

Saying so he tied the child to the ground by chanting mantras with darbha grass in his hands. At the same time Śūrpākṣi came there in invisible form. She threw Dharmīṣṭhā's child from a distance into the courtyard. Kośakāra took his child. But all the attempts of the Rākṣasī to lift her child from the ground failed. The grief-stricken Rākṣasī reported the matter to her husband.

As soon as Śūrpākṣi left the place the magnanimous Kośakāra handed over the Rākṣasa child to his wife. He brought up his own child by feeding it on cow's milk, curd, juice of sugar-cane etc. Both the children grew up to seven years of age. The Rākṣasa boy was named Divākara and the other child Nīśākara. Both the children were invested with the sacred thread in due course of time. Divākara learned the Vedas, but Nīśākara did not, and he was despised by all. His father pushed him into a neglected well and covered its mouth with stone.

Nīśākara lived in the well for many years. The fruits of a cluster of plants in the well served as his food. Some ten years afterwards when Nīśākara's mother found the mouth of the well closed with a big stone she asked as to who did so, and from the well came the answer, "Mother, it was father who covered this well with that stone." Alarmed at this the mother asked who was within the well, and she was answered, "Your son, Nīśākara." Then she argued that her son was named Divākara and that she had no son called Nīśākara. But, Nīśākara told her about his past life and what had happened to him during the present life, upon which the mother rolled away the stone and Nīśākara came out of the well and prostrated before his mother. He then went home with his mother. Questioned as to how and why these things happened by Kośakāra his son Nīśākara described his previous life as follows:—

Father, you would please hear about the reason why I became dumb and idiotic. In my previous life I was born in a noble family, my father being called Vṛṣākapi and mother Mālā. My father taught me all the Śāstras and the Vedas. I became concited over my unique learning and erudition and began doing evil acts. Conceit led to avarice, and I lost all my scholarship. I became indiscreet. Having thus become a fool, I began committing sins. I had to hang myself to death on account of my association with others' women and stealing others' money. I, therefore, fell into the Raurava hell. After a thousand years some sin remained attached to me as a result of which I was born as a tiger, and a King trapped and took me to his city. When I was caged Śāstras about Dharma, Artha and Kāma came up in my mind.

One day the King went out wearing only one piece of cloth and with a club in his hands. Then his wife Ajitā, a unique beauty came to me, and because of my taste in my previous life sexual desire arose in my heart. I told her about my feelings. She also felt like me. So, she unchained me and I approached her in great passion and seeing me thus the King's servants tied me to a peepal tree and thrashed me to death.

My soul again returned to hell. After a thousand years I was born as a white ass in the house of a brahmin named Agniveśya, who had many wives. Then all knowledge and wisdom were reflected in my mind. My duty was to carry the brahmin women on my back. One

day the brahmin's wife Vimati of Navarāṣṭra started for her father's home mounted on my back. Half-way home she dismounted and went to a stream to bathe. The exquisite beauty of that lady with wet clothes upset me, and I ran up to her on the stream, pushed her into the water and myself fell upon her. Then a person came and tried to tie me down. I escaped from his grips and ran southwards. While thus running the saddle slipped into my mouth and I fell down. And, within six days I died thinking about her. Thus I fell again into hell. My next birth was as a parrot. A hunter caged me in the forest and he sold me to a Vaiśya merchant, who put me up in the women's quarters. The young women fed me on rice and fruits. One day the wife of the Vaiśya merchant hugged me to her breast and petted me. Her touch kindled in me sexual feelings and I embraced her with my wings. In my hurry about the affair I slipped down and got crushed between the doors. Thus I fell again into hell. Afterwards I was born as an ox in a camp of a Caṇḍāla. One day he yoked me to his cart and started for the forest in it with his wife. On the way she sang a song, and mentally excited by it I looked back. At once I slipped my feet, fell down and died. Again I returned to hell.

After another one hundred years I was born as your (Kośakārad) son in this house. All facts about my previous lives linger in my memory and now I am free from evils and am a virtuous person. I am going to the forest for tapas. Let the good boy, Divākara live here as house-holder. Nīśākara thus did tapas for many years and attained Vaikuṇṭha (Vāmana Purāṇa, Chapter 91).

There is no definite evidence in the Purāṇas to establish that the Nīśākara, the protector of Sampāti and the Nīśākara mentioned above were the same person. NĪŚAṆGI. A son of Dhṛtarāṣṭra. He was killed in the great war by Bhīmasena. (Karna Parva, Chapter 84, Verse 4).

NĪŚATHA I. A prince of the Vṛṣṇi dynasty; son of Balabhadra born of Revati. (Harivaṁśa). Nīśaṭha also had participated in the utsava celebrations held at Raivata mountain by the Yādavas. It was Nīśaṭha who went to Khāṇḍavaprastha with the dowry of Subhadra. He was present at the Aśvamedha and Rājasūya of Yudhiṣṭhira. After death he was absorbed into the Viśvadevas. (Ādi Parva, Chapter 328, Verse 20; Sabhā Parva, Chapter 34; Aśvamedha Parva, Chapter 66; Svargārohaṇa Parva, Chapter 5).

NĪŚATHA II. A King of ancient India. After death he lived in the court of Yama worshipping him. (Sabhā Parva, Chapter 9, Verse 11).

NĪŚCIRĀ. A river glorified in the Purāṇas. It is well known in all the three worlds. A bath in the river is as good as performing an aśvamedha yajña. Those who bathe in the confluence of Nīścirā will attain Indraloka. (Vana Parva, Chapter 84, Verse 138).

NĪŚCYAVANA. Second son of Bṛhaspati. He was sinless, pure and holy. (Vana Parva, Chapter 209).

NĪŚITHA. A King of Dhruva's dynasty. Puṣpārṇa was the son of Utkala, the son of Dhruva, and Nīśitha was Puṣpārṇa's son by his wife Prabhā. Nīśitha had two brothers, Pradoṣa and Vyūṣa. (Bhāgavata, 4th Skandha).

NĪŚKA. One palam (about one-sixth of a pound) of