

A Synopsis Of
SRIMATH BHAGAVATHAM
OR

SRIMATH BHAGAVATHA SANGRAHAM

VOLUME I
(Skandas I to VIII)

Compiled by

'Bhishagvara'

Pandit R. V. SRINIVASA ACHARYA, A. M. A. C.,

AND

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Retd. Sub-Magistrate

MADANAPALLE



Published by

Sri M. V. S. PRASAD, I. A. S.,

Executive Officer,

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FOREWORD

The message of Sanatana Dharma as revealed in the traditional scriptures of India is timeless in relevance, universal in appeal and vastly comprehensive in range and sweep. It lays its accent on spirituality as distinct from creeds and practices which are secondary.

The great itihisas and puranas uphold righteousness and guide the individual in the duties he has to perform to the family, society, the nation and the humanity. They also teach us how God-realisation can be attained even while performing the duties allotted to us in this world.

The Bhagavata, foremost among the puranas, is considered as one of the most sacred scriptures of the country. It is the quintessence of Vedanta and an encyclopaedia of methods of devotion. It contains not only the story of Lord Narayana's incarnations but also all the teachings necessary for guiding an aspirant to salvation.

The present book is in fact an abridged version of the great purana which is the cream of India's spiritual philosophy. Written in an easy and translucent style, this synopsis was overwhelmingly popular with the readers when it was first published serially in the TTD Journal a few decades ago.

We are extremely happy to present this book to our readers and we fervently hope that the theistic public will derive immense benefit by reading this synopsis of a great religious classic.

Tirupati
July 18, 1990

M.V.S. Prasad
Executive Officer
T.T. Devasthanams

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A Synopsis of SRIMATH BHAGAVATHAM

SSRIMATH Bhagavatham is a great and glorious Purana, which is known as Paramahansa Samhitha, i.e., a book of God-realised souls. It consists of 12 Skandas or books, each containing several chapters. This Purana is the foremost in sacredness, and it is held in the highest esteem by all Vishnu Bhakthas. After the four Vedas, the Upanishads recognise the Puranas as the fifth Veda, as they are the authority on Divine and religious matters. Dharma Sastras are based mainly on the authorities quoted in the Puranas. Yagnavalkya therefore assigns the foremost place to the Puranas, among which Srimath Bhagavatham occupies the first place, conducive as it is to the four objects of human pursuits of religious merit, earthly possessions, sensuous enjoyment and final beatitude.

Our supreme Lord Sri Krishna has enjoined that one should listen to Srimath Bhagavatham daily full of reverence, as that will please Him most. He has ordained that the man who recites but a single verse of the Purana attains the merit of reciting all the eighteen puranas. The daily recitation of one-half or quarter of a verse from the Bhagavatha earns the merit of the gift of a thousand cows, and the recitation of even a single letter of a verse bestows the merit of the gift of a cow. The presence of a copy of the scripture in the house wards off all evils; and men, who worship the book in their house, are thoroughly purged of all their sins, and are adored by the Gods. The spirits of one's forefathers will be blessed with the drink of milk, butter, honey and sweet water, so long as the scripture exists in one's house. When in the Kali age, the people are subject all evil influences of the Kali, they are wise who keep a copy of Srimath Bhagavatham in their house, as the Supreme Lord stays there all the time, along with other divinities. The abode becomes sacred as all the sacred rivers and lakes and Kshetras abide there. The glorious and holy Bhagavatha confers health, longevity and prosperity, freeing the persons from all sins.

Sree Vedavyasa is the author of Srimath Bhagavatha, the most sacred of all the 18 Puranas. The supreme religion is Bhagavatha Dharma, which is the religion of Godworship. The scripture deals with the Supreme Lord, from whom this universe springs up, in whom it abides, and into whom it returns. The Omnipresent and omnipotent Almighty, who is self-conscious and self-effulgent, first revealed the four Vedas and other scriptures to Brahma, who has propagated them to the world for the benefit of the mankind. While it is difficult to realise God in one's heart by other means, the blessed souls can easily have realisation through the sacred scripture of Bhagavatha, which is a Kalpa Vriksha dropped to the earth for the benefit of the mankind. It is Divine nectar.

In the great forest of Naimisharanya (the modern Nimsar of Oudh), a great sacrifice lasting a thousand years was going on in olden days. Several seers and sages had collected. On this occasion, Sree Saunaka and other sages requested Sree Suta Mahamuni to expound Sree Bhagavatha Purana, which is a means of supreme good for men.

In this age of Kali, people are mostly short-lived, slothful, dull-witted and unlucky, and are tormented with diseases and other evils. The blessed stories of the Supreme Lord wards off the evils, purifies the men's hearts, and gives them peace and plenty. Therefore, as Sree Krishna's mortal frame had left the material world for His Abode in Heaven, and Kali Yuga had started, the sages desired the purification of themselves and their clan by hearing the sacred discourses about most sacred Supreme Lord, Sri Krishna, from the mouth of the learned Suta.

Sage Suta was very pleased at the question of Brahmanas, as he was thereby enabled to expound Srimath Bhagavatha, which is a blessing to himself, to the sages and all the world. The scripture is a mysterious Purana, possessing a glory of its own and constituting the very essence of all the Vedas, and illuminating the spiritual realities for the welfare of the world. He reverently bowed to Sri Suka Deva, son of Sri Vedavyasa, the Supreme Lord Sri Krishna, and Goddess Saraswathi; and inaugurated the following discourse, which is conducive to the welfare of the world, purifies human hearts, induces devotion to Sri Hari and enables the soul to realise the all-blissful God. Duties efficiently performed, according to

Varna and Asrama Dharmas pleases Sri Hari. Therefore one should ever hear and sing the praises of, meditate upon, and worship, the Lord, who ever protects His Devotees. Constant meditation on Him cuts asunder the evils of karma and develops a desire for hearing His stories, which purify the devotees, in whose hearts He will abide and uproot evil propensities. The mind is then freed from passions of lust and greed, which are a result of Rajas and Tamas. The moment a man realises and sees God, his knot of ignorance is cut, his doubts dispersed and the entire stock of his Karmas liquidated. Sri Hari alone is the bestower of the supreme good of men.

Therefore it is that the sages of yore worshipped Sri Hari, who is pure Sattva personified, and whose mere Grace makes men blessed. The Vedas treat of Sri Vasudeva ultimately, the sacrifices aim at the realisation of Him, the various Yogas lead to Him, all rituals aim at His Grace, all wisdom is to please Him, He is the goal of all austere penance, and all destinies culminate in Him. It is He, by whatever name you may call Him—Sri Hari, Vishnu, Rama, Krishna, Govinda, Narayana, etc., who creates the different worlds, descends by way of sport in different forms and Avatars, and protects all the beings in His creation with the best of His Grace.

Lord's Avatars.

When the Supreme Lord desired the creation of the worlds for His sport, His will manifested itself in the springing up of Brahma from the lotus, which appeared from the lake of His navel. He was the Lord of the progenitors of the world. The Lord Himself was visible to the Divine eye of the blessed Yogis in numerous forms; with a thousand heads, ears, eyes and so on. For the welfare of mankind and other creation, brought forth by Brahma by His will, the Lord Himself manifested in the world at different times as various Avatars. To bless the righteous and punish or annihilate the wicked, the Lord has taken several avatars, a few of which are the Matsya, Koorma, Varaha, Narasimha, Vamana, Parasurama, Srirama, Krishna, and Buddha. The latest of the Avatars is Sri Vyasa, son of Satyavati through Parasara, which has followed closely on the heels of the manifestation of the Lord as Balarama and Krishna, when Kali set in. The coming Avatar is that of Sri Kalki who will appear towards the end of Kali Yuga,

with a view to deluge the enemies of the Lord, at a time when the kings mostly turn into robbers.

The sportive pastimes of the Lord are always purposive. He creates, preserves and reabsorbs the creation, but never gets attached to the creation. His powers are infinite. That man alone can know His ways, who inhales the fragrance of His lotus feet, through constant and sincere devotion. Those that have undivided love for the Lord never fall again into the terrible Samsara of births and deaths.

Sri Vedavyasa composed the Bhagavatha Purana, which is on a par with the Vedas and contains the excellent stories of the Lord. The great composer taught this divine Purana to his son Sree Sukadeva, who is the foremost of the self-realised souls. This cream of all the Vedas and Itihasas was recited by Sri Suka to the great king and devotee Parikshit, who sat on the Banks of the Ganga with several great sages. Sri Suta was among the Mahamunis present then to hear the Purana, and Suta Mahamuni is now expounding the Bhagavatha to Saunaka and other sages gathered at the sacrifice in the Naimisha forest.

Sri Vedavyasa.

The assembly of sages headed by Saunaka requested Sage Suta to give them an account of the glories of the Lord, as the divine sage Suka recited to King Parikshit, and the circumstances leading to the time and place of the Bhagavatham recitation. Suta narrated that, at the end of the Dwapara Yuga, the great Sri Vyasa was born of Satyawati by Parasara. When sitting lonely at sun rise on the banks of the Saraswati river, he pondered over the deterioration in the world—the diminution in the potency of the material objects, the general deterioration in the people generally, who had grown irreverent, weak, dull-witted, short-lived and unlucky. He planned for the welfare of the mankind, which could not, in the deteriorated atmosphere, benefit itself by elaborate Vedic sacrifices for self purification and benefit. Sri Vyasa therefore divided the original veda into parts—Rigveda, Samaveda, Yajurveda and Atharvanaveda, and taught them to Paila, Jaimini, Vaisampayana and Sumanthu respectively; while Romaharsha (Suta's father)

gained mastery over the Puranas and Itihasas, which formed the fifth Veda. The above division of the scriptures was made with a compassion to the men of poor wits in order that they may be able to retain the sacred scriptures in parts at least.

The fallen Dwijas, women and Sudras, were debarred from chanting the Vedas and benefit thereby. Sri Vyasa therefore composed Mahabharatha epic, through which he intended benefit to them. The epic reveals the purport of the Vedas, and conveys the sacred knowledge to one and all, and assures them blessedness. In spite of the compilation of the above works, Sage Vyasa still felt dissatisfied and was aiming at more benefit for the mankind in general. Then sage Narada called at Vedavyasa's hermitage. The celestial sage was duly received and offered worship.

The Glory of singing the Lord's praises.

Sage Narada made kind enquiries of Sri Vyasa and commended his compilation of Mahabharata. In spite of the compilation of the four vedas, Puranas, Itihasas and Mahabharatha, Vyasa did not attain mental peace and questioned Narada as to the why and wherefore of the great feeling of deficiency.

Narada replied that the deficiency lay in the fact that the stainless glory of the Lord has not been adequately sung, in spite of the narration of history, facts, truths and Dharma in the previous compilations by Him. Like the swans that have their abode in the lotus beds of Manasarovar, devotees who take shelter in the lotus feet of the Lord ever abide in His heart. The names of the immortal Lord bear the impress of His glory and wipe out the sins of people. Even disinterested action that has not been dedicated to the Lord serve to heighten one's glory. Recalling the Lord's exploits helps the liberation of the humanity. Only wise men who withdraw from worldly enjoyment experience divine bliss. Once the joy of embracing the Lord's lotus feet is realised, one would not think of abandoning them and can never forget the sweetness of the Lord's feet.

Therefore, Sri Vyasa was suggested to compile, a description at full length, the glorious exploits of the Lord, to recount which would be superior to all penance, sacred knowledge, recitation of Vedas,

enlightenment and bestowal of gifts. It is of highest importance to daily listen to the soul-ravishing stories of Sri Krishna. Hearing these stories with reverence gets the mind firmly established in the Lord. Actions dedicated to the Lord serve as a cure for all the worldly agony of the mankind. They are blessed who utter and meditate on the praises and names of the Lord. They attain self-knowledge, mystic powers and loving devotion to His feet and attain salvation. Chanting of His glory, and none other, is the true means of relieving the worldly afflictions of repeated tormentation by trials and turmoil. Therefore, the suggestion was to sing the praises of the Lord and compile them for the benefit of the mankind.

Sage Narada's previous birth.

Questioned by Sri Veda Vyasa, the celestial sage Narada, who always sings the glory of the Supreme Lord Vishnu, to the accompaniment of his lute and feels not only intoxicated himself, but also delights the unhappy world at large, narrated his 'previous birth. He said that: He was the only son of his mother, who was an ignorant woman with much affection to him. When he was just five years old, his mother died having been smitten by a snake. He left his abode and went northwards. He passed through prosperous lands, cities, villages, mountains and rivers, plantations, groves and gardens, lakes and lotus ponds, frequented by gods and rendered vocal by birds of diverse notes and adorned by bees, producing the best honey. He saw forests with bushes, reeds, bamboos, infested with serpents and jackals. He bathed in a pool, drank its water, felt refreshed, and sat down under a Peepal tree and contemplated on the Lord in his heart. As he meditated on His lotus feet, full of love, tears rushed down his eye eager to behold Sri Hari, who gradually appeared on the screen of his heart. His hair stood on end, his heart experienced a thrill of joy and tranquility. Next he lost his consciousness, and lost the perception of the Lord. He woke up with a longing to see the Lord once again, and wandered lonely in the forest. He heard a voice that he was unfit to behold Him once again in this birth, in spite of his burning desire to see Him, who once revealed His form. He was assured that His grace will continue for Him and that he would attain the position of His attendant in the next birth. Thereafter Narada shook off all his shyness and began to repeat the mysterious and auspicious

names of the Lord and fixed his thoughts on the glories of the Lord. Rid of all cravings, vanity and jealousy, and contented at heart, he roamed about the globe till the end of the Kalpa. At the deluge, the whole creation was reabsorbed into the Lord including himself. Created in this Kalpa as Brahma Manasa Putra, he is playing his lute, bestowed by the Lord Himself. He goes about singing the glory of the Lord, by the worship of whose feet, He reveals Himself in his heart as if summoned. Narration of His doings is a safe raft to cross the ocean of Samsara, which incessantly torments mankind by the craving of sense enjoyment. The highest secret is devotion to the Lord, which is far superior to the various practices of Yoga of self control, etc., for not only Moksha, but for the happiness and prosperity of the mankind here and hereafter.

Aswathama's misdeed & Arjuna's retaliation.

There is a hermitage called Samyaprasa on the western bank of the Saraswathi river. The place is sacred for sacrifices. Sri Vedavyasa's abode was this hermitage, which was a perfect place for concentration. Knowing, as indicated by Narada, that the practice of devotion to the Lord is the direct means of counteracting the evils of Maya and Kali; and to propagate it, Sri Vyasa composed Srimath Bhagavatha for the benefit of the common people. Its recitation or hearing induces devotion to the Lord, which in turn dispels grief, infatuation and fear. He taught the scripture to his son Sri Suka first.

In the Mahabharatha war, several warriors of Kaurava and Pandava hosts had fallen like heroes, and Duryodhana had his thigh broken by a stroke of the mace of Bhima. To please Duryodhana, Aswathama, the son of Dronacharya, severed the heads of Draupadi's sons, while they were asleep and presented them to Duryodhana. Draupadi was sorely distressed at the slaughter of her sons and approached Arjuna, who promised that he would cut off the head of the Brahmin, and bring it to her to trod on. Arjuna proceeded against Aswathama, who ran away for his life; but being unable to rush further, he shot Brahmashtra against Arjuna, and the fire from it enveloped all sides, and Arjuna was agitated and prayed to Sri Krishna for help. The Lord replied that to counteract the missile, he should use the self same Brahmastra

taught to him by Drona. He did so and repulsed the weapon which came against him. The fierce fires resulted by the two weapons were quelled by the Lord, instructing Arjuna to withdraw the two weapons. Then Arjuna bound Aswathama, by a rope and took him to his camp. Aswathama looked like a sacrificial beast, whose head had to be cut, and was presented to Draupadi, who however took pity on the Brahmin, though he had killed her innocent sons, and wanted him to be freed and released. Arjuna was kind and did not want to kill his preceptor's son, and he freed Aswathama. Sri Krishna blessed Arjuna, and said that a Brahman should not be slain though at fault, but should be disgraced. Accordingly, Aswathama's head was shaven and the gem on his head removed and confiscated; and he was disgraced.

Sri Krishna Protects Parikshit in the womb.

After the destruction caused by the Mahabharatha war, the bemoaning Pandavas and Dritharastra, accompanied by Sri Krishna and the affected ladies, went to the banks of the Ganges and performed oblations of water to the deceased kinsmen, with their hearts full of sorrow. The Lord consoled all of them, particularly the Pandavas, Dritharastra, Kunti and Gandhari. Sri Krishna paid His respect to Sri Vyasa and the Brahmins present; and as he was about to leave for Dwaraka, along with Satyaki and Udhava, Uttara, widow of Abhimanyu, deceased son of Arjuna, rushed to the Lord, and implored Him to save her from a missile discharged by Aswathama (son of Dhronacharya) to exterminate the line of Pandavas. She was then pregnant. The five Pandus had then been charged by five burning shafts of Aswathama, and they tried to counter them by their missiles and invoked the Lord's Grace. The Lord protected them all with His discus, Sudarsana; and also enveloped the womb of Uttara by His Own Maya and saved the child in her womb.

Kunti and Draupadi made obeisance to the Lord, and showered prayers and praises on Him as follows; "The Lord Sri Krishna, is the Prime Person transcending Prakriti and dwelling inside as well as outside all created beings, the invisible and imperishable God, existing beyond the range of self perception and screened by the curtain of Maya. His navel is adorned with a lotus and He wears

a wreath of lotus flowers, possesses lotus-like eyes, and His feet resemble the lotus. He delivered Devaki, who had been shot up for a long time in prison by the wicked Kamsa. He saved the Pandavas from poison, from a huge fire, and from man-eating demons. He saved them from the missiles of many great warriors—Bhisma, Drona, Kama, Aswathama and others. He is the ruler of all, without a beginning or end. He appeared on the earth to relieve its burden and to perform deeds fit to be heard and dwelt upon by those tormented in this world by ignorance, desire and selfish acts. His devotees constantly listen to, sing, repeat to others, and contemplate on His stories, and rejoice; and it is they alone who behold His lotus feet that put an end to the stream of births and deaths. The land highly prosperous and rich with ripe crops and vegetation, woods and hills, rivers and oceans, flourish only under His benign looks. The Lord is not only the Ruler and Soul of the Universe, but He is the Universe itself. As the Ganga incessantly pours its waters in the ocean, so may our thoughts constantly and exclusively find delight in Him. He has burnt the whole race of princes, who proved themselves a bane of the earth. His prowess is infinite, and His avatar on the earth is to relieve the distress of the cows, the Brahmanas and the Gods."

Thus extolled by Kunti in sweet words, Lord Sri Krishna smiled and took leave of her. He entered Hastinapur and bidding adieu to other ladies as well, he was about to leave for Dwaraka, when King Yudhisthira stopped Him and was seized with remorse for the destruction of kinsmen, and he could not be calmed though consoled by not only Sri Vyasa and others, but by the Lord Himself. The king recounted the vast scale destruction of children, Brahmins, friends, kith and kin, friends, uncles, cousins and preceptors. He felt that an attempt at expiation from the sins by sacrificial performances would be like adding mud to purify muddy water.

Bhisma extols the Lord and ends his life.

Thus afflicted in mind, Yudhisthira went to the battle-field of Kurukshetra accompanied by his brothers, Sri Krishna, Vyasa, Dhaumya and others. The Pandavas made obeisance to Bhisma, who lay on the ground. To bid good bye to Bhisma, the foremost of the Bharatas, the elite assembled included also Parvata, Narada,

Bhrihadaswa, Bharadwaja, Parasurama, Vasista, Indrapramada, Trita, Gauthama, Atri, Sudarasana, Brahmarata, Kasyapa, Angirasa and others. Sri Krishna sat before Bhishma in a personal form, and was also enthroned in his heart. The Pandavas sat beside Bhishma full of modesty and love, and Bhishma with tears in his eyes, spoke to them as follows; "It is painful and unjust that the Pandavas, who are the progeny of righteousness and votaries of Brahmans, Dharma and Lord Krishna, lived a life of suffering, which they did not deserve. With the death of the great warrior Pandu, the Pandavas had many hardships as destined by Providence.

Such was the adversity even where king Yudhistira, the Dharma Putra, was the ruler, Bhima held the mace in his hand, Arjuna was the Archer, Gandiva was the bow, and Lord Sri Krishna Himself was their friend and well-wisher. All that was His will. Therefore follow His will, rule the land, and protect the helpless people. He lives incognito in all beings, looks upon all with the same eye, He is one without a second or equal to Him, and is free from egotism and blemishness. He is compassionate to those devoted to Him. A yogi who casts off his body with his thought fixed on Him, through devotion and chanting His name, is freed from the bondage of actions. May that Great Lord with four arms, with lotus-like countenance, gracious smiles, and reddish eyes, stay on here till I shuffle off this body."

While still Bhishma lay on the cage-like bed of arrows, Yudhistira asked him a variety of questions on Dharma. Thereupon, Bhishma discoursed upon the various Dharmas for men, relating to their Varna and Asrama, Pravritti and Nivriti margas, Dharmas relating to charitable gifts, the duties obligatory on Monarchs, conduct conducive to liberation, duties of women, and course of conduct necessary to propitiate the Lord. He also explained the four pursuits of Dharma, Artha, Kama and Moksha, illustratively with anecdotes and stories. While thus discoursing, the Uttarayanam period, which is coveted by Yogis for dropping their bodies, dawned; and Bhishma wound up his speech, and exclusively fixed his mind and eyes on the Lord present before Him. Thereon, the last traces of his sin vanished by his concentration on the Most Holy Supreme Lord, and the pain which he felt from the weapons struck in his body disappeared by a mere glance on the Lord. Now,

while casting off his body, Bhishma stopped all activities and sense wanderings and extolled the Lord, and became free from the worldly bondage. At this, all those present became silent, drums were sounded by the gods; and men and the pious princes shouted applause; and flowers were showered from the heaven. The final rites were gone through, and kind Yudhistira was very sorrowful for sometime. The sages present extolled Sri Krishna, and returned to their hermitages with heartfelt devotion for Him. Sri Krishna and the Pandavas returned to Hastinapur and consoled Dhritarashtra and Gandhari. Then permitted by his uncle, and with the approval of Sri Krishna, Yudhistira ruled over his ancestral kingdom with righteousness.

Sri Krishna leaves for Dwaraka.

Lord Sri Krishna having thus revived the race of Kuru, established Yudhistira on the throne. The king, whose wisdom had dawned as a result of hearing the teachings of Bhishma and the exhortation of the Lord, ruled over the whole earth, enjoying the Grace of the Lord and the loyal submission of his younger brothers. The kingdom was Ramarajya itself. There were timely and copious rains, the earth yielded all crops. Cows gave plenty of milk. Rivers seas, mountains, trees, creepers, herbs and plants bore abundant products in due season. Men had no worries, physical or mental, as long as Yudhistira ruled as king. Sri Krishna spent some months at Hastinapur to console His relations and His sister Subhadra. The Lord then obtained leave of the king to return home. He embraced him and others, and was greeted in turn. He mounted His chariot, and all assembled almost fainted in sorrow, unable to bear separation from the Lord. The Pandavas could least bear the idea of separation, as they were very devoted to Him, having had the privilege of seeing Him, touching His person, conversing with Him, and also reposing, sitting and dining with Him. Their hearts were full; and, they and the ladies restrained their tears of affection from trickling down. As the chariot moved, Tabors, Conchs, drums, lutes, trumpets, gongs and other musical instruments sounded. Going up the top of the mansions, the ladies took a last look at the Lord, and rained flowers on Him, with smiling looks, with mingled feelings of affection and bashfulness. Arjuna held over the Lord a white umbrella, which was bordered with strings of

pearls, and had a handle of precious stones. Uddhava and Satyaki held a pair of chowries. The Brahmins pronounced benedictions aloud.

As the Lord went His way, greeting one and all with smiling looks, the women folk of Hastinapur uttered praises and prayers to Him. The king sent an escort of elephants, horses, chariots and foot soldiers. The Pandavas who followed the Lord some distance, unable to bear separation from the Lord, were consoled, blessed and sent back. Then the Lord hastened forward with His favourite companions—Uddhava, Satyaki and others, passing through the territories of Kuru-Jangala, Panchala and Surasena, and along the banks of Yamuna, Brahmavarta, Kurukshetra, and the kingdoms of Matsya, Saraswatha, and Marudhanwa; and then reached the kingdom of Anarta, where he halted, as His entourage required rest. The people on the way honoured the Lord with presents of various kinds. At dusk, he would alight from His car and say His Sandhya prayers.

When the Lord took leave, the people of Hastinapur were filled with love and devotion to the Lord, and praised as follows: "Lord Sri Krishna, who revealed the Vedas and other scriptures, is the Supreme person, whose reality is perceived by only seers who have subdued their senses and fully controlled their breath, full of devotion. He alone can thoroughly cleanse our heart. His sacred stories are sung again and again in the Vedas and other scriptures. In His sportful ways, He creates, maintains and reabsorbs the Universe all by Himself. Whenever kings become unrighteous, He reveals in Himself the Divine attributes of omnipotence, truthfulness, righteousness, compassion and superhuman activity, and assumes various forms from age to age for the good of the world. The city of Dwaraka is twice blessed, as its people always behold their Lord, casting His smiling looks on them whenever he graciously moves out of the palace. Blessed are his eight principal consorts, Rukmini, Jambavati and others, who were carried off by Him as prizes of valour after vanquishing powerful suitors like Sisupala and others. The Lord ever delights in their hearts by His charming behaviour and loving presents like the Parijata tree; and, being all-pervading, He is ever present in their mansions."

Dwaraka welcomes Sri Krishna.

