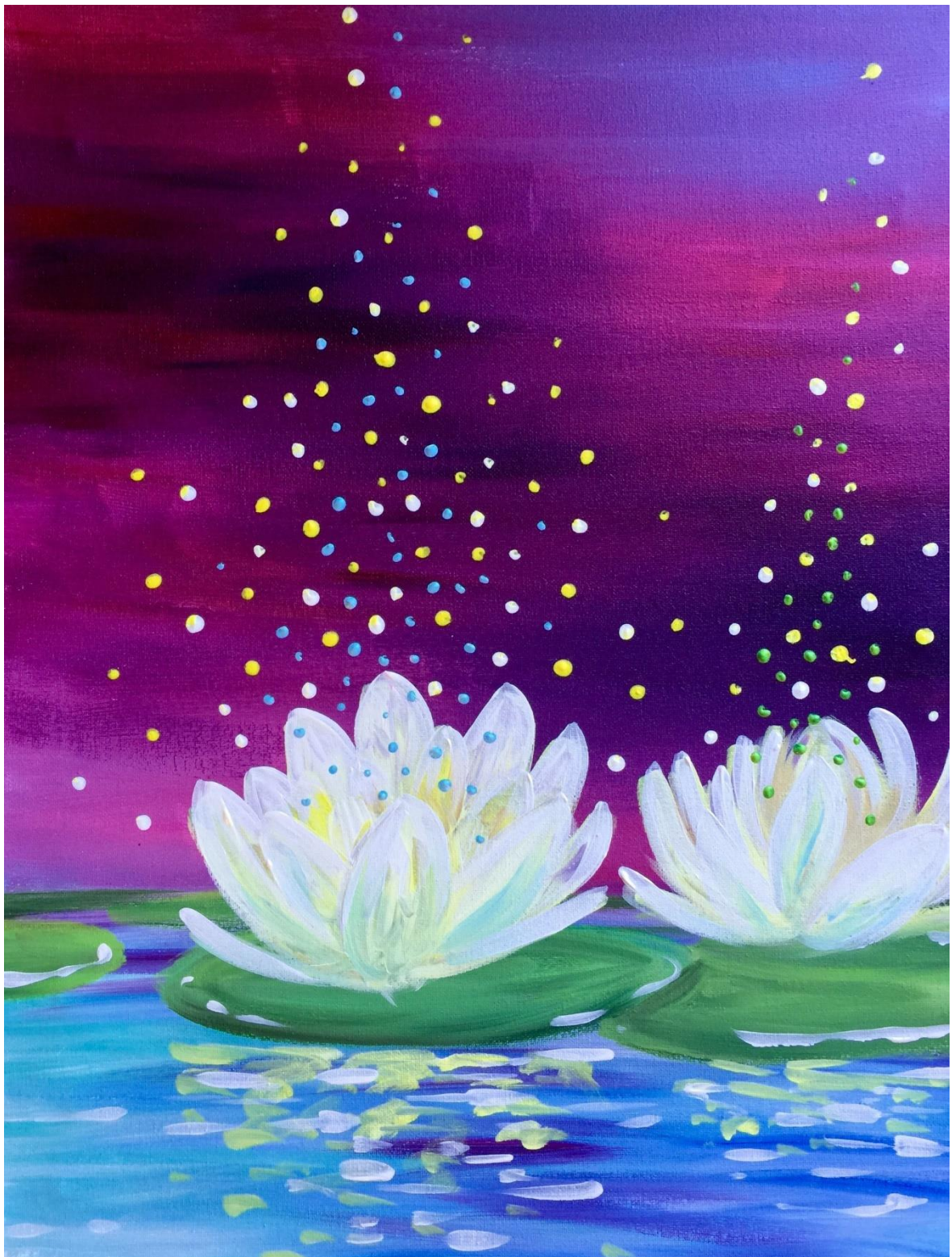


The Legend of the Blue Lotus



Compassion and Sacrifice emanate from an Absolutely Subjective Matrix of the Universe, as divined by Lord Buddha.

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Not to be confused with “The Idyll of the White Lotus” in our Black versus White Magic Series.

