

PURANIC RITUALS : A CASE-STUDY OF VRATAS

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that this dissertation entitled "Puranic Rituals : A Case-Study of Vratas" submitted by Rupamanjari Sen in partial fulfilment for the award of the degree of Master of Philosophy of this University is her own work and may be placed before the examiners for evaluation. This dissertation has not been submitted for the award of any other degree of this University or any other University to the best of our knowledge.

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GLOSSARY

- ācamana* - offering of spoonfuls of water for sipping
- ācāra* - custom or practice; an established rule of conduct
- adhaka* - a particular weight and measure of capacity
- Ādityas* - a class of deities, representing the sun in the twelve months of the year
- āhnikā* - a religious ceremony to be performed every day at a fixed hour
- aṅgapujā* - (literally) bodyworship; worshipping the different parts of the body of the deity with different *mantras*
- apupa* - baked pies
- āratikā* - waving of lamp before the deity
- arghya* - respectful offering of water with or without rice grains, *durva* grass etc.
- aśāstriya* - not sanctioned by the sacred texts
- aśauca* - impurity contacted by the death of a relation or by the commission of prohibited acts.
- aṣṭami* - eighth lunar day
- Aśwamedha* - the horse-sacrifice the antiquity of which goes back to the Vedic period
- bahiryāga* - external worship
- bhakṣya* - side dishes of edible things
- bhakṣyāabhakṣya* - food that should be eaten and that which should not be eaten
- bhasma* - sacred ash
- bhukti* - worldly pleasure
- Brahmāloka* - the realm of God *Brahmā*
- carita* - texts containing or relating deeds or adventures of a sacred deity or person

- caru* - an oblation (of rice, barley and pulse) boiled with butter and milk for presentation to the gods, or manes
- caturdaśī* - fourteenth lunar day
- caturthī* - fourth lunar day
- dakṣiṇā* - sacrificial fee
- dāna* - donation or gift
- daśamī* - tenth lunar day
- dharma* - religion
- dravyaśuddhi* - sanctification of materials
- dravyayajña* - material sacrifice
- dvādaśī* - twelveth lunar day
- dviija* - first three castes (*brāhmaṇa*, *kastriya* and *vaiśya*) of the Brahmanical social order, those who were permitted to wear the sacred thread
- dvitīya* - second lunar day
- ekādaśī* - eleventh lunar day
- Gārhapatya* - fire - the house holder's fire (received from his father and transmitted to his descendants; one of the three sacred fires, being that from which sacrificial fires are lighted)
- Gāyatrīmantra* - a famous hymn of great sanctity in honour of God Savitr in the *Ṛg Veda*
- Goloka* - 'cow world', a part of heaven; in later mythologies, Kṛṣṇa's heaven
- guḍa-dhenu* - sugar-cow presented to *brāhmaṇas*
- haviṣya/haviṣyāna* - sacrificial food consisting of rice or other grain, clarified butter etc.
- homa* - oblation or sacrifice, the act of making an oblation to the Devas or Gods by casting clarified butter into the fire

- indriyas* - senses
- itihāsa* - legends; traditional accounts of former events; heroic history
- iṣṭadevatā* - core deity
- japa* - muttering prayers, repeating in a murmuring tone passages from scripture or charms or names of a deity
- kamaṇḍalu* - a gourd or vessel made of wood or earth used by ascetics and religious students for water
- karmavipāka* - the good or evil consequences in this life of human acts performed in previous births
- krsara* - a dish consisting of sesamum and grain (a mixture of rice and peas with few spices)
- kudava* - a particular weight and measure of capacity
- kunḍa* - a hole in the ground for the sacred fire for oblations
- māṃsa* - meat
- maṇḍapa* - an open hall or temporary building erected on festive occasions; temple; pavilion
- mantra* - a sacred formula addressed to any individual deity
- matsya* - fish
- Māyā* - cosmic illusion
- miśra* - mixed
- mukti* - salvation
- muhūrta* - a moment, any short space of time
- mūrtipālas* - guardian deities
- nakṣatra* - an asterism or constellation through which the moon passes; a lunar mansion
- naivedya* - an offering of eatables presented to a deity or idol

- nāmasaṅkīrtana/nāmagāna/nāmajapa* - the glorification or incessant repetition of the name of a God
- naraka* - hell
- navamī* - ninth lunar day
- nirājana* - waving of lamp or other things before an idol and then falling prostrate
- niyama* - restraining, controlling or restrictions
- pādyā* - water for washing feet
- pañcagavya* - five products of the cow taken collectively, i.e., milk, curd, clarified butter, urine, cowdung
- pañcamākaras* or 5 'M's - Tantric rites of worship. These are - *madya* (alcoholic drink), *māmsa* (meat), *matsya* (fish), *mudrā* (symbolical hand gesture), *maithuna* (sexual intercourse)
- pañcamī* - fifth lunar day
- pañcāmṛta* - five kinds of divine food (viz., milk, coagulated milk or sour milk, butter, honey and sugar)
- pañcodevapāsanā* - worship of five deities together. Here the main deity, say Viṣṇu is worshipped along with four other deities, say Śiva, Śakti, Gaṇeśa, Brahma or Surya
- Pāśupata* - a follower or worshipper of Śiva Paśupati
- pātaka* - an act leading to sin
- pavitraropana* - investiture of the sacred or Brahmanical card especially on the image of a deity
- piṇḍa* - a ball of rice or flour offered to the deceased ancestors
- pitṛs* - ancestors, manes
- pradakṣiṇā* - circumbulation from left to right of a deity as a kind of worship
- prāśana* - feeding upon, eating, tasting; throwing forth or away, casting

- prastha* - a particular weight and measure of capacity
- pratipad* - first lunar day
- prāyaścitta* - expiation, atonement
- pujā* - worship
- pūrñāhuti* - an offering made with full laddle
- pūrnimā* - full moon day
- Puruṣasukta mantra* - a famous hymn in the *Rg veda* describing the supreme soul of the universe and supposed to be comparatively modern
- śālagrāma* - sacred stone (black in colour) worshipped by Vaisnavas and supposed to be pervaded by the presence of Viṣṇu
- Samkalpa* - a solemn vow or determination or declaration to perform any ritual observance
- samskāra* - a sacred or sanctifying ceremony, one which purifies from the taint of sin contracted in the womb and leading to regeneration. According to Manu there are 12 such ceremonies enjoined on the first three or twice born classes
- samnyāsini* - a woman religious mendicant, an ascetic
- sandhyā* - devotions at morning, noon and evening
- Śāntisukta* - name of a hymn
- saptamī* - seventh lunar day
- sarvatobhadra* - a square mystical diagram painted on a cloth, and used on particular occasions to cover a sort of altar erected to Viṣṇu
- ṣaṣṭhi* - sixth lunar day
- śāstra* - any religious or scientific treatise, any sacred book or composition of divine authority
- śāstriya* - sanctioned by the sacred texts
- śatarudra mantra* - a hymn and prayer dedicated to Rudra (Śiva) in his hundred aspects found in the Yajur Veda

- siddhi* - final emancipation or acquisition of supernatural powers by magical means
- Smārta* - an orthodox *brāhmaṇa* versed in or guided by traditional law or usage
- smṛti* - the whole body of sacred tradition or what is remembered by human teachers (in contradiction to Śruti or what is directly heard or revealed to the Rṣis; in its widest acceptance this term includes the 6 Vedāṅgas, the Sūtras, the law books of Manu, the Itihāsas, the Purānas, and the Nitiśāstras
- śrāddha* - a ceremony in honour and for the benefit of dead relatives observed with great strictness at various fixed periods and on occasions of rejoicing as well as mourning by the surviving relatives
- Śrīcakra* - a magical diagram (representing the orbit of the earth), an astrological division of the body (said to represent the uterine or pubic region)
- strikarmani* - rites performed by women
- sutikābhavana* - a temporary building where the mother and the child are kept immediately after childbirth
- suvāsinī* - a married woman whose husband is alive
- tāpasa* - religious austerities
- tarpaṇa* - refreshing of gods or deceased persons by presenting to them libations of water
- tilaka* - a mark on the forehead (made with sandalwood, coloured earth etc.) as a sectarial distinction
- tithi* - a lunar day
- tirthayātrā* - pilgrimage
- toraṇa* - arched doorway, portal, festooned decorations over doorways
- trayodaśī* - thirteenth lunar day
- tritīya* - third lunar day

- udyāpana - the act of bringing to a conclusion
- upācāra - proceeding, procedure
- upāsana - prayer, meditation
- upavāsa - a fast; fasting (as a religious act comprising abstinence from all sensual gratification)
- Vājapeya - one of the seven forms of the Soma sacrifice (offered by kings or brāhmanas aspiring to the highest position)
- Varnāśramadharmā - the duties of a caste or order
- vāyana - sweetmeats or cakes which are offered to a deity and eaten during a religious festival
- Vedāṅgas - certain works or classes of works regarded as auxiliary to and even in some sense as part of the Veda
- vijamantra - seed mantra
- virya - energy
- Viṣṇuloka - realm of Viṣṇu
- vrata - a vowed observance
- vratakathā - mythical stories, legends, anecdotes recited during a vrata to justify the efficacy of that vrata
- vratee - person undertaking a vrata (vow)
- vr̥ṣotsarga - setting a bull free on the occasion of a funeral rite or as a religious act generally
- yantra - a mystical diagram
- Yakṣaloka - the world of Yakṣas
- yoni - female organ
- Yugadharmā - codes of conduct pertaining to one particular period, age

CHAPTER I

UNDERSTANDING THE VRATAS

Rituals, myths, superstitions, all characterize the history and culture of a society and reflect its changing patterns. To accommodate the needs of an everchanging society and to retain their own relevance over a period of time, customs and rituals become transformed and often completely metamorphosed. A vrata which is a vowed observance is one such ritual. Although the word 'vrata', accompanied by certain restrictions on food and behaviour, is present in Vedic and post-Vedic literature, the vrata-ritual was never a Vedic-Brahmanical custom like the sacrifice was. Originating in non-Brahmanical folk tradition vratas were assimilated into the pale of Brahmanical culture when the situation so demanded. This resulted in substantial changes in the nature of vratas. Developments in the subsequent period accentuated the process, so much so that the vratas which find mention in the Brahmanical texts, mainly the Purānas, bear little or no resemblance to vratas which are a part of folk-tradition today.¹ In this study I would mainly concentrate on Purānic

1. S.R. Das, 'A Study of the Vrata-Rites of Bengal' in *Man in India*, Vol.32, 1952, p.215.

vratas because this is one area which has remained unresearched.

I

VRATA: MEANING AND PURPOSE

In popular perception, a *vrata* is any religious act of devotion which requires the observance of certain rites, or austerities for the fulfilment of specific desires.² But although *vrata* as a religious ritual and social custom was not integrally related to Vedic-Brahmanical religion, the word itself is Vedic in origin.³ It is mentioned in several passages in the *Rgveda* in connection with almost all the prominent gods⁴ and can be interpreted as a command or law, obedience or duty, religious or moral practices, religious worship or observance, sacred or solemn vow or undertaking and vow or pattern of conduct.⁵ It should not be supposed that these several meanings followed one another in a time-sequence. Rather it is quite possible that two or more meanings were in vogue simultaneously. By the time the

2. Das, *Op.cit.*, p.212.

3. P.V. Kane, *History of Dharmasāstra*, Vol.V, Part I (Poona: 1962), pp.1-19.

4. K.D. Nambiar, *Narada-Purāna - A Study* (Varanasi: 1979), p.232.

5. Kane, *Op.cit.*, p.5.

Brāhmaṇas were composed, the word *vrata* came to possess two secondary meanings described from the sense of 'religious observance or obligation' i.e., 'a proper course or pattern of conduct for a person' and 'an *upavāsa*' i.e. the sacrificer's staying at night near the *Gārhapatya* fire or fasting.⁶ In Sūtra literature - *Śrauta Sūtras*, *Gr̥hya Sūtras* and *Dharma Sūtras* - these above two meanings of the *vrata* are found.⁷ Patañjali, on the other hand, defines *vrata* as *niyama* or *vinaya* i.e. rules of conduct which presumably involve the selection or choice between what is good and what is bad. While explaining and giving examples of *vratas*, he refers to the items that are admissible as food for the *brāhmaṇas* and other *dvija* castes.⁸ The *Smṛtis* however define the word in a different way. Since *prayaścittas* (expiations) involved the observance of several strict rules, these came to be regarded as *vratas* in *Manu*, *Yājñavalkya*, *Samkhya* and other *Smṛtis*.⁹ In the *Mahābhārata* again, any religious undertaking or vow with certain restrictions on food or behaviour is considered to be a *vrata*. It is also applied in this epic to any course or pattern of conduct or behaviour that is not necessarily

6. Kane, *Op.cit.*, p.25.

7. *Ibid.*, p.26.

8. Das, *Op.cit.*, p.212.

9. Kane, *Op.cit.*, p.27.

religious.¹⁰ Thus, from the beginning of the Christian era, *vrata* definitely came to mean "a religious undertaking or vow, observed on a certain *tithi*, week days, month or other period for securing some desired object by worshipping a deity and was usually accompanied by restrictions on food and behaviour".¹¹

A detailed description of *vratas*, is found in the Puranas especially in the *Matsya*, *Agni*, *Garuḍa*, *Nārada*, *Skanda* and *Bhavisya Purāṇas*. In the *Agni Purāṇa* for instance, a *vrata* is defined as *tāpas* because it causes hardship to the performer and it is called *niyama* since one has to restrain, regulate or control the *indriyas* (senses). Thus the Purāṇas understand *vrata* in the sense of *niyama* for the purpose of *tāpas*. This necessitates the observance of several injunctions like fasting, sleeping on the bare ground, bathing, abstaining from sexual intercourse etc. If however, the *vratee*, whether a man or woman, fails to observe all the injunctions owing to physical or other inabilities, there is provision for performing the same through a substitute. A woman however can perform a *vrata* only after obtaining permission from her guardian (father, husband or son). The Purāṇas also dilate upon the merits

10. Kane, *Op.cit.*, p.27.

11. Kane, *Op.cit.*, p.28.

that are derived from the observance of *vratas*. Such merits are two-fold: *bhukti* or fulfilment of worldly desires and *mukti* or salvation, in other words, freedom from bondage.¹²

Detailed discussions on *vratas* are also found in several socio-religious and socio-legal texts composed during the medieval period. Among such texts, particular mention should be made of the *Dayābhāga* and *Kālaviveka* of Jimutavāhana, the *Karmānuṣṭhānapaddhati* and *Prāyaścitta-prakāraṇa* of Bhatta Bhavadeva (11th to 12th centuries), the *Vratakhanda* and *Caturvargacintāmaṇi* of Hemādri (13th century) etc. In principle and detail, these texts mainly adhere to the stand taken up by the Purāṇas from which they derive the bulk of their material.¹³

II

ANTIQUITY OF VRATAS: A HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Although *vratas* as religious rituals and social customs never acquired any recognition within Brahmanical religion prior to the writing of the Purāṇas, occasional references to popular magico-religious rites in certain Brahmanical

12. Kane, *Op.cit.*, p.28.

13. Das, *Op.cit.*, pp.212-214.

texts bear testimony to the continuous existence of rituals like *vratas* either alongside the Brahmanical rites or in opposition to these practices. The *Atharva Veda* which is the best documentary account of non-Brahmanical and Brahmanical acculturation, describes many rites and practices, like *strikarmani* (rites performed by women) which must have been borrowed from non-Brahmanical sources. Again the *Grhya* rituals, described in the *Grhya Sutras* are essentially magical (being capable of achieving objects without the agency of gods) and thus could be non-Brahmanical in origin. In later Brahmanical accounts also, we often find references to observances of folk or popular religious rites and practices which were however always discouraged. Kautilya for instance, describes various magico-religious rituals which were observed by people but had no Brahmanical sanction. Even during the age of Aśoka, references can be found in his inscriptions to popular rites and customs which were observed specifically by women. Similar references are also traceable in the *Jātakas* and early Buddhist literature. It is difficult to say whether Aśoka succeeded in his attempt at discouraging these non-Brahmanical and non-Buddhist practices which must have continued as before.¹⁴

14. Das, *Op.cit.*, pp.219-223.

The opposition however could not have persisted for long. With the increasing popularity of heretical sects like Buddhism and Jainism, and the continuous intrusion of foreigners, the socio-economic position of the *brāhmaṇas* and the supremacy of their religion was already in threat. There was a need to overcome this crisis, resuscitate Brahmanical religion and make it more broadbased and popular. This was effected through the inclusion of women and sudras and the incorporation of such diverse socio-religious practices like *vratas*, *tirthayātrās* etc. *Vratas* however could not have been incorporated directly as these often consisted of practices antagonistic to the vested interests of the *Brāhmaṇas*. The *vratas* were thus restructured and often imparted with a new meaning and purpose. Many new *vratas* were also formulated and these find mention in the Puranas and other Brahmanical texts. This mainly occurred around the 5th-6th century A.D. during the Gupta age which was also the period when the major Purāṇas were compiled.¹⁵

15. See for details, R.C. Hazra, *Studies in the Puranic Records on Hindu Rites and Customs* (Delhi: 1975).

III

HISTORIOGRAPHICAL ISSUES

While Vedic religion and customs have merited attention, Puranic religion and rituals particularly the *vratas* have largely remained outside the purview of academic research. A possible explanation for this is that for a long time the authenticity of the Purāṇas was itself in question and consequently little significance was attached to Puranic rituals. The only works worthy of mention in this context are P.V. Kane's, *History of Dharma Śāstra*¹⁶ and R.C. Hazra's *Studies in the Puranic Records on Hindu Rites and Customs*.¹⁷ We need to consider their arguments.

Kane focuses on the origin and evolution of *vratas* by tracing the references to the same in various Brahmanical texts like the Vedas, Sūtras, Smṛitis etc. Of particular importance is the comprehensive list that he provides of a large number of *vratas*, the various sources of which he also indicates. However, in the absence of any kind of analysis regarding the origin and development of such customs, Kane's work remains only a narrative and descriptive study based merely on textual evidences.

16. Kane, *Op.cit.*

17. Hazra, *Op.cit.*

Kane makes a significant point when he writes that the keynote struck by the *Matsya*, *Brahma* and other Purāṇas was how to secure great rewards with little effort while the methods prescribed in the Vedas were more rigorous. But the immense potentiality of this statement remains unexplored as he does not try to analyse the reasons and the process which brought about this transformation. A similar paucity of analysis characterizes his treatment of certain popular *vratas* like *Rāmanavami vrata*, *Navarātra vrata* etc.

As contrasted to Kane, Harza provides us with a general understanding regarding the birth and evolution of Puranic religion. He adequately analyses the various forces behind this development and shows how non-Brahmanical practices like *vratas* were assimilated into Brahmanical religion to cater to the demands of society. He however emphasises more on the nature of the causal factors behind this development rather than on the impact that such factors had on contemporary society, religion and culture and the changes produced therein.

Vratas have also been regionally studied, and mention may be made of works such as A. Tagore's *Bāṅglār Brata* (in Bengali)¹⁸ and S.R. Das's *A Study of the Vrata-rites of*

18. A. Tagore, 'Bāṅglār Brata', in *Abanindra Rachanābalī* (Calcutta: 1973).

Bengal.¹⁹ In both these writings attempts have been made to distinguish between the Brahmanical and non-Brahmanical elements in some of the popular *vratas* of Bengal. However, both these writings are rather narrow in perspective and the studies are confined only to the *vratas* of one region - Bengal. Moreover, in the absence of any reference to Puranic *vratas* which also reflect certain non-Brahmanical traits, both these studies remain rather myopic and incomplete.

IV

AIM AND PURPOSE OF THE STUDY AND NATURE OF SOURCES USED

It has been stated that Puranic *vratas*, unlike popular non-Brahmanical *vratas* follow a common pattern. There is barely any difference between one *vrata* and another with regard to ritual-procedure, objective etc.²⁰ In my dissertation, I would however like to show that Puranic *vratas*, while operating within a given framework, exhibit significant structural and functional variations. Puranic *vratas* are usually propitiatory in nature, dedicated to one or more deities, and it is possible to relate these

19. Das, *Op.cit.*

20. *Ibid.*, pp.213-215.

variations in ritual-pattern, aim etc. to the respective sectarian affiliations. I will also attempt to highlight changes even within a particular vrata when it is repeatedly mentioned in more than one text. My study will be confined to the vratas dedicated to three main deities - Viṣṇu, Gauri/Durgā and Śiva. The period under focus will be the late ancient - early medieval times, i.e. roughly from the 6th-7th centuries A.D. to the 12th-13th centuries A.D. This broad chronological scheme has been adopted in view of the fact that the Purāṇas are dateable to different time-periods. Also such a study will facilitate a comparative study of vratas.

In view of the paucity of secondary writings, I have to rely almost entirely on primary sources. These will primarily include the different Purāṇas. Due to constraints of time, I will not be able to look into the entire corpus of Puranic literature but will focus on the following: *Matsya Purāṇa*, *Nārada Purāṇa*, *Brahmavaivartta Purāṇa*, *Devibhāgavata Purāṇa* and *Liṅga Purāṇa*. The *Matsya Purāṇa*, dateable approximately between the 6th and 7th centuries A.D.,²¹ is one of the earliest Puranas which mentions a large number of vratas. It is a non-sectarian text and prescribes vratas to propitiate different deities like

21. Hazra, *Op.cit.*, pp.176-177.

Viṣṇu, Śiva, Surya, Gaurī etc. The *Nārada Purāṇa* in contrast is a relatively late composition and can be placed roughly between the 8th and 11th centuries A.D.²² It is a Vaiṣṇava sectarian text but recommends a large number of *vratas* in honour of other deities also. The *Brahmavaivartta Purāṇa* is also a Vaiṣṇava sectarian composition. It is dateable to an even later period, approximately between the 10th and 16th centuries A.D.²³ However, it seems that the *Brahmavaivartta Purāṇa* was originally the work of a Brahma cult and according to A.J. Rawal,²⁴ came into existence as early as the 7th or 8th century A.D. It was only after the 10th century A.D. when the Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā worship gained popularity that it underwent changes and was revised and enlarged. This process took place between the 14th and 16th centuries A.D.²⁵ The *Devībhāgavata Purāṇa* again is a Śākta sectarian composition and is dateable roughly to a period between the later half of the 11th or the 12th century A.D.²⁶ Finally the *Liṅga Purāṇa*, as its

22. Hazra, *Op.cit.*, pp.184-185.

23. *Ibid.*, pp.187-188.

24. A.J. Rawal, *Indian Society, Religion and Mythology - A Study of Brahmavaivarta-Purāṇa* (Delhi: 1982), p.5.

25. *Ibid.*

26. U. Dev, *The Concept of Śakti in the Purāṇas* (Delhi: 1987), p.41.

name indicates, is a sectarian Purana dedicated to Siva. It is also a late composition and can be placed in the period between the 8th and 10th centuries A.D. approximately.²⁷

The tables provided with the different chapters are based on these primary sources and deal with the description of *vratas*, the nature of devotees and their promised rewards, the total number of *vratas* dedicated to different deities, a study of ritual procedures in different texts etc. The basic purpose of these tables is to corroborate as well as provide us with a better understanding of the arguments developed within the chapters.

This dissertation consists of four chapters and a conclusion. While this first chapter, introductory in nature, provides a broad understanding of the *vratas*, the second chapter discusses, albeit briefly, the general characteristics of Puranic *vratas* and the similarities and differences with Puranic and Vedic rituals. This is based on an examination of *vratas* mentioned in the *Matsya Purāṇa* and the *Nārada Purāṇa*. I have also distinguished the Vaiṣṇava, Śākta and Śaiva *vratas* prescribed in the *Nārada Purāṇa*. The third chapter focuses on the same though in

27. See Hazra, *Op. cit.*, pp.179-180 and N. Gangadharan, *Liṅga Purāṇa - A Study* (Delhi: 1980), pp.134-145.

greater detail, in the context of the three texts - the *Brahmavaivartta Purāṇa*, the *Devibhāgavata Purāṇa* and the *Līṅga Purāṇa*. The fourth chapter studies certain specific *vratas*, those which are recommended more than once in the five texts analysed. The conclusion ties up my arguments.