As Sri Krishna neared the Dwaraka city, He blew His great Conch Panchajanya to announce His coming and soothe the grief of His people. The entire city population sallied forth to meet Him with their presents. They bowed before this lotus feet, which is adored even by Brahma, Siva and Indra. They implored to Him to promote their happiness with motherly love, knowing Him as their true preceptor and supreme Deity, whose countenance with its loving smiles and affectionate looks are a rare sight even for the gods in heaven. The Lord entered the city, extending His Grace to all through His looks.

Dwaraka was protected by Madhus, the Bhojas the Dasarathas, the Arhas, the Kukuras, the Andhakas and the Vrishnis—all Yadhavas of unrivalled strength. The city was adorned with lotus lakes, surrounded by orchards, gardens and parks, full of sacred trees and arbours, richly laden in every season. The gates of the city and the palaces were adorned with festoons and flags, and banners flew over the city. Its roads, streets and quadrangles had been thoroughly cleaned and sprinkled with scented water and were strewn with fruits and flowers and sprouts. The houses were adorned with offerings, incense and lights.

Excited with joy; esteem and emotion, His father Vasudeva, Akrura, King Ugrasena, Balarama, Pradyumna, Charudesna, Samba and others, placed a lordly elephant at their head; and, accompanied by Brahmans reciting benedictory hymns and equipped with good presents, mounted their chariots and sallied forth to meet the Lord, amidst the blast of conchs and trumpets and the chanting of Vedic hymns. They met the Lord, who bowed to them, greeting respectfully with smiles and endearing looks, and granting them their choicest boons, and Himself blessed by His elders and Brahmans. The Lord entered the city and passed along the main road with the white umbrella spread over His head and a pair of chowries waving on either side. He first went into the palace of His parents, and bowed His head to his mothers, who clasped Him to their bosom. He next entered His own Palace, which had a separate mansion for each of His consorts, who with bashful eyes and faces, embraced their Lord, and tears of love and affection rolled down their cheeks. Stung by their guiltless and winsome smiles and

bashful looks and their profound love, the Lord was moved and dropped His bow, acting like a human being in the eyes of the lay people. Herein lies the divinity of the Almighty that, even though abiding in Prakriti, He is never contaminated by the Gunas of Prakriti.

Parikshit is born.

We have read that the infant in the womb of Uttara, which was destroyed by the Brahmastra discharged by Aswathama was brought back to life by Lord Sri Krishna. We must know a little about the noble soul saved by the Lord and the reign of King Udhistira. The king had gained Vairagya, and protected his subjects as well as his father. He was rich and performed many a sacrifice. His consort and his brothers were all devoted to him. He ruled over the entire globe. His fame reached even heaven.

The noble soul in the womb of Uttara had beheld the effulgent Being, most charming and shining, who was the Lord Himself. At a very propitious hour, when the stars were in the ascendant, the child was born to maintain the thread of Pandu's line. The king was glad, and had benedictory hymns recited, and rites performed by holy Brahmans. He made gifts of gold, cows, lands, villages, food grains, elephants and horses to worthy Brahmans, who said that the child was an exalted soul and a great devotee of the Lord, who had, by this child, showered His Grace on the king.

Further questioned by the king about the child, the worthy Brahmans predicted that the child would protect the subjects as Ikswasu did, would be devoted to Brahmans, true to his word like Sri Rama, munificent and kind like Sibi, and perform sacrifices. He would be even-minded like Brahma, gracious like Siva, with excellent virtues, generous like Rantideva, pious like Yayati, firm as Bali, and devoted as Prahlada. He would perform Aswamedha sacrifices and be a progenitor of the race of royal sages and chastiser of the wicked, and would subdue Kali. Finally before his death, he would renounce all attachment and take to Lord's feet and cast off his mortal coil on the banks of the Ganges.

The child was first named Visnuratha (one saved by Sri Vishnu), and was later known in the world as Parikshit, because this gifted

boy used to look for, among those whom he saw, the person whom he had perceived in his mother's womb. Fostered by the grand parents, the child grew up waxing every day by degrees like the moon. The king performed Aswamedha sacrifice to atone for his hostile conduct towards his own kith and kin. The Lord came and attended the sacrifices, and returned to Dwaraka.

Vidura returned to Hastinapur from his long tour, and was warmly received by all his kinsmen—Yudhistira and other Pandava brothers. Dhritarastra, Yuyutsu, Suta, Kunti, Gandhari, Draupadi, Subhadra, Uttara, Kripa, and all the male and female members of the family. He was embraced and greeted heartily, shedding copious tears of love. After a hearty meal and rest for a while, king Yudhistira expressed to him his thanks for the loving care and protection he had extended to the Pandavas earlier, and wished to know all about the pilgrimage, the sacred places visited and the like. He made kind enquiries of the Yadavas in Dwaraka.

Vidura narrated all the story at Dwaraka except, of course, the extermination of the Yadava race, as he did not want his kinsman fall into distress at the news. He lived comfortably as Hastinapur for sometime, dutiful to his eldest brother Dhritarastra. He was in charge of the duty of punishing evil-doers. King Yudhistira continued to rule the kingdom in supreme splendour and joy, and time was fleeting.

Vidura told Dhritarastra that his end was nearing, and that it was indiscreet that he should be living under the roof of Yudhistira, who was till recently his mortal enemy. He recounted to his brother how his sons pursued the Pandavas by administering poison, by subjecting their wedded wife to ignominy in open court, and by seizing their lands and possessions. Vidura advised his brother to free himself from worldly attachment, and prepare himself to drop his body away from his kith and kin, holding Sri Hari in his heart. He suggested his retreat to the Himalayan region.

Thus prevailed, Dhritarastra departed, taking Vidura as his guide. Gandhari followed them. That evening, king Yudhistira went on his usual visit to the apartments of his elder brother, after his Sandhya prayers, salutation to Brahmans and making gifts of cows, lands and gold. He found Dhritarastra and Gandhari absent.

He questioned Sanjaya as to where they had gone. The latter pleaded ignorance of their whereabouts, and then there appeared Sage Narada with Thumburu, who was received by the Pandavas, who questioned the august guest about their uncle and aunt. Narada consoled the mentally afflicted Yudhistira, and told him that his uncle and aunt have left with Vidura to the Himalayam hermitage of sages at Saptasrota, where the Ganga split herself into seven differ-channels, where pouring oblations after a holy bath and penance are very sacred for the attainment of Moksha. He further disclosed that his uncle had there abandoned all enjoyments and duties, and was sitting motionless visualising the Lord in his heart, to cast off his body on the fifth day to be consumed by fire, which Gandhari will enter to follow her husband. Vidura will then again go out on pilgrimage to sacred places. Narada further informed that Yudhistira should also prepare himself for his exit from the world, as Lord Sri Krishna would soon cast off his mortal coil, from which time bad days would come upon the world.

Yudhistira sees evil omens: Arjuna returns from Dwaraka.

Seven months had elapsed since Arjuna had left for Dwaraka. The king saw evil portents. Time and seasons had changed for the worse, people taking to sinful ways of anger, greed and falsehood. Their ways were crooked. Friends became deceitful between themselves. Parents and children, brothers and brothers, relations and relations, and even husbands and wives quarrelled with each other. The approach of Kali age seemed dreadful.

The king sent for his brother Bhima and expressed his misgivings to him about the times and the non-return of Arjuna from Dwaraka. He said that his left thigh, left eye and left arm were throbbing, and his heart quaked frequently. The jackal howled at the sun, and his own dog bayed at him. The owls and crows horribly cried at nights. The quarters looked smoky. There were thunder claps with lightning strokes and hard-blowing winds and blood-raining clouds. Even the sun looked brightless. The people's minds were agitated. Cows wept, tears trickling down their faces. They did not allow themselves to be milked, or allow their calves to suck milk. The land, cities, gardens and hermitages looked cheerless. This land had lost its charm being perhaps deprived of the Lord's feet.

Just then Arjuna entered returning from Dwaraka, and fell at the king's feet. He was ill at ease, his face cast down and his eyes filled with tears. The king became very anxious at heart, especially recalling the words of Narada, and made hurried enquiries, about his relations, the Madhus, the Bhojas, the Arhas, the Satvatas the Andhakas, the Vrishnis, his grandfather Surasena, his uncles, their wives, king Ugrasena, Akrura, Jayantha, Gada, Sarana, Satrajit, Balarama, Sri Krishna, Pradyumna, Aniruddha, Susena, Charudeshna, Rukmini, Samba, Strutadeva, Udhava, Sunanda, and Nanda. He particularly enquired whether Lord Sri Krishna, Divine lover of the Brahmans and devotees was happy at His own capital, with his constant companion Balarama, respected by all His subjects, who were protected by His long arms. The king made searching enquiries of Satyabhama and the 16 thousand and odd spouses of the Lord.

The king then questioned Arjuna about his health and happiness and the reasons for his brightless countenance. He hoped that none tormented Arjuna at Dwaraka and that he himself was generous to Brahmans, children, cows, the aged or ailing persons. The king suspected that the cause of Arjuna's agony might be due to his separation from his most beloved and intimate friend and relation, Sri Krishna.

Arjuna had grown lean and thin, and his sustained silence to a number of questions gave rise to many a doubt in Yudhistira's mind. His brightness had gone, and his face and heart indicated grief. He restrained with difficulty his tears running down his cheeks; and, with choked voice, Arjuna addressed the king as follows:

"Lord Krishna who was my friend and relation, has now deceived me and has deserted me, and has robbed me of my mighty valour. Bereft of Him, the world has become loathsome, as is the human body bereft of life. Through His Grace, I outshone the intoxicated princes at the time of Draupadi's Swayamvara. In His presence, I conquered Indra and his heavenly hosts; and brought presents from every quarter for the Rajasuya sacrifice. It was He who enabled Bhimasena to slay Jarasandha, with the strength and vigour of 10,000 elephants, and set free numerous princes imprisoned by the Rakshasa. It was He who rescued Draupadi from the dishonour she was subjected to by Dushasna and others in open

court. It was He who enabled me to share with the mighty Indra his exalted throne in his court. Befriended by Him, I was able to cross all alone the boundless and unfathomable ocean of Kaurava army, which was impassable, assisted as it was by the Great Bhishma, Drona, Karna, Salya and others. I was stupid in choosing as my charioteer the Supreme Lord, whose lotus feet are so sacred. We treated each other as equals, even while in bed and sitting together, while rambling or indulging in selfpraise or at dinner. Bereft of that Lord, I am left without a heart. Now I was vanquished even by cow-herds and I am helpless, though I possess the same Gandiva, the same shafts, the same chariot with the self-same horses, and I am the same car-warrior, but alas without the valour. All my belonging have become reduced to nothingness, like an oblation poured into the ashes, service done with a covert motive and the seed sown in barren land."

"All our relations at Dwaraka lost their reason under the influence of a curse from Brahmans, drank wine, revelled with each other, struck one another with their fists and all perished with the exception of four or five. To reduce the earth's burden, it was His will that Yadus should be killed by Yadus themselves. It was His Leela, bringing of which to my mind has presently soothed the agony of my heart."

Thus Arjuna's mind became pure, all impurities of lust, anger, attachment and sorrowfulness vanished, as he recollected the gospel of Bhagavatgeetha preached by the Lord in the battle front, Arjuna transcended the three gunas and had Realisation of the Lord.

Yudhistira was touched to the quick, hearing of the Lord's departure and the extermination of the Yadu race, and he resolved to ascend to heaven. Kunti similarly felt disgusted of her earthly life. Kali age set in the very minute the Lord bodily departed from this earth; and unrighteousness dawned on the earth. Greed, falsehood, deceit and violence grew. The king installed his grandson Parikshit on the throne at Hastinapur. Vajra was enthroned at Mathura. The king then offered sacrifice to Prajapathi, and renounced his home and became a recluse, leaving his palace, his fine clothes and ornaments. He mentally merged his mind into Prana, the Prana into Apana, and that finally into the five elements. He was clad in rags, without food and drink. He observed silence,

and did not lend his ear to anything worldly. He fixed his mind on the Lord and proceeded towards the north accompanied by his brothers. Purified by devotion, the Pandavas fixed their mind on the Supreme Lord. Vidura cast off his body at Prabhasa and freed himself from the worldly bondage. The Pandavas and Draupadi concentrated their mind on the Lord and attained to His abode.

Sacred is the story of the Pandavas and their clan. Most sacred are the stories of the Supreme Lord. Therefore, he who listens to their blessed stories, develops devotion and attains perfection.

King Parikshit's adventures and dialogue between Dharma and Mother earth.

King Parikshit was living in the Kurujangala country. He heard the bad news that Kali had entered the kingdom ruled by him. The king instantly took his bow and mounted his chariot bearing the ensign of a lion, and sallied forth from his capital for the conquest of the bane over the kingdom. His own army consisting of chariots and elephants, horses and foot, followed him. He conquered the countries of Bhadraswa, Ketumala, Bharata, northern Kurus, Kimpurusha, etc. Everywhere, he heard praises of the Pandavas and the glories of Sri Krishna. He also heard the story of his own deliverance from the missile discharged by Aswathama by the Supreme Lord Sri Krishna, and of the cordial relations between the Yadus and the Pandavas, and the latter's devotion to the Lord. Highly pleased with those who sang these stories, the emperor Parikshit bestowed on them costly garments and jewels. The other stories related by them, such as the role played by the Lord as the charioteer of Arjuna, as the councillor of the Pandavas, as their friend and ambassador and as warrior watching outside their camp at nights, developed high devotion in the king for His feet. Thus was Parikshit ruling the empire righteously.

Hoofing about on one foot in the form of a bull, Dharma, the god of virtue, saw mother earth in the form of a cow, shorn of lustre and bathing her cheeks in tears like a mother that had lost her child. Dharma questioned the Earth as follows; " Good lady, why do you look so pale? I see agony in your heart. Do you grieve for the misery of some relation or for me, who am deprived of my three feet

and am left with but one foot? Do you feel that unrighteous Sudras will rule over your realm, or that the gods and other heavenly beings are deprived and robbed of their sacrificial offerings by Brahmans? Do you feel that Indra is withholding rains and the country remains waste, or that women and children are uncared for? Are you sorry that the Vedic lore has fallen into the hands of undutiful Brahmans, or that the Brahmans have taken to the service of royal houses, that have no respect for the Brahman race? Or, is it that the fallen Kshatriyas are dominated by Kali and their kingdoms are getting devastated? Are you sorry the Lord has left the earth, and the people have become deteriorated, intent only on eating and drinking, clothing and washing, and sensual pleasures? You look very emaciated and mentally very worried, and without your usual good fortune, which was once extolled even by Gods."

Mother Earth replied: "You are aware that the Supreme Lord endowed you with four feet, that were conducive to the happiness of the world, contributed by the prevailing truthfulness, purity, compassion, forbearance, liberality, contentment, guilelessness, calm mind, subdued senses, austerity, temperance, endurance, quietism, sacred knowledge, self-realisation, dispassion, heroism, majesty, strength, right judgment, independence, dexterity, loveliness of form, fortitude, gentleness, intelligence, modesty, amiability, quickness of mind, acuteness of senses, bodily vigour, good fortune, sobriety, steadiness, reverence, good reputation, absence of egotism and other excellent virtues, which are ever present in the Lord. By that Supreme Lord and the abode of Sri, the world has become deserted, and the world has fallen to the lot of Kali for which I am now grieving. Sri, the Goddess of prosperity has left the Earth in her excessive fondness for the lovely shade of His feet. So far, exquisitely adored by the glorious feet of the Lord, who bore the marks of a lotus, mace, Conch and Sudarsana Chakra of great splendour, I once outshone all the three worlds. Good luck has ceased and the Lord left me. In Dwaparayuga, grieved at the loss of your two feet, He removed my oppressive burden in the shape of hundred of Akshauhinis of kings, who were demons in their previous births. Kaliyuga has dawned, and you are now deprived of one more foot and stand only on one foot. How would women bear the separation of the Supreme Person, and with Him, His endearing looks, bright smiles and sweet words, which are enchanting even to

His own consorts of Satyabhama and others? That thrill of joy is now gone, and perhaps gone for ever."

While Dharma and Earth were thus heartily conversing, the royal sage Parikshit arrived there on the bank of the Saraswathi, where it flows towards the east.

The King subdues Kali.

There on the bank of the Saraswathi, the king saw a Sudra, bearing the insignia of royalty, belabouring a cow and a bull with a club. The bull had only one leg; and the cow was being kicked, and was bereft of its calf. The cow was hungry and lean and was shedding tears. The king, Parikshit, challenged the tyrant, stringing his bow, for striking harmless creatures in a lonely place. He declared the man as an offender, deserving to be slain.

The king made kind enquiries of the bull, as to who amputated his three feet and how such a mishap came about during his monarchy. He assured him protection, punishing the wicked, according to the injunctions in the scriptures. Dharma (the bull) thanked the king for the protection assured, and craved him to remedy the prevailing suffering, which might be due to one's own karma, or the will of the Providence, or the nature of the creation, or something beyond the reach of speech and mind.

The king concluded that the bull was Dharma himself, and addressed him as follows: "Dharma! You were blessed with four feet of austerity, purity, compassion and truthfulness in Satyayuga. With the passage of Krita Yuga, Tretayuga and Dwaparayuga, the progeny of unrighteousness—pride, attachment and hauteur took hold; and Yuga after Yuga, you are deprived of three feet one after the other; and now, the one foot of truthfulness remains for you to stand on. Yonder you see unrighteousness in the shape of Kali, seeking to rob you of the same. This cow in agony is, I see, no other than mother Earth, now forsaken of the charming lotus like feet of the Lord. The wicked pretend to rule the land and hate the Brahmans."

The king thus consoled Dharma and mother Earth, and unsheathed his sword to kill Kali, who however, placed his head at

the king's feet. As the king was meek and hospitable to those seeking his protection, he took compassion and refrained from slaying him. He commanded him to leave Brahmavartha, which is the abode of piety and truth, where learned brahmins perform sacrifices to the Lord, who blesses His votaries and grants all their desires.

Kali trembled at the command and obediently craved for some abode for him. The king then assigned four places for Kali: dice, wine, woman and shambles, which are the hotbeds of falsehood, intoxication, passion and cruelty. An additional abode—gold, which created greed, was also assigned to Kali. Hence people of right conduct should never resort to these vices. The king then restored the three feet of Dharma and comforted and cherished mother Earth, and retired to his capital. King Parikshit thus ruled his empire righteously.

Sage Sringi curses King Parikshit.

Banking on the Grace of Lord Sri Krishna, king Parikshit faced facts boldly, and never took to heart the earlier prophecy that he would die by a serpent bite, as cursed by a Brahman boy. He shook off attachment to everything and accepted the discipleship of sage Suka, and enjoyed the nectar-like stories of the Lord. During the king's regime, Kali was practically powerless, though he set his foot the very day the Lord quitted the earth. The king was very wise, and did not bear any grudge even to Kali. For, the truth is that in the Kali age meritorious acts bear fruit immediately they are just projected, while sinful acts yield fruit only when they are actually committed. Because this is a wicked age, even a small act of merit is amply rewarded by the Lord. Blessed are the men who listen with rapt attention to all the Lord's stories that depict His virtues and narrate His exploits. Therefore, Saunaka and other sages assembled on the banks of the Ganges requested Suta to recount the untarnished glory of the Lord—the sweet honey flowing from His lotus feet. So great is His glory that even the masters of Yoga, headed by Lord Siva and the lotus-born Brahma cannot exhaust the narration of His virtues.

Suta recounted that infinite was the Lord and infinite were His powers. He is called Ananta due to His endless virtues—unequalled

and unsurpassed. Therefore it is that Goddess Lakshmi sought the dust of His feet, even though He did not seek Her hand. So it is that Lord Siva bore on his head the sacred Ganga flowing from the Lord's (Hari's) feet.

One day, king Parikshit was hunting in the forest with his bow. Running after a game, he felt extremely hungry and thirsty. Finding no water nearby, he entered the hermitage of sage Samika, and saw the hermit sitting with his eyes closed. He was in deep meditation, having controlled his senses, breath, mind and intellect. The king asked him for water, but had no response. He grew indignant, and was enraged at the sage. He picked a dead serpent lying nearby with his arrow and put it across the shoulder of the sage, and went home. The king thought that the sage feigned deep meditation and treated him with disrespect.

The sage's son Sringeri was playing at a distance, and was told that his father had been disgraced by the king, by a serpent being flung over his shoulder. The boy though young had abundant spiritual glow. He grew very wild, sipped some water from the Kausiki river and hurled a curse that seven days hence, Takshaka, the chief of the serpents, should bite and kill the bane of the king's race, (Parikshit), who disgraced his father. The boy approached his father and wept aloud. The sage opened his eyes, and found what all had happened. He felt very sorry that his son had pronounced such a curse, which meant such a heavy punishment for the king. In his sympathy for the king, the sage even forgot the king's misdeed, and severely instructed his son against such hasty action against the ruler himself, who was so essential for the kingdom, without whom there would be confusion and terror in the country, and the condition of the Brahmans would not be safe, the country being infested with robbers and decoits.

Parikshit's fast unto death: Sri Suka's visit.

At home, the king felt much troubled at heart for his reproachful conduct to the spiritual powered sage. He was very much worried and was even ready to be burnt up for his misconduct. While thus reflecting, he heard of the sage's son's curse that he should die, bitten by Takshaka. So much was his confession that he was

prepared even to get the effect of the curse at once, as a blessing to expiate his sin.

He therefore renounced his throne and all pleasures, and recognising that the adoration of Sri Krishna's feet was superior to everything else, he sat down on the southern bank of the Ganga, resolving to fast unto death and lead the life of a hermit for the last lap of his life. There arrived with their pupils, sages Atri, Vasista, Chyavana, Saradvan, Bhrugu, Angira, Parasara, Viswamitra, Parasurama, Bharadwaja, Gautama, Pippalada, Maitreya, Aurava, Agasthya, Vedavyasa, Narada and others. The king received them all with due honour and bowed to them all, and told them what he intended to do and craved for their blessings. Once more bowing to them, he implored them to sing the stories of the Lord, and begged them to bless him with devotion to the Lord.

Having installed his son Janamejaya on the throne, he sat amidst the sages on a seat of kusa grass, when gods rained flowers on him and drums were sounded. The sages resolved to stay there till the devoted king cast off his mortal coil and attained the Lord's abode, and help him in his aim of shaking off his sins, and also to purify themselves more and more in so doing, by singing and hearing the glorious stories of the Lord.

Then there arrived the divine sage Suka. He was sixteen years old, with tender feet and hands and lovely arms, shoulders, cheeks and frame, with large eyes, prominent nose, symmetrical ears, beautiful eye-brows, shapely neck and fleshy frame. He was a charming youth with graceful limbs and winsome smiles. Though he concealed his spiritual glow, the learned sages recognised him, and rose from their seats. The king received him reverently and paid him all homage. The great sage shone like the moon amidst other planets and stars. When the sage was comfortably seated, the king approached him, and touching his feet with his head, stood attentive with joined palms. He thanked him for his very kind visit, which purified the assembly and the entire surroundings by the very sight of him and the touch of his feet.

The king implored Sri Suka, the greatest preceptor of the Yogis, to bless him with the character and means of the highest

realisation, and what should be done under all circumstances by a man, who was on the verge of death. He requested to be informed what they should hear, what they should repeat, what they should keep in mind, what they should resort to and what they should avoid. Thus requested in soft accents by the king, Sri Suka, son of Sri Vedavyasa, who was well versed in all Dharma, made the holiest discourses for the spiritual benefit of not only the king but all those assembled.



II SKANDHA

The Supreme Lord's Cosmic Form: Meditation.

THE great sage Sri Suka was very much pleased with the good enquiry of King Parikshit and welcomed it, as the answers thereto would result in the good of the world and be worth hearing, remembering and chanting. He explained to the king that life time should be usefully spent. The span of human life is stolen away by sleep during the nights; and during the days, greedy pursuits of making money for one's body, his progeny, wife and children, are incessant, without an attempt to visualize the life's end. To attain the fearless state of Moksha, one should listen to, recite and dwell on the stories of the Lord, who is the very soul of the Universe. To keep Him in mind at the last moment is the supreme reward of human birth. That mental state at the last moment is not possible unless one is devoted to Him during his normal life, doing every act righteously and dedicating everything to Him.

Srimath Bhagavatha Purana is most sacred as the Purana reveals the sacred stories of the Supreme Lord Sri Krishna. His various Avatars and teachings, and facts most important to elevate the soul, which assuredly bring the Grace of the Lord exclusively. Sri Suka said that he studied Bhagavatha towards the end of Dwa-para Yuga, from his father Sri Vedavyasa; and undertook to recite the same Purana to the devout king and the devout sages assembled. He said that the chanting of the Lord's names had been the best means to the end. Having known that life would end in one hour more, the royal sage Khatwanga renounced everything, devoted himself to Sri Hari and won His Grace. Now king Parikshit had seven days time and could benefit by the most sacred and elaborate Bhagavatha Purana.

To win the Lord's grace, the person should have full self-control, bathe in holy waters, sit in a clean and secluded plot and repeat mentally the holy Pranava 'Aum.' He should withdraw his mind from other objects, and should meditate on the blessed form of the Lord with all devotion.

The king asked the sage the method of concentration and manner of practice prescribed for speedy removal of impurity of

one's mind, and the great sage replied:—Steadiness of seat, control of breath and subdued senses are very essential for concentration, which should be fixed on His Cosmic form. In the description of His form, Patala Loka constitutes the soles of His feet. Rasatala the hinder and front part of His feet, Mahatala corresponds to His ankles, Talatala the shanks, Satala the knees of the Supreme Lord, and Vithala and Atala His thighs. The earth's surface is His loins, Bhuvarloka His navel. Indraloka His breast, Maharloka His neck, Janaloka is His face, and Thapoloka His brow. The twins (Aswinikumaras) are His nostrils, the sky his eyes, the sun His sight, and Satyaloka His eye brows. The vedas are the crown of His head. The moon is His mind. The Brahmana represents His mouth, the Kshatriya His arms, the Vysya the thighs, and the Sudra His feet. Such is the cosmic body of the Lord. It is on this grossest form that the mind is concentrated with the help of reason. One should devote himself to that embodiment of Divine Bliss, feeling not attached to any other object. This ensures perfect concentration.