THE TITLE OF A JOURNAL OR A BOOK must have its *raison d'être* — especially the title of a Theosophical publication. This title is supposed to express the objective in view and to symbolize, as it were, the contents of the journal. As allegory is the very soul of Oriental philosophy, it would be most regrettable for anyone to see in the title “Blue Lotus” only the name of an aquatic plant — the *Nymphaea caerulea* or *Nelumbo [nucifera]*. It stands to reason that a reader of this type would get nothing from the Table of Contents of our new journal.

In order to avoid such a misapprehension we are going to try to introduce our readers to the symbology of the lotus in general and of the blue lotus in particular. This mysterious and sacred plant has been considered from time immemorial a symbol of the Universe, in Egypt as well as in India. There is hardly a monument in the Valley of the Nile, hardly a papyrus, on and in which this plant did not have a place of honour. From the capitals of the Egyptian columns to the thrones and the coiffures of the god-kings, the lotus is found everywhere as a symbol of the Universe. It became of necessity an indispensable attribute of every creative god and goddess, the latter being in philosophy but the feminine aspect of the god, androgynous at first, male at a later date.

It is from *Padma-yoni* — “the bosom of the lotus” — from the absolute Space of the Universe, outside of space and time, that came forth the *Cosmos* conditioned and limited by time and space. The *Hiranya-Garbha*, the golden “egg” (or matrix), from which Brahmā came forth was often called the celestial lotus. The god Vishnu, the synthesis of the Hindu *Trimūrti* or trinity floats in sleep during the “nights of Brahmā,” on the primordial waters, stretched on a lotus flower. Its goddess, the beautiful Lakshmī, coming forth like Venus-Aphrodite from the bosom of the waters, has under her feet a white Lotus. It is from the curdling of the Ocean of Milk by the collective gods — symbol of space and of the Milky Way — that Lakshmī, goddess of beauty and mother of love (*Kāma*) formed of the foam of the creamy waves, appears before the amazed gods, supported on a lotus and holding in her hand another lotus.

Hence the two chief titles of Lakshmī: *Padma*, the lotus, and *Kshīrābdhi-tanayā* — the daughter of the Ocean of Milk. Gautama the Buddha, who never was degraded to the level of a god and who was, nevertheless, the first courageous mortal who in historic times interrogated the mute Sphinx which is called the Universe,¹ and ended by wrenching from it the secrets of life and death, while never deified, we repeat it, was

¹ [See “Oedipus and Sphinx unriddled” in our Constitution of Man Series.]

nevertheless recognized by the generations in Asia as ruler of the Universe. And it is for this reason that this victor and master of the intellectual and philosophical world is represented on the opened lotus — symbol of this Universe which he had divined. In India and in Ceylon, the lotus is usually of a golden colour; among the northern Buddhists it is blue.

But there exists elsewhere in the world a third species of lotus, the *Zizyphus*; he who eats of it forgets his native land and all those who were dear to him, said the Ancients. Let us not follow that example; let us not forget our intellectual fatherland, the world of the human race and the birthplace of the blue lotus.

Let us then lift the veil of forgetfulness which hides one of the most ancient allegories, a Vedic legend, which has been preserved by the Brāhmanical chroniclers. However, as each one of these chroniclers tells it in his individual manner adding to it variations of his own,¹ we give it here in a popular version, and not according to the versions and incomplete translations of Messrs. the Orientalists. It is thus that this legend is sung by the old bards of Rājasthān, when they come on hot evenings of the rainy season and seat themselves under the veranda of the bungalow where the travellers are seated. We ignore therefore the Orientalists and their fantastic speculations. What matters is that the father of the cowardly and egotistical prince who was the cause of the transformation of the white lotus into the blue lotus was called Hariśchandra or Ambarīsha? These names have nought to do, either with the naive poetry of the legend, or with its moral — for there is one if one seeks it. And let us make note of the fact that the chief episode in it oddly enough reminds one of another legend — the one about the biblical Abraham and the sacrifice of Isaac. And is this not additional evidence that the secret doctrine of the Orient might well have a reason to maintain the name of the patriarch is neither Chaldean nor Hebrew, but rather a Sanskrit epithet and a title meaning *a-bram*, i.e., a *non-brāhmana*,² a *brāhmana de-brāhmanized*, or having lost caste? And why should we not suspect in the modern Jews the *Chandālas*³ of the times of the Rishi-Agastya — the bricklayers whose persecution began some 8,000 to 10,000 years ago, and who immigrated to Chaldea 4,000 years before the Christian era, when so many of the popular legends of Southern India remind us of the Biblical stories? Louis Jacolliot speaks of this in several of his 21 volumes on Brāhmanical India and he was right for once.⁴

