

Vol. XXVIII, No. 1]

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[January, 1986

पुराणम्
PURĀṆA

(Half-yearly Bulletin of the Purāṇa-Department)

*Published with the financial assistance from the Ministry of Education,
Government of India and Indian Council of Historical Research, New Delhi*

VASANTAPAÑCAMĪ NUMBER

आत्मा पुराणं वेदानाम्



ALL-INDIA KASHIRAJ TRUST
FORT RAMNAGAR, VARANASI

Annual Sub.—Inland Rs. 50/-

Foreign £ 5

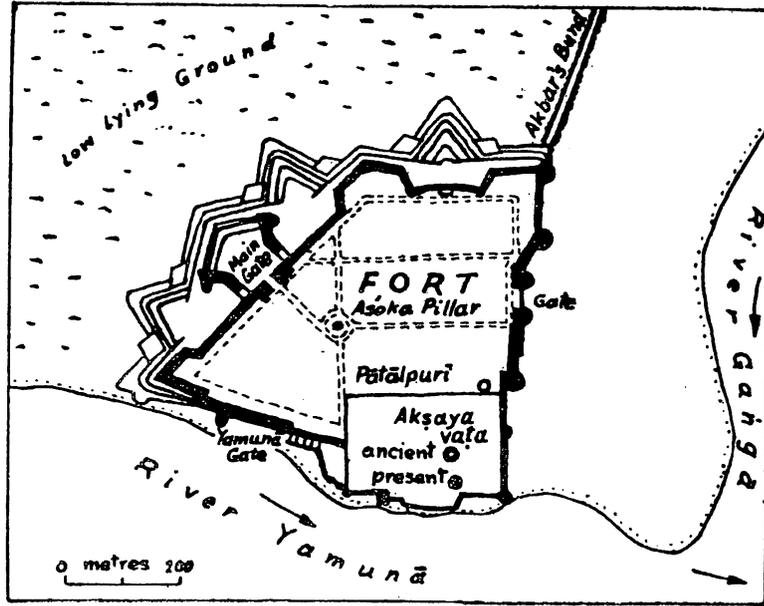


Fig. 2

REASON FOR THE IRREGULAR USE OF THE WORDS DAITYA AND DĀNAVA IN THE PURĀNAS

By

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The Purāṇas expressly declare that they contain detailed genealogies of devas, dānavas, daityas, gandharvas, uragas, rakṣases, sarpas, bhūtas, piśācas etc.¹ According to the Purāṇas these are distinct races born of the daughters of Prācetasā Dakṣa, namely Aditi, Diti, Danu and others (All of these are married to Kaśyapa). The Purāṇas speak of the distinctive characteristics of these races also.²

Here we are not going to say anything either about the historical character of these races or about the identity of these races. We are concerned here with a problem relating to the use of the two names, namely daitya and dānava.

It is found that the authors of the Purāṇas were too much careful in mentioning the names of the races to which the offspring of these daughters of Dakṣa belonged. A being belonging to any one of the races, namely deva, rakṣas, yakṣa, apsaras, etc. has

1. दैत्यानां दानवानां च गन्धर्वोरगरक्षसाम् । सर्पभूतपिशाचानां पशूनां पक्षिवीरुघाम् । उत्पत्तिं निघनं चैव विस्तरात् कथयस्व नः ॥ (Vāyu-p. 67.48; Brahmāṇḍa-p. 2.5.1-2 with the reading, वसूनां for पशूनां); देवानां दानवानां च गन्धर्वोरगरक्षसाम् । उत्पत्तिं विस्तरेणेह मम ब्रह्मन् प्रकीर्तय ॥ (Viṣṇu-p. 1.15.85, Padma-p. 5.6.1 with the reading विस्तरेणेमां गुरो ब्रूहि यथाविधि; Brahma-p. 3.1 with the reading विस्तरेणैव लोमहर्षणं कीर्तय; Śiva-p. Umā. 31.1 with the reading सृष्टिं तु विस्तरेणेमां सूतपुत्र वदाशु मे). See also Kūrma-p. I. 15.1, Matsya-p. 3.1.
2. Vāyu-p. 69.92-96, Brahmāṇḍa-p. 2.7.465-469. (The statement गन्धशीला दितिश्रैव मायाशीला दनुः स्मृता read in these passages is noteworthy).