Concentration: Two Forms of Mukthi.

Perfect concentration is very important. It was through such concentration that Brahma propitiated the Lord at the dawn of creation and got from Him unfailing knowledge and vision for the purpose of the creation of the world. A wise man should be connected with the worldly things only just to the extent useful for maintaining the body. He should be aware of the emptiness of the sensuous enjoyments. Fruitless labour should be avoided. Contentment is the best means. The earth is there to serve as his bed, his arms for pillows, and the hollow of his palms for cups and dishes. Do not the trees live by themselves and also give alms to others in the shape of fruits, leaves and so on? There are the rivers to quench your thirst and the mountain caves to house you. Above all, has the Supreme Lord at any time denied protection to any living being? So where is the need to knock at the doors of those, blind with the pride of wealth? Why any fear when the Supreme Lord resides in every heart?

Thus Sri Suka addressed the king and continued: For concentration, fix your mind on the Lord with four arms with a lotus.

disc, conch and mace, residing in the cavity of the heart, in a form as big as a thumb. He has a cheerful countenance, lotus-like eyes, and yellow robe. He is adorned with gold armlets studded with brilliant jewels, a crown and ear rings. His tender feet are installed in the centre of the full-blown lotus of the heart. He bears Goddess Lakshmi above His left breast, has the famous Kausthubha gem hanging from His neck and a garland on his chest. With his rings, anklets, bracelets, charming smiles and glances, He is the best centre for meditation. As the mind gets steadier, the limbs of the Lord should be visualised one after the other. Meditation and concentration should be practised, after one has finished his daily devotional duties.

For final realisation, the devotee should sit in a steady and easy posture, control his breath, restrain his senses, have pure thoughts, and merge his mind with the Lord within. The Lord's sacred form should be embraced with the heart every moment. The air (Pranavayu) should be drawn upwards through six places (Shat-Chakras or centres) from Mooladhara to Manipura (at the navel), then to Anahatha (heart), on to Visudhi (at the breast), to the root of the palate; and having the eyes, ears, nose and the mouth closed, the Prana air should go up to the middle of the eye-brows; and then, after a pause, to Sahasrara Chakra located at the crown of the head; and this opens the way to the abode of the Lord.

To visit Brahmaloaka and to sport in the company of Siddhas, the Yogis should acquire the eight supernatural powers (Ashta Siddhis). Yogis who practise worship of the Lord, austere penance, Yoga and Jnana, and whose body is as subtle as air, can freely move in the three worlds. They first reach Vaiswanara, to shake off any trace of impurity. They then proceed to Maharloaka, and then rise still higher to Brahmaloaka, life in which lasts for two Parardhas. There, there is no grief or agony, no dotage or death, nor fear of any kind. Satyaloka is the final goal. The Divine goal knows no return to this world of matter.

The Vedas commend these paths. Brahma critically studied the Vedas taught to him by the Lord, and concluded that devotion to Lord Vasudevā is the blessed path to heaven. Exclusive devotion to the Lord is the highest virtue. The Lord abides in all being, and He is the all-witnessing seer. Therefore, men should always

and under all circumstances, listen to, recite and revolve in their mind Lord Sri Hari alone. They should drink to the brim the nectar-like stories of the Lord, who is the soul of the Universe and purify their heart, contaminated through sense pleasures, and thus attain His lotus Feet.

Worship of Deities to Fulfil Desires: Superiority of Devotion to the Lord.

Sri Suka then detailed what deities or gods should be propitiated for the gratification of the various desires. A seeker of sacred knowledge should worship Brihaspathi, and a seeker of keenness of senses should worship Indra. Progeny is secured by propitiating Prajapathis. Goddess Lakshmi grants prosperity, Agni grants indefatigable energy, Vasus bestow wealth to the worshipper, Rudras grant more power, Aditi grants food; Viswedevas grant sovereignty; Adityas grant heaven; Sadyas grant allegiance of subjects; Aswins grant long life; Gandharvas grant personal charm; and Urvashi grants a lovely wife. Brahma should be worshipped for Lordship, and Lord Vishnu for renown. Varuna grants treasures. God Siva learning, and Goddess Uma conjugal happiness. To propagate his race, one should worship Pitris, and to gain bodily vigour, Maruts should be worshipped. Soma grants self gratification.

However, superior to the worship of all the above deities is the worship of the Supreme Lord Krishna, by whatever name you may call him Rama, Krishna, Govinda, Narayana, or any of His Blessed numerous names. His worship is most sacred whether one has any desires or has no desires, or desires Moksha. The attainment of highest good lies in having unswerving devotion to the Lord through the fellowship of His devotees. Hearing discourses on Sri Hari results in the dawn of spiritual enlightenment, purification of the heart and aversion to sensual pleasures.

Sri Suka is a seer well-versed in the vedas, and king Parikshit a great devotee of the Lord. Where holy men meet, there are sublime talks saturated with the sweet stories of the Lord, that make the holy men holier still. The rising and the setting sun steals away the lives of all human beings, except of the men who spend at least

a single moment in singing the praise of the Lord. Men without devotion are no better than trees that grow, bellows that breathes and animals that eat food and copulate, or a dog, a swine, a camel or a donkey. Ears of men that do not hear the exploits of the Lord are mere holes, the tongue is that of a frog, and the crowned head is a burden. Human feet that do not visit sacred places are like roots of trees, and a mortal who has never bathed himself in the dust of the feet of the Lord's devotees, is really dead. A human heart should melt hearing the Supreme Lord's praises, and tears of love and devotion should run down the cheeks and the hair should stand on ends. Such devotion to the Lord contributes to the material, physical and spiritual development of the mankind.

Sri Suka Recounts The Lord's Glories.

King Parikshit devoted his mind exclusively to Sri Krishna's feet, and shook off his deep-rooted attachment for his own body, wife, sons, residence, wealth, kinsmen, animals and his kingdom. He even renounced the pursuits of Dharma, Artha and Kama, and was full of deep reverence for hearing the Lord's glory. He questioned the sage as to the process of Lord's creation, preservation and destruction of the universe.

Sri Suka fixed his mind on Sri Krishna and commenced his discourse on the subject after paying obeisance to the Supreme Lord of infinite glory, who effects the creation, preservation and destruction through the form of Vishnu, Brahma and Siva by the three gunas of Satva, Rajas and Thamas. The great sage offered salutations to the Lord, who roots out the sorrows of the virtuous, and bestows on them the boon of His love. The Lord is of most auspicious renown, by singing whose praises, by thinking of, seeing, greeting and adoring whom, and by hearing whose glory, men are cleansed of their impurities at once. Ascetics and those devoted to charity, men of high repute, who have controlled their minds and senses, knowers of mantras, and men of righteous conduct never attain blessedness without dedicating themselves to His feet. Even Kiratas, Hunas, Pulindas, Kukasas, Abhiras, Kankas, Yavanas, Khasas and other sinful races are purged of all their sins even by taking refuge in those, who are devoted to Him. The Lord is the Veda itself and Dharma personified, to whom Brahma and

Sankara are sincerely devoted. The great sage sought the grace of the Lord, the foremost of the disseminators of wisdom, the creator of these bodies, out of the five elements of earth, water, fire, air and ether; and endowed them with the five senses of perception, the five organs of action, the five vital airs and the mind. The sage hailed the omniscient lord Vedavyasa, who is no other than Lord Vasudeva, from whose lotus-like lips the devotees drink the nectar of wisdom, and who imparted the Vedas to Brahma, who in turn taught the Vedas to sage Narada.

The Cosmos.

Sage Narada questioned his father Brahma for enlightenments on the truth of the spirit and the universe, their support and their characteristics. The sage wondered at the creation, which is after the manner of a spider, which spins a web out of its own mouth without any exertion and sports in that web.

Brahma was pleased at the question of his son, the answer to which reveals the Lord's glory. He replied: "I seem to bring forth the creation, but it is really manifested by the self-effulgent Lord, just as He illuminates the sun, the moon, the fire, the stars and other lunar mansions. He is the real father of the universe, not I. The Supreme Lord Narayana (by whatever name He is called, Krishna, Vishnu or Vasudeva) is the goal of the Vedas. Sacrifices are meant to please Him. He is the goal of the Yogis. He is the Supreme Seer and the Ruler, and is all embracing. He created me, and encouraged by His glance, I evolve this creation. The Lord is infinite and beyond the three gunas of Satwa, Rajas and Tamas for the purpose of creation, preservation and destruction."

"By His own will, Kala, Karma and Swabhava were set in motion. From these, evolved the three Gunas and Mahat. Therefrom Dravya, Gnana and Kriya came into being, which resulted in Ahankara of the three varieties Vaikarika, Tajasa and Thamasa, which are severally predominated by Jnana, Kriya and Dravya. From Tamasa Ahankara was evolved the five gross elements. Sabda is the subtle form of ether from which sprang up air. Vitality, energy, zeal and strength are transformations of air. Time and Destiny of the individual souls later came up. Then was evolved

fire, characteristic of colour, sound and touch. From fire evolved water, which is characteristic of taste, colour, touch and sound inherited from the chain of causes, fire, air and ether. From water, sprang up earth, which is characteristic of smell and taste. From Satvic ego, came up cosmic mind and the ten deities severally presiding over the five senses of perception and the five organs of action, viz., the Digdevatas, the wind-god, *Sūrya*, *Varuna*, *Aswins*, *Indra*, *Mitra* and *Prajapathi*. From the Rajasic ego, were evolved the ten *Indriyas*—the auditory sense, sense of touch, sense of sight, sense of taste and olfactory sense, as well as the organ of speech, hands, feet, and the organs of generation and excretion.”

“The association of the gross elements, the *Indriyas*, the mind and the three *Gunas* were necessary to form a body. Life was necessary and this was infused. Bursting open the cosmic egg, the Supreme Person issued forth. It is in His limbs that the wise locate the various worlds comprised in this universe—seven lower spheres below his waist and seven higher spheres above His hip and loins. The four *Varnas* represent His mouth, His arms, His thighs and His feet. *Bhuvarloka* is His navel, *Swarloka* His heart, *Maharloka* His breast, *Janoloka* His neck, *Tapoloka* His breast, and *Satyalo* His head. Likewise, the lower worlds are located—*Atala* in His waist, *Vithala* in His thighs, *Suthala* in His knees, *Talathala* in His shanks, *Mahatala* in His ankles, *Resatala* in the fore part of His feet, and *Patala* in His soles. In this way, the Supreme Lord represents the aggregate of all the fourteen worlds. Another version is that the earth is located in His feet, *Bhuvarloka* in His navel and *Swarloka* in His head. The Lord is thus the all-pervading Supreme Person, who is above all, without an equal and second to none.”

The Glorious Cosmic Being.

Brahma continued his description of the glorious Cosmic Being to *Narada* as follows: The Cosmic Being is the Supreme Lord, whose mouth is the birth place of speech. The seven *Dhatus* (viz., skin, flesh, blood, fat, marrow, sinew and bone) are the source of the seven Vedic meters—*Gayatri*, *Jagathi*, *Usnik*, *Trishtubh*, *Anushtubh*, *Pānki* and *Bhrihati*. His tongue is the source of food of the gods and the manes, which is ambrosia for the human beings. From His nostrils, emanate the five vital airs—*Prana*,

Apana, Vyana, Udana, and Samana; from His olfactory sense, the Asvins; from His sense of sight, the colours and lights; from His eyes, the heaven and the sun; from His ears, the cardinal points and the sacred places; from His sense of hearing, the ether and sound; and from His limbs, the essence of all things and their loveliness. Again from the hair on His body, emanate the trees and plants; from the hair on His head, the clouds and lightning; from His nails, the rocks and iron; from His arms, the guardians of spheres; from His stride, the three worlds—earth, air region and heaven; from His arteries and veins, all rivers; from His bones, the mountains; and from His heart, the human mind. Similarly, from the Lord's Chitta, emanate Dharma and the presiding god Brahma, Narada, Sanaka, Sanatana, Sanandana, Sanatkumara and Sanatsujata. In short, from that Supreme Lord emanate all gods, demons, men, Nagas, birds, animals, reptiles, Gandharvas, Yakshas, Rakshasas, Bhutas, Manes, Siddhas, Vidyadharas, Charanas, trees, all living beings in air, water, land, planets, lunar mansions, comets, stars, and clouds. He pervades all these, and He casts His effulgence inside and outside the universe, the entirety of which represents but a fraction of the Supreme Person.

The three highest heavens are the Janaloka, Tapoloka and Satyaloka, where immortality, security and fearlessness have been established. The three Asramas of Brahmacharya, Vanaprastha and Sanyasa constitute His three feet, while the fourth foot constitutes that of Grihastha (house holder). The path of Karma (action) leads to Avidya, and the path of Upasana leads to Vidya (His knowledge or realisation). The first path gives enjoyment, and the second path gives final beatitude.

When Brahma sprang up from the lotus in His navel, he obtained, from the Supreme Person, the materials required for sacrifices, such as the Kusa grass, cereals, clarified butter, saps of Soma and other plants, metals, earth, water, the sacred texts of Rigveda, Yajurveda and Samaveda and the Mantras. The Manus, gods, Rishis, Manes and all others partook in the sacrifice and worshipped the Lord. Brahma created the worlds and God Siva as well, under His control. Brahma never conceives a false idea or goes astray, because he ever contemplates on the Lord with a full heart. He practised Yoga with all thoroughness of concentration.

on the Lord, bowing to His most blessed feet, which are the home of all auspiciousness and the end of the cycle of births and deaths.

Brahma sings His praise constantly and hails the Lord who creates, protects and dissolves the universe within Himself. Those who contemplate on the Lord realise Him when they have perfectly subdued their body, senses and mind. The Supreme Lord's creation and protection cover the whole range of the universe including the Gandharvas, Vidyadharas, Charanas, Yakshas, Rakshasas, Nagas, Rishis, Daityas, Siddhas, Danavas, Pisachas, Bhutas, Kusmandas, aquatic creatures, beasts and birds. The scriptures have described the sportful descents of the Lord and they will be narrated in the following chapters. The delightful stories dry up the impurities of the body and soul, and should therefore be drunk by the devotees to their heart's content.

Stories of the Lord's Avatars

The Supreme Lord assumed the form of divine Boar and lifted the earth from the bottom of the ocean. Then Hiranyaksha countered Him, and the Rakshasa was torn to death with His tusks.

Next, He was born as the son of Ruchi and his wife Akuti, under the name Suyajna; and He begot through His consort Dakshayana a son. He was known as Hari, the reliever of distress.

Then, He was born as the son of Kardama and His wife Devahuti, under the name Kapila with nine sisters, and imparted to His mother Divine knowledge, and thus wiped off her sins and granted her the Divine abode. The Lord was born as the son of Atri by name Datta, and, purified by the dust of His lotus feet, Yadu, Sahasrabahu and other Haihaya kings realised the two-fold consummation of Yoga of enjoyment and liberation.

Complying with Brahma's penance, the Lord appeared in the form of four brothers, Sanatkumara, Sanaka, Sanandana and Sananda, and expounded Divine knowledge.

He was born as the twin sages Narayana and Nara to Murthi, wife of Dharma, and was unequalled for the glory of their austere penance and Yogic power.

When Dhruva left the royal home, pierced by the shaft-like words of his step-mother Suruchi, and practised penance in the woods, the Lord was pleased with the praises of the young prince, and appeared before him as Narayana and granted him an eternal abode.

The Lord was born as the son of Nabhi and his wife Merudevi, by name Rishabhā and set Himself as an example of Paramahansa of uninterrupted meditation, ever absorbed in spiritual

The Lord presides over and is worshipped in all sacrifices, and He personally appeared at Brahma's sacrifice as Hayagriva, with a horse's head and golden complexion. He is Veda personified, as, when He breathed, the holy Vedas issued forth through His nostrils.

At the end of the sixth Manvantara, king Satyavrata beheld the Lord in the form of the divine Fish (Matsya). The Lord then picked the Vedas that had dropped into the dreadful ocean, and had submerged.

When the Devas and Danavas churned the ocean of milk to get nectar out of it, the Lord helped them by His Kurma Avatar, and bore on His back Mount Mandara, which was the churning rod.

His Avatar as Narasimha (man-lion) is well known; and, with His restless eyebrows and moving jaws, He seized Hiranyakasipu, threw him down on His lap and ended him by ripping up his belly with His claws.

When the famous elephant was seized by the foot by an alligator, and invoked His grace for relief, Lord Sri Hari appeared on the scene mounted on Garuda and beheaded the alligator with his Sudarsana Chakra, and thus saved the elephant devotee from its enemy's mortal grip.

In His Avatar as Vamana, He covered all the three worlds by His three paces, when king Bali offered Him land. He demonstrated to the world that a righteous man cannot be overthrown even by the all-powerful, except through solicitation. Bali was

magnanimous even though warned and cursed by his own guru Sukracharya, and offered to the Lord his own body, by placing his head at the Lord's feet.

Appearing as the Divine Hamsa, the Lord taught sage Narada the Yoga of devotion, which only wise and devoted men can easily grasp. In the various Manvantaras, he preserves the race of the Manus, wielding His authority over all the ten directions with His Sudarsana, spreading His exploits of charming glory up to the highest heaven of Satyaloka.

The Lord descended on this world as Dhanvantari, to cure the diseases of men of numerous ailments. It was He who propounded Ayurveda, the science of health and longevity.

When the ruling race abandoned the path of virtue, or tortured the virtuous, the Lord appeared as Parasurama, and exterminated the race with His axe.

His Avatar in the line of Ikshvaku as Sri Rama (of Ramayana fame) is too well-known to require any elaboration. His three brothers set an example of brotherhood, and His wife Sita a splendid example of Pativrata. He destroyed the ten-headed Rakshasa-king Ravana with the mere twang of His bow.

Then comes the Avatar of Sri Krishna of Mahabharatha fame. His exploits are innumerable. They are so popular that it is needless to enumerate them here, as the stories in the two epics of Ramayana and Mahabharatha are familiar to the Hindus, nay to almost all Indians, from the Himalayas to Cape Camorin. Suffice it to mention here that we should ever pray for the Lord's Divine Grace and be assured of our material, physical and spiritual prosperity and final beatitude, when He wills it.

When the intellect of men became dwarfed and their lifetime shortened, and the Vedic teachings could no longer be grasped. He manifested Himself as Vedavyasa, son of Satyavathi, and re-arranged the Vedas into four main branches, to facilitate their compartmental study by different groups of Brahmanas, entrusted with their study, preservation and propagation.

At the close of the present Kali age, when there will be no discourses on the Lord even among the pious souls, when the twice-born will turn heretics, and the Sudras will become the rulers of men, nay, when the uttering of the words Svaha, Svadha and Vashat will be heard no more, and when there will be no talk of sacrifices to the gods or Devas or offering of oblations to the manes or Pitris, the Supreme Lord will appear as Kalki (the punisher of Kali, the unrighteous pervader of this Kali Yuga).

The Lord is a storehouse of innumerable potencies, and even the primal deity god Sesha, who is possessed of a thousand mouths, cannot reach the end of the Lord's praises to this day. It is only the Lord's devotees who follow the teachings of the Vedas, who can realise the true nature of the Lord's Maya and thus cross the ocean of Samsara. It is the Lord that bestows on man the fruit of his actions, for it is He who inspires noble actions as per the natural dispositions of the doer.

The above are the lessons from *Srimad Bhagavatha* taught by the Supreme Lord to Brahma, who in turn taught the *Bhagavatha Purana* to his son, Sage Narada, with the command that the work may be amplified and propagated in the world, so that men may develop devotion to the Lord. The man who proceeds to describe the Lord's Lilas, or approves of another's description or even reverently hears the same everyday will never be deluded by Maya, and will be twice, nay, thrice blessed by His Grace.

King Parikshit's Questions.

The king Parikshit bowed his head to the great sage Sri Suka, and addressed him as follows: "You are the foremost of the knowers of the Vedas and you possess marvellous knowledge of the stories of Sri Hari, a source of highest blessing to the world. Tell me please how I am to fix my mind on the Lord before casting off the body. The Lord pervades the heart of the man, who daily listens with reverence to His stories and also narrates His doings. He reaches the lotus of His devotee's heart through the cavity of his ears, and rids it of all impurities, so that he would never abandon His feet. It is His grace that enabled Brahma to create the universe. Though born of the lotus from His navel, Brahma could

behold His divine form by His *and* His Grace alone, which counts for the creation, preservation and dissolution of the universe."

"What is the length of the Mahakalpa and Vikalpas? How many destinies are there to be reached through karma, and what is their nature? What kind of Jivas resort to what action, in what manner and for what kind of fruit? How do the earth and Patala, the four quarters and the sky, the planets and the stars, mountains and rivers, seas and islands, and the creatures inhabiting these come into existence? Pray, tell me the stories of the exalted souls and the distinctive character of the different Varnas, Asramas, the various Yugas and the duties prescribed for each, and the duties enjoined on the men of different trades; the method of worshipping the Supreme Lord, as well the Yoga taught by Patanjali; the theme of the Vedas and subsidiary Vedas, such as Ayurveda, Dharma Sastras, Itihasas and Puranas; the process of performing Vedic rites and the works recommended by the Smritis, such as digging of wells and tanks, construction of tanks, raising of gardens, etc.; the unobjectionable method of pursuing the three objects of human aspiration of Dharma, Artha and Kama; and the manner of emancipation of the soul. You are an authority on these subjects, as much as the lotus-born Brahma; and though I am abstaining from all food and drink, let me taste the nectar (dripping from your mouth) of the Lord's glorious stories."

Sage Suka was highly pleased and expounded the same Bhagavatha, which had been taught by the Lord Himself to his son Brahma at the beginning of Brahmakalpa. The sacred Bhagavatha is of such high esteem as the Vedas themselves. The sage then proceeded to answer the king's question seriatim.

Brahma beholds the divine abode of the Lord, who taught him Bhagavatha.

„Sri Suka answered the king as follows: Even as a man can have no connection with the objects seen in a dream, so the soul that transcends all material sheaths and is consciousness itself, cannot have any connection in reality with the phenomenon, except through the Lord's Maya. When the soul begins to take delight in

material objects, he develops the feeling of 'I' and 'mine' for his body and all that relates to it. He transcends the three Gunas, when he transcends the notions of 'I' and 'mine'. The Supreme Lord revealed His own Divine form to Brahma in approbation of his true penance, which he did sitting in his own abode of lotus. Before he obtained a vision for the purpose of the creation of the world, and while he was yet absorbed in thought, Brahma heard the two letters 'Tapa' (practise penance) twice. But Brahma, who looked around, failed to perceive the speaker. He took it as the Lord's command and set his heart on penance, controlled his breath and mind, subdued his senses and organs, and with a composed mind, practised penance for 1000 celestial years or 360,000 human years.

Pleased with his penance, the Lord fully revealed to him His own Abode, the highest realm, which is absolutely free from all afflictions, bewilderment and fear, and which is extolled in all ways by the highly enlightened souls, who have been blessed by His sight. Sattva, Rajas, Tamas are absent there, and the all-destroying time is also powerless there. The Lord's attendants are adored by Devas and Danavas alike. They are most charming to look at, and are extremely delicate of body, though endowed with four arms and are adorned with gold ornaments set with shining gems, brilliant ear-rings and garlands. There, endowed with a most lovely form, Sri adores the feet of the Lord, singing His praises in company with her companions Bhudevi, Niladevi and others.

There Brahma beheld the Lord of Sri, the protector of His devotees, the omnipresent ruler of the whole universe, being waited upon by the foremost of His personal attendants, Nanda, Sunanda, Prabala, Arhana and others, ever prepared to shower His grace on His devotees. The Lord bears nectar in His looks and wears a gracious smile, with reddish eyes and yellow robes, adorned with a crown and ear-rings. He has four arms and a golden streak on His right breast, symbolising Goddess Lakshmi. He occupies the excellent and most valuable throne and is surrounded by His twenty-five Saktis or potencies of spirit, Prakriti, Mahat-tatva etc., and His six eternal and divine attributes of lordship, righteousness, renown, prosperity, wisdom and

dispassion in their fullest measure. Brahma's heart was flooded with rapture at the sight of the Lord, the hair stood erect on his person, and tears of love rushed down his eyes. He bowed to His lotus feet. The Lord took Brahma by the hand, fully delighted at heart to see His son standing before Him in a suppliant mood, full of love and joy, and fit to receive His commands for the creation of the worlds and addressed him as follows in accents illuminated with a gentle smile:

"With a knowledge of all the Vedas stored in your heart, you have thoroughly pleased me by your long penance. Ask of me your cherished boon, and you will be blessed with that. The pains that men take for their Mukthi reach their fruition in My sight. You practised the supreme penance at My command, and you have been blessed with the rare sight of My Divine Abode. Penance is My very heart, while I am the very soul of penance that absorb it within Myself. Real strength consists in the penance, which is hard to practise."

Brahma said to the Lord: "You dwell in the heart of all beings as witness, and You very well know my desire. Pray, grant me one request that I may be blessed with an insight into the absolute and the relative aspects of Your Being. Even as the spider spins a web round itself, sports in it and then takes it back into its mouth, so do You, Lord of unfailing resolve, multiply Yourself in the form of this universe, carry on Your sport assuming various forms and dissolve the creation at Your Will. Pray, bestow on me the insight by which I may be able to know how you do all this. I shall unwearingly carry out Your instructions, unattached by a feeling of doership and ego. Since You have acknowledged me as Your friend, let me not be puffed with pride, as long as I am engaged in Your service, and let me be enabled to create living beings, and classify the Jivas according to their Svabhava and Karma, unperplexed in mind."