¹ Compare the story of *Śunahśepa* in the *Bhāgavata Purāna*, IX, xvi, 35; in the *Rāmāyana*, Book I, Chap. lx; in *Manu*, X, 105; Kullūka-Bhatta (the Historian); *Bahurūpa* and *Aitareya-Brāhmana*; *Vishnu-Purāna*, Bk. IV. Ch. vii, etc., etc. Each work gives its own version.

² The particle *a* of the Sanskrit word shows it. Placed before the substantive, this particle always denotes the negative or the contrary of what is contained in the immediately following term. Thus *Sura* (god), written *a-sura*, becomes *non-god* or demon. *Vidyā*, is Science, and *a-vidyā* is ignorance or the contrary of Science, etc.

³³ [Also spelled Tchandālas or Chhandālas.]

⁴ [Cf. “To the present moment, with all controversies and researches, History and Science remain as much as ever in the dark as to the origin of the Jews. They may be as well the exiled Chandālas, or Pariahs, of old India, the ‘bricklayers’ mentioned by Vivasvata, Veda-Vyāsa and Manu, as the Phœnicians of Herodotus, or the Hyksōs of Josephus, or descendants of Pāli shepherds, or a mixture of all these. The Bible names the Tyrians as a kindred people, and claims dominion over them. . . .” Yet whatever they may have been, they became a hybrid people, not long after Moses, as the Bible shows them freely intermarrying not alone with the Canaanites, but with every other nation or race they came in contact with. (*Secret Doctrine*, I p. 313 *fn.* & quoting *Isis Unveiled*, II pp. 438-39) Also cf. “The Semites, especially the Arabs, are later Āryans — degenerate in spirituality and perfected in materiality. To these belong all the Jews and the Arabs. The former are a tribe descended from the Chandālas of India, the outcasts, many of them ex-Brahmans, who sought refuge in Chaldea, in Sind, and Āria (Iran), and were truly born from their father A-bram (No-Brāhman) some 8,000 years B.C.” (*ibid.*, II p. 200)

We will discuss this further at some other time.

Meanwhile here is the legend of

The Blue Lotus

Centuries after centuries have rolled away, since Ambarīsha, King of Ayodhyā, reigned in the city founded by the Holy Manu, Vaivasvata, the son of the Sun. The King was a *Sūryavaṅśa* (a descendant of the Solar Race) and considered himself the most faithful devotee of Varuna, the Eternal, the greatest and the most powerful god in the *Rig-Veda*.¹ But the Eternal had refused male heirs to his devotee, which made the king very disconsolate.

Alas! [lamented he every morning, while making his pūjā (devotions) before the lesser gods] — Alas! what good is it to me to be the greatest of kings on earth, if the Eternal refuses me a successor to my blood! When once I am dead and they have placed my body on the funerary pyre, who will perform the sweet filial duty of breaking the skull of my corpse, in order to free my soul from its last terrestrial shackles? Whose will be the stranger's hand which, at the full moon, will offer the rice of the Śrāddha, to honour my manes? Will not the birds of death² themselves turn away from the funerary feast? For, surely, my shade, earth-bound by its great despair, will not allow them to touch me!³

Thus did the king lament, when his grīhastha (family chaplain) suggested to him the idea of taking a vow. If the Eternal would send him two or more sons, he would promise the god to sacrifice the eldest, in public ceremony, when the victim would have attained the age of puberty. Whetted by that promise of bloody and fuming flesh — in such good odour with all great gods — Varuna accepted the promise of the king, and the happy Ambarīsha had a son, followed by several others. The eldest, the heir to the crown, *pro tempore*, was called Rohita (the red-one), and surnamed Devarāta, which, translated literally, means “god-given.” Devarāta grew up and soon became a veritable Prince charming, but also as selfish and cunning as he was beautiful, if we are to believe the legend.