CHAPTER II

GENERAL PATTERN OF VRATAS: A STUDY OF THE MATSYA PURĀNA AND THE NĀRADA PURĀNA

Though the Purāṇas began to incorporate Smṛti-matter as early as 200 A.D., subjects like *vrata*, *tirthayātrās* etc. do not find any mention in most of the early Purāṇas. In fact, till the 5th century A.D., the Purāṇas as R.C. Hazra¹ points out, discussed only those Hindu rites and customs which were prescribed in the early *Smṛti Saṃhitas* like those of Manu and Yājñavalka.² It was only from the 6th century onwards that subjects like gifts, initiation, consecration of images, *vratas*, *tirthayātrās*, *pūjā* etc. began to be incorporated into these texts. This explains why such early texts like the *Viṣṇu*, *Mārkaṇḍeya*, *Vāyu*, *Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇas* are completely silent on these practices. Here I would like to analyse two post-5th century Purāṇas - the *Matsya Purāṇa* and the *Nārada Purāṇa*. While the *Matsya Purāṇa*, dateable roughly between the 5th and 7th centuries A.D.³ is perhaps

1. Hazra, *Op.cit.*, pp.188-189.

2. These topics are: *Varnāśramadharmā*, *Ācāra*, *Āhnikā*, *Bhakṣyābhakṣya*, *Vivāha*, *Aśauca*, *Śrāddha*, *Dravya-Śuddhi*, *Pātaka*, *Prāyaścitta*, *Naraka*, *Karmavipāka*, *Yuga-dharma*. See: Hazra, *Op.cit.*, p. 188.

3. Hazra, *Op.cit.*, pp.176-177.

one of the earliest Purāṇas which prescribes a large number of vratas, the Nārada Purāṇa is dateable to a later period between the 9th and 11th centuries A.D.⁴ and includes a substantially larger number of vratas. The Nārada Purāṇa in contrast to the Matsya Purāṇa reveals a distinct sectarian (Vaiṣṇava)⁵ influence although at the same time it also mentions vratas in honour of deities other than Viṣṇu (eg., Śiva, Durgā, Gaurī etc.).

In this Chapter, I would like to examine the extent to which Puranic vratas were a continuation, negation and restructuration of Vedic rituals and analyse these trends with regard to certain contemporary socio-economic and religious developments. Further, I would like to show through a comparative study of these two texts how sectarianism made its initial appearance in the Nārada Purāṇa, thus imparting a distinctiveness to the vratas.

I

VEDIC AND PURANIC RITUALS: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

As pointed out by S.R. Das, Puranic or śāstriya vratas⁶ (vows which are sanctioned by the śāstras) unlike the

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4. Hazra, *Op.cit.*, pp.184-185.
 5. Nambiar, *Op.cit.*, p.130.
 6. Das, *Op.cit.*, p.214.

*aśāstriya vratas*⁷ (vows which have neither been sanctioned nor mentioned by the sastras) operate within a general framework. Our perusal of the *Matsya Purāna* and the *Nārada Purāna* reveal that the *vratas* in these texts, whether *Vaiṣṇava*, *Śaiva*, or *Śākta*, include the following characteristics - selection of a proper *tithi*, fasting, bathing, sleeping on the bare floor, keeping awake at night, bathing the deity, worshipping with different *upācāras*,⁸ offering *aṅgapūjā*,⁹ honouring the preceptor and other Brahmanas with eatables and often wine, elaborate gifts and *dakṣiṇā*, offering oblation to the fire, chanting Vedic *mantra*, listening to the *Purānas*, practising abstinence, and finally breaking the fast by eating (*pārana*).

 7. Das, *Op.cit.*, p.215.

8. The *Nārada Purāna* constantly refers to 16 *upacaras*. These are: *āvāhana* (invitation), *āsana* (offering a seat), *pādya* (water for washing feet), *arghya* (respectful offering of water with or without rice grains, *durva* grass, flowers), *ācamaniya* (offering spoonfuls of water for sipping), *snāna* (bath), *vastra* (cloth), *yajñopavita* (sacred thread), *gandha* (sandal paste), *puspa* (decoration with flowers), *dhupa* (incense), *dīpa* (waving of light), *naivedya* (offering of eatables), *tāmbula* (betel-leaves), *dakṣiṇā* (religious fee), *pradakṣiṇa* (clockwise circumbulation). See: J.L. Sastri (ed.), *Nārada Purāna* (Delhi: 1981), Vol. IV (trans.), p.1495.

9. *Aṅgapūjā* literally means bodyworship. It consists of worshipping the different parts of the body of the deity with different *mantras*. See J.D. Akhtar (ed.), *Matsya Purāna* (Delhi: 1972), p.22.

In many senses, a majority of these rituals, as a careful study would show, had their parallels in Vedic rituals.¹⁰ In a steady interaction of ideas, Vedic formulaic images, cultural forms and values silently and unobstrusively penetrated into and influenced Puranic *vratas*. Perhaps the greatest similarity is found in the performance of the *homa* (oblation to fire) which resembled to a large extent Vedic sacrifices. For instance, the *Bhimadvādaśī vrata*¹¹ in the *Matsya Purāṇa* required, amongst other things, the performance of a *homa*, for which a *maṇḍapa* (pandal) furnished with a *torana* (portal) and *kuṇḍa* (sacrificial pond) was to be erected, all according to specified measurements. The *homa* was to be performed with *caru* (sacred to Viṣṇu) and clarified butter, and Vedic *mantras* were continuously chanted. This *homa*, it should be noted, could be conducted only through *brāhmanas*, twelve in number, four of whom were *R̥g-Vedins*, another four *Yajur-Vedins* and the remaining four *Sāma-Vedins*. The *vrata* was then brought to a conclusion by propitiating the *brāhmanas* with lavish gifts.

10. A.B. Keith, *The Religion and Philosophy of the Vedas and Upanishads* (Cambridge: 1925).

11. *Matsya Purāṇa*, Chap.69, Verse 40-46 (transl.), pp.207-208.

Similarities with Vedic rituals are noticeable in other instances too. The *Kṛṣṇastamī vrata*¹² for instance reflected the belief in the sanctifying effects of *pañcagavya*; the *Pūrṇimā vrata* and *Dhvajāropana vrata*, both in honour of Viṣṇu, required the recitation of the *Puruṣa sukta*¹³ and *Śāntisukta mantras*;¹⁴ the *Gaurī vrata*¹⁵ (in honour of Goddess Gaurī) was completed only after the devotee donated twelve cows to *brāhmaṇas*. Even many of the rites and customs constituting the sixteen *upācarās* (used in worshipping deities as mentioned before) were prevalent in Vedic times for receiving guests and *pitrs* at the time of the *śrāddha*.¹⁶ The examples cited above represent varying degrees of incorporation into a Brahmanical or Vedic conceptual order.

In spite of these similarities, Puranic rituals in general and *vratas* in particular cannot be characterized as a mere repetition of Vedic rituals and in fact in many ways marked a sharp break. In a process of constant interaction between the two, there occurred a cultural synthesis, a

 12. *Matsya Purāṇa*, Chap. 56, Verse 1-6 (trans.), p.173.

13. *Nārada Purāṇa*, Chap.18, Verse 9-11 (trans.), p.297.

14. *Ibid.*, Chap.19, Verse 14-16 (trans.), p.301.

15. *Ibid.*, Chap. 112, Verse 7 (trans.), p.1432.

16. *Ibid.*, p.1495.

synthesis that had within it elements of both acceptance and rejection, and a restructuration. In spite of the sharing of Vedic symbols, performances and rites, a distinctive identity of the *vratas* was maintained through a redefinition and restructuration of the practices. The following examples elaborate my argument.

The *homa* (an integral part of most *vratas*), for instance was a Puranic sacrifice and was quite different from the Vedic *yajña*. It was more a 'material sacrifice' (*dravya yajña*)¹⁷ and could be characterized only as a method of worship. This was mainly because the *Purāṇas* while retaining the procedural importance of the original Vedic sacrifice, did away with its oblations and sacerdotalism to a large extent. The deities here were also different and the aim of the *vratee* was to secure salvation and a permanent place in the abode of the deity rather than mere mundane wealth. This becomes evident if one looks at the Tables (I-VI) provided herewith. Since it was the aim of the learned followers of the Vedic system to resurrect and popularize Brahmanical religion, they, as writes P.V. Kane, "hit upon the glorification of *vratas* and promised heaven and otherworldly and spiritual rewards to those who

17. P.G. Lalye, *Studies in Devibhāgavata* (Bombay: 1973), p.198.

performed *vratas* that were comparatively easy and within the reach of all".¹⁸

Mention has been made further to the use of Vedic *mantras* during the observance of a *vrata*. However, in most cases, these *mantras* like *Puruṣa Sukta*, *Śānti-Sukta* etc. had either a superficial or no relation with the *vratas*. In the opinion of S. Jaiswal¹⁹, the only reason behind their selection was that these hymns contain words having some affinity with the act though the meaning conveyed by the entire hymn may be absolutely irrelevant and inappropriate. For instance it is difficult to understand the reason behind the use of the *Puruṣa Sukta* hymn in the *Dhvajāropana vrata* which mainly consists of the installation of a banner or flag on a Viṣṇu temple.²⁰

Again *dāna* and *dakṣiṇā* (propitiation of the *brahmanas* with various gifts and money as sacrificial fee constitute an integral part of *vratas* as our reading of the texts would show. In fact the *Matsya Purāna* repeatedly warns the *vratee* that he "... should not give way to niggardliness or

18. Kane, *Op.cit.*, p. 43

19. S. Jaiswal, *The Origin and Development of Vaiṣṇavism* (Delhi: 1981), p.135.

20. *Nārada Purāna*, Chap.19, Verse 14-18 (transl.), p.301.

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doubt"²¹ while offering gifts because "... a man or a woman who exercises miserliness goes to the lower region".²² Gifts to *brāhmaṇas* have been highly expounded in Vedic literature. The Vedas, *Brāhmaṇas*, and *Dharmasūtras* testify to the huge gifts made to the *brāhmaṇas* occasionally and refer to the priests trying to extract the highest amount as priestly fee from the clients by proclaiming that the act of *dana* was highly meritorious. However, in most cases, such gifts comprised simple items like cows, grain, horses, etc. In the *Puranas*, on the other hand, the gifts are multiplied in number and variety. Among the chief items enumerated as gifts in the *Matsya Purāṇa* and *Nārada Purāṇa* are objects of daily use - garments, shoes, umbrellas, beds, bedsheets, pillows, utensils, various eatables etc.²³ A further streak of materialism is displayed in the *Matsya Purāṇa* which constantly recommends expensive donations like golden images of deities, precious stones, houses etc. to the *brāhmaṇas* at the conclusion of every *vrata*.²⁴ The reason behind such propaganda is understandable if one keeps in mind the social degradation and economic depression to which the *brāhmaṇas*

 21. *Matsya Purāṇa*, Chap.60, Verse 43 (trans.), p.185.

22. *Ibid.*, Chap.62, Verse 34 (trans.), p.192.

23. See Tables I-VI.

24. See *Matsya Purāṇa* and *Nārada Purāṇa*, Chapters on *Vratas*.

were subjected during this period. As pointed out by R.C. Hazra, if we study the Purānas carefully, we can discover "... a distinct personal interest behind the attempt, and the Puranic *dharma* appears to be due to a struggle of these *brāhmaṇas* no less for their own economic and social recovery than for saving Brahmanical culture in general."²⁵

Another striking feature of Puranic *vratas* is the prominent role assigned to the *vratees* or the performers. Most Puranic *vratas*, as a look into the Tables I-VI would indicate, could be conducted by the *vratee* himself without the mediation of a priest. The *brāhmaṇa* or the priest in most cases was a passive spectator; his only role was to grant permission to the *vratee* and to receive gifts and *dakṣiṇā* in return. Priestly mediation became necessary only on certain occasions when a *homa* or a sacrifice had to be conducted by a *brāhmaṇa*. Otherwise, any person irrespective of whether he was a *brāhmaṇa*, *kshatriya*, *vaiśya* or *śūdra* was eligible to take up a *vrata*. Even women - married, unmarried or widowed and prostitutes - were not disenfranchised from participation and were promised the same merits as their male counterparts. In fact, the *Nārada Purāṇa* prescribes a large number of *vratas* exclusively for

25. Hazra, *Op.cit.*, p.243.

women²⁶ and in the *Matsya Purāṇa* reference can be found to a vrata (e.g. *Anangadāna vrata*) to be observed specifically by public women.²⁷ This is a departure from the position assigned to womenfolk in any Vedic ritual and from the later Vedic age onwards, particularly from the age of Manu.²⁸

Thus, the Puranic vratas inspite of sharing certain similarities with Vedic rituals, were in many ways a discontinuation of the same and reveal significant differences, differences which were brought about by certain socio-economic and religious necessities of the time.

II

VARIATIONS WITHIN PURANIC VRATAS: CERTAIN SECTARIAN TRAITS

Puranic vratas whether Vaiṣṇava, Śākta or Śaiva were affected not only by Vedic rituals but also by certain socio-religious movements which imparted certain characteristics to the vratas. A study of the *Nārada Purāṇa* reveals that even amidst a general infrastructure of vratas,

26. *Nārada Purāṇa*, see Chap. 112 (trans.), pp.1431-1439.

27. *Matsya Purāṇa*, Chap.70, Verse 1, p.209.

28. See A.S. Altekar, *The Position of Women in Hindu Civilization from Pre-historic Times to the Present Date* (Delhi: 1978).

certain variations or specific characteristics may be delineated which are a reflection of the sectarian affiliations of these rituals.

The *Matsya Purāṇa*, which does not reflect any sectarian bias has *Vratas* which are identical irrespective of whether they are in honour of Viṣṇu, Śiva or Gaurī;²⁹ in contrast, in the *Nārada Purāṇa*, a text with a Vaiṣṇava bias, it is possible to identify certain distinctive features in the description of the *vratas*.

In this text, most *vratas* which are in honour of Visnu require the *vratee* to entertain the deity throughout the night with devotional songs and dance accompanied by the playing of musical instruments.³⁰ Significantly, the *vratas* which are dedicated to deities other than Visnu do not recommend any such practice.³¹ It may be noted here that entertaining the deity with singing, dancing etc. are important constituent elements of Vaiṣṇava devotionalism as propounded by the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* and are popular even today. This has been clearly explained by T.J. Hopkins in

29. See Tables I-III.

30. See Table IV.

31. See Tables V-VI.

his essay, *The Social Teaching of Bhāgavata Purāna*'.³² The single most important feature of the *Bhāgavata Purāna*, as he points out, is its emphasis on *bhakti* or devotion directed to Lord Visnu and his various incarnations. Such devotion represents a significant change from the *bhakti* of the *Bhagavata Gīta*. While the *Gīta* emphasizes quiet contemplation, the other centres around *bhakti* which requires a complete transfer of all emotions and desires, ordinarily expended on worldly pleasures, to the Lord. Although the Bhakti movement came into prominence much later (14th-15th centuries), *bhakti* or personal devotion to the deity was growing in popularity from as early as the 8th-9th centuries A.D. in South India. This was primarily owing to the influence of the Ālvars (Tamil Bhakti Saints) whose main activity can be placed in the period between the 8th and 9th centuries.³³ Since this was roughly the period when the *Bhāgavata Purāna* was composed,³⁴ it is quite possible that its Vaiṣṇava sectarian composers were strongly influenced by *bhakti* ideas propounded by the Ālvars. Also temple-worship which was in vogue during that time and was highly

32. See T.J. Hopkins, 'The Social Teaching of the *Bhāgavata Purāna*' in M. Singer (ed.) *Kṛṣṇa: Myths, Rites and Attitudes* (Honolulu: 1966).

33. K.A. Nilakanta Sastri, *A History of South India* (London: 1958), pp.415-416.

34. Singer, *Op.cit.*, p.6.

devotional in nature, could have been a contributing factor. The *Nārada Purāṇa*, composed subsequently, imbibed similar *bhakti* ideals and practices.

The other set of rituals in the *Nārada Purāṇa* which reveal the influence of growing sectarianism within Brahmanical religion may be studied in the context of the *vratas* dedicated to the goddess Gauri or Lalita or Bhavani as she is variously known. For instance the most characteristic feature of these *vratas* is the propitiation of different categories of women - married women whose husbands are alive and unmarried virgins - with gifts and eatables.³⁵ This requirement is conspicuous by its absence in the observance of other *vratas*³⁶ mentioned in the same text. It may be worth mentioning in this context that women, according to the Tantric and Śākta cults, are regarded as pure manifestations of Śakti and honour done to them is believed to bring great merit.³⁷ In fact, the *Tantras*, as C. Chakravarty points out, highly recommend the regular worship of an ordinary woman as the mother-goddess irrespective of any caste distinctions.³⁸ Traditionally,

35. See Table V.

36. See Tables IV and VI.

37. Lalye, *Op.cit.*, p.119.

38. C. Chakravarty, *Tantras-Studies on Their Religion and Literature* (Calcutta: 1972), p.81.

women who are either virgins or married with husbands living have always been regarded as epitomes of auspiciousness. It is noteworthy that women who are widowed are not included in this category. As S. Hanchett writes "... there are two sources for the high social status and magical significance accorded to a married woman - one is within her - her own chastity, i.e. sexual discipline idealized as exclusive devotion to a single husband partner. It is her duty to preserve this discipline and so conduct her as to preserve and enhance her husband's well-being. Secondly it is her privilege and another basis of power that she can create a special relation between herself and the benign goddess with whom she becomes symbolized. This relationship is based on a vow".³⁹ A virgin on the other hand is not any unmarried girl. Rather it is from the maintenance of her 'virginity' that her auspiciousness and power are derived. For the unmarried woman, a virgin status therefore not only becomes socially desirable but also renders her ritually pure in comparison to her elders. Thus on particular occasions or ceremonies, she is worshipped as *Kanyādevi*, the virgin goddess.⁴⁰ The *Nārada Purāna* then was largely influenced by Tantricism and it is possible to establish a connection between the worship of women recommended in the text and similar tantric rituals.

39. S. Hanchett, *Coloured Rice - Symbolic Structures in Hindu Family Festivals* (Delhi: 1988), pp.73-74.

In *Matsya Purāṇa* and *Nārada Purāṇa*, both men and women are eligible to perform *vratas*. However, the *Nārada Purāṇa* prescribes certain *vratas*, especially those dedicated to goddess Gaurī. These are the exclusive preserve of women.⁴¹ Since women were accorded a secondary position in most Brahmanical religious ceremonies from the later Vedic age onwards,⁴² one might even suggest that Gaurī worship was prevalent initially outside the pale of the Vedic-Brahmanical religion, Gaurī being a non-Brahmanical deity in origin. This is further corroborated by the fact that the worship of a goddess occupied a very subordinate position in the Vedic belief structure. Though references to deities like Aditi, Uṣā, Sarasvati, Rudrānī etc. are found in Vedic texts and *Samhitas*, these did not in any way contribute towards the development of Śakti worship during the Vedic and later Vedic age.⁴³

A careful study of the *Nārada Purāṇa* shows that the majority of these *vratas* which are dedicated to either Gaurī, Lalitā, Kātyāyanī or Bhavānī were aimed towards two

40. P. Hershman, 'Virgin and Mother' in I.M. Lewis (ed.) *Symbols and Sentiments* (London: 1977), p.273.

41. See Table III.

42. Altekar, *Op.cit.*, pp.202-206.

43. J.N. Banerjea, *Paurāṇic and Tāntric Religion* (Calcutta: 1966), pp.113-114.

specific desires - a happy marital life and progeny for the married devotee and a handsome spouse for the unmarried.⁴⁴ The *vratas* dedicated to deities other than Gauri however are usually aimed at attaining heaven and identity with the deity himself. Thus it may be possible to conclude that the worship of the goddess, be it Gauri or Lalita was in its origin a non-Brahmanical practice restricted amongst the women folk who performed it for attaining certain specific desires - conjugal bliss, children and a handsome husband.

The *Śaiva vratas* or the *vratas* dedicated to Siva in both the *Matsya* and *Nārada Purānas*, in general, do not reflect any distinctive characteristic traits either in ritual procedure, aim or purpose.⁴⁵ However, mention may be made of the *Umā-Maheśvara vrata* referred to in the *Nārada Purāna* which includes among other rituals, the *Pāśupata*⁴⁶ rite (besmearing one's body with *bhasma*, and lying on it). The *Pāśupata* rite is a sectarian Saivite custom, propounded and practised by the followers of the *Pāśupata* school of Saivism and its inclusion in a *Śaiva vrata* mentioned in the *Nārada Purāna* only reflects the penetration of Saiva sectarian symbols and practices into the text.

44. See Table V.

45. See Tables III and V.

46. See Table VI.

Thus it is evident from the above discussion that Puranic *vratas* have a distinct identity of being at the same time a continuation of Vedic rituals and a negation of the same. This distinctiveness was only accentuated over time by the incorporation of various sectarian symbols and practices resulting in significant variations within the general pattern of *vratas*.

TABLE I: VRATAS IN HONOUR OF VIṢṆU IN THE *NATSYA PURĀṆA*

SERIAL NO.	NAME	DATE	BRIEF DESCRIPTION
1.	<i>Madana dvādaśī vrata</i>	Twelveth lunar day in bright fortnight of Caitra, to be repeated every month for one year	<p>fasting; sleeping on floor; installing earthen/metal jar filled with fruits, sugarcane, white rice and covering it with copper plate containing fruits, gold, raw sugar; placing image of Cupid and Rati made of sugar on it; performing <i>aṅgapujā</i>; offering sandal, incense, prayer along with music or reciting of glories of Cupid and Viṣṇu; giving jar to a <i>brāhmaṇa</i>; honouring <i>brāhmaṇas</i> with food and gifts; breaking fast with food devoid of salt</p> <p><i>udyāpana</i> rite - worshipping golden image of Cupid; performing sacrifice with white sesanum, ghee, pronouncing Cupid's different names; worshipping priest and consort; honouring <i>brāhmaṇas</i> with food and gifts of ghee, cows, beds, clothes, ornaments, sugarcane, image of Cupid (to priest)</p>
2.	<i>Rohinīcandra śayana vrata</i>	Full moon day falling on Monday, or Monday with <i>Rohinī</i> asterism (to be repeated every month for one year beginning with <i>Śrāvaṇa</i>)	<p>Bathing with <i>pañcagavya</i>, mustard; reciting 'Apyasva' (Vedic) mantra 108 times; performing 'aṅgapujā' of Viṣṇu along with fruits and flowers of different kinds; worshipping <i>Rohinī</i> with flower, incense, eatables; worshipping Moon and Viṣṇu with flowers; sleeping on floor at night; offering a vase of water, gold, eatables to a <i>brāhmaṇa</i>; breaking fast with food (ghee, milk, urine of cow) without flesh and salt</p> <p><i>udyāpana</i> rite - giving a golden image of <i>Rohinī</i> and Moon to a <i>brāhmaṇa</i>, together with 8 white pearls, white cloths, milk, utensiles, rice, raw sugar, sugarcane, fruits,</p>

SIGNIFICANCE	NATURE OF DEITY	NATURE OF DEVOTEE	REWARD	PAGE NO.
<p>Diti, mother of demons, begot the Maruts by performing this vrata. Since Madana is the name of Kāma or Cupid and the vratee is asked to worship Viṣṇu in the form of Cupid, it is quite possible to suggest that the vrata was originally dedicated to Cupid but was later transformed into a Vaiṣṇava vrata. The story of Diti perhaps suggests that vrata was originally performed by womenfolk to beget children. In fact, the vratee is asked to perform the vrata for the same purpose though he is also promised other rewards, which probably were later additions when the vrata came under the influence of Vaisnavism</p>	<p>Janārdana/ Viṣṇu in the form of Cupid</p>	<p>Not specified</p>	<p>One attains liberation from evil, begets worthy children, passes away in peace</p>	<p>21-24</p>
<p>Śudras should observe vrata with a different <i>mantra</i> (non-Vedic), e.g., <i>Somaya Varadayatha Viṣṇave cha namo namah</i>. The name <i>Rohinīcandraśayana</i> perhaps indicates that the vrata was initially dedicated to Moon-god i.e. 'Candra' and his consort Rohinī but was later transformed into a Vaiṣṇava vrata</p>	<p>Viṣṇu with Rohinī and Moon</p>	<p>Men and women also śudras</p>	<p>One attains region of Moon and Viṣṇu</p>	<p>173-175</p>

- white cow, covered with gold and silver; worshipping him along with consort; giving bed, mirror etc. in charity
3. **Akṣaya-tri-tīyā vrata** Third lunar day in fortnight of Vaisakha with *Krithika* asterism bathing in water mixed with *aksata* (unhusked rice); offering *aksata* to the deity; offering *aksata* or barley meal to *brāhmaṇas*; eating the same.
4. **Bhimadvādaśī vrata** Twelveth lunar day in bright fortnight in *Māgha* On tenth day anointing body with clarified butter; bathing in water mixed with sesamum, performing *aṅgapujā* of Viṣṇu and Lakṣmī; worshipping Śiva, Gaṇeśa with sandal, incense, flowers, eatables; eating porridge; washing 100 steps; brushing teeth; performing *sandhyā*; sleeping on bare earth; on 11th day hearing recitations from *Itihāsa* (sacred text) at daybreak; bathing; keeping a fast; offering libations to manes; erecting a *pandal* according to measurements; bathing Viṣṇu with milk; erecting a sacrificed pole; getting sacrifice performed by 12 Vedic *brāhmaṇas*; honouring them with food and gift; staying up at night with music and song; breaking fast next day with food, but abstaining from meat and salt.
5. **Anaṅgadāna vrata** Sunday with asterism *Hasta/Pusya/Pūrṇavāsu* bathing in water mixed with herbs; worshipping Viṣṇu with *angapuja*, incense, flowers, sandals, food; honouring *brāhmaṇa* with incense, flowers; satisfying every desire of the *brāhmaṇa*; offering one *prastha* (measure) of uncooked rice to him for 13 months; on completion

This is one of the most significant vratas prevalent even today. Reference to this vrata is found in the Lar Plates of Govindracandra of Kanauj (1146 AD). The vrata is so called because the merit earned by performing it is akṣaya i.e. inexhaustible. The Matsya Purāṇa however differs. According to this text, since Viṣṇu is worshipped with akṣata (unhusked rice) the vrata is called Akṣaya tritīyā

Viṣṇu
(Janārdana)

not
specified

one attains
everlasting
benefit, bliss,
result of
Rājasuya
sacrifice

197-19

Bhima first performed this vrata; one public woman became an apsarā (nymph), a dairymaid Urvasi (celestial nymph), a Vaiśya girl - queen of Indra, a maid - wife of Kṛṣṇa, i.e. Satyabhāmā by observing this vrata.