Then the Lord explained to Brahma the various factors connected with devotion and realisation as follows: "By My Grace, you shall have true knowledge about Me, My essential character, My various forms, My virtues and My doings. Prior to creation, I alone existed in My absolute state. Other than Me,

there was nothing gross or subtle, or even Prakriti. I exist even after creation, and I remain after all creation has disappeared. Even as the gross elements of earth, water etc., may be said to have entered the bodies of living beings, so can I be said to have entered the living bodies as their indwelling spirit. The real seeker knows the reality, which exists every where and at all times. Therefore establish yourself fully in this doctrine of Mine by perfect concentration of mind, and you shall never be confounded, while creating the divine forms of life in the course of the various Kalpas."

Sri Suka instructed the king that, having answered Brahma, the Lord withdrew His form, and Brahma stood gazing with folded palms. For the good of all created beings, Brahma practised the various forms of self-control (Yamas) and religious observances (Niyamas). Sage Narada appeared and waited upon Brahma and obediently gratified his father by his good conduct, modesty and self-control, and questioned him on spiritual matters, divine and sublime. Brahma was pleased to repeat to sage Narada, Bhagavatha Purana, containing distinctive features, taught to him by the Lord Himself. Narada visited the Learned Lord Sri Vedavyasa, while the latter was meditating on the bank of the Sarasvathi river and disclosed the wisdom gained. Sri Suka undertook to tell the king the same in the form of Bhagavatha, which he had heard from his father Sri Vedavyasa, answering all his questions and disclosing the glorious stories of the Most Glorious Supreme Lord Narayana of various, nay innumerable, names and forms.

The Characteristic features of Srīmad Bhagavatha.

Sri Suka continued his discourse to King Parikshit, explaining the ten characteristic features of the Bhagavatha Purana. They are Sarga, Visarga, Sthana, Poshana, Utis, Manvantaras, Isanukathas, Nirodha, Mukti and Asraya. The aim of the first nine features or topics is to present a clear conception of the tenth topic of Asraya, the highest and Supreme. Sarga treats of the creation of elements, the senses of perception, the organs of action, the mind, ego, and the principle of cosmic intelligence of the three Gunas and Prakriti. Visarga treats of animate and inanimate beings. The triumph of the Lord's creation is Sthana, and the Lord's Grace on

His devotees is termed "Poshana." Manvantaras are in relation to the saintly Manus, while the latent desires of the various creatures of interested action are known as Utis. Isanukathas are the life accounts of the various manifestations of the Lord and saintly devotees. Nirodha is the withdrawal of the individual soul and subjection to the Lord; and Mukti is the emancipation of the soul; and the final Asraya is the Supreme Para Brahma or the highest Paramatma. He is the support of all, and He has no other support than Himself, and there is none equal or superior to Him.

When the Cosmic Being emerged from the egg-shaped universe, His Will be brought into being the holy waters for a foot-hold for Himself. The waters are known as 'Nara,' and as He lived on these waters for a thousand celestial years, He became known as Narayana. The gross elements, Karma, Kala and Jivas exist only by His Grace. Awakening from His Yoganidra, He willed the creation of the world, and Adhidaiva, Adhyatma and Adhibhuta came into being. Again by His self-same Will, there arose His body of acute senses, strong will and good body, as well as Prana; the vital air. Next came the mouth to eat and drink, the palate to taste things, the organ of speech, the nose to smell with, a pair of eyes to see, the ears to hear, the skin to feel the touch, the hands to do things, the feet, and the sex, etc., organs. From His navel, sprang up the Apana air, then the abdomen, intestines, veins and arteries. The body became complete with the several constituents of the outer skin, the thin inner skin, flesh, blood, fat, marrow and bone, and last but not least, the Prana. But really beyond all this, is the Lord's subtle form, which is beginningless and endless, and eternal.

Assuming a form, He reveals Himself with many a name, form and activity. His creation is the whole universe of Prajapatis, Pitris, gods, Rishis, Siddhas, Charanas, Vidyadharas, Asuras, Guhyakas, Kinnaras, Apsaras, Nagas, Kimpurushas, Rakshasas, Pisachas, Bhutas, Vinayakas, Kusmandas, Unmadras, Bhetalas, Yathudhanas, Grahas, birds, reptiles, beasts, animals, mountains and all other names and forms in the universe. He willed the creation, preservation and destruction just for His sport.

The Supreme Lord is beyond all description, and all the above enumeration does not even touch the fringes of His Supreme

Over-Lordship. The great Kalpas are connected with the appearance of Brahma, and the others are smaller Kalpas. Mahakalpa is that which follows a Mahapralaya, when the new creation begins anew, and the other Kalpas follow simply as the night follows the day.

The duration of the Kalpas and their divisions will be fully dealt with later. Now, the story of Padmakalpa, and the events connected with the pilgrimage of Vidura after he left his kith and kin follow, as also Vidura's talks with sage Maitreya, and the teachings of the latter to Vidura.



III SKANDHA

Uddhava and Vidura meet

KING Parikshit questioned Sri Sukacharya as to where and when Vidura met Maitreya and what they conversed about. The divine sage was pleased to answer and continued his discourse as follows:

King Dhritarashtra was blind and had lost his right judgment. He supported his wicked sons in their unrighteousness. He consented to his younger brother's sons being lodged in a house of lac, which was set on fire. He allowed his second son Dussasana to drag Queen Draupati by the hair, and was responsible for profuse tears running down her cheek. The innocent Yudhishtira was worsted in a gambling bout by unfair means and was exiled to the forest for 13 years with his brothers and their spouse. After the thirteen years, when the Pandavas returned, Duryodhana refused to give them the share of their kingdom. When Lord Krishna came for mediation in the matter, Duryodhana did not heed His words. Vidura's wise words, which are the proverbial *Viduraniti*, fell on deaf ears. Then Vidura advised Dhritarashtra to return to the Pandavas their share of the kingdom. Vidura went to the extent of telling his elder brother that his son Duryodhana was an evil incarnate, and was the enemy of the Supreme Lord, and suggested that he should abandon his son and act rightly. Vidura's saintly and wise words raised the anger of Duryodhana and his companions Karna, Dussasana, Sakuni and others. Duryodhana was very much upset, abused him, and ordered that Vidura should be banished from the capital at once, being treated as a traitor to his master. Vidura was touched to the quick, but calmly left the palace depositing his bow at the gate. He left Hastinapur for a pilgrimage to all holy places. He went along and visited on foot cities, sacred groves, mountains, bowers, rivers, lakes and holy places with Lord's images. He was in the garb of a recluse, and lived on pure food of fruits etc. dropped from the trees, bathed in sacred waters, slept on the ground, observed vows and pleased the Lord.

In the course of his tours in Bharatavarsha, he reached Prabhasa, near Dvaraka, where Yudhisthira was ruling with the help of Sri Krishna. There he heard how his kinsmen (Kauravas) had perished due to mutual jealousy. He was much grieved and quietly went to the banks of the Sarasvati river and stayed at different sacred spots—sanctuaries consecrated to Lord Vishnu, founded by holy sages and containing temples, the very sight of which reminded one of the Supreme Lord Sri Krishna. Thence he proceeded to the prosperous land of Saurashtra and the kingdoms of Sauvira, Matsya, Kuru-Jangala and finally reached the bank of the Yamuna, where he saw Uddhava, a great devotee of the Lord. They embraced each other and exchanged mutual greetings.

Vidura made searching enquiries of Balarama and Krishna who had relieved the earth of its burden and brought delight to the whole world. He made earnest enquiries of Vasudeva, the great friend and well-wisher of the Kurus, of Kunti, Pradyumna, Rukmini, Ugrasena, Samba, Yuyudhana, Akrura, Devaki, Aniruddha, Hridika, Charudesna, Gada, and others who were exclusively devoted to the Lord. Vidura's anxious enquiries continued as follows: "Does king Yudhisthira rule the land righteously with the help of Arjuna and the grace of Sri Krishna? Has the relentless Bhima given up his long-standing grudge against the Kauravas, who wronged him? Is Arjuna now at peace, having subdued or destroyed his enemies? Are Nakula and Sahadeva happy, as also Kunti? Tell me about Dhritarastra, who wronged his own brother Pandu and banished me, his well-wisher, having completely yielded to his evil sons. I am not at all surprised or sorry for the ill-treatment, as it is all the Will of the Supreme Lord, who overlooked the wrong-doings of the Kauravas, though capable of punishing them then and there, for he sought to relieve the distress of those taking shelter in Him. The Avatars of the Lord, are only for the extirpation of the wrong-doers and the support of the righteous. Therefore, tell me the news about the Lord of sacred renown, who descended in the Yadu race for the good of the world and those who sought refuge in Him, as well as such other devotees, who were at His beck and call."

Sri Krishna Bala-Leelas

Vidura's enquiries about the Lord, His kith and kin, and His devotees very much moved Uddhava that his hair stood erect over

his body, and tears burst forth from his closed eyes. In a wonderfully expressive tone, he recounted to Vidura the sports of the Lord as a child and otherwise.

The setting of the sun of Sri Krishna upset the splendour of the Yadu homes, which became a prey to the python of Time. It was unfortunate that the Yadus did not recognise Him as Sri Hari, though they were intelligent and lived and sported with Him. By his departure, he screened His Divine form from men who had practised no penance. His form was the highest delight of all eyes at the Rajasuya sacrifice of king Yudhisthira, which was attended by the inhabitants of all the three worlds. That unborn Lord of infinite prowess was born in prison and brought up in Vraja, as if for fear of His uncle Kamsa. The Lord's lotus-like countenance, which ravished all eyes, attained to His abode by Himself. The Lord is equalled by none, much less surpassed by any one.

The Lord is so merciful that even that impious woman Putana, who suckled him at her breast, which was daubed with a deadly poison to kill Him, got from Him His Grace appropriate to a foster-mother.

He lived in Vraja with his elder brother Balarama for eleven years, concealing His glory from the outside world. In the grove on the bank of Yamuna, the Lord sported in the midst of cow-herd boys grazing cows. His childish gestures were pleasing to the inhabitants of Vraja, sometimes seeming to weep, sometimes laugh, and sometimes gazing innocently like a lion cub. Growing a little older, He took to grazing white bulls and cows, entertaining them, with the music of His flute, as well as cowherd boys accompanying Him. Meanwhile, He killed sportfully all the demons who were sent by Kamsa. He smashed them up like playthings. He tamed and expelled Kaliya serpent, and revived cows and cowherds that had fallen dead by drinking the poisoned water of Yamuna; and rendered the waters fit for drinking. To curb the pride of Indra, the Lord made Nanda perform the sacrifice in which cows were worshipped. Indra was enraged, and poured down torrential rains on the land. The Lord saw the distress of the inmates of Vraja and protected them by holding up the Govardhana hill like a toy-umbrella over them. He sang the

melodious strains and revelled in the midst of His companions, gracing them with His presence in the bright evenings with the silver-moon shine.

Some deeds of the Lord.

Uddhava narrated also the following deeds of the Lord to Vidura: Lord Sri Krishna returned to Mathura with Balarama to see His parents. There He knocked down Kamsa from his high seat, killed him, and dragged his body along on the ground. Next, He visited His Guru Sandipani, and restored to him his dead son as Guru Dakshina by recovering him from Yama's abode. The Lord trampled on Sisupala, Jarasandha and other kings, who came for the hand of Rukmini, invited by her brother Rukmi; and carried away the bride by mutual consent, as she was Sri Lakshmi Herself. Having tamed the bulls of immense prowess, He married Satyabhama, for whom He took away from Indraloka the Parijata tree. When the demon Naraka had kidnapped over 16,000 princesses and imprisoned, He released them: and for their love and devotion, He accepted their hand with due ceremony, at one and same hour, though in different places, assuming an equal number of forms, suited to those girls. He begot ten sons through each of them.

When Kalayavana, Jarasandha, Salva and others besieged the city of Mathura, He had them killed by his people Muchukunda, Bhima and others by lending them His divine power. He Himself killed demons Sambara, Bana, Mura, Balvala, Dvidida, Dantavakra, and other warriors, while still others were caused to be killed by Balarama, Pradyumna and so on. To relieve the earth's burden numerous persons on the Kaurava and Pandava sides were destroyed in the Mahabharata war. Duryodhana lost his fortune as well as his life due to the wicked counsel of Karna, Dussasana and Sakuni. Sri Krishna's kith and kin, the Yadus, flourished for the time being.

The Lord placed Yudhisthira on his ancestral throne, bringing delight to his near and dear ones. The king performed more than three Asvamedhayagas and ruled the country happily assisted by his brothers. The Lord Himself enjoyed the pleasures of life at Dvaraka, in strict accordance with the Vedas, Smritis and

Sankhya-Yoga, keeping the spirit aloof from matter and sensual pleasures, but being the abode of all charm and splendour by his endearing smiles and loving glances and speech, affording pleasure to all around.

While playing, the youths of the Yadus and Bhojas offended some sages, who pronounced a curse on the boys that the Yadu race should get extinct. Of course, that was the Lord's will. Some months later, the Bhojas, Vrishnis, Andhakas and others drove to Prabhasa in their chariots for a holiday picnic. They bathed and propitiated the Pitris, Devas and Rishis by offering Arghya; and gifted cows, gold, silver, cloth, food and land to Brahmins, in a spirit of dedication to the Lord. They bowed to the worthy Brahmins and offered prayers to the Lord.

Instructed by Uddhava, Vidura calls on Maitreya

At Prabhasa, the Yadus and others had a gala day, and they took their meals, drank wine and became tipsy. They abused each other and came to blows, fighting to death among themselves, like bamboos rubbing against each other. Beholding the ways of His own will, the Lord sat down at the foot of a peepul tree on the Sarasvati river bank. He had asked Uddhava to proceed to Badari and practise penance. Unwilling to leave the presence of the Lord, Uddhava remained near the Lord, who reclined against an Asvattha tree with his reddish yet gentle eyes, four arms and yellow silk robes. He was full of joy and had placed his right foot on His left thigh. Then sage Maitreya, the loving friend and fellow student of Sri Vedavyasa, came in and bowed to the Lord of endearing smiles and loving glances.

At the time, the Lord blessed Uddhava with his Grace for his unalloyed devotion. The latter craved for enlightenment of His mysterious ways and transcendent character. The Lord granted his request, and Uddhava proceeded to Badarikasrama, obeying His will, but with a heavy heart for his separation from Him.

Vidura was sad to hear of the death of his near and dear ones, and questioned Uddhava more and more about the Supreme

Lord, the master of Yoga, and His teachings. Uddhava bade Vidura to seek knowledge of the affairs from Maitreya, who received divine message personally from the Lord before He left his mortal coil in this world. Uddhava spent the night there, and left the next morning for Badarikasrama. He had mastered his senses and was never attracted by sensual pleasures. At Badari, he adored the Lord by meditation. Vidura deeply felt for the parting of the Lord's great devotee, and he himself left the banks of the Yamuna; and, in a few days, reached the sacred river Ganga to meet sage Maitreya.

Vidura's questions and Maitreya's discourse.

Vidura met Maitreya at Haridvara, the gateway of the celestial Ganga to the plains, bowed to the sage and reverently questioned him as follows for divine knowledge:

"People perform deeds to get happiness; but they neither attain happiness nor at least succeed in ending sorrow. They suffer again and again. The Lord's devotees move about in the world to shower their grace on men of ill-luck being undevoted to the Lord. The poor people are unrighteous and are therefore extremely miserable. Please tell me the blessed path for propitiating the Lord, to gain wisdom and realisation of truth. Tell me all about the Lord and His deeds of creation, preservation and dissolution of the world. Pray, recount to me His exploits for the well-being of the cows, Brahmins and devotees. I have heard the nectar-like stories of Sri Krishna, but that has only created in me more thirst to hear more and more of His exploits."

"I have heard from Sri Vedavyasa about the duties of the higher (twice-born) and lower classes of men. I am now fed up with Dharmas, which are only conducive to trivial joys; but find sole delight to drink the nectar that flows from the stories of Sri Krishna, which are sung with praise by Narada and other seers in the assemblies of holy men. To recount the Lord's virtues, Sri Vyasa composed Mahabharata. The attraction for the stories of the Lord creates aversion in the mind of the devotee for other things. The stories put an end to the sorrows of men, who remember constantly Sri Hari's feet. Those who dislike the stories of the Lord deserve to be pitied even by the pitiable. O Maitreya,

even as a bee gathers honey from the flowers, please extract the essence of all the stories of the Lord, the Bestower of blessedness and the Abode of sacred renown; and relate to me the same and other superhuman feats performed by the Lord for the good of the world."

Maitreya was very pleased with the enquiry of Vidura, whose mind was already fixed on the Lord, who was beyond sense-perception. The former recounted the glory of the Lord's lotus feet and His creation as follows:

"The Lord's feet relieve the agony of the suppliant, just as an umbrella affords relief from the heat of the sun. By resorting to His soles, striving men can easily drive away the endless woes of earthly existence. The human beings never enjoy peace of mind unless they resort to the shade of His feet, which are the abode of sanctity, which has to be sought in seclusion with the help of Vedic Mantras. By contemplating His Lotus feet, the human hearts are purified, through reverence and devotion by chanting or hearing the divine names, their glory, etc. His votaries control their mind by the help of wisdom and dispassion. Worship of His feet vouchsafe fearlessness for His worshippers. Those whose heart has been purified by devotion, intensified by drinking the nectar-like stories of the Lord, attain that spiritual insight, and easily attain his eternal abode of Vaikuntha. Those mastering Yoga, concentrating the mind on the Supreme Spirit, attain Him. Their hardship is great. But the easier method is Bhakthi-marga of adoring Him to attain Him. The immutable ancient Person is the prime cause and sole ruler of the entire universe. Therefore all should pray and crave for His Grace and His Grace alone, to confer on them His Divine Vision and Moksha."

The Cosmic Body.

"The cosmic body was the abode of all the animate and inanimate creation. In that dwelt the all-effulgent Cosmic Being with all the Jivas that were dormant in an unmanifest state for a thousand celestial years (or 3,60,000 human years) in the space having the shape of the interior of an egg, with water surrounding it on all sides. Before creation, in that state, the Supreme Lord was the Soul or the sole support of all the beings. From the cosmic

Being emanated the main sense organs—mouth, palate, nose, eyes, ears, skin, hands, legs, etc. From the mouth of the Cosmic Being emanated the Vedas. The Varnas or grades of society emanated from His face, arms, thighs and feet for the performance of the various vocations of teaching, ruling the land and protecting the people, agriculture and business, and of helping others in the discharge of their duties. For the purification of their heart, all the four classes reverently adored the Lord by the proper discharge of their respective duties. To sing the glory of the Lord is of highest merit. The sole utility of men's speech lies in uttering the praises of the Lord, and the sole utility of one's ears lies in hearing the nectar-like discourses of Sri Hari delivered by learned men. Brahma himself could not fathom the glory of the Lord even after all his penance. Even Rudra returned disappointed, unable to reach Him and realise His Supreme Glory."

Vidura desires more light.

Vidura was fully convinced that the practice of devotion to the Lord was possible only when His Grace dawned on a person, as a result of his disinterested discharge of his duties in the world. When senses are withdrawn from their objects and get exclusively devoted to the Lord, all the distractions of the soul vanish; as in the case of a man in deep sleep. All the afflictions of a person vanish by uttering or hearing of the praises of the Supreme Lord. Naturally fondness developed in one's heart for worshipping the dust of His lotus feet yield the best fruits.

Service of His feet will bring us the feast of intense devotion which puts an end to the agony of birth and death. The service of the Lord's devotees, who are living approaches to the Lord Himself, and in whose company are ever sung the Lord's praises, cannot be easily secured by men of little penance.

Vidura further enquired sage Maitreya about the Supreme Lord's processes of creation of the Devas, human beings, beasts, birds and all living beings, the grouping of society into Varnas and Asramas, the birth and doings of Rishis, the division of the Vedas, the sacrifices, the path of Yoga, the Vaishnava cult, the means conducive severally to religious merit, worldly riches, sensuous

enjoyment and final beatitude, the study of the Vedas, the method of performing Sraddha, the evolution of the Pitris, the reward of charitable gifts, austere penance, sacrificial acts, public utility works and the wisdom taught by the Upanishads.

Brahma's Manifestation.

Maitreya was very much pleased with Vidura, who was no other than God Yama, very much devoted to the Lord. He commenced to relate the Bhagavata Purana, which was a source of newer and fresher charm to the Supreme Lord's Glories, which god Sesha himself was pleased to teach the seers Sanaka, Sanat Kumara and others, who were eager to know more and more about the Lord. The good devotee Sanatkumara imparted this sacred Bhagavata to Sankhyayana, who, in turn, repeated it to his devoted pupil Parasara and also to Brihaspati. Sage Parasara reproduced the sacred Purana to Maitreya, who proceeded to teach the same to Vidura.

Prior to creation, the whole universe was submerged in water. Then the only one that existed was Lord Narayana, who lay on his couch of Sesha with closed eyes in deep meditation, ceasing from all activity of creation, preservation, and dissolution of the universe, but revelling in the bliss of His own self. He had deposited the subtle bodies of all the Jeevas in His own body, which should be roused to activity. From His navel, suddenly sprang out a lotus bud, illuminating the vast expanse of water. It was the embodiment of the fourteen worlds.

In the lotus, there appeared Brahma, who was Veda personified. Perched on the pericarp of the lotus, he failed to see any world. He turned his neck all round with distended eyes, and he was then endowed with four faces, one on each side. Brahma found himself resting on a lotus, which had emerged from the waters with uproarious waves. Not knowing the support for the lotus, he dived into the water but returned disappointed. Thereafter, Brahma controlled his breath, withdrew his mind from outer objects and ideas, and sat down in deep meditation called Samadhi. After doing this Yoga for a hundred human years, light dawned on him; and he saw revealed in his heart, Lord Narayana lying on the huge body of Sesha, which served as His bed, which

was as white as lotus fibre. The ten thousand hoods of the serpent god served the Lord as so many umbrellas, and the gems set on his myriad crowns dispelled the darkness all round by their brilliance. The effulgence of the Lord obscured the splendour of a mountain of emerald. The Lord out-shone the bright evening clouds and the charm of many peaks of gold. He eclipsed the beauty of gems, rills, shining herbs and rare flowers. His person contained all the three worlds. He graciously showed His wish-yielding lotus feet to His devotees for the gratification of their desires. He greeted His worshippers with His countenance, very sacred to remove the agony of the whole world. His robe was yellow like the filaments of Kadamba flower. Lying in the midst of the ocean, the Lord looked like a mountain surrounded by water. The Kaustubhamani which shone on the bosom of the Lord looked like a gem emerging from the heart of a mountain. Brahma had a clear view of the Lord, who wore a wreath of sylvan flowers, that represented His glory, as sung by the Vedas. It was then that Brahma noticed that the lotus had shot forth from His navel, and witnessed nothing else than the Lord, the waters and the sky. Impelled by His will, Brahma desired to evolve the creation, and sung the praise of the Lord intent on creation.

Brahma extols the Lord.

Playing obeisance, Brahma addressed the Lord: 'O Lord, You never leave the lotus heart of your devotees, who take in through their ears, the fragrance of your lotus feet, wafted by the breeze of the Vedas. Your feet secure immunity from all fear. It is only as long as a person does not take refuge in your feet, he suffers sorrow, subject to fear, grief, covetousness, ignominy and inordinate greed proceeding from wealth, house, kinsmen and false sense of mineness. Hearing and chanting Your praises destroy all evil.'

'Those who have an aversion to You and Your praises undergo a series of births and deaths in this world. You are the disinterested friend—the very inner self—of all beings, seated in their very heart. The highest reward for a man's act is to win Your pleasure, through various religious pursuits, such as sacrificial performances, charitable gifts, austere penance and observing

sacred vows. A religious act dedicated to You is of inexhaustible merit. Those who utter Your names, recount Your avatars, virtues and exploits, even in an unconscious state, are immediately rid of their sins of many lives, and attain your abode. Your worship has been declared by Yourself as a duty yielding happy results. You preside over all sacrifices, but have no sense-delights. You are untainted by any Avidya of the five forms—Avidya, Asmita, Raga, Dvesha and Abhinivesa. It is from the lotus, sprung from Your navel, that I emerged, and it is by Your grace that I have secured this opportunity of serving the three worlds by creating them. You kept the universe in your belly for a whole Kalpa, and your Lotus eyes have just opened. You are the sole well wisher and friend of all animate and inanimate beings and the lover of the suppliants. Therefore, I pray, endow my mission with the same wisdom and supernatural power by which you delight the universe, to enable me to create this universe. You are the most ancient Person possessing infinite grace. Be pleased, O Lord, to open your lotus eyes with a loving smile and dispel my despondence by your mellifluous speech.'

Brahma extolled the Lord as best as his mind and speech allowed him to do by His grace, by dint of his austere penance, worship and meditation; and the Lord addressed him as follows in graceful accents:

"O Brahma, do not despair, but exert yourself for creation. Practise penance and worship Me through Mantras sacred to me. You shall find the worlds revealed in your heart. You will find me pervading the whole universe and will see the worlds and the Jivas. Remember that the very moment a man finds me present in all beings, he is rid of all infatuation. You have My grace in full, and so your mind will not feel perplexed in regard to the evolution. I reveal to you My being in your very heart. My grace made you offer Me praises of My stories and developed faith in austere penance. I shall be quickly and immensely pleased with the man who worships Me everyday through Hymns. My pleasure is the highest good to be attained by men through works of public utility, penance, sacrifices, charities, practice of Yoga and meditation. Therefore men should bestow their love on Me. Now evolve the three worlds and the beings hidden in me, even as in the Kalpa

preceding the previous universal dissolution, by your own personality, which is the embodiment of all the Vedas."

