka 68, Chapter 74, Ādi Parva).

(iii) Menakā attended the Janmotsava of Arjuna and sang on the occasion. (Śloka 64, Chapter 122, Ādi Parva).

(iv) Menakā was a dancer in the court of Kubera (Śloka 10, Chapter 10, Sabhā Parva).

(v) Menakā once gave a music performance in the court of Indra in honour of Arjuna. (Śloka 29, Chapter 43, Vana Parva).

MENḌA (MENDHA). A Sanskrit poet who lived in the 5th century A.D. Among his works only one is known viz. Hayagrīvavadha (the assassination of Hayagrīva). This book is known by another name "Hastipāka".

MEPPATTŪR NĀRĀYAṆA BHAṬṬATIRĪ. A Sanskrit poet who lived in Kerala.

1) *General information* It is believed that this poet lived during the period from 1560 to 1648 A.D. He was born in the village of Kurumāttūr in Malabar district. The illam (house of nambūtiris) which became famous by his birth was a mile to the east of the Bhagavatī temple, Candanakkāvu, which itself is situated just two furlongs to the north of the well known Tirunāvāya temple. Meppattūr illam became impoverished and was merged with another illam of name Maravañceri Tekkeṭattu.

Nārāyaṇa Bhaṭṭatirī had a brother named Mātṛdatta. He was younger to Nārāyaṇa and his work was to take