Viṣṇu

men and
women

The vrata
leads to
fulfilment
of all
wishes

205-20

16,000 wives of Kṛṣṇa asked to observe this vrata to get rid of their sins. Perhaps the vrata is so called because the vrata is asked to donate an image of Cupid (Ananga) and Rati to a brāhmaṇa while performing the vrata

Viṣṇu
alongwith
Cupid and
Rati.

prostitutes

Sins become
dispelled
devotee
attains
region of
Mādhava

209-213

honouring *brāhmaṇa* and his wife with gifts; satisfying a good *brāhmaṇa* for 13 months and anybody thereafter

Aśunyaśayana
vrata Twelveth lunar
day in dark
fortnight
of *Śrāvaṇa*

Offering prayer to Viṣṇu; singing hymns in his honour with music, or ringing the bell; eating at night; avoiding oil, salt, acids; honouring *brahmana* with various gifts, food, image of Viṣṇu and Laxmi next day

Viśokādvādaśī
vrata Twelveth lunar
day of *Āśvina*

Taking light food on 11th day; brushing teeth with face towards north/east; worshipping Viṣṇu and Lakṣmī; fasting; sleeping; on 12th day bathing with *pañcagavya*, water, mixed with medicines; wearing white clothes and garlands; performing *aṅgapujā*; worshipping with sandal, flowers, fruits etc.; erecting an altar square in shape amidst a circle, all according to given measurements; installing image of Lakṣmi made of river sand, in a winnowing basket; worshipping her with fruits, clothes, golden lotus and *mantra*; singing throughout night; sleeping in last quarter; honouring *brāhmaṇa* couple with food and gifts; *udyāpana* rite - giving bed, *guḍa-dhenu* (sugar cow) etc. to *brāhmaṇas*

Viṣṇu vrata Twelveth lunar
day in bright
fortnight of
Kārttika,
Caitra,
Vaiśākha,
Mārgaśirṣa,
Phālguna,
Āṣāḍha

On 10th day, taking light food, taking up resolution; on 11th day reciting *Gāyatri mantra* 108 times, performing *aṅgapujā* with white sandal flowers; keeping a golden fish and golden lotus; placing a water pitcher; keeping a vessel fill of molasses, and sesasum; staying up at night, reciting from *Itihāsa*; on 12th lunar day, giving away water

Since the vrata is observed so that the bed does not become empty, in other words, there is no separation between husband and wife, it has been given this name

Viṣṇu

Women with husband alive, widow, man with wife-alive

It prevents separation between husband and wife, one becomes blessed with sons, cattle wealth etc. attain Viṣṇu region

213-215

Since by observing this vrata, separation from dear ones does not become painful, it is called so (śoka-pain/bereavement)

Viṣṇu and Lakṣmi

not specified

Separation from dear ones ceases to be painful, one attains prosperity, it saves men from evils

227-228

The vrata is so called because it is dedicated to Viṣṇu

Viṣṇu

not specified

One attains liberation from sin; frees ancestors; obtains liberation from grief, diseases, poverty; finally takes birth as a king

267-268

			pitcher, golden lotus etc., to a <i>brāhmaṇa</i> ; giving an image of one incarnation of Viṣṇu every month; giving food and gifts to preceptor and <i>brāhmaṇas</i> A poor man can worship Viṣṇu for two years with flowers only
9.	<i>Vibhuti-dvādaśī vrata</i>	<i>Māgha</i>	Giving mount of salt, bed, image of Viṣṇu, golden Kalpa tree, villages to preceptor; garments, <i>kamaṇḍalu</i> , cows to 12 <i>brāhmaṇas</i>
10.	<i>Lilā vrata</i>	not specified	Giving a bull, blue lotus of gold, vessel of sugar; eating only at night at a secluded place
11.	<i>Pṛiti vrata</i>	Four months beginning with <i>Āshāda</i>	Giving up unguents; giving away rice, clean cooking utensils
12.	<i>Pitṛi vrata</i>	Full moon day, for one year	Taking milk; performing <i>śrāddha</i> ; giving away 5 milch cows, pitchers of water, clothes
13.	<i>Viṣṇu vrata</i>	Four months from <i>Āśāḍha</i>	Bathing early in the morning; feeding <i>brāhmaṇas</i> ; giving cow in <i>Karttika</i>
14.	<i>Kānti vrata</i>	<i>Vaiśākha</i>	Abstaining from flower and salt; giving away a cow
15.	<i>Bhumi vrata</i>	One month	Fasting for a month, giving away a cow to a <i>brāhmaṇa</i>

Anangavati, a courtesan became Priti, wife of Cupid, by observing this vrata. A hunter and wife became king and queen of immense virtue by simply offering lotus flowers and not accepting gifts, food etc.	Viṣṇu	not specified	One attains material wealth, liberation from sins	269-271
-	Viṣṇu	- do -	One attains rank of Viṣṇu	271-272
This vrata is so called because it pleases everybody	- do -	- do -	Vrata pleases all; devotee attains region of Viṣṇu	272
Since this vrata is aimed towards liberation of ancestors it is called Pitri vrata	- do -	- do -	One goes to domain of Viṣṇu, saves ancestors, becomes king of kings	273
-	- do -	- do -	One attains Viṣṇu's realm	274
This vrata is so called because it is the giver of lustre and fame	- do -	- do -	One attains Viṣṇu's world, takes rebirth as a king	275
-	- do -	- do -	One attains Viṣṇu's realm	275

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|-----|--------------------|--|---|
| 16. | <i>Kṛṣṇa vrata</i> | Eleventh lunar day of each month | Taking meal only at night; giving a quiet of gold to a Vaiṣṇava |
| 17. | <i>Phala vrata</i> | <i>Caturmāsa</i> (Eleventh lunar day in bright fortnight of <i>Āṣāḍha</i> to 11th day in bright fortnight of <i>Kārttika</i>) | Abstaining from larger fruits, giving same fruits and a pair of cows to a <i>brāhmaṇa</i> |
| 18. | <i>Viṣṇu vrata</i> | Twelveth lunar day of every month | Fasting, giving cows, clothes to <i>brāhmaṇas</i> |
-

-	-	- do -	One resides in realm of Viṣṇu; is reborn as a a king	276
Since the <i>vrata</i> requires abstention from certain fruits and donation of the same to a <i>brāhmaṇa</i> , it is called <i>Phala vrata</i>	-	-	One attains Viṣṇu's world	276
-	-	- do -		276

TABLE II: VRATAS IN HONOUR OF GAURI/DURGA/BHAVANI IN MATSYA PURANA

SERIAL NO.	NAME	DATE	BRIEF DESCRIPTION
1.	<i>Saubhāgya Śayana vrata</i>	Third lunar day in bright fortnight of Caitra	Bathing with <i>sesamum</i> ; bathing image of Gaurī with <i>pañcagavya</i> ; offering <i>aṅgapūjā</i> to Gaurī and worshipping with flower, incense, fruits, lamps, food, <i>saubhāgya-aṣṭaka</i> ; washing horns of a cow; drinking the same water, sleeping on floor; next morning bathing; turning rosary; offering gifts, golden feet and <i>saubhāgya aṣṭaka</i> to a <i>brāhmaṇa</i> and consort; invoking blessing of the goddess; vrata to be continued for one year; different articles of diet, <i>mantra</i> (hymns), items being prescribed for each month; performing <i>udyāpana</i> rite
2.	<i>Ananta Tritiyā vrata</i>	Third lunar day in bright and dark fortnights	Putting <i>tilaka</i> mark on forehead of cowdung, cow's urine etc; bathing; rubbing white mustard on body; wearing coloured garments (men - yellow garments, married women - red, widow - ochre, maidens - white); bathing goddess with <i>pañcagavya</i> , honey etc; offering white flowers, white rice, <i>sesamum</i> , <i>coriander</i> etc. and libation to deity, offering <i>aṅgapūjā</i> , worshipping with <i>mantra</i> , drawing 12-petalled lotus and fixing different goddesses in different petals; entertaining the deity with songs, conches; worshipping with red sandal, cloth, flowers; bathing them and putting red <i>sindura</i> on them; adorning teacher; goddess worshipped with different flowers for different months; taking different items in different months; offering the goddess different items and involving different names; adorning

SIGNIFICANCE	NATURE OF DEITY	NATURE OF DEVOTEE	REWARD	PAGE NO.
<p>Vrata observed by Cupid, Sahasra-Bāhu (son of Kārtavirya), Varuṇa and Nandi</p> <p>The vrata is so called because it is the giver of all kinds of happiness or <i>saubhāgya</i>. Although it is mentioned that the vrata was performed by Cupid, Varuṇa etc. it is recommended mainly for women - married and unmarried</p>	Lalitā/ Gaurī/ Pārvati	Married women, maid, men	One attains good fortunes, health, beauty, emancipation, all desires, region of Śiva	182-185
<p>Since the vrata brings endless merit it is called 'ananta tritīyā' vrata</p>	Gaurī	Men and women, the poor can observe the vrata using only flowers	One remains in Śivāloka for many years	190-193

2/6/8/10/24 *brāhmaṇas* and wives every month; giving *dakṣiṇā* to preceptor and *brāhmaṇas*
Women in family way, maids, or those in confinement due to delivery, menstruation or ill-health, should not keep full fast; should get it observed by others and should observe continence

3. *Rasakalyānini* Third lunar
tritiyā vrata day in bright
fortnight of
Māgha

Bathing in cow's milk, and sesamum; bathing goddess with honey, juice of sugarcane; offering *angapuja* first to right hand side and then left hand side of the goddess; honouring *brāhmaṇa* and wife with food, drink and gifts; avoiding different items of food in different months; giving away a *kamaṇḍalu* full of water and vessel with different items of food in each month; offering *pañcagavya* and *prāsana* to the deity; fasting; *udyāpana* rite - giving away different items to a *brāhmaṇa*

4. *Ārdranandakari* Third lunar day
tritiya vrata in bright
fortnight with
Purvasadha,
Rohini,
Mrigasira,
Hasta or
Mula
asterism

Bathing in water mixed with incense; wearing a garland and white flower, white raiments; performing *aṅgapūjā* with white flowers and incense for Śiva and Pārvati; drawing pictures of lotus with different colours in front of the deities; also conch, quoit, flags, tridents, *chāmara*; giving away 4 *kamaṇḍalus* of water, grain, gold etc. for 4 months on bright and dark fortnight to *brāhmaṇas*; for next 4 months, other items like barley, sesamum and next 4 months, sesamum; offering different items to the deity in different months; giving gifts to *brāhmaṇa* and wife, after one year

Pārvati	Men, married woman, widow, maiden	One attains liberation from sins, good luck, health, attains realm of Pārvati, result of 1000 Agniṣṭoma sacrifice	193-195
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White flowers to be used for Goddess	Pārvati	- do -	One attains unbounded happiness, goes to region of Pārvati along with husband, widow rejoins husband there	195-197
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|----|--------------------|--|---|
| 5. | <i>Gauri vrata</i> | <i>Caitra</i> | Invoking pleasure of goddess with ' <i>Gauri me priyatam</i> '; abstaining from honey, milk, curds, ghee, molass, fine clothes, sugarcane juice; worshipping <i>brāhmaṇa</i> and wife |
| 6. | <i>Rudra vrata</i> | Third lunar day of <i>Kārttika</i> | Taking barley soaked in cow's urine for a year, giving away a cow. |
| 7. | <i>Mahā vrata</i> | Third lunar day of <i>Māgha</i> or <i>Caitra</i> | Giving away a cow, made of molasses |
-

Gauri	Not specified	One attains realm of Pārvati	272
Pārvati	- do -	One attains realm of Pārvati, takes birth as a king, attains everlasting happiness	274
Gaurī	- do -	One attains realm of Gaurī	276

TABLE III: VRATAS IN HONOUR OF ŚIVA IN THE MATSYA PURĀṆA

SERIAL NO.	NAME	DATE	BRIEF DESCRIPTION
1.	<i>Kṛṣṇāṣṭami vrata</i>	Eighth lunar day in dark fortnight of every month	Worshipping <i>brāhmaṇas</i> (especially devotees of Śiva); giving them cow, land, gold, cloth; fasting; worshipping Śiva at night with <i>pañcagavya</i> , urine of cow, ghee, milk, sesamum, barley, kusa grass, <i>bilva</i> and <i>sirisā</i> leaves, curds etc; feeding learned and pious from <i>Margasirsa</i> onwards after an interval of two months, under certain trees - <i>asthatha</i> , <i>vata</i> , etc.; offering <i>arghya</i> water, black cloth and black cow to the deity; finally honouring <i>brāhmaṇas</i> with 5 gems, gold, black cow etc; giving curds, grain etc. in charity; if devotee unable, should give a cow at least
2.	<i>Śivacaturdaśī vrata (Maheśvara vrata)</i>	Fourteenth lunar day in bright fortnight of <i>Mārgaśirṣa</i>	On 13th lunar day, taking food once; praying to Śiva with <i>saṅkalpa mantra</i> ; on 14th lunar day worshipping Śiva and his consort with lotus flowers, sandal etc; <i>aṅgapūjā</i> giving gifts and food to <i>brāhmaṇas</i> ; breaking fast with curd mixed with ghee; sleeping on ground; on full moon day, feeding <i>brāhmaṇa</i> ; eating in silence; repeating <i>vrata</i> on both <i>caturdasis</i> of every month with different <i>mantra</i> , offering flowers; <i>udyāpana</i> rite - in <i>Kārttika</i> feeding <i>brāhmaṇa</i> with eatables; offering garments, ornaments etc.; letting loose a black bull, according to Vedic rites; giving golden image of Siva, Parvati to Vedic <i>brāhmaṇa</i> , and also other things; worshipping a <i>brāhmaṇa</i> couple
	<i>Deva vrata</i>	One year	Eating only at night; giving away a cow, quiet, trident all made of gold, clothes to a <i>brāhmaṇa</i> with a large family

SIGNIFICANCE	NATURE OF DEITY	NATURE OF DEVOTEE	REWARD	PAGE NO.
It is so called because it is to be observed on the <i>astamī tithi</i> of a dark fortnight	Śiva	not specified	One enjoys happiness, attains peace, victory, emancipation, attains region of Śiva	172-173
	Śiva	Men and women	One attains benefit of 1000 <i>Aśwamedha</i> sacrifice, liberation from sins of previous life, long life, health, prosperity, promotion in husbandry becomes chief attendant of Śiva and finally attains union with Him	258-261
	Śiva	not specified	One attains unity with Śiva and lives there	271

4.	<i>Rudra vrata</i>	- do -	Eating only once a day; giving away one bull of gold and a cow of sesamum
5.	<i>Śiva vrata</i>	Four months from <i>Āṣāḍha</i>	Abstaining from trimming nails, hair etc.; avoiding brinjals, giving pitcher of honey, ghee and golden brinjal to a <i>brāhmaṇa</i> in <i>Kārttika</i>
6.	<i>Vira vrata</i>	Ninth lunar day of every month	Honouring a virgin with food and a pair of clothes embroidered with gold and raiments of silk; giving a golden lion to a <i>brāhmaṇa</i>
7.	<i>Silā vrata</i>	One solstice to another	Abstaining from flower, ghee; giving garlands, ghee, cow to a <i>brāhmaṇa</i> , feeding them with ghee, rice cooked in milk and sugar
8.	<i>Dipti vrata</i>	One year	Providing light to the needy in the evening for a year; abstaining from oil, giving lamp, quilt, clothes, golden trident to a <i>brāhmaṇa</i>
9.	<i>Dharā vrata</i>	not specified	Living only on milk; giving away an image of earth made of gold
10.	<i>Prāpti vrata</i>	One year	Living on one meal a day; giving a pitcher of water, eatables etc.
11.	<i>Vaiḥāyaka vrata</i>	Fourth lunar day of each month for one year	Taking meal only at night; giving away a golden elephant
12.	<i>Varsa vrata</i>	<i>Kārttika</i> , for one year	Performing <i>Vrisotsarga</i> (setting a bull free); taking one meal a day and at night.

	- do -	- do -	Destroys ill, attains region of Śiva, attains rank of Śiva	271
	Rudra	- do -	Attains realm of Rudra	272
Perhaps the vrata is so called because by observing it the devotee becomes a 'Vira' one who is not defeated by his enemies.	Śiva	Women and men	Attains handsome form, not defeated by enemies, women get prosperity	273
	Śiva	not specified	Attains region of Śiva	274
Since the vratee has to provide light to the needy, it is called <i>Dipti vrata</i>	Śiva	- do -	Takes birth as man of greatness and power, attains domain of Śiva	274
Since the vrata requires the donation of an image of earth (<i>dharā</i>) it is called <i>Dharā vrata</i>	Śiva	- do -	One resides in realm of Śiva	275
-	- do -	- do -	- do -	275
-	- do -	- do -	- do -	276
-	- do -	- do -	- do -	276
-	- do -	- do -	- do -	276

13.	<i>Prajāpatya vrata</i>	After <i>Candrāyana</i>	Giving away a cow; feeding a <i>brahmana</i>
14.	<i>Trayambaka vrata</i>	Fourteenth lunar day of each month for a year	Living only on nightly meal; giving away cows
15.	<i>Kalyāṇa vrata</i>	Third lunar day of each month	Taking uncooked eatables; giving away a cow
16.	<i>Bhavānī vrata</i>	- do - for one year	Making a canopy in the temple of Siva; giving away a cow
17.	<i>Soma vrata</i>	Second lunar day in bright fortnight	Giving away a vessel of salt in the name of the moon, giving a cow to a <i>brahmana</i> at the year end
18.	<i>Śiva vrata</i>	First lunar day of each month for a year	Taking only one meal; giving away a tawny cow at the end of the year

- do -	- do -	One attains liberation from cycle of birth, goes to realm of Śiva	177
- do -	- do -	One goes to the realm of Śiva	277
- do -	- do -	- do -	278
- do -	- do -	One becomes king of kings	278
- do -	- do -	One goes to the realm of Agni	278

TABLE IV: VRATAS IN HONOUR OF VIṢṢU IN THE NĀRADA PURĀNA

SERIAL NO.	NAME	DATE	BRIEF DESCRIPTION
1(a)	<i>Dvādaśī vrata</i>	Twelveth lunar day in bright fortnight of <i>Nārgaśirṣa</i>	Bathing; fasting; wearing white clothes; worshipping Keśava with flowers, incense, rice, lamps, food offerings, praying (Obeisance to you, O Keśava); offering oblation of ghee and sesamum 108 times; keeping awake at night near Śālagrāma stone; next day-bathing Nārāyaṇa with milk; worshipping Keśava and Lakṣmi thrice in the accompaniment of sages, musical instruments, food offerings; offering milk-pudding with clarified butter, coconut to a <i>brāhmaṇa</i> , also <i>dakṣiṇā</i> ; feeding <i>brāhmaṇas</i> ; eating alongwith kinsmen.
(b)	- do -	Same <i>tithi</i> in <i>Pauṣa</i>	- do - Also entertaining the lord with song, dance, musical instruments and hymns, offering <i>Kṛsara</i> (a sesamum preparation) and cooked rice to <i>brāhmaṇas</i>
(c)	- do -	Same <i>tithi</i> in <i>Māgha</i>	- do - Offering a <i>prastha</i> measure of sesamum seeds and cloth to a <i>brāhmaṇa</i>
(d)	- do -	Same <i>tithi</i> in <i>Phālguna</i>	- do - Offering an <i>adhaka</i> measure of cereals to a <i>brahmana</i> .
(e)	- do -	Same <i>tithi</i> in <i>Caitra</i>	- do - Offering an <i>adhaka</i> measure of rice grains mixed with honey, ghee and sesamum to a <i>brāhmaṇa</i> .
(f)	- do -	Same <i>tithi</i> in <i>Vaiśākha</i>	- do - bathing the deity with a <i>droṇa</i> measure of milk

SIGNIFICANCE	NATURE OF DEITY	NATURE OF DEVOTEE	REWARD	PAGE NO.
<p>This Purāṇa records vratas in honour of the twelve forms of Viṣṇu corresponding to the twelve months. According to Varāha Mihira these twelve forms are the presiding deities of the twelve months beginning with Mārgaśīrṣa. In the Pañcarātra texts these are described as the twelve Mūrtipālas (guardian deities) and connected with the Ritucakra (a diagram indicating the presiding deities of different months), they play a very important role in the diagrams and magical circles (yantras) of the Pañcarātrins. In the opinion of S. Jaiswal these twelve forces of the deity were visualized on the analogy of the twelve Ādityas whose worship was originally connected with the monthly cycle of the year. Sun-worship, in India, although traceable to Ṛg Vedic times seems to have received great impetus during the Śaka-Kuśāna rule and it is held that the worship of the Sun in images was a Magian innovation. The Magis seems to have come to India during the reign of the Scythians or perhaps a little earlier and the patronage of foreign rulers contributed a good deal to the popularization of their cult. It may be suggested that it was the popularity of the Sun-cult during this period that induced the Vaisnavite and also Saivite priests to make similar groupings of the forms of their gods and connect these with the yearly solar calendar (See for details, Jaiswal, Op.cit., pp.81-82)</p>	Keśava	Not specified	One attains eight times the benefit of Puṇḍarika sacrifice.	284-285
	Nārāyaṇa	- do -	One attains the benefit of 8 Agniṣṭoma sacrifices.	285-296
	Mādhava	- do -	One attains the benefit of 100 Vājapeya sacrifice	286
	Govinda	- do -	One attains the full merit of Gomedhamākha sacrifice	286-287
	Janārdana	- do -	One attains the benefit of 8 Atyagnistoma sacrifice	287
Madhusūdana	- do -	One attains the benefit of 8 horse sacrifices	287	

- (g) - do - Same *tithi* in *Jyestha* - do - offering oblation of milk-pudding, offering 20 sweet fried cakes to *brāhmaṇas*
- (h) - do - Same *tithi* in *Āṣāḍha* - do - offering ghee and *Durva* grass in oblation, offering cooked rice and curd to *brāhmaṇas*
- (i) - do - Same *tithi* in *Śrāvana* - do - offering oblation with *pr̥ḡadajya* (ghee mixed with coagulated milk) offering an *adhaka* of milk, cloth and two golden earrings to a *brāhmaṇas*
- (j) - do - Same *tithi* in *Bhādrapada* - do - performing homa with *Caru* (a preparation of boiled rice, barley and pulse) mixed with honey, offering one and a half *adhakas* of wheat, gold to a *brāhmaṇa*
- (k) - do - Same *tithi* in *Āśvina* - do - offering a *Kudava* (measure of honey) to a *brāhmaṇa*
- (l) - do - Same *tithi* in *Kārttika* - do - offering cooked rice with 5 *bhaksyas* (side dishes of edible things) **

** *Udyapana* rite - erecting a pandal, decorated with *Sarvatobhadra* (an auspicious design or *maṇḍala* in 5 colours), 12 waterjars filled with 5 gems, image of *Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa*, in gold/silver; bathing deity; listening to *Purāṇas*; worshipping deity thrice a day; offering thousand oblation; worshipping deity with scents, flowers; give cooked rice mixed with curd milk pudding, clarified butter, 12 *brāhmaṇas*; offering gifts; offering image and *dakṣiṇā* to preceptor; breaking fast with kinsmen.