been always described as a deva, rakṣas etc.³ There are however figurative uses of these words. A manuṣya is sometimes said to be a deva or rakṣas on account of some of his chief characteristics which are peculiar to deva or rakṣas.

It is interesting to note that in the Purāṇas a daitya is sometimes said to be a dānava and vice versa. This irregular use is found in a considerable number of cases especially in persons like Prahlāda, Virocana, Bali, Bāṇa, Tāraka (all belong to the Daitya race), Vṛṣaparvan, Puloman, Vipracitti, Namuci and Maya (all belong to the Dānava race).⁴ This irregular use was so conspicuous that Rājaśekhara refers to it as an example of *kavisamaya*.⁵ He means to say that such irregular use is not a real fault in the field of poetical works. It should be noted that these irregular uses are not based on the figurative senses of the words. As for example when Prahlāda is said to be a Dānava, it does not follow that he possessed the peculiar qualities of the dānava race. As a daitya cannot be described as a dānava and vice versa at the

3. The names nāga and sarpa (of two distinct races) are sometimes found to have been used indiscriminately. It seems that since these two words are read in the lexicons as synonymous, nāga in later times came to be used for sarpa and vice versa.
4. It is not necessary to refer to those Purāṇic passages in which such irregular uses occur. Suffice it to say that Prahlāda, a daitya (being the son of Hiraṇyakaśipu, the son of Diti) has been described as a dānava (an offspring of Danu) in Vāmana-p. 7.22 (अभिषिक्तस्तदा राज्ये प्रह्लादो नाम दानवः); see also verses 47 and 61, the word दैत्येश्वर is however used in verses 44 and 52.
5. While dealing with the कविसमय (conventions in the field of poetry) Rājaśekhara observes : दैत्यदानवासुराणामैक्यं यथा— तत्र हिरण्याक्ष-हिरण्यकशिपु-प्रह्लाद-विरोचन-बलि-बाणादयो दैत्याः, विप्रचित्ति-शम्बर-नमुचि-पुलोमप्रभृतयो दानवाः, बल-वृत्र-विश्वरस्त-वृषपर्वादयोऽसुराः (v. 1. विश्वर-वृषपर्वादयोः) (Kāvya-mīmāṃsā, Ch. 16, p. 88). Rājaśekhara is wrong to think that asura is also a name of a race like the daitya or dānava. The exact name of the race of beings designated as asuras by Rājaśekhara was also known to the authors of the Purāṇas, as for example the Purāṇas often mention Vṛṣaparvan as a dānava (see Viṣṇu-p. 1.21.4-5, Kālikā-p. 34.54. Vāyu-p. 68.8, Brahma-p. 3.78, Padma-p. 5.6.53).

time of mentioning the race, a question naturally arises as to why in a large number of Purāṇic passages we find irregular uses of the two words daitya and dānava.

In the course of my studies I have come across a passage which seems to afford a clue to this irregular use. After describing the genealogies of Diti (Ch. 67) and Danu (Ch. 68) the Vāyu-p. asserts: इत्येते त्वसुराः प्रोक्ता दैत्या दानवाश्च ये (68.14). The passage is found in Brahmāṇḍa-p. 2.6.14 also (the reading being इत्येते असुराः क्रान्ता दैत्या दानवास्तथा). It means the daiteyas i. e. daityas (the offspring of Diti) and the dānavas (the offspring of Danu) are collectively called Asuras.

It must be noted here that these two Purāṇas are referring to a long established custom of ancient India. It would be wrong to think that the custom was established at the time when these two Purāṇas were composed.