The Creation

Brahma practised austere penance for a hundred celestial years with his mind fixed on Sri Narayana. He then saw the Lotus on which he was perched as well as the water all round. His knowledge and creative power was greatly enhanced by his ever growing penance and worship of the Lord by Mantras. The Lotus on which he sat had risen to the very sky. Brahma entered the corolla of the lotus, and split it up into three parts (Bhu, Bhuvah, and Suvah), although it was big enough to be split up into 14 or more parts. These three worlds alone constitute the realm for the Jivas to experience the fruits of their Karma. Satyaloka is Brahma's abode, and immediately below are Maharloka, Janaloka, and Tapoloka.

The Universe previously existed as it is today; and it will continue to be so here-after. The creation is nine-fold; and the one proceeding both from Prakriti (God) and Vikriti (Brahma) is the tenth. In the ninefold creation, the first is Mahat-tattva. Then follow the evolutions of ego, the subtle elements, the Indriyas, the Indriya-deities, and the Tamas. These have proceeded from Prakriti. From Vikriti proceeded the plants, trees, and creepers. Next followed the animals, birds and beasts; after which came the human species, which take delight in sense pleasures, rooted in sorrow. The tenth and the last class of creation is of deities and sages. The creation of heavenly beings consists of the gods, manes, demons, Gandharvas, Apsaras, Yakshas, Rakshasas, Siddhas, Charanas, Vidyadharas, Bhutas, Pretas, Pisachas, Kinnaras, Kimpurushas and Asvamukhas. The Creation was all evolved by the Lord and also by Brahma, as willed by Him.

The Manvantaras and duration of time

The minutest division of material substance is called Paramanu. Similarly the smallest measure of time is also called Paramanu, and the longest measure is a couple of Parardhas, constituting the life-span of Brahma.

Two Paramanus make one Anu, and three Anus make one Trasarenu. The multiples in the ascending order are Truti, Vedha,

Lava, Nimesha, Kshana, Kashtha, Laghu, Nadika, Muhurta and Prahara. Prahara is equal to one quarter of a human day or night. The day and night consist of four Yamas each. Fifteen days and nights constitute a fortnight, two of which make a month, which is a day and night for the Pitris. Two months make a Ritu, three of which form an Ayana. The human year is made up of two Ayanas or twelve months. One hundred such years form the full life span of the human beings.

The four Yugas (Krita, Treta, Dvapara and Kali) along with their Sandhya periods constitute 12,000 celestial years, or 43,20,000 human years. The Krita and the succeeding three Yugas severally consists of 4,3,2 and 1 thousand celestial years plus the Sandhya periods. Thus the three Yugas consist of 4,800, 3,600, 2,400 and 1,200 celestial years respectively. The present Kali Yuga consists of 4,32,000 human years, and the preceding three Yugas comprised twice, thrice and four times as many years respectively.

In Krita Yuga, Dharma existed complete in its four limbs of penance, purity, compassion and truth. In later Yugas, virtue diminished by one limb successively. Thus the Kali Yuga now, subsists of one limb only.

Beyond the three worlds, from Maharloka to Satyaloka 1,000 revolutions of four Yugas constitute a day; and, equal in length is the night, when Brahma goes to sleep withdrawing the three worlds into his belly; and at the close of the night, the creation of the three worlds commences as in the previous Kalpa and continues for the livelong day of Brahma, which embraces the regime of fourteen Manus. Each Manu's period or Manvantara is a little over $71 \frac{1}{4}$ revolutions of the four Yugas. During these Manvantaras, there are separate presiding Manus and their descendants, separate groups of Rishis and Gods, and separate Indras, and Gandharvas. This is the day-to-day creation of Brahma, which affects three worlds alone and in which subhuman creatures, human beings, Pitris and gods are born as per their Karma. During these Manvantaras, the Lord assumes the quality of Sattva and protects the universe with His own manifestations.

At the close of the day, Brahma assumes Tamoguna; and winding up his activity, becomes quiet. Everything becomes

withdrawn, and dissolution sets in. The moon and the sun disappear. The Bhu, Bhuvah and Svah get reabsorbed into his body. The water of the seven oceans get unusually swollen and submerge all the three worlds. On that water, lies Sri Hari on His couch of Sesha with His eyes closed as in abstract meditation.

The first Parardha opened with Brahma Kalpa when Brahma appeared as Veda personified. Next came Padma Kalpa, which was the end of the Parardha. The present is the Varaha Kalpa which has opened the second Parardha. The period of the two Parardhas is figuratively spoken of as the mere twinkling of the eye of the Supreme Lord. Thus the all-powerful time ranges from Paramanu to two Parardhas. The Supreme spirit in embodied form, Lord Vishnu, is the all-pervading power of all the time and the entire universe.

Progress of Creation

Brahma created Tamas, Moha, Mahamoha, Tamisra, and Andhatamisra. He then created the Sages Sanaka, Sanandana, Sanatana and Sanatkumara. They were Urdhvaretas who refrained from worldly activity. Their heart was set on the Lord, and they were disinclined to get offsprings. Brahma was displeased; and in an angry mood, created Rudra, who was further called Manyu, Manu, Mahinasa, Mahan, Siva, Ratadhvaja, Ugrareta, Bhava, Kala, Vamadeva and Dhritavrata, whose abodes were the heart, the senses, vital air, ether, air, fire, water, earth, sun, moon, and austere penance respectively; and their consorts were Dhi, Vritti, Usana, Uma, Niyut, Sarpi, Ila, Ambika, Iravati, Sudha and Diksha respectively. They were styled Rudranis. Rudra's progeny was numerous and alarming, as the hosts of minor Rudras were prone to destruction. Rudra (Prajapati) was then advised to practise penance and please the Supreme Lord.

From Brahma were then born Rishis Marichi, Atri, Angira, Pulastya, Pulaha, Kratu, Bhrugu, Vasistha, and Daksha, and sage Narada as well. From Brahma's right breast were born the twins Nara and Narayana, descending from Dharma. Adharma, Kama, anger and greed also came into being. Then followed sage Kardama. The four Vedas emerged from the four mouths of the four-faced, and the Vedangas as well. Ayurveda, Dhanurveda,

Gandharvaveda and Sthapatyaveda, and the Itihasas and Puranas followed suit. Then came into being the four pillars of virtues—Vidya, Dana, Tapas and Satya, the four Asramas, Gayatri and Prajapatya. Brahma also created Brahmanas, Vaikhanasas, Valakhilyas, Audumbaras, Phenapas, Vanaprasthas, Kutichas, Bahudakas, Hamsas and Paramahamsas.

Creation continued with the birth of Svayambhuva Manu and his spouse, Satarupa, who begot two sons Priyavrata and Uttanapada, and three daughters Akuti, Devahuti and Prasuti. The three daughters were married to Ruchi, Kardama and Daksha respectively and their progeny filled the whole universe.

The Lord's Avatar

Svayambhuva Manu with his consort Satarupa bowed respectfully to Brahma and requested him to assign him a duty, by discharging which one can enjoy celebrity all round in this world, and a happy destiny in the other world. Brahma ordered him to rule over the earth with righteousness and worship the Supreme Lord through sacrifices. He readily agreed, but found the earth submerged, and for the emergence of the earth out of the waters, Brahma was reflecting, and meditated on the Lord. Suddenly a little boar appeared and it grew to the size of an elephant. It was the Lord Himself, disguised as a boar or Varaha; and Brahma and his sons, Marichi, Sanaka, and Svayambhuva Manu sang his praises. The Lord extended His gentle looks at them in token of His grace for them.

The Lord dived into the waters with a head long plunge, and the ocean thundered aloud, tossing up its high waves. He reached the other end of the fathomless ocean, and found the terrestrial globe, which the Lord had absorbed into His body at the end of the previous Kalpa. He rose lifting up the earth on His tusks out of the depths. While he was yet in waters, a demon Hiranyaksha resisted Him; but only to be slain by His Sudarsana Chakra as a matter of play. He lifted the earth out of waters on the ends of His white tusks; and Brahma and others recognised Him and chanted Vedic hymns in His praise for the deliverance of mother earth.

This Varaha Avatar is none other than the Supreme Lord, by whatever name He is called—Rama, Krishna, Govinda or other

innumerable names, who shone resplendent in the boar-like form, which consisted of the three Vedas. He placed the mother earth, which was His spouse, firmly on water, to facilitate whereon further creation by Brahma. He shook around His body composed of the Vedas for the benefit of the humanity and of those in Janaloka, Tapoloka and Satyaloka. Brahma and other sages chanted praises of the Lord, who was much pleased and showered His Grace on them. The Supreme Lord is quickly pleased with those who listen to, or narrate with devotion. His blissful and charming stories, which rid them of all sorrows and sins.

Diti's conception

Daksha's daughter, Diti, was eager to have a son, and sought the company of her husband Kasyapa, son of Marichi. It was then dusk; and sage Kasyapa had just finished offering oblations to the Supreme Lord, and was in deep meditation. The sun was about to set. Diti's co-wives had been blessed with children; and so, her jealousy accelerated her passion. She begged her husband for company. Kasyapa acceded to her request, but asked her to please wait for an hour or so, as it was then the time when Rudra's retinue of ghosts and spirits moved about. At that hour, Rudra also went about on the back of his favourite Nandi, with his glittering mass of matted hair thrown disorderly, soiled by the dust raised by the whirl winds, sweeping the cremation grounds and his silver-white body covered with a coat of ashes. Rudra is of the highest virtue, but yet he conducts himself in the manner of fiends, going naked, besmeared with ashes and adorned with a wreath of skulls. The hour was therefore inauspicious and unsuited.

Diti's mind was completely shaken by love; and she seized the holy sage by his garment, casting off all modesty. Kasyapa bowed to the Lord, and sought seclusion with her, having been cornered much against his will. He then bathed in water, controlled his breath and fixed his mind on the Lord. Diti felt ashamed, and apologised to her husband with her face cast down, and prayed to Lord Siva to be merciful to her.

Kasyapa told Diti that since her mind was impure, tainted with lust, a pair of wicked and unworthy sons would be born to

her, and they would kill helpless and innocent creatures, violate chastity of women, anger exalted souls, and enrage the Lord, who will slay them. Diti was very sorry, but consoled himself that her sons would be blessed by the contact with the Lord for their end.

Kasyapa was moved by remorse felt by Diti and the right judgement that had dawned on her, and blessed her with good devotion for the Supreme Lord as well as to Lord Siva. He also blessed that one of her four grandsons, by her first son, would prove worthy of esteem even for holy men, and sing the Lord's glory. He would be a great devotee of the Lord, magnanimous, high-souled and noblest of the noble, installing the Lord in his heart, with intense devotion. Diti felt highly delighted that her grandson would be so worthy a devotee and bring grace to the family line.

In Vaikuntha, Sanaka and his brothers curse Jaya and Vijaya

Vaikuntha, the realm of Lord Vishnu is crowded with aerial cars made of emerald and gold, which are secured by mere obeisance at the feet of the Lord, and not through Karma Yoga, Jnanayoga, Vairagya or penance. Those, who are there, are fully devoted to the Lord, whose spouse Sri (Goddess of fortune) has a most lovely form, whose favour is sought after by even Brahma. She moves about in the palace with the sounding anklets on her feet and with a lotus flower held in her hand. She is engaged in worshipping the Lord with Tulasi leaves in Her own pleasure garden with her attendants. While so, those that do not worship the Lord even after attaining human birth, are deluded and sink to lower levels of misery. They attain to that realm of Vaikuntha who are devoted to the Lord and take delight in chanting or hearing the glories of Sri Hari. This realm, sage Sanaka and his three brothers reached by dint of their Yogamaya.

They passed through six entrances to the Lord's residence, but they saw at the seventh gate two shining persons—Jaya and Vijaya armed with a mace and adorned with armlets, ear-rings, and diadems, and a flower garland round their neck. The boy-sages looked only 5 years of age and were naked though they were of ripe realisation. The gate keepers blocked the sages' way with their staff. The sages grew wild and cursed Jaya and Vijaya

that they should be deprived of Vaikuntha and fall to Bhuloka, where lust, anger and pride predominate. The cursed two were dead afraid of the sages' curse and fell on their feet as retribution for insulting them, and sought their mercy and command.

The Supreme Lord, who was within, learnt about the insult of the sages by his own servants, came out and saw the latter fallen at the feet of the sages. The Lord came accompanied by his attendants, holding the white umbrella over His head, with the cool breeze coming from the pair of chouries waved on both His sides. With Goddess Lakshmi, the shining Lord showered His affectionate glances on the sages and His own humble servants. The Lord's head was covered by a gem-set crown, and a charming neck-lace hung between His beautiful arms, while His neck was adorned with Kaustubha gem. The sages joyously bowed their heads to the Lord, with the most charming personality. The Lord's presence not only thrilled the sages' body but also caused a flutter in their mind. Having their hearts desire fulfilled by the sight of the Lord's lovely and smiling face, the sages looked lower down at His feet, with ruddy nails looking like rubies, and fixed their mind on the same and meditated.

The sages extolled the Lord, who had appeared before them, and who was hidden from the view of the evil-minded, though present in their very heart. Sages free from egotism and passion realise Him in their heart by virtue of their unflinching devotion. Their eyes derive excessive joy from the sacred form, which He reveals by His grace.

The fall of Jaya and Vijaya to earth

The Supreme Lord was pleased to see the sages, greatly devoted to Him. He appreciated the curse pronounced by them against His servants, who had offended against His devotees. He expressed that he would not countenance any disrespect for the Brahmanas and His devotees. If a servant did a wrong, the world generally blamed his master, whose fair name got tarnished. The Lord enjoys the delicacies offered to Him through the mouth of a Brahmana more than by the oblations offered through the sacrificial fire. The Brahmins, cows, and defenceless creatures are claimed by the Lord as his own body. The Lord is pleased with

those, who respect the Brahmanas and pacify them in loving words. The Lord ordered Jaya and Vijaya to quit Vaikuntha for having offended the Brahmana sages, but willed that their exile should expire before long.

The sages (Sanaka and his brothers) were much delighted to behold the Lord and offered praises to Him. Sanathana Dharma has proceeded from Him and the same is protected by His manifestations. He is the immutable goal and the secret of all Dharma. He is very fond of His devotees. He is manifest in all the four Yugas, but the Kaliyuga is notorious for its marked absence of Dharma. The Lord is the overlord of all the entire universe, animate and inanimate.

The sages told the Lord that He might either approve the curse they had pronounced, or mete out to themselves any suitable punishment for cursing His own servants. The Lord replied that the curse was ordained by Himself, and that His servants would be born as Asuras, but would soon return to His presence. The sages then went round the Lord and prostrated themselves before Him; and taking leave of Him, returned extremely delighted, applauding His divine splendour. The Lord then entered His abode, adorned with rows of palaces of all-surpassing splendour. As a result of the sages' curse, the two servants lost their splendour and pride. When they actually fell to the earth, a loud out-cry was heard from the aerial cars. It was then that these two attendants entered the womb of Diti through Kasyapa. The Lord controls the three Gunas and is responsible for the creation, preservation and dissolution of the universe. It was merely His will that came to pass.

Hiranyakasipu and Hiranyaksha are born

The virtuous lady, Diti, was very apprehensive of trouble to the Devas from the children in her womb, ever since her husband had predicted so. She brought forth two twin sons after full one hundred years. They were Jaya and Vijaya reborn in this world due to the curse of the sages Sanaka and his brothers. At the time of their birth, many evil portents occurred, foreboding great calamity to the world. There was earthquake here and there. All the quarters appeared to be on fire. Thunderbolts came down and

evil comers appeared. Ghastly winds blew, uprooting gigantic trees. The rivers and lakes were agitated and the lotuses in them withered. Jackals yelled portentously, vomiting fire. Dogs wailed and donkeys brayed wildly. Birds shrieked out of their nests. Cows were terror stricken and yielded blood instead of milk. The people were seized with fear, not knowing the secret of these portents and thought that the end of the universe was near at hand.

These two earliest Daityas soon revealed their prowess, and with their steel-like frame and huge body, they shook the earth as they walked. Sage Kasyapa named them Hiranyakasipu and Hiranyaksha. Hiranyakasipu was puffed with pride and brought under his sway the three regions of the earth, the heaven and the subterranean region. By virtue of a boon from Brahma, he feared death from none and in no manner. His younger brother Hiranyaksha, who always pleased him, was fond of war. He adorned himself with a Vaijayanti garland and rested his huge mace on his shoulder. The Devas were afraid of the brothers and hid themselves, as snakes hide themselves at the sight of Garuda.

Hiranyaksha, not finding Indra and other Devas for a combat, roared in anger like an elephant, and dived deep into the ocean, which became terribly agitated. Moving about in the ocean long, tossing the waves by his mace, he reached Vibhavari, the capital of Varuna, the guardian of Patala-loka; and made fun of him by falling at his feet, but asking for a combat. Seeing that the prowess and vanity of the Daitya knew no bounds, Varuna waxed angry; but calming himself, replied that none could give battle to him except the Supreme Lord Vishnu, and excused himself. The all-powerful Lord will vanquish the pride of the wicked and exterminate them and show His Grace to the virtuous, assuming various Avatars from time to time.

Encounter: Divine Boar and Hiranyaksha

Hiranyaksha was proud and vain-glorious. He ascertained from Narada where Sri Hari was, and hurried to ocean depths, and saw His all-victorious Avatar of Divine boar, bearing the earth on His tusks. The Daitya challenged the Lord for a battle. He took a vow that he would end the Lord and thus wipe the tears of his kith

and kin. The Lord was much put out by the abusive words, and emerged out of the ocean; but, was chased by the Daitya. He placed the earth on the surface of water and energised it to stand on water. Displaying terrible rage, and armed with a mighty mace, the Lord came out for a combat. The Daitya quickly dealt a blow with his mace which missed to hit the Lord, who repaid the enemy with a frightful blow. There was a keen combat, which Brahma and the sages witnessed. Hiranyaksha was full of manliness and was fearless, possessing irresistible prowess. As he was a constant menace to the Brahmanas, cows and other innocent beings, Brahmā and other sages prayed to the Lord to slay the demon quickly, and establish peace in the world.

Hiranyaksha ended

The Lord sprang and aimed His mace at His enemy, who stood fearlessly before Him. Struck by the demon's mace, the mace in the Lord's hand slipped down. Then the demon refused to strike his unarmed foe and thus respected the law of single combat. The Lord was pleased with the demon's love for righteousness in his fairplay. He took up his Sudarsana, which began to revolve in His hand, for a combat with the adversary, who was overpowered with indignation, hissing like a serpent and biting his lips. The demon sprang into the air and aimed his mace at the Lord, who knocked the mace with His foot. The Lord allowed him to take his mace, which the demon aimed at the Lord's mace and loudly roared. The Lord caught it easily as a serpent would seize a crab. Thus frustrated, the demon felt humiliated and was reluctant to take back his mace, which was offered to him by Sri Hari. The demon hurled a trident at the Lord, who tore it to pieces with his discus (Sudarsana). Enraged and disappointed, the demon rushed towards the Lord roaring aloud, smote Him with his hard fist against Lord's broad chest, and ran out of sight. The Lord was the least pained, and the offence was as coolly and sportfully received as a garland of flowers, struck against an elephant. Fierce winds blew, darkness spread and stones came in volleys. The sky became clouded, lightning and thunder appeared; and blood, pus, hair, urine and bones rained. Cruel Yakshas and Rakshasas were alarmed and raised savage slogans.

Now, the Lord discharged His beloved Sudarsana, to disperse the magical forces displayed by the demon. The demon reappeared and began to strike the Lord with his fist. The Lord finally dealt a final blow, by which the demon's body began to wheel, his eye balls bulged out of their sockets, and he fell down dead like a huge tree cut down, with his arms, legs and head broken and scattered. Brahma and other Devas witnessed the same from above and paid glowing tributes to the Lord, who had saved humanity from the demon.

The Lord, who had appeared as Divine Boar or Varaha, retired to His own realm, while Brahma and others extolled Him for His grace to the humanity, by ending the wicked demon. In the encounter, His exploits were like a plaything for Him. On another occasion, the Lord quickly saved the lordly elephant from the grip of an alligator, when the former fixed his mind on His lotus feet and prayed. The Lord is easily pleased by guileless men resorting to Him for protection, though the unrighteous find it difficult to propitiate Him. Any one is speedily and completely absolved from all his sins, if he listens to, sings, or even applauds the story of the most wonderful pastime of Lord's destruction of Hiranyaksha. This sacred narrative confers good merit, wealth, fame, longevity and all desires to those who listen to it.

Brahma's Creation Proceeds.

Brahma created Mahat-tattva, the principle of cosmic intelligence in which Rajas predominates. Next was created the Ego, predominated by Sattva, Rajas and Tamas. Then followed the five kinds of Avidya-Tamisra, Andhatamisra, Tamas, Moha and Mahamoha. From darkness or ignorance, came Yakshas Rakshasas and demons. The good-natured Devas followed. The creation of the evening twilight took the form of a damsel, a budding beauty, kindling passion. Creation proceeded with the coming into being of Apsaras, Gandharvas, Bhutas, Pisachas, Sadhyas, Pitris, Siddhas, Vidyadharas, Kimpurushas, Kinnaras, Nagas and others.

At last, Brahma evolved, out of his mind, Manus; and gave them his own form, and also the Rishis characterised by deep meditation, concentration of mind, supernatural power, austerity, adoration and dispassion.

Kardama's penance and the Lord's boon

The worshipful sage Kardama practised penance on the bank of the Sarasvati river for a long period. He devoutly worshipped the Lord, accompanied by deep meditation. At last, Kardama beheld the Lord in His purely divine form, effulgent like the sun, wearing a garland of lotuses and water-lilies, and clad in spotless yellow silk. His lotus face fringed with sleek dark locks of curly hair. He held his characteristic Sankha (conch), Chakra (disc), Gada (mace) and Padma (white lily); and His smile captivated the heart. Seated on Garuda, standing in the air, He had a golden streak, (symbol of Goddess Lakshmi) on His breast and the famous Kaustubha gem suspended from His neck. Joyfully, the sage fell prostrate on the ground and praised the Lord with joined palms full of love.

The sage said that the fruit of his eyes had been attained by seeing the Lord. His lotus feet were a real vessel to take one across the ocean of Samsara. Only those of limited sense worshipped His feet asking for trivial and momentary pleasures, which could be had even in hell. He was the wish-yielding tree. The sage worshipped His feet and desired a married life. He repeatedly bowed to the Lord, whose lotus feet were worthy of all reverence, in His form adorned with a splendid wreath of Tulasi leaves.

The Lord presented the sage with a smile, full of affection and granted the sage's desire. He was pleased with the devoted mind and senses of the sage. Worship offered to Him can never go in vain. The Lord said that the emperor Svayambhuva Manu, who ruled the earth from Brahmavarta, would go to the sage with his queen Satarupa in two days, and offer his daughter of noble character and commendable virtues in marriage to him. She would bring forth nine daughters by the sage, who would thereafter resign to Him the fruit of all his acts and realise His abode. The Lord would manifest Himself, through the wife Devahuti, as a worthy son, and instruct her in Sankhyayoga. The Lord then disappeared from the lake Bindusarovara which is encircled by the Sarasvati river.

Svayambhuva Manu and his wife Satarupa arrived in a chariot with their daughter Devahuti, as per the Lord's words, at

Kardama's hermitage on the Bindusarovara bank. The lake overflowed with the waters of the Sarasvati river, which was sweet as nectar. The place was rich in fruits and flowers from the sacred trees and creepers, giving shelter to holy beasts, and birds, such as merry peacocks, cuckoos, Karandavas, Plavas, Swans, water-fowls, cranes, Chakravakas, and Chakoras. The place was infested with deer, bears, monkeys, musk-deers, elephants and lions. The visitors saw in the hermitage, the sage, whose body shone bright, though he had been in penance for a long time, due to the Lord's presence and grace recently reaped. The sage respectfully greeted them and made kind enquiries. He said the emperor was the divine manifestation of the Devas, such as Indra, Yama, Dharma and Varuna, governing the moral laws of various Varnas and Asramas in the world. If the ruler gave up his duty, the land would fall into the clutches of impious men. The sage gladly offered to meet the wishes of the guests.

Sage Kardama accepts the hand of Devahuti

The emperor felt impressed by the kind homage extended by the sage, who was leading a retired life, and addressed him thus: "The Lord evolved you (Brahmanas) rich in austere penance, learning and Yoga, and averse to sense pleasures, from his mouth for the protection of the Vedas. For the protection of the Brahmanas, the same Lord evolved us (Kshatriyas) from His thousand arms. The Brahmanas and the Kshatriyas protect each other. It is my fortune to see you and touch your feet with my head. I have a prayer to you. This daughter of mine is the sister of Priyavrata and Uttanapada. I am on the look out for a match worthy of her in age, character and qualities. Sage Narada told her your noble character, beauty, young age and other virtues, and she has fixed her mind on you. She is fit to be your helpmate in every way, and I reverently offer her to you. Please accept her as your wife. It is auspicious that one should accept the offer that has come of itself. I have heard that you are prepared to marry, and I request you to accept her hand."

The sage replied: "I desire to marry, and I willingly take her hand, in the prescribed manner. She is of artless splendour, and is the very ornament of womanhood. I shall take her hand and live with her, till she bears through me a child of Supreme spirit.

Thereafter, I shall take to penance and devotion of a Sanyasi as taught to me by the Lord Himself, from whom evolved the universe, in whom it rests, and into whom it disappears."

The sage's countenance, graced with a smile, captivated the heart of Devahuti. The emperor unmistakably knew the mind of his queen and his daughter with regard to the alliance, and gladly gave his daughter to the sage, who matched her well. Empress Satarupa lovingly presented numerous valuables to the bride and the bridegroom, including jewellery, raiment and house-hold articles. The emperor was relieved of all anxiety about his daughter, who had been bestowed on a suitable person. The emperor and his spouse, unable to bear separation from their daughter, shed tears again and again; and bid adieu to the great sage and his bride, wishing them God-speed and all prosperity, and drove back in their chariot to their capital, followed by their retinue and witnessing the beautiful hermitages and the seers on the banks of the river Sarasvati.