2. *Pūrṇimā vrata* or *Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa vrata* Full moonday in *Mārgaśirṣa* Performing ablution; wearing white garments; performing *ācamana*; offering usual daily worship to gods; worshipping the deity by offering him a seat, scents, flowers, etc. propitiating him with songs, musical instruments, dances, hymns; reading *Purāṇas*; offering homa thrice with ghee, *caru* and sesamum seeds, alongwith recitation of *Purusa Sukta* and other hymns; according to *Griha Sūtras*,

Trivikrama	- do -	One attains the benefit of 8 <i>Naramedha</i> sacrifices	287-288
Vāmana	- do -	One attains the benefit of 100 <i>Agniṣṭoma</i> sacrifices	288
Rāma	- do -	One attains the benefit of 1000 horse sacrifice	288-289
Hṛṣikeśa	- do -	One attains the benefit of <i>Brahmamedha</i> sacrifices	289
Padmanābha	- do -	One attains the benefit of 1000 <i>Brahmamedhas</i> sacrifices	289
Dāmodara	- do -	One attains twice the benefit of 1000 horse sacrifices	290

brāhmaṇa, kṣatriya, vaiśya, śudra
and even women

Lakṣmī and
Nārāyaṇa

Enjoys all pleasures in the company of sons and grandsons, attains liberation from sins

296-298

muttering *Śānti Sukta*; worshipping deity again; dedicating fast to the deity; offering *arghya* to the moon; keeping awake at night; eating with relatives, repeating vow in *Pauṣa* and other months, performing *udyaṇa* rite.

3. *Dhvajāropana vrata* Twelveth lunar day in the bright fortnight of *Kārttika* On 10th day - performing ablution; taking food only once; observing celibacy; sleeping in front of the deity, wearing white clothes; on 11th day performing rites of *ācamana*, ablutions; worshipping Viṣṇu; observing *svastivāchana* utterance of benediction together with four *brāhmaṇas*; performing *Nandi śrāddha* (*Śrāddha* preliminary to *saṃskara* and *utsavas*) repeating *Gāyatri mantra*; worshipping Sun, Moon and *Garuḍa*, Viṣṇu and *Brahmā*, with turmeric, raw rice grains, scent etc. white flowers; offering 108 oblations with ghee and milk pudding; reciting from *Puruṣukta* and *Santisukta* etc. offering 8 *ahutis*; keeping awake at night near Vishnu; on 12th day offering worship; installing a flag in the temple of Viṣṇu; worshipping Hari with *naivedya*, scents etc.; circumbulating the temple; chanting song of prayer; worshipping *brāhmaṇas*, offering *dakṣiṇā* and gifts to preceptor, feeding *brāhmaṇas*; performing *pāraṇa* together with kinsmen.
- Hari-Pañcami vrata* or *Pañca-rātri vrata* Vow of 5 nights starting with tenth lunar day in bright fortnight of *Mārgaśirṣa* to be continued for 1 year On the 10th day - taking bath; keeping sense organs under control; worshipping the deity; performing 5 great *yajñas*; eating only once; on 11th day - bathing; worshipping Hari according to rules in his abode; bathing Hari with *pañcamṛta*, worshipping with scents, flowers, food offerings, betel leaves, circumbulations, *pañcamṛta*, praying with mantra; staying awake at 13th, 14th and full moon days; on full moon day - bathing Viṣṇu; performing *homa*, giving sesamum to *brāhmaṇas*, staying up; on *pratipad* or first lunar day - performing all rites of a householder; taking

The custom of installing a banner with the sign of a Garuḍa on it (Garuḍa-dhvaja) in honour of Vāsudeva seems to be quite old. In an inscription of the 2nd century B.C. the Greek Bhāgavata Heliiodorus is recorded to have erected a *Garuḍa-dhvaja*. In the Gupta age, temple building and installation of images became popular. Later, even installation of a flag at the entrance of or over the shrine became so important that it came to be regarded as a *vrata*. Legend of King Sumati shows how the king attained his cherished desires by performing this *vrata*

Viṣṇu

not specified

One attains sarupya with Hari, goes to heaven, attains liberation from sins

300-304

This *vrata* is so called because it extends for 5 nights

Viṣṇu

not specified

One never returns from *Brahmāloka*, attains salvation, liberation from sins attains benefit of giving 1000 cows

316-318

pañcagavya; worshipping Hari; feeding *brāhmaṇa*, breaking fast with kinsmen

Udyāpana rite in *Mārgaśirṣa* - on 11th day abstaining from food, on 12th day, taking *pañcagavya*; worshipping the deity with scents, etc.; offering milk-pudding mixed with honey, ghee, fruits and also a waterjar filled with scented water and fine precious gems to a learned scholar, feeding *brāhmaṇas*; breaking fast.

5. *Masopavaṣa vrata* *Āṣāḍha, Śrāvaṇa, Bhādra or Āśvina* Subduing sense-organs; taking *pañcagavya*, sleeping near Viṣṇu, worshipping Viṣṇu in the company of learned men, reciting Svasti-Sukta (Vedic hymn), taking a *sankalpa* (revelation or intention) staying in Viṣṇu temple for a month, bathing deity in *pañcamṛta*; retaining lights in the temple; chewing tooth-brush twig daily; feeding *brāhmaṇas*; offering *dakṣiṇā* etc.; taking food with kinsmen
6. *Ekādaśī vrata* 11th lunar day of both fortnights On *daśamī*, bathing; controlling sense-organs, bathing Viṣṇu, and worshipping him according to the sastras, avoiding night meal; on *ekādaśī*, taking bath; bathing Viṣṇu with *pañcagavya*; worshipping Viṣṇu with scents, flowers etc; fasting; keeping awake in front of Lord; singing, playing musical instruments, listening to Purāṇa; on *dwādaśī* - taking bath; worshipping Viṣṇu; bathing Viṣṇu with milk; feeding *brāhmaṇas*, giving *dakṣiṇā*, performing 5 sacrifices; breaking fast with kinsmen.
7. *Annakuta vrata* First lunar day in bright fortnight of *Kārttika* Fasting according to ability; eating once a day food that is obtained without asking; installing a water-pot, sowing germinating barley and wheat grains in it; reciting mantras from holy texts; worshipping Govardhana mountain; preparing *annakuta* (a heap of cooked food and

Visṇu	women without husbands or sons recluses, religions, students, hermits	One attains salvation and benefit of many vedic sacrifices	320-322
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Vratee should not cast glance at Candala, fallen persons or converse with atheists, censurers back-biters, or one who nourishes progeny by a Sudra woman; should never honour even with words pimp, musician, one who eats from a professional worshipper of idols, physician, poets, opposer of the Devas, one who covets other men's food and wives.

The episode of Bhadrasila is used here to illustrate the efficacy of the vow.

Visṇu	<i>brāhmaṇa,</i> <i>kshatriyas</i> <i>vaiśyas,</i> <i>śūdras,</i> Women	One attains <i>sarupya</i> with Viṣṇu and finds a place in <i>Viṣṇuloka</i> (Viṣṇu's region)	324-332
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This vrata is probably celebrated in memory of Kṛṣṇa's triumph over Indra (when he lifted the Govardhana mountain with one finger). Though the *Narada Purana* instructs the vratee to perform all the rites mentioned for Navaratra vrata, the essential difference is

Govardhana mountain or Viṣṇu	Not specified	One attains worldly pleasures and liberation	1426
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milk); worshipping Govardhana mountain in the evening together with cows; offering *dakṣiṇā*

- | | | | |
|-----|-----------------------------|---|--|
| 8. | <i>Dhana vrata</i> | First lunar day in the bright fortnight of <i>Mārgaśīrṣā</i> | Worshipping Viṣṇu at night with <i>homa</i> ; giving replica of fire god in gold to a <i>brāhmaṇa</i> covered with red cloth |
| 9. | <i>Matsya vrata</i> | Fifth lunar day in bright fortnight of <i>Caitra</i> | Worshipping Viṣṇu in the form of Fish (<i>Matsyāvatara</i>) with great festivities |
| 10. | Unnamed <i>vrata</i> | Fifth lunar day | - |
| 11. | <i>Daśaphala vrata</i> | Eighth lunar day in the dark fortnight of <i>Śrāvaṇa</i> (for ten days) to be continued for ten years | Fasting; bathing; worshipping Viṣṇu with 10 leaves of black <i>Tulāsi</i> ; uttering his 10 names; circumbulating the deity; prostrating before him; continuing <i>vrata</i> for 10 days; performing <i>homa</i> at the beginning, middle and end, performing 108 <i>homas</i> with <i>Caru</i> and <i>mantra</i> , worshipping preceptor; placing a replica of <i>Tulasi</i> -leaf in gold and placing it in a vessel; worshipping golden image of Viṣṇu, offering image to preceptor, also other gifts, offering 10 <i>purikas</i> (fried cakes of wheat flour) to <i>Kṛṣṇa</i> for 10 days giving 10 <i>purikas</i> each to 10 <i>brāhmaṇas</i> |
| 12. | <i>Kṛṣṇajanmaṣṭmi vrata</i> | Eighth lunar day in dark fortnight of <i>Śrāvaṇa</i> | Fasting; bathing with gingelly seeds, mixed in pure water of a river; making a mystic diagram on platform; placing a <i>kalasa</i> (water pot) etc. and golden image of <i>Kṛṣṇa</i> ; worshipping with <i>pādya</i> , and other <i>upācāras</i> , worshipping <i>Devaki</i> etc.; staying up at night, offering <i>naivedya</i> , <i>āratikā</i> , <i>arghya</i> , reciting hymns from <i>Purāṇas</i> ; singing, playing instruments; giving gifts and <i>dakṣiṇā</i> to preceptor; breaking fast. |

that the Navarātra is pertaining to Devi (Śākta) while Govardhana puja is a vegetarian Vaisnava vrata.

This vrata is also referred to as Dhanya vrata or Dhanya-pratipada vrata. Since 'dhanya' means food-grains and the vrata is aimed towards attaining wealth, foodgrains it is possible that the vrata was originally connected with cultivation but later transformed into a Vaisnava vrata

Viṣṇu - do - One attains wealth and food grains 1426-1427

Viṣṇu - do - Not mentioned 1450

Madhu Sūdana - - -

Viṣṇu not specified One attains cherished desires, sayuja with Kṛṣṇa 1471-1472

It is one of most popular vratas celebrated in different parts of India even today. For details, refer to Chapter IV.

Kṛṣṇa together with Devaki Nanda, Vāsudeva, Vraja - do - One attains Goloka together with family servants, attains benefit of a crore Ekādaśī vratas 1472-1474

- | | | | |
|-----|------------------------------|--|---|
| 13. | <i>Rāma Navami
vrata</i> | Ninth lunar day in bright fortnight of <i>Caitra</i> | Fasting for whole day, or if incapable, taking one meal; propitiating Rāma; honouring <i>brāhmaṇas</i> with sweet cooked rice, gift etc. |
| 14. | Unnamed
vrata | Tenth lunar day in bright fortnight of <i>Vaiśākha</i> | Worshipping Viṣṇu with scents white flowers; making 108 circumambulations around Viṣṇu's shrine; feeding <i>brāhmaṇas</i> . |
| 15. | <i>Daśāvātara
vrata</i> | Tenth lunar day in bright fortnight of <i>Bhādrapada</i> | Bathing in a tank; performing <i>Sandhyā</i> , <i>tarpana</i> rite to Devas, sages and men; worshipping the 10 incarnations of Viṣṇu by erecting 10 golden images giving the images to 10 <i>brāhmaṇas</i> after honouring them; enjoying meal with friends and relatives. |
| 16. | <i>Ekādaśī
vrata</i> | Eleventh lunar day in both fortnight of every month | On the 10th lunar day, abstaining from bell-metal vessel, meat, cooked lentil, Bengal gram, Kodrava grains, wine, food at other's house, second meal, sexual intercourse; on the 11th lunar day, constructing pavilion, bathing, fasting, worshipping Visnu with <i>upācāras</i> , <i>japas</i> , <i>homas</i> , <i>pradakṣiṇās</i> , reciting hymns, singing, playing musical instruments, keeping awake at night, abstaining from gambling, |

There is no clear indication in the text as to whether this vrata is in honour of Rāma Dāśarathi or other Rāmas, e.g., Balarāma and Paraśurāma. However, since the vrata is celebrated today in honour of Rāma Dāśarathi and on the same tithi as recommended here one can assume that Nārada Purāṇa refers to Rāma Dāśarathi only. This vrata has been discussed in details in many other texts like Hemadri's Caturvargacintāmani which shows that it was popular in Maharastra even before 12th century A.D. Nārada Purāṇa's cursory treatment of this currently popular vrata shows that it was not attached much importance then. See Śāstri Op.cit., p.1472.

Rāma - do - One attains liberation from sins and a place in Viṣṇu's world 1480

Viṣṇu - do - One attains Viṣṇuloka 1484

The Nārada Purāṇa dedicates the vrata in honour of the currently believed 10 incarnations of Viṣṇu e.g. Matsya (the Divine Fish), Kūrma (the Divine Tortoise), Varāha (the Boar), Narasiṃha (Man-lion), Trivikrama (the religious student (Vāmana), Paraśu-Rāma, Śri Rāma, Kṛṣṇa, Buddha and Kalki. The inclusion of Buddha and Kalki must be comparatively late when people forgot that Buddha was the propagator of a non-Vedic faith. See Śāstri, Op.cit., pp.1485-1486.

Ten incarnations of Viṣṇu - do - One attains worldly pleasures, liberation, from sins, salvation, Viṣṇuloka 1485-1486

The Narada Purana recommends as many as 24 Ekadasi vratas corresponding to the 24 lunar fortnights in a year. These are: Kāmoda (śuklā ekādaśi, Caitra), Pāpamocanī (kṛṣṇā ekādaśi, Caitra), Mohinī (śuklā ekādaśi, Vaiśāka), Vāruthinī (kṛṣṇā ekādaśi, Vaiśākha), Nirjalā (śuklā ekādaśi, Jyeṣṭha), Aparā (kṛṣṇā ekādaśi, Jyeṣṭha), Śāyanī (śuklā ekādaśi, Āśāḍha), Yoginī (kṛṣṇā ekādaśi, Āśāḍha), Putradā (śuklā

Viṣṇu not specified One attains worldly pleasures, liberation from sins, salvation, Viṣṇuloka 1490-1501

sleeping, chewing betel leaves, cleaning teeth, slandering, back-biting, stealing, causing injury to others, sexual intercourse, anger, telling lies; on the 12th lunar day, fasting, worshipping Viṣṇu with 16 *upācāras*, feeding *brāhmaṇas*, getting various gifts; breaking fast; abstaining from bell metal vessel, meat wine, honey, oil, conversation with out-castes, physical exercise, journey, second meal, sexual inter-course, touching untouchables, eating cooked lentils; abstaining from one meal on 10th and 12th lunar days, complete fasting on 11th lunar day.

- | | | | |
|-----|--|---|---|
| 17. | <i>Madana vrata</i> or <i>Madana dvādaśī vrata</i> | Twelveth lunar day in bright fortnight of Caitra (to be continued for a year) | Placing a pot filled with white raw rice grain; placing different types of fruits with stumps of sugar-cane plants; applying white sandal paste on the pot, covering it with white cloth, keeping various dishes of eatables, gold, keeping a copper vessel full of jaggery on the pot; worshipping Hari with all <i>upācāras</i> , fasting, next morning honouring <i>brāhmaṇa</i> with food, gifts and <i>dakṣiṇā</i> . <i>Udyāpana</i> rite - giving in bed, cow etc. to the preceptor; worshipping a <i>brāhmaṇa</i> couple; presenting a gold image of Kāma, cow and garments. |
| 18. | <i>Bhartr-dvādaśīkā vrata</i> | - do - | Making a bed with clean bed sheet; placing a golden image of Hari along with Sri on it, making a pavilion with flowers; worshipping deity with scents etc., keeping awake at night, with songs, dances, music; next morning giving away gold image, bed to preceptor; feeding and giving <i>daksina</i> to <i>brāhmaṇas</i> . |
| 19. | <i>Nirājana vrata</i> | Twelveth lunar day in bright fortnight of <i>Bhādrapada</i> | Adorning the deity with ornaments; bedecking himself at night; worshipping the deity with <i>mantras</i> , <i>hoṃa</i> (in the fire kindled by silver lamps) scents, fragrance etc; performing <i>nirajana</i> , to Hari, Lakṣmī Brahmā, Gaurī, Yakṣa, Gaṇapati, planets, Mothers, mountains, |

ekādaśi, Śrāvaṇa), Kāmikā (kṛṣṇā ekādaśi, Śrāvaṇa), Padmā (śuklā ekādaśi, Bhādrapada), Ajā (kṛṣṇā ekādaśi, Bhādrapada), Papankuśa (śuklā ekādaśi, Āśvina), Indirā (kṛṣṇā ekādaśi, Āśvina), Prabodhinī (śuklā ekādaśi, Kārttika), Ramā (kṛṣṇā ekādaśi, Kārttika), Mokṣa (śuklā ekādaśi, Mārgaśirṣa), Utpanna (kṛṣṇā ekādaśi, Mārgaśirṣa), Putradā (śuklā ekādaśi, Pausa), Saphalā (kṛṣṇā ekādaśi, Pausa), Jayā (śuklā ekādaśi, Māgha), Sātilā (kṛṣṇā ekādaśi, Māgha), Āmalaki (śuklā ekādaśi, Phālguna), Vijayā (kṛṣṇā ekādaśi, Phālguna).

This vrata has already been mentioned in Matsya Purāṇa. Its mention here shows that it was still in vogue.	Acyuta in the form of Kāma	not specified	One attains liberation from sins, equality with Hari	1501-1503
It is evident from the name of vow itself that it stresses on conjugal life.	Hari and Śri	- do -	One attains stability in married life, and pleasures in both worlds	1502
The king also performs this vrata	Viṣṇu	Common people and king	This vrata cures all kinds of ailments	1504-1505

			serpents, cows, buffaloes, along with sounds of conch, bells and shouting <i>namaḥ</i> (obeisance), <i>Jaya</i> (be victorious) etc.
20.	<i>Akhaṇḍa-dvādaśi vrata</i>	- do -	Making image of Viṣṇu in gold; worshipping with scents, flowers, etc.; feeding 12 <i>brāhmaṇas</i> every month; eating at night; having subdued senses; at year end worshipping image and giving it to preceptors alongwith a cow; feeding 12 <i>brāhmaṇas</i> , giving <i>dakṣiṇā</i>
21.	<i>Rupavrata</i>	Twelveth lunar day in the dark fortnight of <i>Pauṣa</i>	On 10th lunar day - taking bath; collecting cow-dung; preparing 108 balls, drying them, keeping them in a copper pot; on 11th lunar day, fasting; worshipping Viṣṇu; staying up at night with songs, music etc.; on 12th lunar day, placing image on vessel of gingelly seeds and then in a pot of water; worshipping with <i>upācāras</i> ; kindling fresh fire; performing <i>homa</i> , with cowdung balls, gingelly seeds etc. 108 times; offering <i>pūrnāhuti</i> ; feeding <i>brāhmaṇas</i> , offering image to preceptors and <i>dakṣiṇā</i> to <i>brāhmaṇas</i>
22.	Unnamed <i>vrata</i>	Twelveth lunar day in bright fortnight of <i>Vaiśākha</i>	Fasting; worshipping Mādhava, with scents and other <i>upacaras</i> ; feeding a <i>brāhmaṇa</i> with sweet cooked rice and a water pot
23.	- do -	Twelveth lunar day in bright fortnight of <i>Jyestha</i>	Worshipping the deity with different <i>upācāras</i> ; presenting a bowl of sweet cooked rice to a <i>brāhmaṇa</i> ; taking a single meal
24.	- do -	Twelveth lunar day in bright fortnight of <i>Āśāḍha</i>	feeding 12 <i>brāhmaṇas</i> with sweet cooked rice; worshipping them with scents etc.; giving them garments etc.
25.	<i>Gotrirātra vrata</i>	Thirteenth lunar day in bright fortnight of	Making a golden/silver image of <i>Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa</i> ; placing the image on an auspicious <i>maṇḍala</i> of a eight-

Bhādrapada

petalled lotus drawn on a pedestal; bathing image with *pañcamṛta*; worshipping with *upācāras*, gifting a pot of water and cooked rice; *udyāpana* rite - worshipping deity for a month, gifting money to a *brāhmaṇa* along with mantra; circumbulating a cow; feeding and honouring a *brāhmaṇa* couple; gifting image to them

26. *Gopadma vrata* Full moon day of *Āṣāḍha* bathing; meditating on Hari; worshipping with 'Purūṣa Sukta and *upācāras*; propitiating preceptors with clothes, ornaments, feeding *brāhmaṇas* with sweet cooked rice.
27. *Ananta caturdaśī vrata* Fourteenth lunar day in bright fortnight of *Bhādrapada* to be continued for 14 years Taking a single meal; cooking a *prastha* measure of ground wheat flour smeared with ghee and mixed with sugar; offering it to the deity as *naivedya*; wearing a thread with 14 knots; giving ground flour and *dakṣiṇā* to a *brāhmaṇa*, taking moderate quantity of food; *udyāpana* rite - drawing *Sarvatobhadra*; worshipping golden image of Ananta with all injunctions after placing it on a copper pot over the *Sarvatobhadra*; performing *homa* with *puṇahuti* and *havisya*; honouring preceptor; honouring 14 *brāhmaṇas* with food and *dakṣiṇā*; women devotee should wear the thread on left hand and men on right hand
-

involved worshipping a cow as a deity. Later it was transformed into a Vaisnava vrata.

from 1000
Aswamedha
or 100
Rajasuya
sacrifices

The Nārada Purāna fails to justify the title 'go-padma' of this Viṣṇu vrata

Viṣṇu

not
specified

One attains
cherished
desires here
and hereafter

1530-
1531

Ananta is regarded a form of Viṣṇu. But it is actually the name of the serpent Śeṣa. One thus wonders whether this is an evidence of an assimilation of the cult of serpent-worship into Brahmanism. Anantacaturdaśi vrata is a popular vrata even today.