When the prince had attained the desired age, the Eternal speaking through the mouth of the same court chaplain cautioned the king to keep his promise. But as

¹ It is only much later that Varuna became the Poseidon or Neptune that he is today in the dogmatic Pantheon and the symbolic polytheism of the Brāhmanas. In the *Veda* he is the most ancient of the gods, the same as the Greek *Ouranos*, i.e., a personification of celestial space and the infinite sky, the creator and governor of heaven and earth, the King, the father and the Master of the world, of the gods and of men. The *Ouranos* of Hesiod and the *Zeus* of the Greeks all in one.

² Ravens and crows.

³ The *Śrāddha* is a posthumous ceremony performed for nine days by the closest relative of the deceased. At one time it was magical. At present, it consists among other practices, primarily in the scattering of small pellets of cooked rice in front of the door to the house of the defunct. If the crows devour the rice promptly, it is a sign that the soul is liberated and is at peace. If not, these voracious birds refraining from touching the food, furnish the proof that the *piśācha* or *bhūta* (the ghost) is present to prevent them. The *Śrāddha* is a superstition, no doubt, but not more so, to be sure, than the Novenas and Masses for the dead.

Ambarīsha thought of an excuse each time in order to delay the moment of the sacrifice, the Eternal finally became angry — jealous and choleric god that he was — threatening the king with his divine anger.

For a long time neither warnings nor threats had the desired effect. As long as there were sacred cows which could be transferred from royal barns to those of the Brāhmanas, and as long as there was money in the treasury to fill the crypts in the temples, the Brāhmanas succeeded in keeping Varuna quiet. But, when there were neither cows nor money left, the Eternal threatened to submerge the palace with the king and his heirs, and, if they escaped therefrom, to burn them all alive. Being at the end of his rope, the poor king Ambarīsha summoned his first-born and informed him of the fate that awaited him. But Devarāta turned a deaf ear to this. He refused to submit to the paternal and divine wills.

And so, when the fires of the sacrifice had been kindled, and the whole good city of Ayodhyā had gathered in great excitement — the heir apparent was the only one absent from the feast. He had taken refuge in the forest of the Yogīns.

These forests were inhabited by holy hermits, and Devarāta knew that he would be safe from being overtaken or attacked. He could be visited but no one could inflict any violence upon him — not even Varuna, the Eternal. It was all very simple. The religious austerities of the *Āranyakas* (the holy men of the forest), several of whom were Daityas (Titans, a race of giants and demons), gave them such might that all the gods trembled before their omnipotence and their supernatural powers — even the Eternal.

These antediluvian Yogīns, it would seem, had the power to destroy at will the Eternal himself — perhaps because it was they who had invented him.

Devarāta remained in the forest for several years. At long last, he grew weary of it. He allowed himself to be persuaded that he could satisfy Varuna by finding a substitute who would be willing to sacrifice himself in Devarāta's place, as long as he were the son of a Rishi. He started on his journey and ended by discovering what he sought.

There was famine in the countryside surrounding the blossom-laden shores of the famous Pushkara Lake, and a very Holy Man, called Ajīgarta,¹ was on the verge of dying of hunger with his entire family. He had several sons, the second, a virtuous adolescent, Śunahśepa, by name, was on the way to becoming a Rishi. Taking advantage of the famine and imagining, with good reason, that a hungry stomach would listen more eagerly than a full one, the cunning Devarāta related his tale to the father. He offered him 100 cows in exchange for Śunahśepa, whom he would use as a substitute for the offering of flesh on the altar of the Eternal. At first the virtuous father curtly refused. But the sweet Śunahśepa offered himself and spoke thus to his father:

What matters the life of one man if it can save the life of so many others? The Eternal is a great God, and his pity is infinite; but he is also a very jealous god, and his anger is quick and vengeful. Varuna is master of terror and death

¹ Others call him Rishika and speak, instead of Ambarīsha, of Hariśchandra, the famous sovereign who was a paragon of all the virtues.

obeys his command. His spirit will not compromise forever with one who disobeys him. He will repent himself of having created man, and will burn alive a hundred thousand *lākhs*¹ of innocent people for one guilty one. If his victim escapes him, he will surely dry up our rivers, scorch our land and split open pregnant women, in his infinite mercy . . . Let me sacrifice myself, my father, in the place of this stranger who is offering us 100 cows, for this will prevent you and my brothers from dying of hunger, and would save thousands of others from a terrible death.

At such a price, to forsake life is sweet.