On their arrival, the subjects of Brahmavarta sallied forth to greet their Lord with songs, panegyrics and instrumental music. There was great rejoicing in the capital. There, Manu spent his days happily with his wife and children, righteously ruling the empire. He was devoted to the Supreme Lord, ever engaged in listening to, contemplating on, composing and narrating the stories of the Lord. He ruled over the realm for his whole Manvantara, consisting of many rounds of the four Yugas of Satya, Treta, Dvapara and Kali, meditating on His divine form, chanting His names and virtues, and worshipping His images, and at the same time carrying on the administration most righteously. He taught the people their diverse sacred duties, as well as the duties of the different Asramas and Varnas, and was friendly disposed to all living beings.

Sage Kardama and Devahuti

When the parents of Devahuti had left for their capital, the virtuous girl, who could easily read the mind of her lord, attended daily to his comforts, with as much delight as goddess Parvati looked after her consort, Lord Siva. Giving up lust, deceit, malice,

covetousness, vanity and all forbidden acts, and ever vigilant and active, she pleased her husband by her fidelity, purity of mind and body, respect, control of senses, service, love and affable speech. She looked upon her husband as even more than the Lord and was fully devoted to him, seeking his blessings. Having served him for a long time, she grew weak and emaciated, due to religious observances as well. Sage Kardama felt for her condition, and spoke to her as follows:

"You have shown great respect to me, and I am pleased with your faithful service and supreme devotion. So I confer on you supernatural vision, to get divine blessings, that I got through austere penance and worship of the Lord. The blessings are free from fear and grief. You have now attained the object. You can enjoy the good unearthly pleasures, which are very difficult to get by human beings."

Now, Devahuti was glad to discover that her husband was the master of all Yogic powers and all forms of worship. Her face brightened with a smile and bashful glances; and she spoke to him with modesty and love thus:

"O my lord, chief of the Brahmanas of great Yogic powers, please redeem your promise to me of allowing me your company but once, for blessing me with a virtuous progeny. Kindly instruct me how I should prepare myself and serve you."

Sage Kardama instantly produced an aerial mansion, which could range at will, by virtue of his Yogic powers. It was a wonderful structure, containing all jewels, adorned with pillars of precious stones and capable of yielding all desires, and equipped with all forms of wealth. It was decorated with buntings and flags, and was embellished with wreaths of charming flowers, linen, silk and other superfine fabrics. The house was furnished with beds, cushions, fans and seats, arranged in several storeys one above the other. It was provided with pavements of emerald and coral daises, the entrances shining with coral thresholds and doors of diamond. Its sapphire domes were crowned with gold pinnacles. Its walls were studded with rubies set in diamonds, and it had wonderful canopies and highly valuable festoons of gold. Swans and pigeons resounded the premises. Its pleasure grounds, resting

places, bedrooms, and inner and outer yards were of charming comfort, astonishing even the sage himself.

Kardama asked Devahuti to bathe in the sacred lake Bindusarovara and ascend the aerial mansion. The lady who was in soiled cloth, matted hair, and dirty and famished frame, dived as commanded into the lake, where she saw in a house, a thousand maids in prime of youth, emitting the fragrance of lotus. They all suddenly rose with joined palms and waited as maid-servants for the princess' commands. They showed great respect, bathed the lady in costly oil and perfumed powder; and gave her a pair of fine cloth, superb jewels, good food and sweet drinks. In a mirror, she beheld her person, rid of dirt, adorned with garland, clad in rich robes and decorated with auspicious marks made by the maids. She was bedecked with gold ornaments about her neck, bangles on her wrist, and tinkling anklets about her ankles. She had a girdle of gold, set with rare jewels. She shone with beautiful rows of teeth, charming eye-brows, lotus-like eyes, and dark and beautiful tresses. The moment she thought of her lord, she was amazed to find herself surrounded by a thousand maids in the presence of her husband, and was amazed at his Yogic power.

Devahuti had become clean, and shone quite bright, regaining her original beauty. She was clad in excellent robes and was waited upon by a thousand Vidyadhara girls. Kardama then conceived a love for her, and helped her to ascend the aerial mansion. The couple shone in the aerial mansion as charming as the moon with his consort. Waited upon by charming damsels, and extolled by hosts of Siddhas, Kardama revelled Kubera for long years over the valleys of Mount Meru, rendered all the more delightful by cool, gentle and fragrant breezes that stimulated passion and echoed the auspicious sound of the Ganga water-fall. He fondly enjoyed the company of his wife in the heavenly gardens of Vaisrambhaka, Surasana, Nandana, Pushpaḥhadra and Chaityarathya, as well as over the Manasasarovar lake. Coursing through the various spheres on the brilliant and great aerial mansion, Kardama surpassed even the Devas, and it was an achievement of those self-possessed men, who surrendered to the sacred feet of the Lord which put an end to all sorrows.

Having shown round to his wife the whole terrestrial globe, and having had her company, the sage returned to his own hermitage. He divided his self into nine forms and gave her his delightful contact for years, which passed off sweetly like an hour. Devahuti conceived and begot nine daughters of charming beauty and red-lotus fragrance. Then, as her lord was about to leave his home as a recluse, the virtuous lady longed for a male issue, bent her head low with suppressing tears, and beseeched her husband to bless her with a son, to rid her of her sorrow, when the sage left her. The affinity that she bore to the sage rid her of all fear. She sought liberation from the bondage of Samsara.

Avatar of Lord Kapila

Devahuti had undertaken sacred vows. She adored the Lord with supreme reverence through religious observances and austere penance. Sage Kardama told her that the Lord would enter her womb to be soon born as a son, and instruct her Divine knowledge. In due course, Lord Vishnu manifested Himself and was born, when there were encouraging thunder-claps, Gandharvas sang His praises, Apsarasas danced with joy, heavenly flowers rained, and all the rivers, lakes and minds of the people became clear. Brahma, with Marichi and other sages, came to the hermitage of Kardama, on the occasion of the descent of the Lord to propagate the Sankhya system of philosophy. Brahma was greatly delighted and expressed his satisfaction at his son Kardama's deference to his command to beget children through Devahuti. He blessed the sage and his family, and instructed Kardama to give the hand of his daughters to the foremost of the sages, with due regard to the girls' temperament and liking, and thus spread his fame all over the globe. Brahma further said that the Supreme Lord had descended through His own Maya in the person of Kapila in the womb of Devahuti, whose knots of ignorance and Karma would be cut and whose fame would spread.

Brahma then returned to Satyaloka along with Narada, and Sanaka and his three brothers, leaving behind Marichi and other sages. Presently, in obedience to the command of Brahma, sage Kardama married his daughters to the suitable and worthy sages, according to the injunctions of the Sastras. He gave the hand of his daughters—Kala to Marichi, Anasuya to Atri, Sraddha to Angira,

Havirbhu to Pulastya, Gati to Pulaha, Kriya to Kratu, Khyati to Bhrigu, Arundhati to Vasistha, and Santi to Atharva. Kardama entertained and greeted the sages and their wives, who all took leave; and, full of joy departed for their own hermitages.

Kardama knew that his son through Devahuti was Lord Vishnu Himself full of power and affluence, piety and renown, and wisdom and dispassion. The sage bowed to Him when he was alone and praised Him. He said that he took refuge in Kapila and thanked Him for having gained through Him all his desires, as per Brahma's command, of marriage and progeny. He decided to roam about free from sorrow, as a recluse, contemplating on the Lord. The Lord bade him go wherever he liked, conquering death, but beholding Him in his heart, freed from all sorrow and fear.

Kardama, full of joy, withdrew to the forest, observing a vow of non-violence, and renounced the sacrificial fire, and roamed about the globe free from all attachment. His mind was always fixed on Lord Vasudeva, with full devotion, and he finally attained His abode.

Lord Kapila expounded the path of devotion to Devahuti

Lord Kapila was no other than Lord Narayana, descended to teach the humanity Sankhya Yoga. When Kardama left for the forest, the Lord stayed in the hermitage on the Bindusarovara to please His mother Devahuti, who was sick of the craving of the wicked senses, and desired to dispel the great delusion of "I-ness" and "mine-ness" by the grace of the Lord, so close to her now. To fulfil His mother's innocent desire, the Lord instructed His mother as under, with a beaming face and gentle smile:

"The only means to final beatitude is Yoga of contemplation on the Supreme Lord, which was taught to the sages of yore like Narada. Mind is responsible for the bondage or emancipation of the soul. Attached to objects, it leads to bondage, and devotion to the Lord brings liberation. When the mind is purged of its impurities of lust, greed etc., and becomes pure, it becomes free from pleasure and pain, and gets equipoised. For striving souls, devotion is the only blissful road to Moksha. Attachment to

objects is the fetter for the soul. But when it is directed towards saints, the door to liberation opens. Saints are forbearing, compassionate, and composed. They are friendly to all and inimical to none. They follow the injunctions of the Sastras. With undivided heart, they practise unflinching devotion to the Lord; and for His sake, they abandon their obligatory duties and even forsake their kith and kin. They listen to and narrate delightful stories of the Lord, their minds ever set on Him. Afflictions never torment them. The company of such holy men should be sought, to hear the glorious stories of the Lord, which is the path to develop fondness for and devotion to the Lord. Blessed is the man who enjoys the fellowship of saints, and diligently and devoutly strives to subdue his mind through the easy processes of Yoga, which leads to His abode."

The devout Devahuti felt much enlightened by the instruction, and craved for more light on the method of Yoga, which can be easily and immediately practised for getting quick liberation. Lord Kapila was immensely pleased by His mother's earnestness and expounded the following outlines of Sankhya system of philosophy for mind control and meditation: "Motiveless devotion to the Lord is valuable. Such devotion is superior to even beatitude. Some devotees ever delight in the service of His feet, and are engaged in lovingly singing to one another His exploits. The saints behold His charming and divine forms of smiling face and have talks about them. Their devotion secures to them His subtle abode, even though they never seek it, and practise devotion desirelessly.

"They crave not for the wealth and enjoyments of even Satyaloka, nor for the Ashta Siddhis (eight kinds of Supernatural powers), that come to them of their own accord, as a sequel to devotion; nor even for the wealth and splendour of the Lord's own realm of Vaikuntha. Yet they enjoy these in the service of the Lord's lotus feet. To them, the Lord is their very self, the son, the friend, the preceptor, the kith and kin and the chosen deity. They have the protection of the Lord's Sudarsana.

Those who worship Him with exclusive devotion, realising His presence in everything and in every direction, cross the ocean

of Samsara very happily, and get rid of the terrible fear of birth and death. It is by the Lord's command that the wind blows, the sun shines, Indra showers rain and the fire burns. For lasting happiness, Yogis take to the practice of devotion, with spiritual knowledge and dispassion. For Mukti, the only means is to fix the mind on the Lord and practise devotion with a full heart."

The Process of Evolution and the Fundamentals

Lord Kapila now began to relate to his mother Devahuti the distinctive features by knowing which a man is freed from the yokes of Samsara. Self-realisation cuts the knot of egotism and leads the Jiva to Mukti. The Supreme Person is the all pervading Purusha. He accepted of His own free will, the unmanifest divine Prakriti. Abiding in Prakriti, He fell a prey to her charms. Prakriti is responsible for the identification of the soul with the body, the senses and the mind, as well as the presiding agents. Prakriti and Purusha are the two causes for this universe.

The primordial matter (Pradhana) is itself Prakriti, which consists of three gunas (Sattva, Rajas and Tamas). It is the aggregate of 24 categories, viz., the five gross and the five subtle elements, four internal senses, five senses of perception, and the five organs of action. The gross elements are earth, water, fire, air and ether. The subtle elements are smell, taste, colour, touch and sound. The Indriyas (the senses of perception and the organs of action) are ten, viz., auditory sense, the organ of speech, the hands, the feet, and the organs of generation and defecation. The internal senses are the mind, understanding, ego and reason. The twentyfifth is the Kala (time). The Lord, who Himself activates Prakriti, is Kala, who is the inner controller known as Purusha, and as Kala outside.

Due to His Chit-sakti, Mahat-tattva came into being, followed by Ahankara of three kinds (Sattva, Rajas and Tamas), which is the source of gross elements, Indriyas and the mind. The Purusha, called as Sankarshana is Ananta Himself with a thousand heads, as well as Lord Aniruddha and Pradyumna. From the Sattvic ego, evolved the mind; from the Rajasic ego, evolved the senses of perception and the organs of action; and from the

Tamasic ego, evolved the principle of sound, auditory sense, ether, etc.

As the Mahat-tattva, the ego and the five gross elements were disunited, Lord Narayana entered them, along with the Jivas and Gunas; and the cosmic Being came into existence. This was enveloped on all sides by belts of water, fire, ether, ego and Mahat-tattva, and these six were enveloped by the outermost belt of Pradhana. All the fourteen worlds (manifestation of Hari Himself) spread within this egg, which lay on the casual waters, the cosmic Being presiding over them, manifesting the various Indriyas.

To begin with, a mouth appeared in the cosmic being. Then followed a pair of nostrils, the eyes, the ears, the skin, the hair thereon, the organs of generation and defecation, the hands, the feet, the blood vessels, abdomen, heart, mind, ego, and Chitta (reason). All these could not make the cosmic being rise. Finally, when the Inner Controller entered the heart, that very moment, the cosmic being rose from the waters. The Indriyas, the mind and the rest were in-effective without the Inner Controller for activity. Therefore, through devotion, dispassion, spiritual wisdom and concentrated mind, one should contemplate on the Inner Controller, as present in every body, though apart from it.

Path of Liberation

The sun, reflected in water, remains unaffected by the attributes of water, such as coolness, unsteadiness, etc. Similarly, the Spirit though abiding in the material body, remains unaffected by its pleasure and pain, being devoid of doership. If he is attached to the Gunas, he considers himself the doer, being deluded by egoism. Due to this sense of doership, he loses his peace of mind, through the evils of his action; and is therefore helplessly thrown into the wombs of good, evil, and mixed beings, and undergoes repeated births and deaths. Just as a dreaming man experiences sorrow, even though he has no real cause for it, even so, he who dwells on the objects of senses, cannot escape the rounds of births and deaths. So, through concentrated practice of devotion and dispassion, one would get mind-control and avoid sense pursuits,

practising Yama and other paths of Yoga, with sincere devotion and dedication to the Lord, listening His stories, being even-minded to all beings, avoiding enmity or particular attachments to any, with a vow of continence, silence, devotion and dedication to the Lord. Such contented man takes food in a measured quantity and is ever in contemplation and seclusion, calm and composed, friendly and compassionate to all, ceasing to identify himself with his body, and transcending the three states of waking, dream and deep sleep. He sees and thinks nothing else than God and attains His abode.

Devahuti heard the above teachings of her son with rapt attention, and questioned further as to her doubts, and the Lord further detailed the path of devotion as follows: "Intense devotion to Him developed by hearing His stories with a pure heart, doing duties desirelessly, practice of meditation, sacred vows and religious observance, and seeking His Grace are the direct paths to liberation. Then the soul-binding Prakriti gradually withdraws. Prakriti becomes harmless, once the mind is fixed on the Lord. One who is given to contemplation, develops Vairagya and gets His abundant Grace, and his doubts are all resolved. He then attains the blissful state of Mukti, from which he never returns to births and deaths. Development of Yoga, unattached to super-human powers, is the only true means to get the Immortal and all-Blissful state."

Ashtanga Yoga

Yoga is meditation by the practice of which, the mind gets purified and takes to the path of God. The various steps therefor are: to do one's duty to the best of his ability, avoiding prohibited acts, to remain contented with whatever Providence gives, to adore the feet of the devotees of the Lord, to take pure food in a measured quantity, to dwell permanently in a secluded place, to practise Ahimsa in thought, word and deed, to speak the truth, to abstain from thieving; to limit one's possessions to one's barest needs, to observe continence, to practice austere penance, to be pure in body and mind, to study Vedas and other sacred texts, to worship the Lord, to observe silence, to acquire steadiness in very best postures, to control one's breath by slow degrees, to withdraw senses from objects and direct them towards the heart, to fix one's

mind and Prana on any mystic circle in one's body, to contemplate ceaselessly on the Lord's past-times, to compose one's mind by observing fasts, bestowing gifts, avoiding evil ways, and to contemplate on the Lord.

Having controlled the posture, one would sit up in a clean place on a seat of Kusa grass, deer skin or so, and do Pranayama. He should first inhale the air through one nostril, withhold the breath, and exhale it by the other nostril; and reverse the process (i.e. breathe in by the second nostril, withhold for some time, and breathe out by the first nostril). This makes the mind steady and free from distraction, and renders the mind and body pure, by eradicating the disorders of the wind, bile and phlegm. Concentration and meditation should be practised with the mind fixed on the tip of the nose to visualise the form of the Lord.

The Lord has a cheerful lotus-like countenance with ruddy eyes, like the interior of a lotus, and a body of good complexion like the petals of a blue lotus, bearing a conch, a discus, a mace and a lotus flower in his four hands. He is robed with shining yellow silk, and bears the mark of Srivatsa on His bosom. He has the brilliant Kaustubha gem suspended from His neck, and a garland of sylvan flowers round His neck. He is adorned with a pearl neck-lace, a crown and a pair of armlets, wristlets and anklets. He stands most charming on the Lotus of His devotee's heart, with a serene aspect, gladdening the soul and eyes of the seer. The Lord has a captivating appearance of the prime of youth, and He is impatient to shower His Grace on His Devotees. The singing of His glory sanctifies all and confers grace. Thus one should meditate on the pastimes of the Lord. With full and sincere devotion, one should visualise Him as standing, moving, sitting, lying, and dwelling in one's heart. Having taken a collective view of all His limbs, the devotee should fix his mind on each individual limb of the Lord.

The devotee should first concentrate on the Lord's lotus feet, adorned with the marks of a thunder-bolt, a goad, a banner, and a lotus, with ruddy and brilliant nails. The sacred feet dispel the thick gloom of one's heart. The blessed Lord Siva became all the more blessed, by bearing on his head the holy Ganga waters, that

had washed the Lord's holy feet. The feet are like a thunderbolt that shatter the sins of the devotee meditating on them.

The devotee should then impress on his heart the Lord's knees, which are fondled by Sri Lakshmi Herself. Next the mind should be fixed on His most graceful thighs, borne on the shoulders of Garuda. He should next proceed to His rounded hips robed with yellow silk; and then His navel, the abode of the entire creation of the world. Then follow for meditation: the lord's nipples, resembling a pair of rare emeralds; His bosom, which is the abode of Mahalakshmi; His neck with the Kaustubha gem, which is adored by the whole universe; His four arms, wielding the Sudarsana chakra of dazzling lustre; the Sankha, which is swan-like on His lotus-like palm; the sacred Gada aimed at enemy warriors; and Padma, the flower of rare beauty and merit, His garland of sylvan flowers, the Kaustubha gem adorning His neck, and His distinguished countenance, gracing compassion for the devotees, with curly tresses, lotus-like eyes, and dancing eyebrows.

With full devotion, one should long contemplate on His heart, which soothes the agony of His devotees with His glances of loving smiles of abundant grace. Full of devotion and perfect love, one should finally fix his mind on the laughter of the Lord, abiding in the cavity of his heart.

With devotion practised as above, the devotee's heart melts, his hair stands erect, tears of love run down, and he visualises the Lord of Supreme Grace, which leads to Mukti.

True Devotion

Devahuti was highly thankful to the Lord for the Sankhya system taught to her, and prayed for knowledge on Bhaktiyoga system to remove the bottomless darkness of ignorance in the path to His abode; and the Lord gave the following discourse:

"The devotees are of many kinds. One who thinks of Me devoutly, but with a mind full of hypocrisy, anger and jealousy, is a devotee of Tamasic type. He who worships Me through an image, desiring sense-objects, fame and power, is a devotee of

Rajasic type. He who adores Me as distinct from himself, to wash off his sins, dedicating his actions to me, feeling it his sacred duty to worship me, is a devotee of the Sattvic type. The flow of the mind stream of devotion to Me, dwelling in the hearts of all, like that of the Ganga waters towards the ocean, at the mention of My virtues, combined with motiveless and good love to Me, is the perfect Bhaktiyoga. My true devotees do not even accept, in preference to Me, Salokya, Samipya, Sarupya, and Sayujya. Their love is so much for Me."

"By devoutly performing one's duties (Nitya and Naimittika Karmas) regularly and disinterestedly, following a course of worship, seeing, touching, adoring, and extolling Me, and bowing to My images, having patience and dispassion, respecting exalted souls, pitying the afflicted beings, being friendly to equals, practising the five Yamas and the five Niyamas, by hearing spiritual discourses, chanting divine names, following holy men without egotism, and intending to please Me, the devotee gets thoroughly purified and conceives My grace, the moment my virtues enter his ears. I am ever present in all beings as Inner Controller. He who stupidly resorts to idol-worship alone, ignoring Me present in him and in all beings, is not all-wise. Those who hate Me, and bear malice to living creatures, cannot find peace. I cause fear to him, who makes distinction between himself and another, and forgets My presence in all. One should propitiate Me, making charitable gifts and by friendly behaviour to others, viewing all alike, but keeping Me in view always."

"Human beings are superior to animals, which are superior to other living beings. Higher than animals are beings having consciousness; and higher still are those having sense perception. Higher still in the ascending order are beings endowed with sense of taste, touch, olfactory sense, hearing, perceiving difference in colour, and the beings having teeth in the upper and lower jaws. Beings with four feet are superior to those having many feet, and bipeds are still higher. The members of the four castes are higher than other classes; and the Brahmanas are superior to the remaining three classes. Of the Brahmanas, the knowers of the Vedas are superior; and in the ascending order, superior still are those who know the meaning of the Vedas: those who can clear

doubts in Mimamsa philosophy; those who perform their duties properly; those who have Vairagya and do their duties desirelessly; those who dedicate their actions to the Lord; those treating all living beings with due regard and compassion, realising that the Supreme Lord is the Inner Controller of the soul, tenanted the human bodies; and those who mentally visualise the Lord, in all creation, at all times, and in all manners, and mentally bow to the all-pervading Lord."

"By following either of the ways—Ashtangayoga or Bhaktiyoga, one can attain to the Lord's abode. The Lord brings into play the activity of each man's Karma in the shape of birth in the various deserving species of life. The Lord has no favouritism, and has none hateful, or unduly dear, to Him. But He maintains equilibrium, and is ever alert to help a deserving man; and attack or destroy him, who is undutiful to Him, and irreverent to His creation. For fear of Him, and obeying His will, the sun shines, Varuna rains, the heavenly bodies shed their lustre, trees and creepers bear fruit in proper season, the fire burns, and the respective deities attend to the creation, preservation and dissolution of the universe. He is the Supreme Lord with numberless names (Rama, Krishna, Govinda, Narayana, Achyuta, Ananta, Kesava, etc.) that is all-powerful, all-pervading, all-merciful, and second to none, and with no equal to Himself. May His Divine Grace dawn on us all."

Over-attachment in Samsara brings downfall

Lord Kapila continued his discourse to His mother Devahuti as follows: "Though subjected to births and deaths, Jiva forgets the enormous power of Kala, which destroys his acquisitions with great pains hoping to keep himself happy. The Jiva regards his house, lands and wealth as permanent, as also his kith and kin. He feels delight for the fold he is born in, whatever its loathsome condition. He is deeply attached to his body, wife, progeny, house, animals, wealth and relations; and feels blessed. He commits all sins incessantly in his burning anxiety to maintain them all. Though home life is full of trouble, involving the practice of misdeeds, he is lured in it by lewd women and lisping infants. **He maintains the home life by procuring money unscrupulously.**

and enjoys only what is left out of his earnings after nourishing his kith and kin. He longs for other's wealth whelmed with greed. If unlucky, he becomes moneyless, and is unable to maintain his family. Reduced to a wretched plight, he heaves deep sighs, full of anxiety."

Seeing his inability to support them, his wife and children neglect him, even as a cultivator neglects to feed his own worn-out oxen. Yet he feels no aversion for them, but helplessly looks on in oldage, weak and pale, and confined to his house, awaiting his end. His eyeballs shoot out, his wind pipe gets choked, and coughing and hard breathing cause him exertion and death. He is speechless and his relations surround him, when he is caught in the noose of death. In the midst of weeping kinsmen, the Jiva is troubled to see a couple of frightful messengers of death, with wrathful eyes. The Jiva is clothed in an aerial body, bound by cords and forcibly dragged along the long road to Yamaloka. Overcome by hunger and thirst, oppressed by sunshine, forest fire and hot winds, and flogged on the back with whips, he trudges along the road, which has no shelter or water. He is dragged along this road of 99,000 Yojanas (or 7.92,000 miles) within 2 or 3 hours, and he suffers tortures. His body is set fire to in the midst of burning pieces of wood. His entrails are pulled out by the hounds and vultures. In the hell, he is tormented by serpents, scorpions, gnats etc. His limbs are lopped off, one by one, and he is hurled down from hill-tops, according to the degree of his sins. The sinful acts ripen in the hells of Tamisra, Andhatamisra, Raurava and so on. Good souls go to heaven. The tortures of hell and the pleasures of heaven exist in this world also in some form."

One who nourishes his body, by marring the interests of other creatures, goes down to the dark hells and reaps the evil consequences. So also, he who supports his family by unrighteous earnings suffers the worst hell of Andhatamisra. He undergoes tortures, and passes through the lowest forms of animal life, before he is again born as a human being. Human life is a rare gift, and so every one in human life should deserve the Lord's Grace, earn merit by devotion to Him and by a righteous life, and rise to His abode."