Ananta
(Viṣṇu)

men and
women

One attains
worldly
pleasure and
salvation

1523-
1524

TABLE V: VRATAS IN HONOUR OF DURGĀ/GAURI/PĀRVATI IN THE NĀRADA PURĀṆA

SERIAL NO.	NAME	DATE	BRIEF DESCRIPTION
1.	Navarātra vrata	First lunar day in bright fortnight of Āśvina, to be continued for nine nights	Installing a water pot in the forenoon; sowing barley grains and wheat for germination; taking a single meal every day, or fasting; worshipping goddess with mantras; reciting from holy texts, reading the Caritas from Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa, for all 9 days; worshipping and feeding brahmanas.
2.	Gaurī vrata	Third lunar day in bright fortnight of Caitra to be continued for 12 years	Making an image of Gauri along with Śiva in gold, silver, copper or clay; worshipping with scents, flowers, clothes, ornaments, Durva grass; fasting; propitiating brāhmaṇa women whose husbands and sons are alive and girls of auspicious characteristics with saffron, collyrium, clothes etc; keeping awake at night; giving image to preceptor if metallic, if made of clay, immersing it in tank or river; udyāpana rite - donating 12 cows.
3.	Svarnagauri vrata	Third lunar day in bright half of Śrāvaṇa to be continued for 16 years	Worshipping goddess with 16 upacaras; praying for conjugal bliss etc; giving sweet meat etc. to brāhmaṇas; udyāpana rite - erecting a pandal, drawing a pure maṇḍala; worshipping Gaṇeśa and other gods; placing a saucer like copper plate over water pot; worshipping golden image of Bhavani with scents, flowers etc; performing homa; offering as naivedya 16 bamboo baskets of sweet dishes, cooked rice; distributing same amongst

SIGNIFICANCE	NATURE OF DEITY	NATURE OF DEVOTEE	REWARD	PAGE NO
This vrata is still observed in different parts of India. It has been discussed in Chapters II, III and IV.	Goddess	not specified	One attains worldly pleasure, salvation, <i>Siddhi</i>	1425-1426
This vrata has been discussed in detail in Chapters II and IV.	Gauri, with Śiva	Unmarried virgin desirous of bridegroom, married women desirous of matrimonial bliss and good fortune for sons and husbands	One attains wealth, good husband, sons, learning, ability to command, fame, happiness	1432
This vrata is still popular in Karnataka, where it is observed on thrid day of <i>Bhādrapada</i> . Herein the number 16 is very important. The Goddess is worshipped with 16 <i>upācāras</i> , the vrata is observed for 16 years, and 16 bamboo baskets filled with sweet dishes etc. are offered to <i>brāhmaṇas</i> .	Bhavāni with Śiva	Women	not specified	1434-1435

- brāhmaṇas*, kinsmen and relatives; giving golden image to preceptor; monetary gifts to other *brāhmaṇas*
4. *Haritālikā vrata* Third lunar day in bright fortnight of *Bhādrapada* Worshipping the deity with *pādyā*, arghya; fasting; offering cooked rice in a gold, silver or copper vessel, and *dakṣiṇā* to *brāhmaṇas*; breaking fast with kinsmen; giving 16 bamboo-baskets filled with bliss yielding articles and *daksina* to *brāhmaṇas*.
5. *Hastagaūri vrata* or *Kotiśvari* or *Lakṣeśvari vrata* Third lunar day in *Bhādrapada* coinciding with constellation *Hasta*, to be continued for four years Making an image of goddess with one hundred thousand rice grains or gengelly seeds (boiled) decorating it with garlands etc; worshipping the deity with scents, flowers etc; bowing and craving for forgiveness; immersing image in a water-tank; offering *dakṣiṇā* to *brāhmaṇas*; taking food the next day.
6. *Bṛhadgaūri vrata* Third lunar day in bright fortnight of *Āsvina* to be continued for 5 years Fasting; worshipping deity with 16 *upācāras*; worshipping preceptors and other *brāhmaṇas* with cash presents; worshipping 5 *suvasinīs* (married women with husbands alive) as *haripriyās* (beloved of Hari) with clothes, ornaments, sandal, bodices, earrings, necklaces, giving one bamboo basket filled with saffron, cumin seed, sweet meats, *apupa* (baked pies), fruits to each *suvasinī*; taking food silently; wearing one fruit round the neck; next day - beducked with ornaments and accompanied by friends, songs and music, immersing *Gaurī* image in a river.
7. *Viṣṇugaūri vrata* Third lunar day in bright fortnight of *Kārttika* Worshipping the deity with different modes of services; feeding and honouring a *suvasinī*; bidding farewell to the deity

This is a very popular vrata in Maharashtra but not in Gujarat or Bengal. The vrata is also found in late medieval digests.

Goddess

Women

One attains conjugal blessedness, becomes a friend and attendant of Gauri

1435-1436

The vrata is called Lakṣeśvari because a paste of one hundred thousand rice grains or sesamum seeds is used to make the image.

Pārvati

- do -

One attains world of Gauri

1436-1437

This vrata is still popular in Maharashtra and Karnataka. There a plant is brought along with its roots, fruits and branches for worship. A thread is wound round the neck in the name of Gaurī.

Gaurī

- do -

One attains conjugal bliss Gauri's world

1437-1438

Gauri

Women

One attains grace of salvation of the deity

1438

8.	<i>Haragauri vrata</i>	Third lunar day in bright fortnight of <i>Mārgaśirsa</i>	Same as above
9.	<i>Brahmagauri vrata</i>	Third lunar day in bright fortnight of <i>Pauṣa</i>	- do -
10.	<i>Saubhagya Sundari vrata</i>	Third lunar day in bright fortnight of <i>Māgha</i>	- do -
11.	Unnamed vrata	Third lunar day in bright fortnight of <i>Phālguna</i>	- do -
12.	<i>Gauri vrata/ Dhunḍhi vrata/ Kuṇḍa vrata/ Lalitā vrata/ Śānti vrata</i>	Fourth lunar day in bright fortnight of <i>Māgha</i>	Worshipping Gauri and Yoginis with <i>kuṇḍa</i> flowers, <i>kumkuma</i> , red threads, red flowers, <i>ālātaka</i> juice, incense etc., green <i>Pālakas</i> ; worshipping married women (whose husbands are alive) and <i>brāhmaṇas</i> , honouring them with gifts; taking food with kinsmen.
13.	<i>Lalitā vrata</i>	Sixth lunar day of <i>Bhādrapada</i>	Bathing; wearing white clothes and garlands; making 5 lumps of sandy soil taken from confluence of a river; meditating on goddess <i>Lalitā</i> ; worshipping her with 108 flowers of each of Jasmine, lotus etc. and 28 unbroken buds, praying, worshipping with Campaka flowers; <i>naivedya</i> (consisting of different fruits and vegetables), lights, food grains, incense etc. sweet meats; keeping awake with songs and instrumental music; dances along with female friends, taking every thing to a river next day; giving <i>naivedya</i> to a <i>brāhmaṇa</i> ; bathing; performing homa, worshipping <i>devas</i> , <i>Pitra</i> , married women, virgins, 15 <i>brāhmaṇas</i> and feeding them.

-	Jagadambikā - do -		One attains worldly pleasures and world of Devi	1438	
-	Gaurī	- do -	One becomes associated with the Goddess	1439	
-	- do -	- do -	One attains a place in the world of goddess	1439	
-	- do -	- do -	The goddess bestows auspiciousness	1439	
	Though the <i>Nārada Purāṇa</i> attributes the fruits of this vrata to the grace of Gaṇeṣa it is essentially a Devi vrata.	Gaurī and Yoginīs	Men and Women	One attains conjugal blessedness	1448
-	Lalitā	Men and women but primarily for the latter	One attains blessedness <i>Śivaloka</i> , rejoins with Goddess	1457-1458	

14.	Unnamed vrata	Sixth lunar day in bright fortnight of Āśvina	Worshipping deity with scents, <i>naivedya</i> ; bidding farewell to her, worshipping either an image (probably of Goddess) of sandy soil or chaste wife of a <i>brāhmaṇa</i> with ornaments.
15.	- do -	Eighth lunar day in bright fortnight of Śrāvāṇa	Worshipping Goddess, according to injunctions; bathing idol in milk; offering sweet cooked rice as <i>naivedya</i> ; feeding <i>brāhmaṇas</i> next day, taking food himself.
16.	- do -	Eighth lunar day in bright fortnight of Vaiśākha	Fasting; taking bath; performing ablution to the deity; worshipping with scents, <i>naivedya</i> etc; feeding virgins on 9th lunar day.
17.	- do -	Eighth lunar day in bright fortnight of Āśāḍha	Bathing in water mixed with turmeric powder, performing ablution of Goddess, smearing deity with sandals and camphor; <i>naivedya</i> ; honouring <i>brāhmaṇa</i> with <i>naivedya</i> , foods, gifts and <i>dakṣiṇā</i> ; taking food herself.
18.	- do -	Eighth lunar day in dark fortnight of Māgha	Worshipping the deity with great devotion
19.	<i>Matṛvrata</i> (the day Bhadrakālī was crowned chief of all mothers)	Ninth lunar day in bright fortnight of Caitra	Propitiating 64 Yoginīs and Bhairava with garlands, <i>naivedyas</i> etc; fasting controlling sense organs
20.	Unnamed vrata	Ninth lunar day in both fortnights of Vaiśākha	Worshipping Caṇḍikā according to injunctions

Kātyāyanī	Unmarried virgins and married women	Unmarried virgins get bridegroom and married women get sons	1459- 1460
Goddess	not specified	Progeny increases	1471
Aparājitā	- do -	Devotee will move about in heaven in an aerial chariot	1470
Goddess	- do -	One attains world of the Goddess	1470
Bhadrakāli	not specified	The vrata destroys hosts of enemies bestows cheri- shed desires	1478
- do -	- do -	not specified	1480
Caṇḍikā	- do -	One rejoices with devas	1480

21.	- do -	Ninth lunar day in bright fortnight of <i>Jyeṣṭha</i>	Worshipping Umā; feeding <i>brāhmaṇas</i> and virgins; giving <i>daṁṣiṇā</i> ; eating only cooked <i>Sali</i> rice and milk
22.	- do -	Ninth lunar day in either fortnight of <i>Āṣāḍha</i>	Worshipping fair-complexioned Goddess <i>Aindri</i> , partaking of food at night
23.	<i>Kaumari vrata</i>	Ninth lunar day in both fortnights of <i>Śrāvaṇa</i>	Taking food only at night, worshipping the deity with scents, flowers, incense, lights, <i>naivedyas</i> , feeding virgins
24.	<i>Nandānavamī vrata</i>	Ninth lunar day in bright fortnight of <i>Bhādrapada</i>	Worshipping the deity with all <i>upācāras</i>
25.	<i>Mahānavamī vrata</i>	Ninth lunar day in bright fortnight of <i>Āśvina</i>	Worshipping <i>Sami</i> tree in the afternoon in eastern quarter; at night, in first watch, worshipping sword, bow, arrows, iron clubs, trident, javelin, axe, dagger, shield, umbrella, baton, noose, discus, conch; worshipping a buffalo with scents; <i>upācāras</i> , sacrificing it before the deity; offering oblation; eating cooked rice; giving <i>daṁṣiṇā</i> to <i>brāhmaṇas</i> .
26.	<i>Nandini Navamī vrata</i>	Ninth lunar day in bright fortnight of <i>Mārgaśirṣa</i>	Fasting; worshipping deity with all <i>upācāras</i>
27.	Unnamed <i>vrata</i>	Ninth lunar day in bright fortnight of <i>Pauṣa</i>	Worshipping the deity; taking a single meal

-	Uma	- do -	One attains worldly pleasures and finally heaven	1481	
-	Aindri (riding Airāvata)	- do -	- do -	1481	
-	Kaumārī Caṇḍikā	- do -	One attains world of Goddess	1481	
-	Durgā	- do -	One attains benefit of a horse sacrifice, attains Viṣṇu's region	1481	
	This vrata is observed all over India as a part of Navaratra or Durgāpujā festival even today.	Bhadrakālī or Durgā (destroyer of miseries of mankind)	not specified	One attains worldly pleasures, attains heaven	1481-1482
-	Jagadambā	- do -	One attains benefits of a horse sacrifice	1482-1483	
-	Mahāmāyā	- do -	One attains benefits of Vājapeya sacrifice	1483	

28.	- do -	Ninth lunar day in bright fortnight of <i>Māgha</i>	Not specified
29.	<i>Anandānavami vrata</i>	Ninth lunar day in bright fortnight of <i>Phālguna</i>	Fasting; worshipping the deity
30.	<i>Pavitra- ropana vrata</i>	Fourteenth lunar day in bright fortnight of <i>Śrāvaṇa</i>	Performing the rite of <i>Pavitraropana</i> , repeating mantra 108 times and dedicating it to goddess in accordance with injunctions laid down in <i>Veda</i>
31.	<i>Pasana vrata</i>	Fourteenth lunar day in bright fortnight of <i>Kārttika</i>	Fasting during daytime; cooking ground flour in ghee, shaping it in the form of brick; worshipping Gauri at night with scents etc; offering flour-brick as <i>naivedya</i>
32.	<i>Durgā vrata</i>	Fourteenth lunar day in bright fortnight of <i>Phālguna</i>	Worshipping <i>Durgā</i> ; offering scents, and other <i>upācāras</i> ; feeding <i>brāhmaṇas</i> ; taking only a single meal
33.	<i>Kokilā vrata</i>	One full moon to next full moon day in <i>Śrāvaṇa</i>	Taking bath in a river or tank; meditating on goddess <i>Pārvati</i> ; painting her figure on cloth; worshipping her every day with scents etc; giving image to <i>brāhmaṇa</i> in gold or ground flour, or gingelly seeds, with golden piece as <i>daksina</i> ; feeding <i>brāhmaṇas</i> and 30 <i>sanyāsinīs</i> , bidding farewell to them.

-	Mahanandā	- do -	holy bath, charity, japa, homa, fasting performed by one acquire everlasting benefit	1483
-	Anandā	- do -	One attains all desired benefits and liberation from sins	1483
<i>Nārada Purāṇa</i> only mentions the outline of the vrata but does not clarify that pavitra is the sacred thread, yajnopavita	Mahadevi	Men and women	One attains worldly plea- sure, salvation	1523
-	Gaurī	not specified	One attains glory, happi- ness, conjugal bliss, beauty of form	1526
-	Durgā	- do -	One attains all cherished desires in this life and after	1528
-	Kokilā	Women	One attains happiness, conjugal bliss for 7 births	1531

TABLE VI: VRATAS IN HONOUR OF ŚIVA IN THE NĀRADA PURĀNA

SERIAL NO.	NAME	DATE	BRIEF DESCRIPTION
1.	Unnamed vrata	Beginning with 14th day in dark fortnight of Karttika to be continued till 1st lunar day of bright fortnight	On the 14th day, fasting on full moon day, worshipping Śiva; on 1st lunar day offering vāyana (sweet meats etc.) alongwith a golden flute to a brāhmaṇa
2.	Mahaṭmā vrata or Mauna vrata	First lunar day in the bright fortnight of Bhādrapada, to be continued for 14 years	Cooking three times 16 fruits and ground flour in silence; offering another set of 16 to the deity and eating one himself; worshipping a golden image of deity placed on a water pot; offering everything along with a cow to a brāhmaṇa
3.	Unnamed vrata	Second lunar day in bright fortnight of Phālguna	Worshipping Śiva with white flowers, making a canopy and decorating it with flowers and ornamental things; propitiating the deity with naivedyas of various kinds, offering incense, lights; performing nirājana; prostrating on the ground.
4.	- do -	Sixth lunar day in bright fortnight of Phālguna	Worshipping a clay image of the deity with 16 upācāras; bathing image with water or pañcamṛta, uttering śatarudra mantra, smearing unguents over image, worshipping with raw rice grains, white flowers, fruits; offering different naivedyas; performing nirājana rite; craving for forgiveness; sending deity ritualistically to Kailāsa.

SIGNIFICANCE	NATURE OF DEITY	NATURE OF DEVOTEE	REWARD	PAGE NO.
-	Śiva	not specified	One attains increase in wealth, pleasure of the deities	1424
-	Śiva	- do -	One attains worldly pleasures, Śiva's world	1424-1425
-	Śiva	Only brāhmaṇas	One attains freedom from sickness and obtains wealth foodgrains, life for 100 years	1430-1431
In the opinion of J.N. Banerjea, Śiva has always been worshipped in the form of a <i>liṅga</i> inside the main <i>garbhagrihya</i> of a temple (i.e. sanctum sanctorium). Though several anthropomorphic images of Śiva may be located, these are always found outside the main <i>garbhagrihya</i> . Thus, when the <i>Nārada Purāṇa</i> instructs the <i>vratee</i> to make an image of Siva, we should assume that the reference is being made to a <i>Śivalinga</i> . If an anthropomorphic image is referred to, then the <i>vrata</i> is to be conducted outside a temple.	Paśupati	Men and women	One attains worldly pleasures, also goal of Śiva	1461

- | | | | |
|-----|---|--|---|
| 5. | <i>Amuktabharana vrata</i> | Seventh lunar day in bright fortnight of <i>Bhādrapada</i> | Worshipping the deity with 16 <i>upacaras</i> ; offering prayer and obeisance, bidding farewell ritualistically |
| 6. | <i>Phalasaptami vrata</i> | - do - continued for 7 years | Offering 7 fruits (coconut, brinjal, orange, pomegranate, white gourd, Brhati, arecanut) to the deity; placing a thread, consisting of 7 threads and tied into 7 knots; worshipping deity; wearing the threads; feeding 7 <i>brāhmaṇas</i> with milk puddings and offering 7 fruits to them; partaking of the same food; women should wear thread on left hand and men on right hand. |
| 7. | <i>Acala vratā</i> or <i>Trilōcana Jayanti vrata</i> (Birth anniversary of three-eyed Lord) | Seventh lunar day in bright fortnight of <i>Māgha</i> | Not mentioned |
| 8. | Unnamed <i>vrata</i> | Eighth lunar day in dark fortnight of <i>Jyestha</i> | - |
| 9. | <i>Durvāṣṭami vrata</i> | Eighth lunar day in bright fortnight of <i>Bhādrapada</i> | Placing <i>Liṅga</i> on <i>Durva</i> grass growing on a clean spot; worshipping it with incense, flowers, scents, lights, <i>naivedyas</i> , curds, raw rice grains, fruits; offering <i>argya</i> with <i>mantra</i> , circumbulating, giving <i>dakṣiṇās</i> and fruits to <i>brāhmaṇas</i> ; taking food himself. |
| 10. | Unnamed <i>vrata</i> | Eighth lunar day in bright fortnight of <i>Pausa</i> | - |

-	Maheśa, Uma and Ganga	not specified	Vrata leads to flourishing increase of all desires	1465
According to other texts, it is Sun-God and not Maheśa who is the chief deity of this vrata	Maheśa	Men and women	One attains identity with Śiva	1465- 1466
-	-	-	One attains liberation from sins	1468
-	-	-	One attains Śivāloka	1470
-	Liṅga	Men of all 4 castes and women	One attains long-life to progeny, liberation from sins	1474- 1475
-	Śiva	-	One attains worldly pleasures, liberation from sins	1478

11.	- do -	Eighth lunar day in bright fortnight of <i>Phālguna</i>	Worshipping with scents and other things
12.	- do -	Thirteenth lunar day in bright fortnight of <i>Kārttika</i>	Taking single meal; bathing at sunset; lighting a thousand/hundred/thirty two lamps with ghee; worshipping Śiva with scents; various kinds of <i>naivedya</i> etc.; eulogising Śiva with 100 names, circumbulating the deity.
13.	- do -	Fourteenth lunar day in bright fortnight of <i>Caitra</i>	Fasting or taking a single meal; worshipping Śiva with saffron, agallochum, sandal paste, scents, ornaments etc; erecting canopy, banner and umbrellas; worshipping mothers
14.	- do -	- do -	Worshipping with Damanaka leaves and fragrant flowers; dedicating fruit to Siva
15.	<i>Śivarātra vrata</i>	Fourteenth lunar day in dark fortnight of <i>Vaiśākha</i>	Fasting; bathing at sunset; wearing white clothes; worshipping Linga with scents and other <i>upacaras</i> , and leaves of <i>Bilva</i> trees; inviting a prominent <i>brāhmaṇa</i> ; breaking fast on next day
16.	<i>Līṅga vrata</i>	Fourteenth lunar day in bright fortnight of <i>Vaiśākha</i>	Bathing <i>Līṅga</i> (made of ground flour) in <i>pañcamṛta</i> , saffron; offering fruits as <i>naivedya</i> ; worshipping with scents, incense etc.
17.	Unnamed <i>vrata</i>	Fourteenth lunar day in bright fortnight of <i>Āṣāḍha</i>	Worshipping Śiva with flowers of the season
18.	- do -	Fourteenth lunar day in bright fortnight of <i>Kārttika</i>	Worshipping Linga with scents, flowers, fruits, different kinds of <i>naivedyas</i> ; taking a single meal

Śiva	-	One becomes lord of all <i>Siddhis</i> (supernatural power)	1479	
Śiva	not specified	One attains worldly pleasures and Śivāloka	1517-1519	
- do -	- do -	One attains merit more than that of a horse sacrifice	1521	
- do -	- do -	-	1521	
Liṅga	- do -	One attains progeny, wealth	1521	
Śiva	not specified	One attains worldly pleasure, salvation, achievement in all objects	1522	
Śiva	- do -	One attains all riches	1522-1523	
It is believed that Lord Viśveśvara (Śiva) took bath on this day at Manikarnikā-Tirtha, worshipped his own self and performed the Pāśupata rite (applied <i>bhasman</i>)	Viśveśa (Śiva)	- do -	One attains all cherished desire	1525

- | | | | |
|-----|----------------------------|---|--|
| 19. | <i>Śiva vrata</i> | Fourteenth lunar day in bright fortnight of <i>Mārgaśīrṣa</i> | Taking a single meal or fasting; worshipping a golden replica of a bull, giving it to a <i>brāhmaṇa</i> ; next day - bathing, worshipping Mahesvara and Uma with lotus flowers, scents, unguents; feeding <i>brāhmaṇas</i> with sweet cooked rice and propitiating them with <i>dakṣiṇā</i> . |
| 20. | <i>Virupākṣa vrata</i> | Fourteenth lunar day in bright fortnight of <i>Pauṣa</i> | Worshipping the deity with scents, garlands, incense etc. richly prepared cooked rice etc. |
| 21. | <i>Śivarātri vrata</i> | Fourteenth lunar day in bright fortnight of <i>Phālguna</i> | Fasting, even abjuring water, during the day; worshipping the <i>liṅga</i> (self born or made of clay) at night, with scents and other <i>upācāras</i> , <i>Bilva</i> leaves; recitation of <i>hymns</i> , <i>japa</i> , <i>naivedyas</i> ; next day, worshipping deity with <i>upācāras</i> ; feeding <i>brāhmaṇas</i> with sweet cooked rice, giving <i>dakṣiṇās</i> . |
| 22. | <i>Umā-maheśvara vrata</i> | Full moon day of <i>Bhādrapada</i> for 15 years | Taking a single meal on previous day; worshipping Śiva, praying, sleeping near the deity at night, on full moonday - getting up in the last watch of night; applying <i>Bhasma</i> and wearing <i>Rudrākṣa</i> ; worshipping <i>Saṅkara</i> with different kinds of <i>upācāras</i> , <i>naivedyas</i> etc; fasting till sunset; at moonrise, worshipping once again; keeping awake at night.
<i>Udyāpana</i> rite - getting golden images of <i>Umā</i> and <i>Maheśvara</i> , making 15 pots of silver, gold or clay, placing the images in one of the pots; bathing them with <i>pañcamṛta</i> and pure water; worshipping with 16 <i>upacaras</i> ; feeding 15 <i>brāhmaṇas</i> with sweet cooked rice and giving <i>dakṣiṇās</i> , giving one pot and image to each. |
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-	Māheśvara	- do -	One attains worldly pleasure and liberation.	1526- 1527
-	Virūpākṣa Śiva	- do -	One rejoices the heaven with Devas	1527
This is the Mahāśivarātri vrata popular all over India. As compared to other Purāṇas and digests, the Nārada Purāṇa gives a bare outline of the vrata.	Śiva	- do -	One attains immortal pleasure	1527- 1528
-	Umā Mahēśvara	not specified	One attains fame throughout world and riches	1532- 1533

CHAPTER III

VARIATIONS IN THE RITUAL PATTERN OF VRATAS: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF VAIṢṆAVA, ŚĀKTA AND ŚAIVA VRATAS

In the previous chapter we have seen how *vratas* while operating within a common framework reveal sectarian affiliations which in turn determine their characteristics. It is this trend of increasing sectarianism that I would like to develop upon in this Chapter. The texts which I have taken up for discussion are the *Brahmavaivartta Purāna*, the *Devibhāgavata Purāna* and the *Līṅga Purāna* - all of which extend to a later period in comparison to the *Matsya* and *Nārada Purānas*. It is by counterposing these three later *Purānas* with the *Matsya* and *Nārada Purānas* that I would like to highlight and analyse the growing sectarian character of the texts and the *vratas* mentioned therein. But I had confined my study to an examination of different categories of *vratas* (Vaiṣṇava, Śaiva or Śākta) mentioned within one text only - the *Nārada Purāna*. Here I would like to undertake a comparative study of Vaiṣṇava, Śākta and Śaiva *vratas* with reference to three different texts.