The old Rishi shed tears, but he finally consented and went to prepare the sacrificial pyre.²

Lake Pushkara³ was one of the favourite localities on this earth of the goddess Lakshmi-padma (white lotus), who frequently dipped herself in its cool waters, in order to visit her elder sister Varuni, the spouse of Varuna, the Eternal.⁴ Lakshmi-padma overheard Devarāta's offer, saw the despair of the father, and admired the filial devotion of Śunahśepa. Full of pity, the mother of love and compassion sent for the Rishi Viśvāmitra, one of the seven primordial Manus and son of Brahmā, and succeeded in interesting him in the fate of her protégé. The great Rishi promised her his help. Appearing before Śunahśepa, while remaining invisible to the others, he taught him two sacred verses (mantras) of the *Rig-Veda*, and made him promise to repeat them on the pyre. Anyone who pronounced these two mantras (invocations) compelled the entire conclave of the gods — with Indra at the head — to come to his rescue, and thus by that very act become a *Rishi*, both in this and his future incarnation.

The altar was raised on the shore of the lake, the pyre was ready and the crowd had already assembled. Laying his son upon the perfumed sandalwood, and tying him to it, Ajīgarta armed himself with the sacrificial knife. He was already raising his trembling hand over the heart of his beloved son, when the latter intoned the sacred verses. Another moment of hesitation and of supreme pain . . . and as the young man was about to finish his mantra, the old Rishi plunged his knife into the bosom of Śunahśepa . . .

But, oh miracle! . . . at the same instant, Indra, the god of the azure (the Firmament), swooped from the heavens into the very midst of the ceremony, enveloping the pyre

¹ A *lakh* stands for 100,000 whether it be men or coins.

² *Manu* (Book X, 105), mentioning this story, remarks the Ajīgarta, the holy Rishi, did not commit any sin by selling the life of his son, seeing that the sacrifice preserved his own life and the life of his entire family. This reminds us of another and more modern legend, which could well parallel this one. Did not Count Ugolino, condemned to die of hunger in his dungeon, devour his children — “in order to keep alive for them their father”? The popular legend of Śunahśepa is more beautiful than the commentary of *Manu*; evidently a Brāhmanical interpolation in the falsified manuscript.

³ This lake is now sometimes called *Pokhar*. It is a well-known place of annual pilgrimage located in the charming surroundings of Rājasthān, some five English miles from Ajmere. *Pushkara* means “white lotus,” as the waters of the lake are covered with these beautiful flowers as if with a carpet. The legend says that they were at first white. Pushkara is also a man's proper name as well as the name of one of the “seven sacred islands,” in the Geography of the Hindus — the *Sapta dvīpas*.

⁴ Varuni, goddess of heat (later on, goddess of Wine), is also born from the Ocean of Milk. Of the “fourteen precious things,” produced from its curdling, she is the second one to appear, and Lakshmi is the last, preceded by the cup of *Amrita*, the drink that confers immortality.

and the victim with a thick azure cloud; the mist extinguished the flame of the pyre and untied the cords which bound the captive man. It was as if a corner of the blue sky had descended over the locality, illumining the whole countryside and lending to the whole scene a golden azure hue. Frightened, the crowd and the Rishi himself fell on their faces, half-dead with fear.

When they came to, the mist had disappeared and a complete change of scene had taken place.

The flames of the pyre had rekindled themselves and, spread on it, could be seen a roe-deer (*rohita*),¹ which was none other than the Prince Rohita, the Devarāta, who, his heart pierced with the knife which he had aimed at another, was himself burning as a holocaust for his sin.

A few feet from the altar, also stretched out, but on a bed of lotuses Śunahśepa slept peacefully. And on the spot where the knife was lowered upon his chest, could be seen a beautiful *blue lotus* bursting into bloom. Lake Pushkara itself, covered but a moment earlier with white lotuses, whose petals shone in the sun like silver cups filled with *amrita*,² reflected now the azure of the sky; the white lotuses were changed into blue ones.

Then, rising into the air from the depths of the waters, a melodious voice could be heard, like unto the sound of the *Vīṇā*,³ uttering the following curse:

A Prince who does not know how to die for his subjects is unworthy to reign over the children of the Sun. He will be reborn in a red-haired race, a barbarous and selfish race; and the nations which will descend from him will have for heritage but the lands of the setting Sun [couchant]. It is the first born of an ascetic mendicant, he who sacrifices his life without hesitation in order to preserve the life of others, who will become king and will rule in his place.