Rebirth described

After enjoying the pleasures in heaven, or suffering the pangs in hell, as a result of his previous Karma, the Jiva comes from a father into the womb of a mother. In five days, his abode therein takes the shape of a bubble. It hardens in ten days, and later becomes a ball of flesh or an egg. In a month, a head is formed, and in two months, hands, feet and other limbs form themselves. In three months, finger nails, hair, bones, and skin appear, as also the eyes, ears, etc. In four months, blood, flesh, fat, bone, and marrow appear; and in a month more, hunger and thirst are experienced by the Jiva in the womb. In the sixth month, the child moves sideways in the abdomen, and gets nutrition from the food and drink taken by the mother. The foetus grows in the abominable receptacle of faeces and urine, bitten by the hungry worms therein. It is there covered outside by its mother's intestines with its head turned towards the belly, and its head and neck arched like a bow. Then its memory is awakened and it recollects its doings during its previous lives, without peace of mind.

From the seventh month, the child is endowed with consciousness, and is pressed downwards during the weeks preceding delivery. Confined in its mother's body, and disgusted with repeated rebirths, the Jiva prays to the Lord for release pitifully as follows:

"I take shelter in the lotus feet of the Lord, who assumes various forms to protect the universe, and who has thrown me in this wretched condition due to my sins. I bow to the Supreme Lord, who is the saviour from Samsara, strewn with the deadly shackles of Karma. I adore Him to soothe my agony. Fallen into this sink of blood, faeces and urine, and scorched by the gastric fire, I pray for release from this confinement. For the wisdom You have bestowed on me now, I join my palms and pray to you. Though living in this womb, I do not desire to get out of it, if it is to descend into the pitfall of the outside world, where the Lord's Maya overtakes the souls, blinds them and subjects them to the cycle of births and deaths, which is worse than the misery in the womb. So, installing the Lord's feet in my heart, and shaking off

distraction of mind, I pray for His help to redeem myself from the ocean of worldly existence, entailing many rounds of gestation."

When the ten-month old Jiva thus wails and prays, the wind within propels him forward, with his face downwards; and he issues forth breathless and deprived of memory, fallen in a pool of blood and urine, tossing like a worm, having lost wisdom acquired in the womb and crying loudly. He is nourished with something, which he does not relish, but is unable to refuse. He is laid on a foul bed, infested with sweat-born creatures, and he is unable even to scratch to relieve itching, much less to sit up, stand or move about. He cries bitterly, bitten by bugs or mosquitoes, and is helpless.

Painful experiences of infancy and boyhood follow, pride and anger growing with age. The Jiva cultivates a selfish love for his body, bound by ties of ignorance and destiny, and paves his way further for rebirth and death. Gratification of sex and palate follows, and he becomes a toy of women. Very often, truth, purity, compassion, wisdom, prosperity, modesty, fair name, forbearance, and control of mind and senses give place for infatuation and bondage of Samsaric evils.

Woman is a personification of Maya to entrap man. So, an aspirant of Yoga should avoid company of young women, who should be avoided like a well, whose mouth is covered with grass, and which is deadly to an unwary traveller. Similarly, man figures as Maya for woman, who should be careful and righteous in dealing with her husband, progeny and household.

The human soul goes on reaping the fruit of his past actions, moving from one sphere (earth) to another (hell or heaven) with the subtle body, unceasingly performing fresh actions, thus paving the way for future births. When one views the physical body as one's very self, it is called birth, and when the sense functions cease, it is death. One should neither view death as horror or have recourse to stinginess in life or infatuation. Knowing the true nature of Jiva, he should guard himself against unrighteousness by right vision, strengthened by Yoga and dispassion. He should be devoted to the Supreme Lord, within his own heart, and pervading everything in the universe.

Paths of destiny for departing souls

Lord Kapila continued His discourse to His mother Devahuti, on Bhaktiyoga, and on bright and dark paths that the departing souls take, as follows: "A house holder who performs his duties earning wealth and enjoying sense pleasures, and who, deluded by desires, worships Devas and Pitris through sacrifices, attains Chandraloka and its pleasures. When the merit he had earned is exhausted, he returns to the mortal world. But the wise man, who does not desire wealth and enjoyment, but dedicates his actions to the Lord with a pure devoted mind, without the feeling of 'I' and 'mine', reaches the Lord's abode by the bright path. He, who meditates on Brahma, goes and dwells in Satyaloka for two Parardhas till the dissolution takes place. The Yogi who controls his breath and mind desirelessly, reaches the worshipful Brahma, who takes him to the Lord, when he himself seeks Him at the time of dissolution. Therefore, a wiseman should seek refuge in the Supreme Lord only, who has His abode in the lotus-like heart of all living beings, and attain Mukti."

"He who is material-minded and performs religious rites actuated by desire, and worships the Pitris every day, finds delight in his home alone, devoted to religious merit, wealth and sense pleasures. He often abandons the sweet stories of the Lord and listens to vile talks even as a swine feeds on filth, and is cheated by fate. His destiny is the southern or the dark path; but he is eventually born in the line of his own progeny, descending to this world, when merit earned is exhausted. Therefore, the Supreme Lord alone should be worshipped, with dispassion and spiritual wisdom. The Lord appears in different forms as the seer at different times. Vairagya is the only desired end to be attained through all forms of Yoga, devotion and dispassion."

"The Lord, though one, is variously realised by different paths laid down in the scriptures, by works of public utility (digging wells and tanks, laying roads, etc.) sacrifices, charitable gifts, austere penance, study of Vedas, control of mind and senses, as well as by renunciation of action by Yama, Niyama, devotion, etc. Bhaktiyoga or the discipline of Devotion is the best method to be adopted by the wise. These truths should never be taught to a wicked or immodest person, an arrogant man, a moral rake, a

hypocrite, a non-devotee or a hater of devotees. They should be imparted to a devotee, a meek soul, an uncavilling man, a friend-of-all, a man of serene mind, free from jealousy, pure both within and without, and one who holds the Lord dearer than everything. He who reverently listens to or repeats this discourse is sure to attain His abode which is the highest goal."

Divine grace dawns on Devahuti and she attains mukti

By the hearing of Lord's most sacred discourse, Devahuti's ignorance was torn asunder. She bowed to Him and extolled Him thus: "You are possessed of inconceivable powers and you are the Ruler of all the Jivas, carrying on the universal creation, preservation and dissolution. Into your belly, the whole universe disappears at the time of universal dissolution, and You rest alone on the leaf of a banyan tree in the form of an infant, sucking its own toe. How could it be that You were born in my womb? How fortunate I am! You manifest Yourself to exterminate the sins of Your devotees, showing them the path of devotion and righteousness. By occasionally hearing and chanting Your names, bowing to You or even remembering You, even a pariah becomes worthy of adoration. Those who utter Your name are equal to those who have practised penance, performed sacrifices, bathed in sacred waters, conducted themselves well and even recited the Vedas. You are Lord Vishnu Yourself, the source of all Vedas, I bow to you and pray to you for your grace."

The Lord assured that, following the path taught, she would soon attain the Supreme Goal, and took leave of His mother Devahuti. She practised Yoga in the hermitage and attained peace of mind. She then renounced her abode, which had been enriched by austere penance and the Yogic power of sage Kardama. She also deserted the garden of the hermitage, blossoming with celestial trees, cooing pairs of birds and humming bees, drunk with honey. When her husband left her, she had consoled herself by the presence of her son Lord Kapila, whose departure now depressed her not a little, just as a cow would feel if it lost her fondling calf.

Soon she fixed her mind on her son, who was no other than Lord Sri Hari. She meditated on the form of the Lord of cheerful countenance, as a whole and as well as in parts. With uninter-

rupted devotion and intense dispassion, she was soon rid of all afflictions and attained final beatitude. The sacred spot where she attained Siddhi is now widely known by the name 'Siddhapada.' Her mortal frame, which had been purged, through Yoga, of all its dross, was transformed into a river, which is very sacred and confers highest blessings on those who bathe in it, and is therefore resorted to even by Siddhas. Lord Kapila, who, having taken leave of His mother, proceeded towards the north-east from the hermitage of His father, Sage Kardama, was duly worshipped and offered an abode by the Ocean (Samudraraja) himself. He continues there in perfect peace and deep meditation for the good of the three worlds and is being extolled by Siddhas, Charanas, Gandharvas, sages, Apsaras and other Sankhyayogis.

Lord Kapila's discourse to Devahuti is most sacred and is a great secret of all the doctrines, teaching the ways and means of God-Realisation. Therefore, those who expound or listen to the teachings can easily fix their mind on the Lord and assuredly attain to His most sacred feet.



IV SKANDHA

The Supreme Lord's Avatar: Progeny of Manu's Daughters

BY Satarupa, Manu had three daughters—Akuti, Devahuti and Prasuti, and two sons. Akuti was married to Ruchi; and they agreed to give their son in adoption, as Putrika Dharma, to Manu, who had himself two sons. Ruchi and Akuti had a son named Yajna and a daughter called Dakshina, who were manifestations of Sri Vishnu and Sri Lakshmi respectively. Manu received Yajna as Putrika Dharma and brought him up rejoicingly.

Dakshina was married to the Supreme Lord, and they begot twelve sons, Tosha and others, who were all Devas known as Tushitas. The venerable Marichi and others were the Sapta (seven) Rishis, and Yajna was the Lord of the celestials.

Priyavrata and Uttanapada, the two sons of Manu, were strong and righteous, and ruled the earth splendidly. The age of Manu was covered by the rule of his sons, grandsons and great grandsons. Prasuti was married to Daksha, son of Brahma. The nine daughters of Devahuti were married to Brahma Rishis (sages born of Brahma), and their progeny was as follows: (1) Kala married Marichi and had two sons Kasyapa and Purniman, and a daughter by name Devakulya. (2) Anusuya became the wife of Atri and had three sons, named Datta, Durvasa and Sama, part manifestations of Vishnu, Rudra and Siva. (3) Sraddha married Angiras, and bore four daughters—Sinivali, Kuhu, Raka and Arumati, and two sons—Vatathya the Divine, and Brihaspati, a great devotee of Brahma. (4) Havirbhu, wife of Pulastya, had two sons Agastya and Visravas. (5) Gadi, wife of Pulaha, had three sons Karmasreshtha, Viriyas and Sahishnu. (6) Kriya, wife of Kratu, brought forth 60,000 sages called Valakhilyas of shining divine glory. (7) Urja (Arundhati) married Vasishtha, and begot seven sons—Chitraketu, Surochis, Virajas, Mitra, Ulbana, Vasubhridyana and Dyumat, who were sages of untainted nature.

Vasishtha had also other sons Sakti, etc., by another wife. (8) Chitti, wife of Atharvan, had a son Dadhyachi, (also known as Asvasiras) who was of rigid austerity. (9) Khyati, wife of Bhrigu, had two sons Dhata and Vidhata and a daughter called Sree, who was devoted to the Lord. The two sons married Ayati and Niyati the daughters of Meru. Ayati's son was Markanda, whose son was Markandeya; and Niyati's son was Vedasiras. Kavi was another son of Bhrigu, and the son of Kavi was the famous and worshipful Sukracharya.

Manu's second daughter Prasuti, wife of Daksha, had sixteen daughters, thirteen of whom were married to Dharma, one to Agni, one to Pitris and one to god Siva. Dharma's wives were Sraddha, Maitri, Daya, Santi, Tushti, Pushti, Kriya, Unnati, Buddhi, Medha, Titiksha, Hri and Murti. Of them Sraddha bore Subha and Maitri, Prasada, Daya, Abhaya, Santi, and others bore a child each; and the virtuous Murti bore sages Nara and Narayana, the birth of whom filled the universe with joy, the celestial trumpets blew, flowers showered, and Gandharvas and Kinnaras sang. Nara and Narayana were the manifestations of the Supreme Lord, and they proceeded to mountain Gandhamadana.

Svaha begot three sons—Pavaka, Pavamana, and Suchi, from whom have descended the 45 Agnis, making a total of 49 Agnis, including the three fathers and one grandfather, who were well-versed in the Vedas and were invoked by various names in Agneya Ishtis. Svadha bore two daughters, Vayuna and Dharini, who were perfect in Vedic knowledge. Sati, Siva's wife, was intensely devoted to him, but was not blessed with a son, worthy of her qualities. She cast off her body by means of Yoga, when her father Daksha was enraged against her husband Siva.

Daksha attends the sacrifice by Prajapatis

The sacrifice performed by the Prajapatis was attended by Brahma, Siva, the great Rishis, celestials, sages and the Agnis. The shining Daksha entered the great hall of the assembly, and all those present, except Brahma and Siva, respectfully rose from their seats and welcomed Daksha. Daksha bowed to Brahma and took a seat with his permission. He, however, felt humiliated that his son-in-law was indifferent to him, and indicted Siva in the open

assembly as follows: "I gave the hand of my pious daughter Sati to Siva in the presence of Brahmana sages and Agni. Siva is now haughty and has violated the path of the righteous. He has behaved shamelessly and has wrecked the fame of the protectors in the world. When I arrived here, instead of welcoming me and receiving me with salutations, he has shown me scant courtesy, though I have given him my beautiful daughter, which act has been like imparting the sacred Vedas to Sudras. He dwells in the horrible abodes of ghosts, surrounded by spirits and demons. He wanders like a mad man in nakedness, laughing and weeping, bathed in ashes, wearing wreaths of flowers on dead bodies, and having pieces of bones for his ornaments. The auspicious 'Siva' is his name, but he is inauspicious, being the intoxicated lord of devilish spirits of darkness. He is destitute of piety and is possessed of a wicked heart. Unfortunately, my virtuous daughter's hand has fallen to him. I curse that he should no more share the sacrifices made to gods, Indra and others."

Thus cursing Siva, Daksha went home in great rage. Siva was quiet; but his servant Nandi cast a fearful curse on Daksha in intense rage. The curse was: "Daksha should be like a brute addicted to women and should have the face of a sheep. His followers who are discourteous to Siva, should suffer in the Samsara of births and deaths. Haters of Siva should be wholly attached to Karma-Marga, with agitated mind. They should eat anything and everything; and should study, do tapas, and keep austere vows for their livelihood, wandering like beggars, and finding delight in material, physical and sensual pleasures."

Learning of the curse pronounced by Nandi, sage Bhrgu pronounced an irrevocable counter curse that "those who propitiate Siva shall become Pashandas and enemies of true Sastras; they shall be of impure habits with clouded judgment, wearing matted looks, ashes and bones; that Nandi shall be a Pashanda for reproaching the Vedas and Brahmanas following the duties of Varnas and Asramas, which is the auspicious and eternal path to the Supreme Lord; and that, for condemning the Vedic, pious and wise path, Nandi shall worship the lord of the Tamasa Bhutas."

The worshipful Siva regretted the unpleasant happenings, and left the place with his attendants. The Prajapatis duly performed

the sacrifice for a thousand years, and pleased the Supreme Hari. The sacred sacrifice over, they took a holy bath in the Ganga, where the Yamuna joins it, and returned to their homes with mind and body purified.

Daksha Prajapati's Yajna: Sati's desire to attend it.

The strained relations between Daksha and Siva continued a long time. Daksha, who was installed the lord of Prajapatis by Brahma, performed Vajapeya Yajna. With a feeling of elevation and disregard for others, he began to perform the great Brihaspati sacrifices. At the sacrifice were assembled Brahma Rishis, divine sages, Pitris and other deities with their wives. The occasion was very grand. Siva's wife, Sati, heard of her father's grand sacrifice and saw the Gandharva women going along with their lords in their aerial cars to attend the sacrifice. She became eager to attend the sacrifice, and suggested to her Lord that they two also might proceed thither and attend the sacrifice. Her humble entreaties were as follows:

"The great sacrificial festivity has commenced. My sisters will certainly be there with their husbands. I long to go there with you and receive presents from my parents. I am anxious to see my sisters and their husbands, my aunts, my dear mother and the great Rishis there. It will be my proud privilege to visit my birth place. Numerous ladies are going adorned with their husbands in their aerial cars, moving swan-like in the sky. How can I remain aloof here on hearing the Soma festivity in my parent's house? One should go, even uninvited, to celebrations, in the house of a friend, husband, preceptor or parents. O my merciful lord, grant my request, let us go. I entreat you, do me the favour."

Reminded by the arrow-like abuses uttered by Daksha previously, Siva laughed at the request of his wife, and replied: "Surely people go to their relations even uninvited, if they are not spoiled by pride or anger. Learning, Tapas, wealth, age, beauty or high pedigree are virtues in the case of good men, but they turn out to be vices for bad men. Haughty men are spoiled. Such men look upon visitors with a crooked heart, knit brows and angry eyes. Bad words of crooked kinsmen wound the heart day and

night, much more than enemies' arrows stuck in the body. Though you are the beloved daughter of Daksha, you will now be disregarded, as you are wedded to me. Wise men show great regard to each other, as the regard is directed to the Supreme Lord, abiding in every one's heart. But your father is blind to the truth, puffed with power and pride. Daksha hates me, and will disregard you. Disgrace from one's kinsmen is equal to death. Therefore, drop your proposal. If you neglect my advice and go, nothing happy will betide you."

Sati's visit to her father and her end

Sati was eager to go and see her friends and relations. At the same time, she was afraid of disregarding her lord's advice. She was as anxious to go, as she was to keep back. She was distressed and wept, tears rolling down her cheeks. She was full of grief and anger. At last, misjudging the circumstances in her feminine nature, she went alone to her parents' place. She set off quickly unprepared all alone. In great haste, followed her thousands of attendants, Yakshas, Maniman, Mada and others, led by Nandi, who had great respect for his master's spouse. The lady attendants placed her on Nandi, and they all went on, to the accompaniment of music of drums, conchs and flutes. Sati had the paraphernalia of Sarikas, mirrors, lotuses, white umbrellas, fans and flower garlands.

Sati arrived at the place of sacrifice, where there was loud repetition of Vedas, and Brahmana sages and Devas were present. Afraid of Daksha, no person dared to welcome Sati on her arrival, except her sisters and mother, who embraced her with affection and tears of love. In spite of the affection shown, she did not accept the honour done and the seat offered to her; as her father did not welcome her. She grew very angry as her father, not only disregarded her, but did not offer a share of the sacrifice to her lord Siva. She angrily censured her father for his pride, but prohibited the hosts of spirits and Bhutas created by her divine power, from doing any harm to Daksha. She addressed her father thus openly:

"You have acted as an enemy to my lord, who hates none. He is the beloved of all embodied souls. The wise do not pick holes in

others. They respect merit and disregard demerits of others. You only see defects and not merits, and find fault with them. Unrighteous men constantly reproach great men. Siva's name is hallowed, and his command is inviolable. The utterance of his name, but once, destroys the sins of men. You hate him and misbehave towards him. The vile tongue that utters evil things about him deserves to be cut off. The unwholesome food consumed through ignorance or carelessness is to be got rid of by vomiting. Similarly, I will not have this body born of you, a hater of Siva. The attainment of Yogic powers, possessed by us can never belong to you or those that follow the path of smoke, and are gratified with the food offered. We depend on our wish, and command the powers of Avadhutas. I am of vile birth, a body born of one who has sinned against Hara. Fie upon my birth from one disregarding the great. To be called Dakshayani. I stand with a painful heart, and I shall therefore cast off this carcass born of your body."

So saying, Sati, silently sat down on the ground facing north, did Achamana, closed her eyes, and adopted the Yoga path. Fixed in her seat, she held her Prana and Apana controlled at the navel, raised Udana up from the navel Chakra, stopped it along with the mind at the heart and carried it to the chest, and through the throat, to Bhru Madhya (mid-point of the eye brows). Vexed with Daksha, she determined to cast off her body and instituted the Yogic concentration of wind and fire within the members of her body. She contemplated the joy of worshipping her lord's lotus like feet; and her body was at once ablaze with the fire of Yogic concentration.

There was great uproar, arising from the people in the sky and on the earth at the remarkable and wonderful sight. The wickedness of Daksha Prajapati angered the camp followers of Sati. Now Daksha realised that the destruction of his daughter was due to his own fault. He repented and lamented. He cursed himself for his worst sin, committed against his daughter and lord Siva. Roused by anger, Sati's attendants rose with their weapons to slay Daksha. Seeing the mighty rush, Bhrigu poured an offering into the Dakshinagni with the chanting of Yajurveda to save the sacrifice; and instantly came forth certain gods called Ribhus in

thousands; and the latter routed, with fire brands blazing with Brahma Tejas, all the army of attendants of Siva, Pramathas and Guhyakas, who ran away in different directions.

Creation of Virabhadra and Daksha's death

Siva's anger knew no bounds on hearing the end of Sati and the routing of his followers. Filled with rage and biting his lips, Siva looked terrible, and he pulled out his matted locks, which emitted lightning and flames of fire. He laughed and roared, and dashed his Jata on the ground, when Virabhadra of enormous dimensions, and a thousand arms, arose instantly. He had three eyes and prominent tusks. He was armed, and wore a garland of skulls and locks of hair, which looked like flames of fire. Siva bade him to destroy Daksha. With folded palms, Virabhadra went round Siva, and ran impatiently with a terrible roar, and with a raised Sula, accompanied by the attendants of Rudra. As they neared the place of sacrifice, darkness was seen from the cloud of dust, as at the time of deluge. The women there feared disaster as a result of the disgrace Sati was put to. The people were bewildered, and terrible ill-omens appeared, and even Daksha was filled with fear. Very soon, Rudra's army surrounded the place. The attendants were dwarfish, blood-red and yellow in complexion, with hungry mouths and stomachs. Some broke the Pragvamsa, some broke into the Daksha's wife's apartment, and some others plundered the offerings stored, the sacrificer's room and the kitchen. The utensils were smashed, the sacrificial fire was put out, and water was poured into the sacrificial basins. Some struck the sages and hermits, and threatened their wives. Maniman arrested Bhrigu, Virabhadra took hold of Daksha, Chandisa seized Pushana, and Nandisvara held Bhaga. All the priests and the Devas fled away, unable to bear the pelted stones. Virabhadra cut off the beard of Bhrigu, and pulled out the eyes of Bhaga, Bala broke the teeth of the Kalinga kings and those of Pushan, who had laughed when Rudra was abused. Virabhadra threw himself down on Daksha's chest and used his sharp weapon to cut off his head. He was however unable to sever it. Even the skin of his throat could not be cut and Virabhadra was perplexed. But he soon recollected, and cut off Daksha's head, by the method of slaying the sacrificial animal at a sacrifice, and severed it from

his body. Then shouts of approbation from Bhutas, Pretas and Pisachas rent the air, and Virabhadra was glorified. Brahmanas and others bemoaned the situation. Virabhadra threw Daksha's head as an offering into Dakshinagni; and having burnt the sacrificial edifice, he set out for Kailasa, the home of the Guhyakas.

Brahma pacifies Rudra, and revives Daksha and others

The routed hosts of Devas and others, who had come to the sacrifice, who were terror-stricken and who had been injured by Rudra's army with their weapons of Sula, Pattisa, Nistrimsa, Gada, Parigha and Mudgara, ran to Brahma, and narrated their miserable plight. He pitied them for their misery, which was a result of their neglecting Rudra and failing to offer him his due share in the sacrifice. He suggested that they should go and win the grace of Rudra, who could be easily and quickly propitiated. They all gathered, and Brahma, accompanied by Devas, Pitris and Prajapatis, went to the mount Kailasa (the abode of Siva), frequented by the virtuous Devas, Kinnaras, Gandharvas and Apsaras, merited by superior birth, Tapas, Mantras and Yoga practices.

The Kailasa summits are composed of various gems of different mettalic ores. There are various kinds of trees, creepers and bushes, and numerous kinds of animals. The Kailasa mountain is beautiful with streams of crystal water, with caves and peaks, and it is a source of delight to Siddha women, sporting with their lovers. It is resonant with the screams of peacocks, shrill strains of bees, charming voice of cuckoos, and the sweet notes of warbling birds. There, Kalpa Vrikshas branch out, seeming to welcome birds with lifted hands. The place is very splendid with various trees viz., Mandara, Parijata, Sarala, Tamala, Sala, Tala, Kovidara, Arjuna, Chuta, Kadamba, Nipa, Naga, Punnaga, Champaka, Patuka, Asoka, Bakula, Kunda and Kuruvaka. Abundant are lotus flowers of hundred petals of golden hue, cardamon creepers, Kubjaka, Mallika and Madhavi, and also trees Panasa, Udumbara, Asvattha, Plaksha, Nyagrodha, Hingu, Bhurija, Jambu Amrataka, Amra, Priyala, Madhuka, and Inguda. Lotus lakes with beds of white lillies, and flights of warbling birds

abound there. The sight is splendid with deer, monkeys, boars, lions, bears, Salyakas, Gavayas, Sarabhas, Rurus, tigers, buffaloes, and other beasts, as also Karnantras, and musk deer.

Mount Kailasa is surrounded by the Ganges, with perfumed waters, presenting a charming scenery. There, the city of Alaka is beautiful with its gardens of Saugandhika flowers. The sacred Nanda and Alakananda rivers flow along the limits of the city. After lovely sports, celestial women plunge into these rivers and sport, sprinkling their consorts with the water. The elephants and their mates drink these waters coloured with the saffron, washed down during the ablutions of celestial women. The city is frequented by Punyajanas or Yakshas, and is crowded with vehicles built of silver, gold and precious jewels. Beyond the city of Kubera, there was the Saugandhika garden with various trees, flowers, fruits and leaves, yielding all that might be desired. The garden abounded with all kinds of Kalahamsas, pools adorned with lotuses, Harischanda trees with perfumed breezes, and ponds covered with lilies. Kimpurushas frequented the garden. A banyan tree stood at a distance. It was a hundred Yojanas high, with branches 75 Yojanas long. It warded off heat and afforded a permanent shelter. The tree inspired absolute devotion to the Lord, and was the resort of all desiring Moksha. There sat Lord Siva, waited upon by Sanaka, Sanandana and other Yogins. He practised Upasana, concentration, meditation, and Tapas for the welfare of the world. He wore sacred ashes, crescent moon, club, matted locks and deerskin, which delight hermits. He sat on Darbhasana, expounding the divine truth to his wise disciples. Resting his left foot on the right thigh, and the left arm on the left knee, he had a rosary of beads round his right forearm, with his hand formed into Tarska Mudra. With folded hands, sages prostrated before the lord, who was meditating, wearing a Yoga strap to keep the left knee in position.