Unlike in the *Nārada Purāna* or the *Matsya Purāna* the *vratas* prescribed in the *Brahmavaivartta*, *Devibhāgavata* and

Liṅga Purāṇas are mainly dedicated to one single deity.¹ Vows to propitiate other deities are either totally absent or if present, are very few in number.² The total number of *vratas* also become reduced considerably. For instance, in comparison to the *Matsya* and *Nārada Purāṇas* which contain fifty seven and one hundred and sixty three *vratas* respectively³, the *Brahmavaivartta Purāṇa* mentions nine *vratas*, the *Liṅga Purāṇa* three *vratas* and the *Devibhāgavata* only one⁴. *Vratas* as mentioned before, were introduced into Brahmanical religion so as to reinstate the same to its old glory. It may thus be suggested that once this purpose was fulfilled socio-religious relevance of *vratas* declined. Moreover, with the increasing popularity of *bhakti*, and the importance attributed to devotion pure and simple to the deity of one's choice, the significance of rituals gradually receded to the background.⁵ This perhaps explains the diminishing number of *vratas* in the *Purāṇas* and their growing sectarian nature. The latter trait becomes evident through the variations in ritual-pattern between a Vaiṣṇava, Śākta and Śaiva *vratas*.

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1. See Tables VII-XI.
 2. See Tables IX-XI.
 3. See Tables VII and IX.
 4. See Tables IX-XI.
 5. Lalye, *Op.cit.*, p.19.

BRAHMAVAIVARTTA PURĀṆA

The *Brahmavaivartta Purāṇa*, is a Vaisnavite text dateable approximately between the 10th and 16th centuries A.D.⁶. It mentions four *vratas* in honour of Viṣṇu - the *Punyaka vrata*, the *Janmāṣṭami vrata*, the *Ekādaśī vrata* and the *Trayeemāsika vrata*⁷. Apart from the typical rites like fasting, keeping awake at night, propitiating the *brāhmaṇas* or worshipping the deity with various *upācāras*, there are references to certain characteristic Vaiṣṇava rituals like *nāmsaṃkīrtana* or *nāmagānas*, entertaining the deity through singing, dancing and playing musical instruments, reciting or listening to the stories of the birth of the deity etc.⁸ It is possible to discern in all these rites and customs a distinct influence of *bhakti* to Kṛṣṇa.⁹ And *bhakti* without emotional fervour as explains Kṛṣṇa in the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*,¹⁰ cannot purify. It thus becomes necessary that the activities of the devotees, stimulated by emotional

6. Hazra, *Op.cit.*, pp.187-188.

7. See Table IX.

8. See Table XII.

9. Kṛṣṇa in *Brahmavaivartta Purāṇa* has not been presented as an incarnation of Viṣṇu but as the supreme deity Himself. See Rawal, *Op.cit.*, p.242.

10. *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, Chap.11, Verse 14 (transl.), pp.23-24.

attachment to the Lord, are continually directed into more general cultic activities in His service. This includes among other things, as mentioned by Kṛṣṇa in the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* -

"... Reciting my births and acts; merriment in my temple with songs, dancing, musical instrument..... keeping my vows;"¹¹

From Patañjali's reference to the sounding of musical instruments in the temples of *Dhanapati*, *Rāma* and *Keśava*,¹² we come to know that music and dance formed an important constituent in temple-worship, especially during festivals. And according to the *Viṣṇudharmottara Purāṇa*, it is far more meritorious to dedicate a song, dance or musical instrument rather than offerings of flowers, food etc. It not only fulfils all desires but is equivalent to the performance of a sacrifice.¹³

The Vaiṣṇava texts also lay great emphasis on *nāmasaṃkīrtana* or *nāmagāna*, an unbroken recitation of the names of *Rāma* and *Kṛṣṇa*, often accompanied by singing, dancing and the playing of musical instruments. This

11. *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, Chap.11, Verse 14 (transl.), pp.34-40.

12. Jaiswal, *Op.cit.*, p.145.

13. *Viṣṇudharmottara Purāṇa*, Chap.3, Verse 34, pp.25-27.

practice which is popular even today may have received an impetus from the sentiments of *bhakti* according to which uttering the name of a chosen deity on every occasion was believed to bring great merit. Infact with the passage of time, *nāmasaṁkīrtana* became so popular that it began to be considered more meritorious than worshipping the deity with elaborate rituals. This shift of emphasis from costly rituals to simple *nāmajapa*, as S. Jaiswal points out, "contributed a great deal to the popularization of Vaisnavism."¹⁴

Attempts at popularization are also noticed in the introduction of *vrata kathās* (a recitation or hearing of anecdotes depicting the efficacy of the *vrata*) as an integral part of most of the vows.¹⁵ In the *Matsya Purāna* and the *Nārada Purāna*, the *vratee* is usually advised to recite from or listen to certain sacred texts like the *Purānas*.¹⁶ But a narrative or a *vrata-kathā* which constitutes an integral part of popular *vratas* even today, is conspicuous by its absence in these texts. Though such narratives are not peculiar to Vaiṣṇava *vratas*, generally their absence in the Śākta and Śaiva texts studied here

14. Jaiswal, *Op.cit.*, pp.144-145.

15. See Table XII.

16. See Tables I-VI.

renders these important for discussion. These stories which are usually in the nature of myths or legends are believed to have acted as effective devices to commend the efficacy of the *vratas* amongst the common people. In the case of the *Punyaka vrata*, for instance, the popular story of the marriage of Śiva and Pārvati and the birth of Gaṇeśa¹⁷ has been utilized to popularize a *Vaiṣṇava vrata*.

Another feature of the *Vaiṣṇava vratas* in this text is the *pañcādevopasanā* (worship of five deities or at times even six deities). Though the principal deity here is Kṛṣṇa (Viṣṇu) the text permits the propitiation of other deities like Gaurī, Śiva etc.¹⁸ In spite of sectarian exclusiveness then, the *Brahmavaivartta Purāṇa* demonstrates a spirit of tolerance and reconciliation towards other sects. This formed the basic principle of the *Pancarātna puja* followed by the *Smārtas*. The main deity who is placed at the centre is worshipped together with four or five other deities.¹⁹ For instance, if the chief deity is Viṣṇu or Kṛṣṇa, the other deities would be Śiva, Śakti, Gaṇeśa and Surya or Brahma and occasionally even Agni.²⁰ The typical *Vaiṣṇava*

17. See Table XII.

18. See Table XII.

19. V.S. Pathak, *History of Śaiva Cults in Northern India from Inscriptions* (Allahabad: 1980), p.56.

20. *Brahmavaivartta Purāṇa*, *Srikrṣṇajanmakhaṇḍa*, Chap.28 (transl.), p.495.

rites characterizing the *vratas* in this text are conspicuous by their absence in the other two texts.

II

THE DEVIBHĀGAVATA PURĀNA

The *Devibhāgavata Purāna* is a *Śākta Purāna* and may be placed approximately between the 11th and 12 centuries A.D. Although the *Devibhāgavata Purāna* mentions a number of vows propitiating Goddess Dūrgā, it is only the *Navarātra* vow which is described in detail. The *Navarātra vrata*, even today, is one of the most popular *Śākta* festivals celebrated in various parts of the country. Here I would like to highlight some of the typical *Śākta* rites which are related to this festival and thereby distinguish these *Śākta vratas* from *Vaiṣṇava* or *Śaiva vrata*.

One of the most significant features of the *Navarātra vrata* is the sacrifice performed on either *astami* or *navamī tithi* (the eighth or ninth lunar day).²¹ This sacrifice, considered as most efficacious in propitiating the 'Devī', mainly consists of the offering of an animal (goat or wild boar) which is killed before the deity. Since the animals offered in sacrifice are believed to attain 'unending

21. See Table XIII.

heaven,²² the persons responsible for killing them are absolved from increasing any sin. This sacrifice, unlike a Vedic sacrifice lays greater emphasis on the material offered rather than on elaborate oblations and sacerdotalism and is therefore a *dravyayajña* or material sacrifice.²³ It is thus a typical Puranic sacrifice. However, it is different from other Puranic sacrifices in that the item or material sacrificed here is an animal and is thus characteristic of the Śākta cult. The text also recommends the offering of fish (*matsya*) and flesh (*maṃsa*) as *naivedya* before the deity on *aṣṭamī tithi*.²⁴ It may be noted here that worshipping the deity with *maṃsa* (meat) and *matsya* (fish) constitute integral parts of the five M's or *Mākaras* - a typical, tantric ritual.²⁵ And since Śaktism was largely influenced by Tāntricism, here a similar connection cannot be ruled out.

The influence of Tantricism is evident in several other rites and rituals constituting the *Navarātra vrata*: the use

22. *Devibhāgavata Purāna*, Chap.26, Verse 33-34 (transl.), p.227.

23. Lalye, *Op.cit.*, p.198.

24. *Devibhāgavata Purāna*, Chap.27, Verse 11 (transl.), p.230.

25. A.L. Basham, *The Wonder that was India* (Delhi, 1967), p.340.

of the seed *mantras*²⁶ or nine-lettered *Durgā mantra*,²⁷ the drawing of a diagram or *yantra*²⁸ as a symbol, virgin-worship etc. The *mantras* here are used not merely as combinations of letters or words. The seed or *vija mantras* or nine-lettered *mantra* consists of a number of unetymological vocables, e.g. *Hrim*, *Srm*, *Dum*, which are really the abbreviation of the names of the deity and her functions. These represent the *iṣṭadevata* or core-deity of the aspirant (here *Durgā*) to be visualized and retained by him through spiritual efforts. Thus, these *mantras* have a deeper spiritual significance and historically are a continuation of the archaic magical belief in the efficacy of the sound.²⁹ It is through uttering these *mantras* that the *vratee* wishes to achieve his desired object.

Similarly the drawing of a geometrical diagram or *yantra* included in the *Navarātra* festival is an important part of the *bahiryāga* or external worship of *Sakti*. The *yantra* is not an ordinary geometrical diagram but is often considered as the deity itself. One of the most popular

 26. *Devibhāgavata Purāna*, Chap.26, Verse 12-17 (transl.) p.226.

27. *Ibid.*, Chap.26, Verse 52 (transl.), p.228.

28. *Ibid.*, Chap.26, Verse 21-22 (transl.), p.226.

29. N.N. Bhattacharya, *History of the Tāntric Religion* (New Delhi: 1982), pp.327-330.

forms of the yantra is the Śricakra consisting of the yonis i.e. female organs.³⁰

Another striking feature of the Navarātra vrata is kumārī-pujā or virgin worship. The Devibhāgavata Purāna gives a detailed description as to how different categories of virgins were to be propitiated for achieving various aims.³¹ It has been mentioned in the earlier chapter that the propitiation of virgin girls was an important feature of the Sakta cult. This is evident from the high position conferred on virgin-girls who are regarded as the very embodiment of auspiciousness and representatives of the goddess Herself. The influence of Tantricism is evident in this case too.

III

LINGA PURĀNA

The *Linga Purāna*, a Śaiva text, was composed roughly between the 10th and 12th centuries. The Śaiva vratas prescribed in this text consist of the same rites and rituals as any other Puranic vrata mentioned in the

30. Bhattacharya, *Op.cit.*, p.332.

31. *Devibhāgavata Purāna*, Chap.26, Verse 37-51 (transl.), p.228.

different texts.³² However, mention may be made of certain rites which though not common to most Saivite vows are peculiar to certain particular and more popular Saiva vratas. Here reference should be made to the *Pāśupata vrata* as already mentioned, which mainly consists of such peculiar practices as the besmearing of the body with sacred ashes or *bhasma*, sleeping over ashes etc. The merits of using the *bhasma* is repeatedly pointed out in the *Purāṇa*. According to the text, the *Bhasma* is the energy (*virya*) of Siva and is capable of bringing good and destroying one's sin.³³ The *Pāśupata Sūtra* also enjoins a devotee to besmear the body with ashes thrice a day and to sleep on ash so as to free himself from sins of heinous crimes.³⁴ That it was a characteristic feature of most ascetics belonging to the *Pāśupata* school is corroborated by several epigraphic records. The Udeypur Inscription of *Naravāhana*, for instance, mentions ascetics of the *Pāśupata* school "having the characteristics of the besmearing of ashes, wearing of the barks of trees and matted hair".³⁵ According to the Harsha inscription, "nakedness, matted hair, besmearing of ashes, sleeping on the earth, food received as alms and the

32. See Table XIV.

33. Gangadharan, *Op.cit.*, p.91.

34. Pathak, *Op.cit.*, p.17.

35. *Ibid.*, p.15.

hands used as drinking cup" were the features of the ascetic *Bhavadyota*.³⁶ It is thus evident that the influence of the *Pāśupata* school of Saivism was widespread. Even the *Nārada Purāṇa* which is primarily a Vaisnavite text prescribes the besmearing of the body with ashes as an important rite in the observance of the *Umā-Maheśvara vrata*,³⁷ another Śaiva vrata. The *Liṅga Purāṇa*, however does not prescribe this rite while describing the same vrata, nor is it included in any of the *Vaiṣṇava* or *Śakta* vratas mentioned in either the *Brahmavaivartta Purāṇa* or the *Devibhāgavata Purāṇa*.

It is evident from the above discussion that *Puranic* vratas, as described in the three texts selected here, show distinct sectarian characteristics which can be related to the increasing sectarian nature of the contemporary religious currents. This distinctive sectarian character that the vratas acquired in these later texts were conspicuously absent in the *Matsya Purāṇa* and barely visible in the *Nārada Purāṇa* and reflect on the increasing differences in religious sects.

36. Pathak, *Op.cit.*, p.16.

37. *Nārada Purāṇa*, Chap.124, Verse 35 (transl.), p.1533.

TABLE VII: VRATAS IN THE MATSYA PURANA

VRATAS HONOURING VIṢṆU	VRATAS HONOURING GAURI/DURGĀ	VRATAS HONOURING ŚIVA	VRATAS HONOURING OTHER DEITIES
Madanadvādaśī vrata	Saubhāgyaśayana vrata	Kṛṣṇāṣṭami vrata	Sarasvata vrata (Sarasvati)
Rohinīcandraśayana vrata	Anantatritiyā vrata	Maheśvara vrata	Saptami vrata (Dharmarāja)
Akṣayatritiyā vrata	Rasakalyāṇinī- tritiyā vrata	Devavrata Rudravrata	Angāraka vrata (Mars)
Bhimadvādaśī vrata	Ardranandakari tritiyā vrata	Siva vrata	Kalyāṇasaptami vrata (Sun)
Anaṅgadāna vrata	Gauri vrata	Viravrata	Viśokāsaptami vrata (Sun)
Viśokāsaptamī vrata	Rudra vrata	Siṭā vrata	Mandārasaptami vrata (Sun)
Viṣṇu vrata	Mahā vrata	Dipti vrata	Unnamed vrata (Sun)
Vibhutidvādaśī vrata		Dharā vrata	Saṅkranti vrata
Lilā vrata		Prāptivrata	Sarasvata vrata (Sarasvati Devi)
Pitr̥ vrata		Vaihayaka vrata	Surya vrata (Surya)
Viṣṇu vrata		Varsa vrata	Dridhā vrata (Varuṇa)
Priti vrata		Prajāpatya vrata	Kalpa vrata (Brahmā)
Kānti vrata		Trayambaka vrata	Sugati vrata (Indra)
Bhumi vrata		Kalyāṇa vrata	Vaivaśnara vrata (Brahmā)
Kṛṣṇa vrata		Bhavānī vrata	
Phala vrata		Soma vrata	Surya vrata (Sun)
Viṣṇu vrata		Śiva vrata	
TOTAL: 17	7	18	15

TOTAL NUMBER OF VRATAS: 57

TABLE VIII: VRATAS IN THE NĀRADA PURĀNA

VRATAS HONOURING VIṢṆU	VRATAS HONOURING GAURI/DURGĀ	VRATAS HONOURING ŚIVA	VRATAS HONOURING OTHER DEITIES
Dvādaśī vrata	Navarātra vrata	Rojaka vrata	Saurivrata (Sun)
Pūrṇimā vrata	Gauri vrata	Unnamed vrata	Karavirapratipad vrata (tree)
Dhvajāropana vrata	Svarnagaurī vrata	Mahatmā vrata	Aśoka vrata (Aśoka tree)
Haripañcamī vrata	Haritālikā vrata	Unnamed vrata	Unnamed vrata (Sun)
Māsopavāsa vrata	Hastagaurī vrata	-- do --	Netra vrata (Aśvins)
Ekādaśī vrata	Brhadgaurī vrata	Amuktabarana vrata	Unnamed vrata (Brahmā)
Annakuta vrata	Viṣṇugaurī vrata	Phalāsaptanī vrata	- do - (Sun)
Dhana vrata	Haragaurī vrata	Acalā vrata	Aśokasayana vrata (Brahmā)
Unnamed vrata	Brahmagaurī vrata	Unnamed vrata	Unnamed vrata (Bhadra)
Matsyajayanti vrata	Saubhāgya Sundarī vrata	Durvāṣṭamī vrata	-do- (Yama)
Dasaphala vrata	Unnamed vrata	Unnamed vrata	-do- (Pitrs)
Unnamed vrata	Gaurī vrata	Unnamed vrata	-do- (Prajāpati)
Kṛṣṇajanmaṣṭamī vrata	Lalitā vrata	- do -	-do- (Gaṇeśa)
Rāmanavamī vrata	Unnamed vrata	- do -	-do- (Gaṇeśa)
Unnamed vrata	- do -	- do -	-do- (Ganesa)
Daśāvātara vrata	- do -	- do -	Sativrata (Gaṇapati)
Kāmoda Ekādaśī	- do -	- do -	Unnamed vrata (Gaṇapati)
Varuthinī Edādaśī	- do -	- do -	-do- (Gaṇapati)
Mohinī Ekādaśī	- do -	- do -	-do- (Gaṇapati)
Aparā Ekādaśī	Matrivrata	Liṅga vrata	Durgāgaṇapati vrata (Gaṇapati, Durgā)
Nirjalā Ekādaśī	Unnamed vrata	Unnamed vrata	Bahulādhenuka vrata (Cow)
Yoginī Ekādaśī	- do -	Unnamed vrata	Siddhavināyaka vrata (Gaṇeśa)
Śāyanī Ekādaśī	- do -	Rudra vrata	Karakā vrata (Gaṇeśa)
Kāmikā Ekādaśī	- do -	- do -	Nāga vrata (Śeṣa)
Pavitra/Putradā Ekādaśī	Kaumārī vrata	Śivarātri vrata	Vara vrata (Gaṇeśa)
Aja Ekādaśī	Nandānavamī vrata	Virupākṣa vrata	
Padma Ekādaśī	Mahanavamī vrata	Unnamed vrata	
Indirā Ekādaśī	Nandininavamī vrata	Umā-Maheśvara vrata	
Pasaṅkuśa Ekādaśī	Unnamed vrata		
Rama Ekādaśī	- do -		
Prabodhinī Ekādaśī	Ānandanavamī vrata		
Utpanna Ekādaśī	Pavitraropana vrata		
Mokṣa Ekādaśī	Pāsana vrata		
Saphala Ekādaśī	Durgā vrata		
Putradā Ekādaśī	Kokilā vrata		
Sattila Ekādaśī			
Jayā Ekādaśī			
Vijayā Ekādaśī			
Āmalaki Ekādaśī			
Pāpamocanikā Ekādaśī			
Madana vrata			

Bharṭṛ-dvādaśikā vrata
Nirājana vrata
Akhandadvādaśī vrata
Rupa vrata
Gotrirātra vrata
Unnamed vrata
Gopadma vrata
Anantacturdasi vrata

Annasamṛddhi-da
vrata (Devas)
Unnamed vrata
(five sages)
Kumāra vrata
(Skanda).
Varunaṣaṣṭhi
vrata (Varuṇa).
Gangā vrata
(Jahhavi)
Kamalā vrata
(Sun)
Nimba vrata
(Sun).
Sarkarāsaptamī
vrata (Sun)
Aryanga vrata
(Sun)
Mitra vrata
(Sun)
Abhayasaptamī
vrata (Sun)
Sarvaptisaptamī
vrata (Sun)
Rathasaptamī
vrata (Sun)
Arkaputa
vrata (Sun)
Aśoka vrata
(Asoka tree)
Gopāṣṭamī
(Cows)
Unnamed vrata
(Sitalā)
Arogyavrata
(10 brāhmaṇas)
Dvādaśāditya
vrata (Adityas)
Mahāvarunī vrata
(Kāma)
Ratikāma vrata
(Kāma)
Trirātaśoka vrata
(Aśoka tree)
Dhanadā vrata
(Kubera)
Kadali vrata
(Plantain tree)
Brahmakurcāvratā
(Devas)

Yamatapana vrata
(Yama)
Dharmarāja vrata
(Dharmarāja)
Vatasāvitrikā
vrata (Sāvitri/
Vatatree)
Vedopakarma vrata
(Sages)
Kojāgara vrata
(Lakṣmi)
Holikā vrata
(Holikā/Kāma)

TOTAL	49	33	24	57
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TOTAL NUMBER OF VRATAS: 163

TABLE IX: VRATAS IN THE BRAHMAVAIVARTTA PURĀNA

VRATAS HONOURING VIṢṢU	VRATAS HONOURING GAURI/DURGĀ	VRATAS HONOURING ŚIVA	VRATAS HONOURING OTHER DEITIES
PUNYAKA VRATA	GAURI VRATA	NIL	SAVITRI VRATA (SAVITRI)
JANMĀṢṢAMI VRATA			MAṅGALCANDIKĀ VRATA (MAṅGAL CANDIKĀ)
TRAYEEMASIKĀ VRATA			ṢAṢṢHI VRATA (ṢAṢṢHI)
EKĀDAŚI VRATA			MAHĀLAKṢMI VRATA (LAKṢMI)
TOTAL	4	1	NIL
			4

TOTAL NUMBER OF VRATAS: 9

TABLE X: VRATAS IN DEVIBHĀGAVATA PURĀNA

VRATAS HONOURING VIṢṢU	VRATAS HONOURING GAURI/DURGĀ	VRATAS HONOURING ŚIVA	VRATAS HONOURING OTHER DEITIES
NIL	NAVARĀTRA VRATA	NIL	NIL
TOTAL: NIL	1	NIL	NIL
TOTAL NUMBER OF VRATAS: 1			

TABLE XI: VRATAS IN THE LINGA PURĀNA

VRATAS HONOURING VIṢṢU	VRATAS HONOURING GAURI/DURGĀ	VRATAS HONOURING ŚIVA	VRATAS HONOURING OTHER DEITIES
NIL	NIL	ŚIVA VRATA PĀŚUPATA VRATA UMĀ-MAHEŚVARA VRATA	NIL
TOTAL: NIL	NIL	3	NIL
TOTAL NUMBER OF VRATAS: 3			

