

At last Puṣkara apologised to Nala and gave him back his country. (See under Damayanti).

PUṢKARA III. A sage. He was the Guru of Paraśurāma. (Chapter 151, Agni Purāṇa).

PUṢKARA IV.

1) *General information.* This is a holy place situated 36 Kilometres to the north of Ajmer. Brahmā once did penance there. There is a temple of Brahmā there. Padma Purāṇa gives a story about the origin of this tīrtha :—

Once Brahmā came to a place holding a lotus. Then Brahmā saw Vajranābha who was engaged in penance for the destruction of the devas. Suddenly the lotus in the hands of Brahmā fell down making a thundering noise. The sound was so loud that its vibrations killed Vajranābha. From that day onwards the place was known as Puṣkara.

2) *Other details.*

(i) Arjuna spent the period after his pilgrimage in this tīrtha. (Śloka 14, Chapter 220, Ādi Parva).

(ii) Once sage Pulastya praised the greatness of Puṣkara. (Śloka 20, Chapter 82, Vana Parva).

(iii) Sage Dhaumya praised the greatness of Puṣkara-tīrtha. (Śloka 16, Chapter 89, Vana Parva).

(iv) Once the god of death came and did penance at this place. (Śloka 26, Chapter 54, Droṇa Parva).

(v) Once Brahmā performed a Yāga at this place and then Sarasvatī rose up from the place in the name of Suprabhā. (Śloka 5, Chapter 38, Śalya Parva).

(vi) If one performs penance at this place peacefully one can attain mokṣa. (Chapter 297, Śānti Parva).

PUṢKARA V. A mountain in the island of Puṣkara. This mountain is full of precious stones. (Śloka 24, Chapter 12, Bhīṣma Parva).

PUṢKARA VI. One of the seven islands. The other six are Jambūdvīpa, Plakṣadvīpa, Śālmādvīpa, Kuṣadvīpa, Krauñcadvīpa, and Śākadvīpa. (8th Skandha, Devī Bhāgavata).

PUṢKARADHĀRINĪ. The wife of a sage. There was once a sage named Satya in the country of Vidarbha. Puṣkaradhārīnī was the wife of Satya. Satya who believed in Ahimsā performed a Yāga with fruits and roots. It is believed that no yāga is perfect if performed without a sacrificial goat. But even his wife for fear of a curse did not object to a Yāga of the kind.

There was another sage living in that forest in the form of a deer due to a curse and he was a great friend of Satya. The deer came to the place of the Yajña and requested Satya to kill him as the sacrificial animal to make the Yāga a success. Satya did not agree to that but then Sāvitrīdevī appeared in person and compelled him to kill the deer and conduct the Yāga. With great reluctance Satya killed the deer and conducted the Yāga; but the power of penance of Satya faded away by that deed of his. Then Puṣkaradhārīnī performed penance to regain the power of her husband and Dharma appeared in person and blessed Satya. (Chapter 272, Śānti Parva).

PUṢKARĀKṢA I. A King of Purāṇic fame.

There was once a King called Bhadrākṣa in Takṣaśīlānagara. He worshipped Bhagavatī with 108 lotus flowers daily in order to obtain a son. One day he found one flower missing and the brave king tore open his heart and made the number complete. The goddess was pleased and she blessed him saying that he would

have a son worthy of becoming an emperor. Puṣkarākṣa was the son thus born.

The boy grew up and after crowning him as King Bhadrākṣa left for the forests. Puṣkarākṣa worshipped Śiva daily to get a suitable wife. After some time Śiva blessed him saying that he would get a very good wife.

One day he went for hunting. He saw a camel trying to eat two cobras engaged in the act of mating. Instantly the King sent an arrow against the camel and the camel falling down turned into a Vidyādhara and that Vidyādhara told the King thus :—“Oh King, there was once a Vidyādhara named Raṅgamālī. A Vidyādhara maiden named Tārāvalī was attracted by the handsome form of Raṅgamālī. She married him without the consent of her parents. The angered father separated them by a curse. The curse took effect and they soon got separated losing their way in the forest. Pining to see her husband Tārāvalī roamed about in the forests and reached the other shore of the western sea. It was a colony of ṛsis and there was a fig tree there standing in full blossom. Tārāvalī took the form of a beetle and sat on the tree sucking honey. After some days Raṅgamālī also came to the place. On seeing her husband she had emission and from the virile fluid was born a fig fruit. After that both of them flew to the Gandharva loka. I am Raṅgamālī. One day a sage named Jitāsu came that way and this fruit fell before him. From the fruit came out a beautiful maiden and Jitāsu with his divine power understood the whole story behind it and so took the girl to his āśrama and named her Vinayavatī. Vinayavatī grew into a beautiful maiden and stayed in the āśrama. One day by accident I happened to see her and attracted by her beauty tried to rape her. She cried aloud and hearing the noise the sage came out and cursed me and turned me into a camel. I pleaded for mercy and the sage said I would be released from the curse when I was killed by the future husband of Vinayavatī, Puṣkarākṣa by name. Oh King, I am now released from the curse and you should go to the forest named Surabhimāruta on the other side of the western sea and marry that maiden.”

Puṣkarākṣa was pleased to hear this and the king going back to the palace and entrusting the administration of the state to his ministers left for the forest of Surabhimāruta. Reaching the shore of the western sea he was thinking of ways to cross the sea when he saw a Bhadrakālī temple nearby. When he went to the temple he saw a violin in front of it and taking it he played on it a few songs in praise of Kālī and went to sleep in the temple. The goddess was pleased with his songs and took the sleeping king to the other side of the sea. When he woke up next morning he saw himself on the other shore and was pleasantly surprised. He walked about on the shore and saw an āśrama and peeping in saw a sage sitting inside. On seeing the king the sage told him thus “Oh Puṣkarārāja, Vinayavatī in search of whom you have come here has just gone to pluck flowers for her worship. She will come just now and you can then accept your wife of your previous birth as your wife of this life.”

The king wanted to know more about Vinayavatī when the sage said she was his wife in his previous birth also. Then the sage said : “Once there was a Vaiśya called Dharmasena in Tāmralipti. He married