

articles were displayed there. Men and women of all the four castes stayed there.

7. The wealthy and prosperous king of that city named Śīlanidhi was preparing for the gorgeous celebration of the voluntary wooing (Svayaṃvara)¹⁷⁸ of his daughter.

8. Brilliant princes coming from all the four quarters eager to court the princess had thronged there dressed in diverse ways.

9. On seeing such a splendid city Nārada¹⁷⁹ was enchanted. With his love kindled, he eagerly went to the palace threshold.

10. When the sage reached the palace the king Śīlanidhi adored him, having offered him a seat on the splendid throne studded with precious gems.

11. He called his daughter Śrīmatī and asked her to kneel down at the feet of Nārada.

12. Being struck with wonder on seeing the girl, Nārada said—"O king, who is this lovely girl comparable to celestial damsels?"

13. On hearing the words of the sage, the king replied with his palms joined in reverence—"O sage, this is my daughter Śrīmatī.

14. She has attained the marriageable age. She is in search of a qualified bridegroom. She has all charms and accomplishments and her Svayaṃvara is imminent.

15. O sage, kindly foretell her destiny, everything that is in her horoscope. Please tell me what sort of a husband she will get."

16. By the time these words were spoken Nārada had become an agitated victim of love and desired her. Addressing the king, he said thus :—

17. "O great king, this daughter of yours is endowed

¹⁷⁸. This was an ancient custom amongst the kings of Kṣatriya caste to hold a public assembly of suitors for the selection of a husband for their daughters.

¹⁷⁹. Nārada is one of the ten mind-born sons of Brahmā having sprung from his thigh. He is celebrated as a divine sage and is associated with another sage Parvata. He is represented as the messenger from the Gods to men and vice versa and as being very fond of promoting discords among Gods and men; hence he is called Kalipriya.