From the aforesaid passage it follows that a daitya or a dānava was sometimes designated as an asura. Now, if a being is known to be an asura to a person, it becomes impossible for him to decide whether the being is a daitya or a dānava. Thus there would arise in later times a confusion regarding the proper race of a being who was once described as an asura.

Since both daityas and dānavas are alike in some respects⁶ (i. e. both are non-virtuous and possess the propensity of giving trouble to others on account of their highly developed strength, often caused by penance) teachers of Puranic tradition did not strongly feel any necessity to assert correctly the names of the races of these beings. In fact these teachers found it easier to use the word asura in the place of daitya or dānava since in later times the distinction of daitya and dānava lost its significance and since the non-mention of the precise name of the race was not considered as a serious fault of the authors of the Purāṇas.

6. The Purāṇic statement that Prahlāda was given lordship over both the daityas and dānavas (*vide* Viṣṇu-p. 1.22.4, Brahma-p. 4.4, Śiva-p. Umā 33.22, Matsya-p. 8.5 Padma-p. 5.7.72) shows that both of these two races possess some inner similarity.

As time went on the authors of Puranic tradition did not take it necessary to use the proper name of the race at the time of describing a daitya or dānava. Consequently they paid little attention in using the words daitya and dānava, as a result of which a daitya was often described as a dānava and vice versa.

It is remarkable to note that in the aforesaid Puranic passages mentioning the names of races (see footnote 1) there is no mention of asura, though daitya and dānava are expressly stated. This evidently shows that in the *prajāśarga* connected with Kaśyapa there was no race called asura.⁷

7. In the Purāṇic passages showing the creatioa of four ambhas by Brahmā Prajāpati from His body, asuras are mentioned along with devas, manuśyas and pitṛs (Vide Vāyu-p. 9.2-3, Mārkaṇḍeya-p. 48.4, Garuḍa-p. 1.4;20, Viṣṇu-p. 1.5.28). As this creation is of a different kind the question whether this asura is the same as the aforesaid asura has no relevance.

ACTIVITIES OF THE ALL-INDIA KASHIRAJ TRUST

July—December 1985

Garuḍa Purāṇa

Collation of two Bengali manuscripts from the Asiatic Society, Calcutta and another from the Dhaka University is in progress while that of an incomplete manuscript obtained from Germany has been completed. The subject concordance of the Garuḍa Purāṇa with the other Purāṇas, the Rāmāyaṇa and the Mahābhārata is under preparation. More manuscripts of the Ācārakāṇḍa, Pretakalpa and Brahmakāṇḍa are being examined. The different manuscripts of Purāṇa-sūcīś are being consulted for the use in the testimonia.

Mānasakhaṇḍa of the Skanda Purāṇa

Chapters 1 to 30 have so far been published in the previous issues of the Purāṇa. Chapters 31 to 40 are ready for publication. The text is being edited by Dr. Gangasagar Rai on the basis of three Devanāgarī manuscripts, one of which is in the Trust's Library and the other two have been obtained from the National Archives, Kathmandu, Nepal.

Sivadharmā and Śivadharmottara

Work on the critical editions of the Śivadharmā and the Śivadharmottara Purāṇa-s is being carried out by Dr Giorgio Bonazzoli with the help of a computer in Italy.

Index of names in the Liṅga Purāṇa

'Index of names in the Liṅga Purāṇa' has been prepared by Dr N. Gangadharan of the Madras University. The first instalment of this is published in the present issue of the Purāṇa.

Veda Pārāyaṇa and Purāṇa Pāṭha

In the month of Āṣāḍha, the Kāṇva Saṁhitā of the Śukla Yajurveda was recited in the Sivala temple of the Trust in Varanasi by Paṇḍita Śrīnīvāsa Paurāṇika with Paṇḍita Lakṣmīkānta Paurāṇika as the Śrotā. The reciter and the Śrotā were given the customary Dakṣiṇā.