TABLE XII: VRATAS IN HONOUR OF VISNU IN THE BRAHMAVAIVARTTA PURĀNA

SERIAL NO.	NAME	DATE	BRIEF DESCRIPTION
1.	<i>Punyaka vrata</i>	Thirteenth lunar day in the bright fortnight of <i>Māgha</i> , to be continued for one year	Appointing a priest; bathing; installing a water-pot; fasting; worshipping with 16 <i>upācāras</i> ; performing <i>homa</i> ; eating <i>haviṣya</i> and fruits for 5-6 months; sustaining on water in one fortnight and ghee in another; feeding <i>brāhmaṇas</i> ; giving <i>daksina</i> , cloth, gola; staying up at night; breaking fast with kinsmen <i>udyapana</i> rite - after one year; listening to <i>vratākathā</i>
2.	<i>Janmāṣṭamī vrata</i>	Eighth lunar day of <i>Bhādrapada</i>	Controlling senses and eating <i>haviṣya</i> on 7th lunar day; next day, fasting; bathing; building a <i>Svtikā-bhavan</i> etc; installing a water-pot; worshipping 5 deities (<i>pañcodevapasanā</i>); worshipping <i>Kṛṣṇa</i> with different <i>upācāras</i> ; offering different items to the deity; reciting from <i>Sama Veda</i> ; giving <i>dakṣiṇā</i> to <i>brāhmaṇas</i> ; listening to the story of birth of <i>Śrīkṛṣṇa</i> ; keeping awake at night; feeding <i>brāhmaṇas</i> ; finally performing <i>nāmasaṅkīrtana</i>
3.	<i>Trayeemasikā vrata</i> or three monthly fast	Starting with <i>Vaiśākha</i> should continue for 3 months	Fasting, eating <i>haviṣya</i> ; worshipping <i>Viṣṇu</i> either in a water-pot or fire or water or <i>Śālagrāma</i> ; worshipping 5 deities (<i>pañeodevapasanā</i>) muttering <i>mantra</i> from <i>Sāma Veda</i> ; worshipping with 16 <i>upācāras</i> ; offering 108 oblations every day; feeding 100 <i>brāhmaṇas</i> every day; performing <i>nāmasaṅkīrtana</i> , with songs, music, dance, listening to <i>vratākathā</i>
	<i>Ekādaśī vrata</i>	Eleventh lunar day in both fortnights of every month	Sustaining on <i>haviṣya</i> ; fasting, even avoiding water throughout night; sleeping alone on bed made of <i>kuśa</i> grass; bathing; worshipping deity with 16 <i>upācāras</i> ; installing water pot, worshipping 6 deities; reciting <i>Sama Veda</i> ; giving <i>dakṣiṇā</i> to <i>brāhmaṇa</i> ; keeping awake at night; performing <i>nāmasaṅkīrtana</i>

SIGNIFICANCE	NATURE OF DEITY	NATURE OF DEVOTEE	REWARD	PAGE NO
Śatarupā, wife of Manu and others performed this vrata	Kṛṣṇa	Women	One obtains sons, attains Vaikunṭha (Viṣṇu's realm)	243-246
-	Kṛṣṇa	Men and women	One's progeny increases, he attains liberation from sins, salvation, freedom from rebirth	378-381
-	Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa	Women	One obtains salvation with husband, becomes the mother of sons for 100 births, never becomes separated from husband and sons etc.	430-433
-	Kṛṣṇa	Men and women	One becomes the servant of Kṛṣṇa, liberates progenies	492-496

TABLE XIII: DESCRIPTION OF ŚĀKTA VRATAS IN THE DEVIBHĀGAVATA PURĀNA

SERIAL NO.	NAME	DATE	BRIEF DESCRIPTION
1.	Navarātra vrata	First lunar day	<p>On new moon day, collecting materials; eating <i>haviṣya</i> only once, preparing an open shade in a temporary building; erecting an altar; inviting <i>brāhmaṇas</i> well-versed in worshipping the Devī</p> <p>On first lunar day, bathing; fasting; worshipping deity; installing idol, or water-pot filled with gold, 5 young shoots, etc.; drawing a diagram or yantra; approaching <i>brāhmaṇas</i> for reading from sacred texts; worshipping the deity with <i>Vīja mantra</i>; 2nd lunar day onwards, making a <i>saṅkalpa</i> (avowal of the purpose to perform a rite); worshipping deity with different <i>upācāras</i>; sacrificing animals before the deity; propitiating virgins; feeding <i>brāhmaṇas</i> etc. The method is repeated every day</p>

SIGNIFICANCE	NATURE OF DEITY	NATURE OF DEVOTEE	REWARD	PAGE I
A trader fulfills his desires by performing this vrata Rāma performed this vow to win over Rāvaṇa and get back Sītā	Devī or Durgā	Men and women	One attains riches, crops, sons and grandsons, prosperity, happiness, longevity, learning, heaven etc.	225-234

TABLE XIV: VRATAS IN HONOUR OF ŚIVA IN THE LINGA PURĀṆA

SERIAL NO.	NAME	DATE	BRIEF DESCRIPTION
1(a)	Unnamed vrata	<i>Paṇṣa</i>	Worshipping the deity; eating only at night (food consisting of Sali rice, wheat and milk products); speaking truth, controlling anger; on 8th lunar day in both fortnights - fasting; sleeping on bare ground; on full moon day bathing Rudra with ghee etc.; worshipping and deity; feeding <i>brāhmaṇas</i> with barley cooked in milk and ghee; performing <i>japa</i> ; dedicating a tawny-coloured cow and bull to Śiva
{b}	- do -	<i>Māgha</i>	Fasting; eating only once at night (<i>kṛsara</i> and ghee); restraining sense-organs; fasting on 14th lunar day both fortnights, offering a black cow and black bull with ghee and blanket; worshipping Śiva; feeding <i>brāhmaṇas</i>
{c}	- do -	<i>Phālguna</i>	Eating only at night (food consisting of cooked rice of Syamaka, ghee, milk; conquering anger and sense-organs; fasting on 8th and 14th lunar days bathing; worshipping Śiva; on full moon day, dedicating a cow and bull to Him; feeding <i>brāhmaṇa</i> ; praying
{d}	- do -	<i>Caitra</i>	Worshipping the deity; having food (Sali rice cooked with milk and ghee) at night; sleeping in a cowpen on bareground at night; on full moon day bathing Śiva; dedicating a white cow; bull to Him; feeding <i>brāhmaṇas</i>
{e}	- do -	<i>Vaiśākha</i>	Taking food at night; bathing the deity on fullmoon day with <i>pañcagavya</i> , ghee, etc.; dedicating a white cow and bull
{f}	- do -	<i>Jyeṣṭha</i>	Worshipping deity; taking food only at night (red Sali rice purified by

SIGNIFICANCE	NATURE OF DEITY	NATURE OF DEVOTEE	REWARD	PAGE NO.
-	Śiva	not specified	One attains world of fire-god, later liberation	412
-	- do -	- do -	One attains world of Yama	412-413
-	- do -	- do -	One attains identity with Moon	413
-	- do -	- do -	One attains the abode of Nirṛti	413
-	- do -	- do -	One attains benefit of horse sacrifice	413
-	- do -	- do -	One is honoured in	414

			honey, water, ghee etc); serving cows for half the night; sitting in <i>Virāsana</i> ; on full moon day, bathing the deity; worshipping Him with <i>caru</i> ; feeding <i>brāhmaṇas</i> ; giving a cow and bull (smoke-like in colour)
{g}	- do -	Āṣāḍha	Taking fried grain flour mixed with ghee, sugar candy and milk products at night; bathing deity on full moon day, with ghee etc.; worshipping him; feeding learned <i>brāhmaṇas</i> ; giving a white cow and white bull
{h}	- do -	Śrāvaṇa	Worshipping the deity; taking <i>Sastika</i> rice cooked with milk at night; bathing deity with ghee etc.; on full moon day, worshipping Him; feeding <i>brāhmaṇas</i> ; offering sugarcane, and cow and bull with white toes
{f}	- do -	Bhādrapada	Taking food at night, consisting of left-overs of <i>homa</i> ; eating roots of trees during day-time; bathing and worshipping Siva on full moon day; dedicating a cow and bull with blue shoulders; feeding <i>brāhmaṇas</i>
{k}	- do -	Āśvina	Taking food at night consisting of ghee; worshipping Śiva on full moon day; feeding <i>brāhmaṇas</i> (devotees of Śiva); donating blue-coloured bull and cow
{l}	- do -	Kārttika	Worshipping the deity; taking food at night consisting of rice cooked in milk and ghee; bathing deity on full-moon day; offering <i>caru</i> (<i>naivedya</i>); feeding <i>brāhmaṇas</i> ; dedicating a cow and tawny coloured bull to the deity
{m}	- do -	Mārgaśirṣa	Taking food at night, consisting of barley, cooked with ghee, milk, etc.; bathing and worshipping the deity on full moon day; feeding <i>brāhmaṇa</i> ; giving cow and bull to him
2.	<i>Umā-Maheśvara vrata</i>	Full moon day, New moon day, <i>Aṣṭami</i> , <i>Caturdaśī</i>	Preparing <i>haviṣya</i> at night for a year; making an image of <i>Umā-Maheśvara</i> in gold or silver; after one year feeding <i>brāhmaṇas</i> ; giving them gifts; taking

		the world of Vāyu	
- do -	- do -	One attains the world of Varuṇa	414
- do -	- do -	One attains identity with Vāyu and becomes all pervasive like Him	414
- do -	- do -	One attains Yakṣaloka and becomes their king	415
- do -	- do -	One attains world of Indra	415
- do -	- do -	One attains identity with Śiva	415
- do -	- do -	One attains the world of the Moon	415- 416
Umā- Maheśvara	Men and women (virgin, widow, etc.)	Men attain identity with Śiva, women with Umā	416- 421

for a period of
one year

the image on a chariot to a Śiva temple, dedicating a trident to the deity; worshipping with thousand white lotuses; dedicating a silver lotus; dedicating the following things to the temple of deity - a bhara of black gingelly seeds cooked in ghee and jaggery in *Kārttika*; a bull in *Mārgaśīrṣa*; a trident in *Pauṣa*, a chariot in *Māgha*; a golden or silver image of Śiva in *Phālguna*; images of Bhava, Kumāra and Bhavānī in *Caitra*; a silver mountain (*Kailāsa*) in *Vaiśākha*; a liṅga (of metal) in *Jyestha*; a brick house in *Āṣāḍha*; a hillock of gingelly seeds, minerals in *Śrāvaṇa*; a hillock of Sali rice in *Bhādrapada*; a hillock of grains together with clothes in *Āśvina*; images of Uma and other deities in *Kārthika*; performing the *Mahāmeru vrata*-making a huge mountain of grains, seeds, etc; bedecked with minerals, umbrellas etc.; installing images of Śiva, Viṣṇu, Brahmā and other deities on it; worshipping; feeding *brāhmaṇas*; offering the *Mahāmeru* to Śiva.

3. Pāśupata
vrata

Not specified

Consecrating sacred fire by repeating Vedic *mantras*; fasting; bathing; wearing white clothes, sacred thread, garlands; performing sacrifice, with *mantra*; extinguishing the fire; taking *bhasma* (ash obtained after fire is extinguished) assiduously; wiping off his limbs and touching them along with *Agni mantra* etc.

Common features: The devotee should practice non-violence, truthfulness, non-
Common reward : Devotee attains identity with Śiva and obtains path of perfect
Virāsana - a particular posture practised by ascetics in meditation, sitting on

Śiva or Rudra	Vaiśyas, ascetics, forest- dwellers, house- holders	A learned <i>brāhmaṇa</i> liberates himself from all sins; and a person lying down on ashes attains identity with Śiva	662- 667
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stealing, celibacy, forgiveness, mercifulness, three times ablution, *Agnihotra* etc.
knowledge.
the hams.

CHAPTER IV

CHANGING PATTERNS OF RITUALS: FOCUS ON A FEW POPULAR VRATAS

The *vratas* prescribed in Puranic texts are not repetitive in nature, with the exception of a few. Many reasons may be suggested for this.¹ Since the Purāṇas are assignable to different periods of time, place, region and even authorship, the *vratas* mentioned in the different texts maintained a distinct and different identity. Moreover, when the *vratas* were incorporated into Brahmanical religion and were restructured and reformulated accordingly, the less popularly practised *vratas* probably went out of vogue rather rapidly and were not mentioned more than once. There is yet another possibility. Perhaps most of the *vratas* mentioned in the different Purāṇas were never practised but were rather schematic formulations deliberately introduced by the authors, and hence find mention only once. On the other hand, the *vratas* which were actually observed retained their popularity and were prescribed repeatedly. It may be worth mentioning that many of the *vratas* that occur repeatedly are in vogue in different parts of India even today.

1. Compare Tables VII-XI.

I will be studying in this Chapter the variations that are noticeable within the same vrata in the different Purāṇas that I have taken up for analysis in my dissertation - the *Matsya*, *Nārada*, *Brahmavaivartta*, *Devībhāgavata* and *Liṅga Purāṇas*. More specifically, the vratas discussed will be the *Madanadvādaśī vrata*, the *Janmāṣṭamī vrata*, the *Ekādaśī vrata*, the *Navarātrī vrata*, the *Gaurī vrata* and the *Umā-Maheśvara vrata*.

I

MADANADVĀDAŚĪ VRATA

The *Madanadvādaśī vrata*, as Table XV indicates, is a Vaiṣṇava vrata prescribed in the *Matsya Purāṇa* and also in the *Nārada Purāṇa*. Its mention in more than one Purāṇa shows that the vrata was in vogue and was regularly practised. Although the two texts are dateable to different time periods, there is hardly any variation in the description of the vow. The *Matsya Purāṇa* however recommends a more elaborate ritual-procedure including the *aṅgapūjā*, the worshipping of the images of Rati and Kāma, the reciting of the glories of Kāma and Keśava, the performance of sacrifice with sesamum etc.;² these features

2. *Matsya Purāṇa*, Chap.7, Verse 10-18 (transl.), pp.22-23.

are conspicuously absent in the *Nārada Purāṇa*.³ This is particularly striking because the *Nārada Purāṇa* in general prescribes a more elaborate ritual-pattern for conducting *vratas* in comparison to the *Matsya Purāṇa*. Perhaps the *Madanadvādaśī vrata* was losing its popularity by the time the *Nārada Purāṇa* was compiled.

II

JANMĀṢṬAMI VRATA

Perhaps the most popular of all the *Vaiṣṇava vratas* celebrated throughout India even today, the *Janmāṣṭamī vrata* has been mentioned both in the *Nārada Purāṇa* and the *Brahmavaivartta Purāṇa*. There is however a difference of opinion between the two texts regarding the exact date or *tithi* for celebrating the *vrata*. Whereas the *Nārada Purāṇa* prescribes *Kṛṣṇāṣṭamī* of *Śrāvaṇa*, the *Brahmavaivartta Purāṇa* recommends *aṣṭamī* of *Bhādrapada* as more auspicious.⁴ It may be mentioned here that the latter date is corroborated even by the *Bhavisyottara Purāṇa*.⁵ The *Varāha Purāṇa*, on the other hand, mentions that *Kṛṣṇa* was born on the twelfth of

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3. *Narada Purana*, Chap.121, Verse 2-10 (transl.), pp.1501-1502.
 4. See Table XVI.
 5. Kane, *Op.cit.*, p.131.

Āṣāḍha in the bright half⁶. However in the absence of any definite information in the *Harivaṃśa* (which merely mentions that the *nakṣatra* was *Abhijit* and the *muhūrta* *Vijaya* when *Kṛṣṇa* was born)⁷ it is difficult to arrive at any definite conclusion regarding the exact date and month. The divergent data only reflect the fluidity of the tradition. One can however say that since *Janmāṣṭamī* today is celebrated in India on *Kṛṣṇnāṣṭamī* of *Bhādrapada* which is also the date prescribed in later *Purāṇas* like the *Brahmavaivartta* and *Bhaviṣyottara*, this represents a more recent belief than the rest which were perhaps prevalent earlier.

The date apart, there is little or no difference between the two texts regarding the ritual pattern, aim etc. of the *vrata*. In both texts, the *vrata* represents a typical Puranic ritual.⁸ The description of the ritual procedure is however detailed more in the *Brahmavaivartta Purāṇa*. Here the *vratee*, apart from propitiating the deity with the usual fasting, worshipping etc. is to enact the events of the birth of *Kṛṣṇa* in all its details, listen to the story of His birth and finally participate in *nāmasaṃkīrtana* or

6. Kane, *Op.cit.*, p.133.

7. *Ibid.*

8. See Table XVI.

nāmagāna.⁹ The last two, as discussed before, are typical Vaiṣṇava practices influenced by *bhakti* and were largely responsible for popularising Vaisnavism. The very fact that such practices have been incorporated into the *Janmāṣṭamī vrata* in the *Brahmavaivartta Purāṇa* which is a later composition perhaps reflects the increasing relevance and growing popularity of this Vaiṣṇava vrata.

III

EKADASI VRATA

The description of the *Ekādaśī vrata*, another popular Vaiṣṇava vrata, is found in both the *Nārada Purāṇa* and the *Brahmavaivartta Purāṇa*. There is little or no difference in ritual procedure prescribed by the two texts.¹⁰ It may be pointed out that the vrata in the *Brahmavaivartta Purāṇa* includes such typical Vaiṣṇava rituals like *nāmasaṅkīrtana* which is not mentioned in the *Nārada Purāṇa*. Also the deity to be honoured in the former is not Viṣṇu but Kṛṣṇa.¹¹ He is represented here not as a mere incarnation of Viṣṇu but

9. *Brahmavaivartta Purāṇa*, Śrīkṛṣṇajanmakhaṇḍa, Chap.9 (transl.), pp.379-380.

10. See Table XVII.

11. *Brahmavaivartta Purāṇa*, Śrīkṛṣṇajanmakhaṇḍa, Chap.28 (transl.), pp.494-496.

as the chief deity. This is natural because the *Brahmavaivartta Purāṇa* was composed at a later period in the eastern region, more specifically Bengal, where Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā worship was popular. It is because of this that the text regards Kṛṣṇa as the supreme deity.¹²

However, in contrast to the *Brahmavaivartta Purāṇa*, the *Nārada Purāṇa* describes the *Ekādaśī vrata* in great detail. In fact the entire *Uttarārdha*, the second section of the text is dedicated to the glorification of this *vrata*. That this was the most important Vaiṣṇava *vrata* according to this text is also evident from the references to twelve different kinds of *Ekādaśī vratas*. The text also mentions different kinds of abstinences that the *vratee* is supposed to observe on the three days - *daśamī*, *ekādaśī* and *dvādaśī*¹³ (the tenth, eleventh and twelfth lunar days). Similar references are not found in the *Brahmavaivartta Purāṇa*. It is difficult to conclude whether the popularity of the *vrata* diminished or not by the time this Purana was composed. One can only say that unlike in the *Nārada Purāṇa*, the *Ekādaśī vrata* is certainly not the most important or popular *vrata* according to the *Brahmavaivartta Purāṇa*.

12. Rawal, *Op.cit.*, p.5.

13. *Nārada Purāṇa*, Chap.120, Verse 1-92 (transl.), pp.1491-1501.

IV

NAVARĀTRA VRATA

The Navarātra vrata celebrated in different parts of India even today is perhaps one of the most popular Sakta festivals. A detailed description of this vrata is traceable in both the *Devībhāgavata Purāṇa*, a Śākta text and the *Nārada Purāṇa* which reflects a distinct Vaiṣṇava influence. A comparative study¹⁴ of these two texts shows that in the *Nārada Purāṇa*, the Navarātra vrata is only at the initial stage of its formation. It should be noted here that the reference to this vrata is not found in any of the earlier Purāṇas. Although the vrata here is referred to as a festival of nine nights there is no mention of such typical Śākta rituals like animal sacrifice or such Brahmanical rites like propitiating the *brāhmaṇas* etc.¹⁵ All of these rituals are not only mentioned in the *Devībhāgavata Purāṇa*¹⁶ but characterize the Navarātra festival even today. Any reference to the installation of an image of Durgā, fully bedecked with ornaments and various

14. See Table XVIII.

15. *Nārada Purāṇa*, Chap.110, Verse 30-34 (transl.), pp.1425-1426.

16. *Devībhāgavata Purāṇa*, Chap.26, Verse 1-62 (transl.), pp.225-229.

weapons in her different arms is also absent.¹⁷ It may be suggested that the worship of the goddess here is symbolic. At the same time, the reference to a water-pot filled with germinating wheat and barley grains¹⁸ might very well indicate that the vrata was nothing but a fertility-cult in its origin. Here one may refer to a particular passage in the *Devimāhatya* section of the *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa*, where the goddess *Caṇḍi* says that she will be famed as *Śākambharī* in future and will sustain the whole world by filling it up with life-giving roots and crops sprouting from her own body in the downpour of rain¹⁹. Infact the concept of fertility has always been associated with the worship of the goddess. This connection is traceable as far back as the Harappan age.²⁰ Mention ought to be made here of an oblong terracotta seal from Harappa which shows a nude female standing upside down with legs wide apart and a plant issuing from her womb. This seal can be compared to a terracotta relief of the early Gupta period from Bhita where the goddess is shown with her legs in almost the same position and a lotus issuing from her neck instead of from

17. See Table XVIII.

18. *Nārada Purāṇa*, Chap.110, Verse 30-31 (transl.), p.1425.

19. Banerjea, *Op.cit.*, p.112.

20. *Ibid.*, pp.165.

her womb. The underlying idea in the opinion of J.N. Banerjea is similar and can be expressed as "the goddess as the main source of nourishment."²¹

From the above discussion it is evident that the *Nārada Purāṇa* depicts the *Navarātra vrata* in the initial stages of its evolution. Another plausible explanation may be that the *Nārada Purāṇa* being a Vaiṣṇava text, refrains from indulging in any detailed discussion of a Śākta ritual. This is evident in the way Śakti is represented in the text in relation to Viṣṇu, the principal deity. Here it is Viṣṇu who is the controller of the world while Durgā or Śakti is His power and is related to Him. When Sakti is realized with Viṣṇu, She is the Almighty power. But when She is realized without Viṣṇu, She is nothing but *Māyā*.

The *Devībhāgavata Purāṇa* on the other hand, gives a detailed and elaborate account of the *Navarātra vrata*. The *vrata* here develops into a full-fledged festival extending over nine days with different kinds of rituals being prescribed for each day. The *vratee* is asked to commence the *vrata* from the *Amāvasyā tithi* itself. Besides other things he is asked to construct a *maṇḍapa* (an open shade in a temporary building), ornamental gateways with an awning

21. Banerjea, *Op.cit.*, p.112.

above, all according to specified measurements. The fact that a separate *maṇḍapa* is to be constructed in the open space outside the house perhaps indicates that the *vrata* here is no longer a private affair but a public festival. It may be for the same reason that the *vratee* is not asked to conduct the ritual individually but has to invite *brāhmaṇas* who are versed in the Vedas and *Vedaṅgas*²² and especially skilled in the ceremony of worshipping the Devi. Even the *Candipāṭha* and *Bhagavatapāṭha* on the *pratipad tithi* are to be conducted by *brāhmaṇas* appointed for the purpose. Moreover the devotee is asked to satisfy the *brāhmaṇas* before they begin the *pūjā*. Since the entire affair is conducted by them, it is only by propitiating them that the *vratee* could hope to make the *vrata* a success. This is indeed a significant change in comparison to the nature of the *vrata* in the *Nārada Purāṇa* where the *vrata* is totally a personalized affair to be performed by the *vratee* himself without any priestly mediation.²³

Other changes also need to be discussed. For instance, the water-pot representing the deity in the *Nārada Purāṇa* is replaced in the *Devībhāgavata Purāṇa* by a huge idol of the goddess fully decorated with ornaments and weapons in her

 22. *Devībhāgavata Purāṇa*, Chap.26-27, pgs. 225-229, 229-234.

