



Revitalising the Sacred

■ Neera Misra

HINDUISM'S most sacred river Maa Ganga is entangled in a conflict between spiritual and material, as we humans have forgotten the sacred value and its spiritual symbol in this materialistic world

A

masterpiece titled Pārvaṭī excavated at Pañcāla Desha (Ahichchhatra) during the 1940 excavation, and now a prestigious display at National Museum, New Delhi. It has some unique features: (a) Half moon indicating 'Chandravanshi' lineage from King Drupada, (b) Third eye of Śiva, (c) Exquisite hairstyle (showing Draupadī's love for her hair).

Gangā Pārvaṭī and Draupadī

Draupadī is generally known as the heroine of the Epic Mahabharata, the 'itihasa' of the 'Greater Bharata' during the time of the Kurukshetra War. She was the illustrious daughter of King Drupada of Pañcāla, who married the Pandav prince of Hastinapura. Over a thousand

years' disconnection of our people with our original textual knowledge interpretations has led to much misperceptions about our celebrated personalities of the past, especially Sri Krishna and Draupadī. There is, however, a very intriguing relationship between Gangā Pārvaṭī and Draupadī that helps put things in proper perspective.

The book *Kampilyamahatmya* simplified by Durga Datta Sharma* explains that Draupadī is the reincarnation of mother Shakti Pārvaṭī. Śiva predicted and blessed Pārvaṭī to be born as the daughter of King Drupada of Pañcāla.

Śiva curses Gangā & Pārvaṭī

Vaisampayan said: 'O king, once Śiva ji cursed Pārvaṭī;

A discord had developed between Pārvatī and Gangā and Śiva faced continuous wrangling. Śiva tried to stop this, but his words were not respected and so Śiva cast a spell on them, to 'go from the Devloka to the manushyaloka'. Gangā will be the wife of king Shantanu and Pārvatī will be the daughter of King Drupada'. Being upset at this they pleaded with Śiva "... May our husband be like you."

Vaisampayana said: After the Swayamvara the Pandavas stayed for sometime at the wedding. It was then that Draupadī remembered Śiva and she decided to install Śivalinga of her heart's desire. With the assent of her Pandavas she installed the lingam according to the vedic lore, on the south bank of the Gangā and at the northern side of Kampilpura.

It became known by the name of Kalesvara. "O Pārvatī, you will reside in secret in the country of Pañcāla, in the town of Kāmpilya, with the name of Kāmpilya vasini. There the Munis will perform a fire sacrifice". In the third era called Dwapara yuga, there will be a king of the Chandravansha, lunar dynasty. In order to have children he will perform a yajña on the right bank of the Gangā.

You will be called Kṛāṇa, Kali, and Draupadī. Then I will be the son of king Pandu, Arjuna. In his heart there will be my third eye. He will be your husband". (*Kāmpilya Māhātmya* - Chapter 5 page 46 verses 23-31).

The relationship between Śiva, Pārvatī, Gangā, and Draupadī is relived in another generation, the historical time known to us as Dvapara of Bharatiya 'itihaskaras'. Itihasa means 'as it happened or as experienced'. Pañcāla Kingdom was the cradle of deep research and Upanishads and ancient texts that explained the philosophy and science of Vedic visionaries. A very significant trait of scholars of Pañcāla was the continuous debate and resolution of conflicts between materialism and spiritualism that affected humanity in every sphere of life.

Gangā is now also entangled in the spiritual and material conflict. It is our responsibility to ensure that Gangā is with us as a healthy and pure living source of divine power. What went wrong with Gangā? Just we misunderstand Draupadi, we misunderstand Maa Gangā, taking this Goddess of our life and culture to be mere river for our selfish use. We have lost the cultural and spiri-

tual connect with our past, our nature and especially mother Gangā that is our savior from birth to death.

When our Rishi's and Shakaracharya's developed the 'Chardham' or 'Tirath Yatras', the basic concept was to make us humans keep connectivity with nature, to meditate in a place of peaceful pristine energy, to introspect and value human life. They had experienced the divinity in man and nature. Blending the physical and metaphysical, the spiritual connect to provide 'moksha', which in effect means peace of mind, body and soul. Rituals were performed with natural ingredients, 'Murtis' were made of mud, adorned with cotton fiber. There was no artificial plastic painted and synthetic material then. Today tirath yatra', for majority is no spiritual quest. Today people don't carry homemade food or eat local 'natural fresh' food. They eat multi variety 'plastic' packed food and water, leaving behind tones of waste material at our sacred places.

Seers envisioned for a clean mother earth and structured a ritual where material remains of ashes and bones were immersed in flowing waters. But the patronage for Culture and Spiritual practices that ancient Kings gave for healthy and moral social engineering of society started vanishing over thousand years ago. The priesthood had to survive on commercial terms too, which led to denigration of values and concepts of man nature cultural connect.

When the 'atman' leaves the body it mingles with 'paramatman'. When the soul leaves the body, the material being, too should not remain on mother earth and must mingle with respect into the environment sources. Thus developed the vision of Sagara and we have the Gangā Avataran, bringing goddess from heavenly rains to purify earth, wash away our material remains, and give salvation. Śiva blessed Bhagirath and had to also sacrifice by sending Parvati down to 'earth' or plains. The penance and sacrifice of our visionary ancestors gave us Maa Ganga.

Society has reached a critical point and another 'Bhagirathi prayas' is needed for sustaining Maa Gangā, the trees and mountains, to ensure clean and healthy life. While the physical cleaning of Ganga happens, the spiritual cleaning of hearts and minds is essential to keep Maa Gangā pure and healthy.

(The writer is founder of Draupadi Dream Trust)

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