A quiver of approbation ran through the carpet of flowers which covered the lake. Opening their blue hearts to the golden light, the lotuses smiled with joy and sent up a hymn of perfume to Sūrya, their sun and master. The whole of nature rejoiced, except Devarāta who was then but a handful of ashes.

The Viśvāmītra, the great Rishi, already the father of a hundred sons, adopted Śunahśepa as his eldest son, and cursed in advance, as a precaution, any mortal who refused to recognize him as the Rishi's eldest son and the legitimate heir to the throne of King Ambarīsha.

By reason of this decree, Śunahśepa was born in his next incarnation in the royal family of Ayodhyā and reigned over the Solar race for 84,000 years.

As to Rohita, Devarāta or god-given though he was, he suffered the fate to which Lakshmī-Padma had doomed him. He reincarnated in the family of an *outcast* for-

¹ A play on words. *Rohit*, means in Sanskrit a female deer, a roe, and Rohita means "the red-one." According to the legend, he was changed into a roe on account of his cowardice and his fear of dying.

² The elixir which bestows immortality.

³ A kind of lute, an instrument the invention of which is ascribed to the god Śiva. [Cf. *Voice of the Silence*, frag. I vs. 45 p. 10; frag. III vs. 226 p. 51.]

eigner (*Mlechchha-Yavana*),¹ and became the ancestor of the barbarous red-haired races that inhabit the Occident.

It is with a view to the conversion of these races that *The Blue Lotus* has been founded.

And if any one of our readers should doubt the historical veracity of this adventure of our ancestor Rohita, and of the transformation of the white lotuses into azure ones, we invite him to pay a visit to Ajmere.

Once there, all they would have to do would be to go to the shores of the thrice-holy lake called Pushkara where any pilgrim who bathes therein during the full moon of the month of Kartika (October-November) attains the highest holiness, without further trouble. The sceptics will be able to see with their own eyes the site where stood the pyre of Rohita, and the waters frequented erstwhile by Lakshmi.

They would even see the blue lotuses, were it not that owing to a new transformation decreed by the gods, most of these plants changed since those days into sacred crocodiles, which no one has the right to disturb, and that is why nine out of ten pilgrims, who dip themselves in the waters of the lake have a chance to enter immediately into Nirvāna, and why the sacred crocodiles are the fattest of their species.²



The Sacred Lake of Pooshkur (1829) Steel engraving by Frances Young Waugh
From James Tod's *Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan* (1839-40)

¹ [Cf. Another proof of the fact that the Pāndavas were, though Aryans not Brahmans, and belonged to an Indian tribe that preceded the Brahmans and, were later on *Brahmanized*, and then outcasted and called *Mlechchhas*, *Yavanas* (i.e., foreign to the Brahmans) is afforded in the following:

Pāndu has *two* wives: and “it is not Kuntī, his lawful wife, but Mādri, his most beloved wife,” who is burnt with the old king when dead, as well remarked by Prof. Max Müller, who seems astonished at it without comprehending the true reason why this is. As stated by Herodotus (v. 5), it was a custom amongst the Thracians to allow the most beloved of a man’s wives to be sacrificed upon his tomb; and “Herodotus (iv. 17) asserts a similar fact of the Scythians and Pausanias (iv. 2) of the Greeks” (*Hist. of Anc. Sans. Lit.*, p. 48). The Pāndavas and the Kauravas are called esoterically *cousins* in the Epic poem, because they were two distinct yet Aryan tribes and represent two *nations* — not simply two families.

Blavatsky Collected Writings, (WAS WRITING KNOWN BEFORE PANINI?) V p. 305 *fn.* [on Arjuna, Chief of the Pāndavas.] The reference to Herodotus should be iv. 71. This may be a proof-reader’s error, but it may also be one of the instances spoken of by H.P. Blavatsky herself, when references seen in the astral light became reversed when she was disturbed in her work. — *Boris de Zirkoff*.

² First published in: *Le Lotus Bleu*, Paris, Vol. I, No. 2, April 7, 1890, pp. 73-85. Translation from: *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, XII pp. 177-86.