23. See Table XVIII.

four or eighteen arms. In cases of difficulty, the image is replaceable by a water-pot containing five young shoots of plants. A full *kalasa* or *ghata* (water jar) has been a symbol of holiness and prosperity from the early Vedic times (Refer to *Rg.III 52.15, apūrṇa asya kalasah*).²⁴ But its inclusion here reiterates the connection between Devi-worship and a fertility cult. It may be noted here that the establishment of a *ghata* is a major ritual in the Navaratra festival celebrated in the Deccan,²⁵ Gujarat and Saurashtra; in Bengal which is well known for its autumnal *Dūrgā pūjā*, worshipping of *navapatrikā* or nine sprouts marks the beginning of the festival.²⁶ According to the *Devībhāgavata Purāṇa*²⁷ the two most auspicious times for celebrating the festival occur in *Āśvina* and *Caitra* - the times when the autumn and spring crops become ready for harvesting. This reaffirms the connection that I have sought to establish between the *Navarātra vrata* and a fertility-cult.

Durga in this text is however not merely a fertility goddess. Rather, the description in the text reminds us of

 24. Kane, *Op.cit.*, p.183.

25. Kane, *Op.cit.*, p.183.

26. Chakravarty, *Op.cit.*, p.99.

27. *Devībhāgavata Purāṇa*, Chap. 26, Verse 18-20, 50-51, 58, 60 (transl.), pp.226-229.

the goddess in her typical *Durgā Mahiṣāsūramardīnī* form (the supreme war-goddess who killed the demon *Mahiṣāsura* and others and thus became *Durgatīnāśīnī*, the destroyer of all sufferings and calamities). The *Navarātrī* festival in the *Devībhāgavata Purāṇa* thus symbolises the triumph of the good over evil forces. It is in this form of the *Durga Mahiṣāsūramardīnī* that the goddess is worshipped in Bengal even today during the *Durgā pūjā*.²⁸

Besides, the reference to animal-sacrifices, the offering of meat as *naivedya* on specific days, the propitiation of virgin girls of different ages and castes for the fulfillment of specific desires, are significant changes²⁹ in the procedures of the *vrata*s and reflect the gradual development of the *vrata* to a full-fledged festival. This in turn indicates the increasing importance and popularity of the *Navarātra vrata*.

V

GAURI VRATA

The *Gaurī vrata* is another popular *vrata* in honour of the goddess *Gaurī* or *Bhavānī* and continues to be practised

28. Chakravarty, *Op.cit.*, p.94.

29. See Table XVIII.

by womenfolk of today. This vrata has been mentioned in as many as three Puranas - the *Matsya Purāṇa*, *Nārada Purāṇa* and the *Brahmavaivartta Purāṇa*.³⁰ If one tries to situate these texts in a chronological scheme inspite of certain inherent difficulties, the *Matsya Purāṇa* precedes the *Nārada Purāṇa* which in turn is followed by the *Brahmavaivartta Purāṇa*. Keeping in mind this tentative scheme, if one examines the Gaurī vrata, a gradual evolving pattern emerges. In the *Matsya Purāṇa*, for instance, the vratee is asked to observe the vow by simply invoking the deity, practising certain restraints regarding food, and propitiating a *brāhmaṇa* couple with gifts and eatables.³¹ As a reward, he is promised the "realm of Pārvati". There are no elaborate instructions to undertake a fast, keep awake at night or perform a *pūjā* - rituals which are common to most Puranic vratas. Moreover, although the vow is dedicated to goddess Gaurī (a form of Sakti), it bears no resemblance to a typical Śākta vrata. In other words rituals like the worship of virgins, the sacrifice of animals etc are not mentioned here. One should also note in this context that the text prescribes the vrata for both men and women but not for the latter specifically or for a

30. See Table XIX.

31. *Matsya Purāṇa*, Chap.101, Verse 7-8 (transl.), p.272.

particular objective.³² This is in contrast to the description of the same vrata in other texts. Thus one might conclude that the *Matsya Purāṇa* records the Gauri vrata in the initial stages of its formation.

In contrast, both the *Nārada* and *Brahmavaivartta Purāṇas* describe the Gauri vrata in greater detail. In both texts, the vrata is recommended exclusively for women, particularly unmarried virgins desirous of a bridegroom.³³ In the *Nārada Purāṇa*, however, even a married woman³⁴ is eligible to participate in the vrata in order to obtain "matrimonial bliss and good fortune for her sons and husband. Further, the vratee, whether married or unmarried, is asked to propitiate *brāhmaṇa* women (with husbands and sons alive) and girls "with auspicious characteristics" (virgins) with different items like saffron, collyrium, clothes etc.³⁵

In the *Brahmavaivartta Purāṇa*, on the other hand, there is no reference to the worship of virgins or married women

32. *Matsya Purāṇa*, Chap.101, Verse 7-8 (transl.), p.272.

33. *Nārada Purāṇa*, Chap.112, Verse 2-5 (transl.), p.1432; *Brahmavaivartta Purāṇa*, Śrīkṛṣṇajanakhaṇḍa, Chap.29 (transl.), p.501.

34. *Ibid.*, Chap.112, Verse 2-5 (transl.), p.1432.

35. *Ibid.*

by the vratee.³⁶ The fact that this text is Vaisnava in form probably determines the restraint in prescribing rites which are typical of the Śākta cult. The *Nārada Purāṇa* inspite of being primarily a Vaishnava *Purāṇa*, it needs to be reemphasized, is more liberal in its attitude towards other sectarian faiths and their rituals.

Both the *Nārada Purāṇa* and the *Brahmavaivartta Purāṇa* also prescribe, unlike the *Matsya Purāṇa*, an elaborate ritual procedure for the Gaurī vrata as is evident from Table XIX. This includes fasting, making an image of the deity, bathing, worshipping the deity with different upacaras etc. The instruction given in the *Brahmavaivartta Purāṇa* is even more detailed. Here, the vratee is not only required to observe the above rites but also to listen to a vrata-kathā, offer puja to six other deities, and entertain the deity with song, music and dance.³⁷

Other differences may also be cited. The deity to be propitiated in the *Nārada Purāṇa* and the *Matsya Purāṇa* is Gaurī. The *Nārada Purāṇa* instructs the vratee to construct an image of Gaurī along with her consort Siva.³⁸ In the

36. See Table XIX.

37. See Table XIX.

38. See Table XIX.

Brahmavaivartta Purāṇa, on the other hand, the *vrata* is dedicated to Durgā.³⁹ Both Durgā and Gaurī are forms of Śakti and are different images of the same Goddess. But Durgā, unlike Gaurī, Lalitā or Bhāvānī is not merely the wife of Śiva. She is the supreme war-goddess and is worshipped primarily in the eastern region, or more specifically Bengal. Since the provenance of the *Brahmavaivartta Purāṇa* is also located in Bengal, it is only natural that the *vrata* is dedicated to Durgā. Infact, in the text, instructions are given to the *vratee* to construct a ten-armed idol of Durgā (exactly in the way she is worshipped currently in Bengal) out of sand.⁴⁰ It is evident that in contrast to its description in the *Matsya Purāṇa*, the Gaurī *vrata* acquires prominence in both the *Nārada* and *Brahmavaivartta Purāṇas*. Not only does it become more elaborate in its ritual procedure, it acquires a specific purpose and is recommended for a particular group of participants - women.

39. See Table XIX.

40. *Brahmavaivartta Purāṇa*, Śrikr̥ṣṇajamakhaṇḍa, Chap.29 (transl.), p.501.

VI

UMA-MAHESVARA VRATA

Although the *Umā-Maheśvara vrata* has been recommended in the *Nārada*⁴¹ and *Liṅga Purānas*⁴² texts with differing sectarian affiliations, one does not notice much difference in ritual-patterns mentioned in the texts. The only noticeable difference lies in the duration of the *vrata* which becomes more prolonged in the *Liṅga Purāṇa*.⁴³ This is natural since the *Liṅga Purāṇa* reveals Śaiva affiliations and therefore attaches more importance to the *vrata*.

One interesting feature of the *vrata* in the *Nārada Purāṇa* is that it requires the *vratee* to smear his body with *bhasma*⁴⁴ - a Śaiva rite of the *Pāśupata* school. Thus, one can notice here an influence of the *Pāśupata* sect of Saivism. In the *Liṅga Purāṇa*, however, this rite is not included in the observance of the same *vrata*.⁴⁵ Instead the text prescribes a separate *vrata*, the *Pāśupata vrata* of

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41. *Nārada Purāṇa*, Chap.124, Verse 33-43 (transl.), pp.1532-1535.
42. *Liṅga Purāṇa*, Chapter 84, Verse 1-72, pp.416-421.
43. See Table XX.
44. *Nārada Purāṇa*, Chap.124, Verse 35 (transl.), p.1533.
45. *Liṅga Purāṇa*, Chap.84, Verse 1-72 (transl.), pp.416-421.

which the *Pāśupata* rite is the chief feature. Perhaps this particular ritual could not find support among the lay-worshippers of Śiva and was therefore deleted from the *Umā-Maheśvara vrata* which is prescribed for ordinary men and women. The *Pāśupata vrata* on the other hand is recommended mainly for ascetics, forest-dwellers and learned *brāhmaṇas* though house-holders are also given permission to practice it.

Further, in the *Nārada Purāṇa*, the vratee is promised fame and material wealth on observing the vrata. In the *Liṅga Purāṇa* on the other hand, the vratee is promised identity or *Sayuja* with the deity Himself.⁴⁶ Thus, the vrata, according to the *Liṅga Purāṇa*, becomes more effective thus suggesting its increasing importance.

In this chapter I have tried to trace through similar *vratas* prescribed in different Puranic texts, the changing patterns of *vratas* to indicate the shifting importance of these rituals as also the deities and the cults to which these *vratas* were affiliated.

46. See Table XX.

TABLE XV: DESCRIPTION OF MADANADVĀDAŚI VRATA IN THE DIFFERENT PURĀNAS

PURANA	MATSYA PURĀNA	NĀRADA PURĀNA
TIME	Twelveth lunar day in bright fortnight of Caitra, to be repeated every month for 1 year	Twelveth lunar day in bright fortnight of Caitra, to be repeated every month for 1 year
BRIEF DESCRIPTION	<p>Fasting; sleeping on floor; installing earthen/metal jar filled with fruits, sugarcane, white rice; covering it with copper plate containing fruits, gold, raw sugar; placing image of Cupid and Rati made of sugar on it; offering <i>angapuja</i>; offering sandal, incense, prayer along with music; reciting glories of Kāma and Keśava, giving jar to <i>brāhmaṇa</i>, honouring <i>brāhmaṇas</i> with food and gifts, breaking fast with food devoid of salt.</p> <p><i>Udyāpana</i> rite - worshipping golden image of Cupid; performing sacrifice with white sesamum, ghee; pronouncing different names of Cupid; worshipping priest and consort; honouring <i>brāhmaṇa</i> with food, gifts etc.</p>	<p>Placing a pot filled with white, raw rice grain; placing different types of fruits with stumps of sugarcane; applying white sandal on pot; covering it with white clothes; keeping various dishes of eatables, gold, a copper vessel of jaggery on the pot; worshipping the deity with all <i>upacaras</i>, fasting; next morning - honouring <i>brāhmaṇas</i> with food, gifts, <i>dakṣiṇā</i>.</p> <p><i>Udyāpana</i> rite - giving bed, cow etc. to preceptor; worshipping a <i>brāhmaṇa</i> couple, presenting a golden image of Kāma, cow and garments.</p>
PRIESTLY MEDIATION REQUIRED	No	No
SIGNIFICANCE	Diti, mother of demons begot the Maruṭs by observing this vrata	No
NATURE OF DEITY	Janārdana in the nature of Kama	Acutya in the form of Kāma
NATURE OF DEVOTEE	Not specified	Not specified
REWARDS	One attains liberation from evil, begets worthy children, passes away in peace.	One attains liberation from sins, and equality with Hari

TABLE XVI: DESCRIPTION OF JANKĀṢṬĀMI VRĀTA IN THE DIFFERENT PURĀNAS

PURANA	NĀRADA PURĀNA	BRAHMAVAIVARTTA PURĀNA
TIME	Eighth lunar day in dark fortnight of Śravana	Eighth lunar day of Bhādrapada
BRIEF DESCRIPTION	Fasting; bathing with gingelly seeds, mixed in pure water of a river; making a mystic diagram on platform, placing a water-pot on it and over that a golden image of Kṛṣṇa; worshipping with sixteen upacaras; worshipping Devaki, Vāsudeva, etc.; staying up at night; offering naivedya, āratikā, arghya etc.; reciting hymns from Purāṇas; singing, playing instruments; honouring preceptor with gifts and dakṣiṇā, breaking fast	Controlling senses; eating haviṣya on saptamī; on aṣṭamī - fasting; bathing; building a Sutikā-bhavana; making all arrangements for birth of a baby; installing a water-pot; worshipping five deities; worshipping Kṛṣṇa with five different upācāras; reciting from Sāma Veda; giving dakṣiṇā to brāhmaṇa; listening to the story of birth of Kṛṣṇa; keeping awake at night; feeding brāhmaṇas; performing nāmasaṅkīrtana
PRIESTLY MEDIATION REQUIRED	No	No
SIGNIFICANCE	- do -	- do -
NATURE OF DEITY	Kṛṣṇa together with Devaki, Vāsudeva etc.	Kṛṣṇa
NATURE OF DEVOTEE	Not specified	Men and women
REWARD	One attains Goloka with family servants, obtains benefit of a crore of Ekādaśī vrata	One attains progeny, liberation from sins, freedom from rebirth

TABLE XVII: DESCRIPTION OF EKĀDĀŚI VRATA IN THE DIFFERENT PURĀNAS

PURANA	NĀRADA PURĀNA	BRAHMAVAIVARTTA PURĀNA
TIME	Eleventh lunar day in both fortnights of every month The <i>Nārada Purāna</i> prescribes as many as 24 <i>Ekādaśi vratas</i> to be performed on both fort-nights of every month.	Eleventh lunar day in both fortnights of every month
DESCRIPTION	On tenth lunar day controlling sense-organs; bathing; bathing Visnu; worshipping; avoiding night meal; on eleventh lunar day, constructing a pavilion; fasting; worshipping with <i>upācāras</i> , <i>japa</i> , <i>homa</i> , <i>pradakṣiṇas</i> , reciting hymns, singing, playing musical instruments; listening to Purānas; keeping awake at night; on the twelfth lunar day, fasting; bathing; bathing and worshipping Visnu; feeding <i>brāhmaṇas</i> , giving them various gifts and <i>dakṣiṇā</i> ; performing five sacrifices; breaking fast with kinsmen.	Fasting, taking <i>haviṣya</i> ; avoiding even water at night; sleeping alone on bed made of <i>Kuśa</i> grass; bathing; worshipping deity with 16 <i>upācāras</i> ; installing a water pot; worshipping 6 deities; reciting <i>mantra</i> from <i>Sāma Veda</i> , and <i>stava</i> for Viṣṇu; giving <i>dakṣiṇā</i> to <i>brāhmaṇas</i> ; keeping awake at night; performing <i>nāmasaṅkīrtana</i> .
PRIESTLY MEDIATION REQUIRED	No	No
SIGNIFICANCE	On tenth lunar day - abstaining from bell-metal vessel, meat, cooked lentil, Bengal gram, Kodrava grains, wine, food given by others; on eleventh lunar day - abstaining from	- do -

contd...

TABLE XVII contd...

gambling, sleeping, betel leaves, cleaning teeth, slandering, back-biting, stealing, injuring others, sexual intercourse, anger, lying; on twelveth lunar day, avoiding bell-metal, meat, wine, honey, oil, conversation with out-castes, physical desires, journey, second meal, sexual intercourse, contact with untouchables, cooked lentil.

NATURE OF
DEITY

Viṣṇu

Kṛṣṇa

NATURE OF
DEVOTEE

brāhmaṇa, kṣatriya, vaiśya,
śūdra and women

Men and women

REWARD

One attains *sarupya* with Hari, Viṣṇu's abode, worldly pleasure, liberation from sin, salvation.

One becomes servant of Viṣṇu, his progenies become liberated.

TABLE XVIII: DESCRIPTION OF NAVARĀTRA VRATA IN THE DIFFERENT PURĀNAS

PURANA	NĀRADA PURĀNA	DEVIBHĀGAVATA PURĀNA
TIME	First lunar day in bright fortnight of Āśvina, to be continued for 9 nights	First lunar day in bright fortnight of Āśvina or Caitra to be continued for 9 nights
BRIEF DESCRIPTION	Installing a water-pot in the afternoon; sowing barley and wheat grains in it; taking a single meal daily, or fasting; worshipping Goddess with mantras; reciting holy texts, reading 3 caritas from Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa; worshipping and feeding brāhmaṇas	On new moon day, collecting materials; eating haviṣya only once; preparing an open shade in a temporary building; erecting an altar etc; inviting brāhmaṇas, well versed in worshipping the Devi; on first lunar day, bathing; appointing brāhmaṇas for reading sacred texts; fasting and worshipping the deity; installing 4 or 18 armed idol on the altar, or a water pot filled with gold, 5 young shoots; drawing a diagram; placing all necessary items on one side; worshipping with different upācāras; offering animal sacrifice and homa; singing, dancing, playing musical instruments; worshipping virgins every day; offering payasa, flesh, fish to the deity; feeding brāhmaṇas.
PRIESTLY MEDIATION REQUIRED	No	No
SIGNIFICANCE	- do -	A trader fulfills his desires by performing this vrata. Rāmacandra performed the vow to win over Rāvaṇa and got back Sitā.

contd...

TABLE XVIII contd...

NATURE OF DEITY	Goddess (not specified)	Devi
NATURE OF DEVOTEE	Not specified	Men and women
REWARD	One attains worldly pleasures, salvation, <i>siddhi</i>	One attains riches, crops, sons and grandsons, prosperity, happiness, longevity, health, heaven, learning. One deprived of kingdom will get it back, the sin of <i>brāhmaṇa</i> murder, drinking liquor, stealing, adultery with wife of guru, association with such a person perishes on performing this <i>vrata</i> .

TABLE XIX: DESCRIPTION OF GAURI VRATA IN THE DIFFERENT PURĀNAS

PURĀNA	MATSYA PURĀNA	NĀRADA PURĀNA	BRAHMAVAIVARTTA PURĀNA
TIME	<i>Caitra</i>	Third lunar day in bright fortnight of <i>Caitra</i> , to be continued for 12 years	<i>Agrahayana</i>
BRIEF DESCRIPTION	Invoking pleasure of Goddess with 'Gaurī me priyatam'; abstaining from honey, milk, curds, ghee, molass, fine clothes, sugarcane juice; worshipping <i>brāhmaṇa</i> and wife	Making an image of Gaurī and Śiva in gold etc; worshipping with flowers, scents, clothes, ornaments etc.; fasting; propitiating <i>brāhmaṇa</i> women (whose husbands are alive) and virgins with saffron, collyrium etc.; keeping awake at night; giving image to preceptor or immersing it; <i>udyāpana</i> rite - donating 12 cows	Bathing; installing water-pot; worshipping 6 deities with 5 <i>upācāras</i> ; drawing a <i>maṇḍala</i> ; constructing an idol of Durga with 10 hands, with sand on the bank of a river; muttering <i>mantra</i> from <i>Sāma Veda</i> ; listening to <i>vrata-kathā</i> ; giving gold to <i>brāhmaṇas</i> , feeding them, with the accompaniment of songs, music etc.
PRIESTLY MEDIATION REQUIRED	No	No	No
SIGNIFICANCE	- do -	- do -	<i>Gopinīs</i> including Rādh performed this <i>vrata</i> to obtain Kṛṣṇa as husband
NATURE OF DEITY	Gaurī	Gaurī with Śiva	Durgā or Pārvatī

contd...

TABLE XIX contd...

NATURE OF DEVOTEE	Not specified	Unmarried virgins desirous of husband, married women desirous of conjugal bliss and good fortune for husband and sons	Young women desirous of good husband
REWARD	Attains realm of Pārvatī	One attains good husband, sons, conjugal bliss, fame, wealth, happiness etc.	One attains good husband, <i>Goloka</i>

TABLE XX: DESCRIPTION OF UMĀ-MAHEŚVARA VRATA IN THE DIFFERENT PURĀNAS

PURANA	NĀRADA PURĀNA	LĪNGA PURĀNA
TIME	Full moon day of <i>Bhādrapada</i> for 15 years	Eighth lunar day, 14th lunar day, full moon day, new moon day
BRIEF DESCRIPTION	<p>On previous day, taking a single-meal; worshipping the deity; praying; sleeping near the deity at night; on purnima, getting up in the last watch of night; applying <i>bhasma</i> and wearing <i>Rudrākṣa</i>; worshipping the deity with different <i>upācāras</i>; fasting till sunset; at moonrise, worshipping again; keeping awake at night.</p> <p><i>Udyāpana</i> rite - making golden image of Umā-Maheśvara; placing image on a silver post; bathing images with <i>pañcamṛta</i> and pure water; worshipping with 16 <i>upacaras</i>; feeding 15 <i>brāhmaṇas</i> with sweet, cooked rice, giving <i>dakṣiṇā</i>, giving one pot and image to each <i>brāhmaṇa</i>.</p>	<p>Preparing <i>haviṣya</i> at night for a year; making an image of Umā-Maheśvara in gold or silver; after one year feeding <i>brāhmaṇas</i>, giving them gifts; taking the image on a chariot to a Śiva temple; dedicating a trident to the deity; worshipping with thousand white lotuses, dedicating a silver lotus; dedicating the following things to the temple of deity - a <i>bhara</i> of black gingelly seeds cooked in ghee and jaggery in <i>Kārttika</i>, a bull in <i>Mārgaśirṣa</i>, a trident in <i>Pauṣa</i>, a chariot in <i>Māgha</i>, a golden or silver image of Śiva in <i>Phālguna</i>, images of Bhava, Kumāra and Bhavānī in <i>Caitra</i>, a silver mountain (<i>Kailāsa</i>) in <i>Vaiśākha</i>, a linga (of metal) in <i>Jyeṣṭha</i>, a brick house in <i>Aṣāḍha</i>, a hillock of gingelly seeds, minerals in <i>Śrāvaṇa</i>, a hillock of <i>Sali</i> rice in <i>Bhādrapada</i>, a hillock of grains together with clothes in <i>Āśvina</i>, images of Umā and other deities in <i>Kārttika</i>; performing the <i>Mahāmeru vrata</i> - making a huge mountain of grains, seeds, etc. bedecked with minerals, umbrellas etc.; installing images of Śiva, Viṣṇu, Brahmā and other deities on it; worshipping, feeding <i>brāhmaṇas</i>; offering the <i>Mahāmeru</i> to Śiva.</p>

contd...

TABLE XX contd...

PRIESTLY MEDIATION REQUIRED	No	No
SIGNIFICANCE	- do -	Observing forbearance, non- violence, celibacy etc.
NATURE OF DEITY	Umā-Maheśvara	Umā-Maheśvara
NATURE OF DEVOTEE	Not specified	Men and women
REWARD	One attains fame throughout world and riches	Men attain identity with Śiva and women with Umā

CONCLUSION

Puranic *vratas* exhibit a general pattern. Yet while adhering to a broad structure, *vratas* differ both within the same texts as well as across texts. An analysis as to why such variations arose would in fact point to issues far more complex than a simplistic understanding of rituals and *vratas* serve as indicators of the prevalent socio-economic conditions, the rise of different religio-cultural movements and the changes within a general pattern of history strung across centuries. In my dissertation I have analysed the *vratas* prescribed in the following texts - *Matsya Purāṇa*, *Nārada Purāṇa*, *Brahmavaivartta Purāṇa*, *Devībhāgavata Purāṇa* and *Liṅga Purāṇa*.

In this context, I have also elaborated on another theme. *Vratas*, particularly from the post-5th-6th centuries A.D. may be placed in an intermediary position between Brahmanical and non-Brahmanical cultures. These are rituals in which may be discerned Vedic characteristics, and yet *vratas* inevitably maintained for themselves a distinctiveness that increased over centuries and gave to these practices a distinct personality. As historical developments took place and new politico-religious currents arose and ebbed away, *vratas* in turn were moulded and

restructured and had imprinted on them the stamp of the age. And because such practices came to be incorporated in Puranic texts composed over centuries, we have some *vratas* which appear for a time in certain texts, only to make a hasty departure once these rituals lost their social relevance and became anachronistic, while others remained and have continued in practice even today.

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