

darkness. O you having serpents for ornaments, you are beyond all that deserve eulogy. Hence I bow to you. You are greater than the greatest.

31. O soul-formed one, O Śiva, this universe of the mobiles and immobiles is pervaded by these series of your forms. O eight-formed lord, having the form of the immanent soul, I always bow to you.

32. O kinsman of those devoid of kinsmen, O you of the form of universe, equipped with the eight forms, you make all expand. O lord, you make all objects available to those who bow to you. Hence I bow to you.

Sanatkumāra said:—

33. Eulogising the eight formed Śiva by reciting the eight verses, Bhārgava touched the ground with his head and bowed again and again.

34-35. When he was eulogised by Bhārgava of great brilliance, the great god stood up and lifted the brahmin from the ground where he was bowing to him. Holding him up, the lord spoke in a rumbling voice like that of the cloud but gentle in effect, illuminating the quarters with the moonlight-brilliance of his teeth.

The great lord said:—

36-38. O excellent brahmin, O Bhārgava, O dear, you are my faithful devotee. By your severe penance in this life, by the merit of installing my phallic image, and the adoration of it, by the offerings made with concentrated devotion, your unshaken purity and holy conduct in this Avimuktakṣetra,³¹⁷ I see you as my other two sons. There is nothing which cannot be given to you.

39. With this body you shall enter the cavity of my belly and you will be born as my son through my excellent organ—the penis.

40. I am giving you now the boon inaccessible to even my attendants and which I have kept away even from Viṣṇu and Brahmā usually.

317. The Avimukta-Kṣetra is the same as Vārāṇasī region. It derives its name from the installation of the phallic emblem of Śiva called Avimukteśvara.