Seeing Brahma coming, Siva bowed and worshipped him, along with all the Siddhas and Rishis there. Brahma thereupon addressed Siva thus:

“You are the Lord of Dharma and Artha (righteousness and wealth). You ordained the Brahmanas to practise austerity and

piety. Daksha was but a string in the sacrifice to support the Vedas, which are the source of Dharma and Artha. You confer Svarga or Naraka for pious and impious acts respectively. Those with a corrupt heart wound others feelings by their tongue. They are foolish, and should be sympathised but not killed. Your judgment is not affected by Maya, as you are of perfect wisdom, prepared to pardon the faulty persons. O lord, be pleased to ordain the completion of the sacrifice of Daksha Prajapati, in which dull-witted persons omitted to give you your share of the offering. Let, by your grace, Daksha come back to life, Bhrgu recover his eyes and beard, and Pushan, his teeth. Let the Devas and priests, whose bodies are shattered by weapons and stones, regain the good state of their body and health. Let all this merit remain your share of sacrifice, and let the sacrifice itself become complete today."

Daksha and others revived: sacrifice resumed:

Sati Born as Parvati

Lord Siva was pleased with the address of praise offered, and the lord expressed that he would not talk about or think of the faults of children, who were deluded by Maya. He ordained that Daksha, whose head had been burnt, should have the face of a goat, that Pushan should get his teeth to eat flour and chew the offering, that all the rest injured have their limbs properly restored, that Adhvaryu and Ritviks should have the arms of Asvins and the hand of Pushan for their own, and that Bhrgu have a beard like that of a sheep.

All were thus overjoyed; and heartily they invited Siva to the sacrifice, along with Brahma. They arrived at the sacrificial place, and joined the head of the sacrificial animal to Daksha's body. A Gracious glance of Siva brought back Daksha to life, as though from sleep. He offered praises to Siva, with a serene mind and devotion. He apologised for his previous indifference and thanked Siva for his merciful grace. He then proceeded to complete the sacrifice. Pious Brahmins poured an offering of three plates dedicated to Vishnu. He held the offering ready in hand, and contemplated the Lord with a pure mind. Sri Hari manifested Himself, borne by Garuda. The Lord was of blue complexion,

wore a zone of gold, and a brilliant crown. His face shone beautiful with charming ear-rings, and with Sankha, Chakra, Gada, Padma. Sara, Chapa, Asi and Charman in His arms. On His bosom abided Lakshmi, with Vanamala. His gentle looks and smiles delighted the world. Two Chamaras waved on both His sides, and the brilliant white umbrella was held over Him. Seeing Him come. Brahma, Siva, Indra and all others instantly rose and bowed to Him. Full of love, fear and reverence, with joined palms, they sang the Lord's praises piously. Brahma and others were of poor understanding and poor powers of expression of His glory, as they were but only His partial manifestations.

Daksha addressed the Lord thus: "You are in Your own unimpaired essence, pure and absolute consciousness, and eternally untouched by mental states. You are the only fearless being, untouched by Maya, through the medium of which, you appear in Jivas, as if engrossed with impure matter."

The Ritviks, Sadasyas, **Bhrigu**, Brahma, Indra, priests, Rishis, Daksha's wife, Yogisvaras, Agni, other gods, Vidyadharas and other Brahmanas assembled there joined in the praise of the Supreme Lord Sri Hari thus: "You are unassailed by any impurity. Lord, save us. Blindly given to rituals, we do not understand Your true nature, due to Nandi's curse. Your divine form is sung in the three Vedas. You are the asylum of all those fallen in Samsara destitute of any shelter and full of privations, with pitfalls of pleasure and pain, full of the wild fire of grief, and harassed by desires. We have set our mind on Your charming feet, which are worshipped even by saints, who have attained Moksha, and which shower all blessings on Your devotees. You are the soul and kin of Your suppliants. Be gracious unto us. You are the only protector of the world, with your eight arms holding weapons ready to destroy the wicked. Your worship by this sacrifice was spoiled, as Pasupati was offended by Daksha. Be pleased to purify us to continue the sacrifice. Sri Lakshmi, whom all worship for their prosperity, seeks refuge in You. Our minds scorched by the wild fire of afflictions, and distressed by the thirst of desires in Samsara, are now plunged into the river of pure nectar of Your stories and praises. Save us with a kind heart. May You, and Your consort Sri, enable us to complete the sacrifice. You are in five forms, piously

worshipped with the five Yajus mantras; and by Your energy and light, Agni flames forth and bears the offerings soaked in ghee in every sacrifice. You are the Supreme Person, who, reposing on the bed of Sessa over the ocean, withdraw all creation into your own womb, for mere sport. Your nectar-like stories shake off all illusion of even persons distracted by their foolish attachment to Samsara and the egotism of "I" and "mine" You are the sacrifice, the offering, the fire, the Mantra and everything in a sacrifice. The Three Vedas form Your body O Lord, be gracious to us; we sing your name, and we bow to you."

Daksha resumed the sacrifice; and the Lord, pleased with the offerings made to Him, blessed Daksha and the gathering. Daksha worshipped the Lord by his sacrifice, and waited upon Rudra with his due share of sacrifice; and the latter pleasingly accepted the same. Thus concluding the sacrifice, Avabhrittha ablutions were performed along with the priests. The other gods were also pleased with the hospitality extended to them, and they showered their blessings and returned to their celestial regions.

Later, Daksha's daughter, who had cast off her body was reborn of Mena, wife of Himavan. She was named as Ambika (Parvati), and was wedded again to Rudra, who enjoyed the pleasures of life with her for centuries. Most auspicious is Siva's name, and his devotees are blessed with the grant of all their desires. The man who listens to or sings the above stories is cleansed of all his sins, and is assured of long life, health, wealth and all happiness.

Dhruva's birth and penance

Saunaka and others, Narada, Ribhu, Hamsa, Aruni and Yati—all sons of Brahma, led a life of celibacy, without taking up the house-holder's life. Adharma (unrighteousness) and his wife Mrisha (falsehood) had a son Dambha (Hypocrisy) and daughters called Maya (Illusion) and Nirriti, who was childless. Of these were born Lobha and Nikriti, from whom were born Krodha and Himsa, of whom again were born Kali and his sister Durukti. Kali begot Bhaya and Mrityu on Durukti; and of these, were born a couple viz., Yatana and Niraya. The above are the offshoots of the tree of Adharma, the source of Samsara.

The reputed Svayambhuva Manu had two sons, Priyavrata and Uttanapada. The latter had two wives Suniti and Suruchi. Suniti's son was Dhruva. Uttanapada loved Suruchi more, and her son was Uttama. When the king was fondling Uttama, Dhruva came to his lap, and the king did not like it. Suruchi also chided the young Dhruva, and said that he was unfit to sit on the king's lap, or come to the throne; but instead he should go away afar, and do penance, and not aspire for the throne.

The step-mother's harsh words stung the boy as though by a serpent, and he angrily went away crying to his own mother. Suniti took him on her lap, and bitterly bewailed with burning grief, with her lotus-like eyes full of tears. She consoled her son, and advised him to pray to God and win His grace. She reminded him that his grandfather Manu propitiated the Supreme Lord with sacrifices, became an emperor on the earth, and secured Moksha in heaven. The Lord was kind to his devotees, purified by right conduct. He alone could redress one's grief and make him happy.

Dhruva was strengthened by his mother's advice, controlled his mind and will, and left his father's city for penance. Then Narada appeared, blessed him touching his head by his purifying hand, but dissuaded him from his pursuit of penance, saying that he was a young boy, who should be playful yet. He added that even sages practising austere Yoga and sublime meditation, had not yet known His ways, that he was quite young, and that happiness and prosperity would flower in time for him, without the need for dejection. Dhruva however replied that his heart was shattered by the cruel arrow-like words of Suruchi, that there was no more place for him in the palace, and that the Divine path was the only resort. Narada was pleased with the spirit of the boy, and gave him the following blessed advice:

"Worship of Sri Hari's feet is the only way to achieve one's desires for Dharma, Artha, Kama and Moksha. So, devote yourself to Him. The sacred Madhuvana, imbued with the Lord's holy presence, is on the bank of the Yamuna. Bathe in the sacred waters of the Kalindi every morning, midday and evening, offer prayers to Him, and by a steady and comfortable seat and posture, get rid of the impurities of Prana, Indriya and Manas by doing three-fold Pranayama, and meditate on the Lord with a steady

mind. His face and eyes are gracious and cheerful. He has a good-looking nose, eye brows and charming cheeks. He is fascinating, youthful and beautiful with rosy lips and eyes. He is the one and only resort of all suppliants, the dispenser of happiness and the ocean of mercy. He is distinguished by the marks of Srivatsa, blue like a cloud, with a perfect form, having Vanamala (garland), and Sankha, Chakra, Gada and Padma in His four arms. He wears a crown, ear-rings, Keyuras, and bracelets. Kaustubha adorns His neck. He is dressed in silks of golden colour, with ornamental zone about His middle, and brilliant anklets of gold. He is most beautiful, and He delights the mind and eyes, enthroned in the lotus of the heart of those that worship Him. His feet are resplendent by the ruby-like nails."

"With a steady mind and intense concentration, you should contemplate the Lord, as having a smiling face and loving looks, ready to shower boons. The auspicious personality soon grants renunciation and perfect contemplation. There is a secret Mantra, which should be repeated over and over, while contemplating the Lord and His attributes. Repetition of the Mantra seven nights brings God-realisation. The Lord should be worshipped with pure water, flowers, roots, fruits, Tulasi leaves and clothes. An image should be made of gold, silver or other metals or even earth, and should be worshipped with perfect mental control and tranquility, subsisting on simple and moderate food. The wonderful deeds of the illustrious Lord should be meditated upon. The Lord embodied in the Mantra should be worshipped by the same Mantra in all ways of worship laid down and followed by the ancients."

"Thus worshipped at heart, in thought, word and deed, and by other deeds of devotion, the Lord enhances and ennobles the devout disposition of the sincere worshipper, and confers upon him the blessing that is most desired and beneficial in the form of Dharma, Artha and Kama. Turning away from sense gratification, the worship of the Lord should be done with infinite devotion and undivided mind."

Thus initiated, Dhruva went round, and bowed to Narada: and betook himself to the sacred Madhuvana.

Sage Narada went along and came to the king's palace, and was welcomed, worshipped and comfortably seated. He made kind enquiries of the king, who disclosed the sorry tale of his young son having been driven out along with his mother due to the influence of the pitiless woman, and pondered over the miserable condition of hunger and fatigue that might befall them. Narada consoled him, and said that Dhruva was a great soul, whose glory would fill the world. Lord Sri Hari would take care of him. He would do great Tapas, please the Lord, and soon come back to enhance the king's reputation. The king then became indifferent to his royal fortune and anxiously thought of his son alone.

In Madhuvana, Dhruva bathed in Kalindi, performed his duties and fasted on the first night. He worshipped the Lord with a perfect mind as instructed by sage Narada. After three days, he ate the wild fruits of Kapittha and Badari just enough to maintain himself, and worshipped the Lord for a month. In the second month, he worshipped the Lord, maintaining himself by eating, every sixth day, withered grass and leaves. The third month he spent in perfect concentration, just drinking water every ninth day. Subsisting on mere air every twelfth day, he passed the fourth month in meditation. In the fifth month, the royal child controlled his breath standing motionless on one foot and meditating on the Lord. He was not daunted by the frightening serpents, elephants, lions, Kushmandas and terrible spirits, which were set up in vain to disturb his penance. His severe penance began to shake the three worlds. The earth, pressed down by the toe of his one foot, became half inclined on one side. His breath control was so intense that the humanity became distressed unable to breathe, and the gods went and prayed to the Lord to rescue the world from the difficulty. The Supreme Lord assured them of His help, and sent them pacified.

The Lord graces Dhruva with his presence

Having taken leave of the Lord, the gods cheerfully returned to Svarga-Loka. Then the Supreme Lord proceeded to Madhuvana mounted on Garuda. On His arrival there, Dhruva who was in intense Yoga and perfect concentration, realising in his mind the

Lord brilliant like a flash of lightning, suddenly lost sight of the vision. He was amazed and opened his eyes, when he found the Lord standing before him in the same form and manner, as in his vision. Dhruva trembled; and bending low, bowed to Him, throwing himself on His feet. He was eager but was unable to utter His praises. The Lord touched His head with His Sankhā, the embodiment of Vedas. The young Yogi could then calmly sing the Lord's praises with full devotion and love. Dhruva offered humble salutations to the Lord and said: "O Lord, You roused my power of speech by Your touch. You are all-powerful giving activity to the hand, the foot, the ear, the touch and other senses. Your feet are the shelter of the Muktas. You are the Kalpa tree, capable of yielding all desires, including salvation. The bliss, that embodied souls realise here by contemplating Your lotus-like feet and hearing Your auspicious stories, cannot be realised even in other blissful states. Pray, bless me to enjoy the company of those great souls, pure in mind and incessantly devoted to You, recounting the nectar-like stories of Your attributes to cross the terribly perilous and miserable Samsara. Pious souls do not even remember their mortal frame, kith and kin, but devote themselves to the fragrance of Your lotus-like feet. Your gross form consists of the world of beasts, trees, mountains, birds, serpents, gods, Daityas, mortals and others; but Your essential nature is beyond these. You are essentially free and blessed, absolutely pure, omniscient, the absolute spirit, perfect in glorious powers and the highest ruler of the three Gunas. Your lotus-like feet truly form a real blessing far superior to the worldly blessings of sovereignty and the like pomp. Your Grace protects us as the mother cow protects its new-born calf."

The Glorious Lord was much pleased with the wise boy's address, and replied: "I know your cherished desire, and I bestow it on you. You will later have a place of permanent residence—a place in relation to which the stars and constellations are placed in position. It is an abode which will continue to exist even after the destruction of intermediate Kalpas i.e., when the three worlds are destroyed. Dharma, Agni, Kasyapa and Sukra, who are in the form of stars, and the Sapta Rishi stars, along with other constellations, will go round the abode, always keeping it to their right. Your father will crown you and retire to the forest. You will

then protect the world for 36,000 years, firm in righteousness and endowed with unimpaired senses. When your brother Uttama is lost while hunting in forest, and his mother bewails, you will go in search of him, and there fall into a forest fire. You will then remember Me and reach My abode of eternal happiness."

The Lord then retired to His abode; and Dhruva went back to the city. In six months, Dhruva secured the shelter of His feet, which Sunanda and others secured only after several births of life-long celibacy, concentration and meditation. Dhruva however felt for his folly of again coming to Samsara, and for his failure to seek at His feet the highest purpose, then and there. He foolishly thought of the royal fortune which was granted. This was unfortunately like a penniless person begging an emperor for mere chaff. The king was very glad to hear that his son was coming back; and he presented a precious necklace of pearls to the person, who brought the news. Hastily, he mounted the chariot, drawn by excellent horses, decked in gold; and surrounded by Brahmins, elderly members of the family, ministers and relations, with conches blowing, drums sounding, flutes playing and Vedas recited, he started from the city eager to receive his son. His queens Suruchi and Suniti adorned themselves with gold ornaments, and with Uttama between them, went forth in a palanquin. They met Dhruva near the pleasure grove. The king alighted and embraced his son with tears of joy in his eyes, his heart being full of joyous emotions and good wishes. The boy bowed at the feet of his father and his mothers. Suruchi raised him and embraced him with blessings. Uttama and Dhruva both embraced each other with joy, profusely shedding tears of joy. Suniti embraced the boy with great pleasure. The people praised the queen and congratulated her for the safe return of her worthy son.

As they all entered the town joyously, they found that Makaratoranamams were hung; and plantain trees, areca trees and bunches of fruits were set up. Every door was decorated with vessels full of water, with tender mango shoots, flowers, pearls and lights. The ramparts, towers and big mansions were also decorated; and the ladies of the city hailed the reception joyously with fruits, flowers and all joys. Dhruva and the joyous company entered the palace, where the apartments were furnished with

milk-white beds on ivory bed-steads decorated with gold, high-priced seats and all other furniture. Jewelled lights shone on the crystal walls decked with emeralds. Besides, charming parks with wonderful celestial trees, warbling birds and humming bees were seen. The garden tanks had steps of precious stones and looked grand with lotus flowers, Utpalas and lilies, and with swans, Karandavas, Chakravakas and Sarasas. The king wondered at the astonishing greatness of his son. When he saw Dhruva in proper age and beloved by his subjects and courtiers, he placed him on the throne, himself renounced the world, and set out to the forest, seeking the heavenly path.

Dhruva's marriage and progeny

Dhruva married Bhrami, daughter of King Sisumara and Ila, daughter of Vayu. By the first wife, he had two sons called Kalpa and Vatsara. By the second wife, he had a son Utkala and a daughter also.

Uttama, yet unmarried, went on a hunting expedition, and was slain by a Yaksha in a fight on the Himalayan mountains. His mother Suruchi went in search of him, and lost her life. Dhruva who heard the news was filled with anger, revenge and sorrow; and he marched against the home of the Yakshas, mounting on his victorious chariot. He reached the Himalayan valley, where dwelt Yakshas and followers of Rudra. Dhruva blew his glorious conch, and the Yaksha warriors came out with upraised weapons; and Dhruva struck them all down with three arrows. The Yakshas were completely defeated and were surprised at the valour of the heroic Dhruva. They rose in anger with their arrows against the hero, and showered various weapons and missiles like Sakti, Rishti and Bhushundi. Dhruva was covered with the thick shower of arrows and could not be seen. The Yakshas thought that he was struck down and was no more alive. The Yatudhanas or Rakshasas shouted their triumph; but his chariot soon came into view, as the sun comes from behind the mist. With his divine bow, he scattered the Yakshas, as the wind scatters the clouds. His sharp arrows broke their armours and they were cut down with Bhallas. The battlefield was covered with their heads adorned with ear-rings,

their arms beautiful with bracelets, with precious strings of pearls, Keyuras, crowns, and helmets. Those that did not fall dead were disabled in some limbs, and fled from the field, as elephants flee seeing the lion.

The warrior was alone in his chariot, but was prepared for any witch-craft from the Rakshasas. Soon the sky became clouded with fearful flashes of lightning and thunder on all sides. They rained blood, phlegm, puss, excreta, fat and urine. Headless bodies rolled down. Mad elephants, tigers and lions rushed forth. Serpents thundered fire through their enraged eyes. Yakshas rushed in from all sides with Gada, Parigha, Nistrimsa, and Musala. It looked terrific like the time of Pralaya due to the magic powers of the Asuras. Dhruva was a little taken aback. The sages blessed the young hero and prayed for his success to the Supreme Lord, the mere mention or hearing of whose name conquers death and ensures success.

Yaksha's destruction: Manu visits Dhruva

At last, Dhruva set Narayana Astra on his bow, and advanced. The magical traits of the Guhyakas soon vanished. The shafts entered the enemy army terrifically. The Yakshas were enraged and rushed against Dhruva with their sharp-edged shafts, but their upraised weapons were like the uprising of mere serpents against Garuda. With his arrows, he cut the arms, thighs, heads, necks and stomachs of those who assailed him in battle, and soon despatched them to the abode of Yama.

Hearing of the mass destruction of Yakshas, the compassionate Svayambhuva Manu came to his grandson, and advised him to desist from the sinful wrath and mass destruction for the fault of just some one yaksha, who killed his brother. He advised Dhruva that the Tapas Sakti obtained by propitiating the Lord should not be wasted like that. He continued thus: "Sri Hari is pleased with you, and you are always in His heart and are most agreeable to His votaries. You are an example of righteous conduct and should not stoop to the sinful act of destruction. The Lord is pleased with His votaries of good endurance, mercifulness, love and impartiality for all His creation. You are aware of the process of His creation, preservation and dissolution. He is beginningless and endless. He

has no enemy. He hates none. The animate creatures are short-lived or long-lived, according to their Karma. The Lord is called Karma, Svabhava, Kala, Daiva or Destiny. He is the unmanifest Immeasurable Being, the source of various powers. It is not the sons of Kubera that killed your brother. It is the Lord's will that brings about the creation or destruction of man. He is the soul, the ruler, the creator and protector of all beings. With your heart resigned to Him, please resort to the Deity, the highest asylum to the world. As a boy of five years, you left your mother and went to the forest, touched to the quick by your step-mother's words. Propitiating the Lord, you have obtained a place above the three worlds. Now turn your mind from the war of passions, and be imperishably and eternally blessed. Develop more devotion to Him, and cut asunder the notions of 'I,' 'my,' and 'mine.' Control your anger, which is the highest impediment to the attainment of every good. No person seeking to be fearless should subject himself to that passion; for, the world is terribly afraid of such a person. By killing the Yakshas, you have shown a disregard to Kubera, brother of Rudra. O Child, therefore please at once beg for his pardon and grace, by prostrating and apologising to him."

Dhruva respectfully bowed to his grandfather, agreed to do his bidding, and repented his folly, which resulted from his sorrowing for his brother and mother. Svayambhuva Manu then set out for his city along with the sages.

Kubera is pleased: Dhruva's sovereignty and Tapas

The worshipful Kubera, the Lord of wealth, came to Dhruva, along with Charanas, Yakshas and Kinnaras; and was pleased that Dhruva gave up anger and stopped his destructive rivalry. Kubera addressed Dhruva thus: "I am very glad that you have obeyed your grandfather, and have relinquished the feeling of hostility, which is very hard to be rid of. You are not to be blamed for killing the Yakshas, nor the Yakshas for killing your brother. Kala or destiny is the power behind creation and destruction. The dream of the empty notion of 'I' and 'you' is due to ignorance, and it results in the bondage and miseries of Samsara. May you betake to the Almighty Lord and be happy. Worship His glorious feet, which are both associated with and untouched by His own Maya. I

am so pleased with you that I request you to ask of me a boon which is dearest to you. You rightly deserve to receive boons and favours."

The great devotee, Dhruva prayed for eternal memory of Sri Hari. Kubera conferred it and vanished.

Thereafter Dhruva worshipped the Lord by performing several sacrifices with liberal gifts. Dhruva gradually visualised the Lord in his own heart and in all other beings. His rule was Rama Rajya. His subjects regarded him as their father. He was virtuous and righteous, devoted to Brahmins and tender to the afflicted. He safeguarded Dharma and defended righteousness. He ruled the earth for 36,000 years, enjoyed unobjectionable pleasures and practised self-denial. After a long period of righteous life leading to Dharma, Artha and Kama, Dhruva gained perfect control over his senses, and lastly made over the throne to his son. Having perceived that his body, wife, children, friends, strength, wealth, palace, charming pleasure grounds, gardens, and the whole earth were all limited by time and perishable, he retired to Visala.

At Visala, he bathed in sacred waters, attained serenity of mind, controlled his breath in a firm seat, restrained his mind and senses, and contemplated on the gross form of the Lord or Virat rupa. He was eventually rid of gross environment. He cherished uninterrupted devotion to the Lord and was often bathed in blissful tears. His heart melted in intense devotion; he ceased to think of his own self; and thus stood severed from gross environment.

While in this state, Dhruva saw an excellent car descending from the sky, illuminating the ten cardinal points, just like the rising moon on the full moon night. In the car, he saw two celestials having four arms, of blue complexion, of youthful age, with eyes bright like lotuses, armed with Gada, wearing beautiful attire, and adorned with crowns, wreaths of flowers, pearls and charming earrings. Knowing them as the attendants of the Lord, Dhruva stood up with joined hands and prostrated himself before them uttering the names of Sri Hari. As he stood with joined hands and head bent in humility, Sunanda and Nanda spoke to him thus: "Blessed you are that you have pleased the Lord, while

yet a child of five years. He has sent us to bring you to His abode. You have secured His best Grace that even sages could not secure. Your high place is that, round which go the sun, the moon, the planets, the stars and other luminous bodies of the sky. You will attain the most praiseworthy place of Vishnu, which was not filled by any of your forefathers. Be pleased to mount the excellent celestial car sent by Lord Vishnu."

Hearing the sweet words, Dhruva bathed, performed his daily duties, dressed himself auspiciously, bowed to the sages, went round and worshipped the 'divine car, and mounted it. Then sounded the Dundubhis, Mridangas, Panavas and others; and Gandharvas loudly sang, showering flowers over him. Before taking off, he remembered his poor mother, Suniti behind; and the gods knowing his mind, showed him the brilliant queen (his mother) going in a vehicle in front of him. En route, he saw the planets one after another, and there were showers of flowers and praises of his greatness. He passed beyond the three worlds, and the sphere of the Sapta Rishis, and reached his abode above all. It is the highest place for those doing auspicious and righteous duties, who are rid of all sins and impurities, and are kind and helpful to fellow beings. There, even now shines Dhruva like a faultless gem and the crown of the three worlds. It is known as Dhruva Mandala, round which revolve the heavenly luminaries.

In appreciation of his greatness. Sage Narada played on Vina; and sang praises in the sacrificial hall of Prachetasas as follows:

"Dhruva, as a child of five years, was pained at heart, with the arrow-like words of his step-mother. He went to the forest; and, there, doing as I told him, he attained the grace of the Lord, whose excellent qualities are praised by His devotees. The position gained by the young boy, by praying to the Lord for a short period, cannot be gained by any Kshatriya even through many long years."

The sacred story of Dhruva is most agreeable to the righteous. It is a story, which when read, said or heard, leads to happiness and glory; and brings long life and merit. It is a great source of all auspiciousness, and helps to gain His eternal abode. It deserves to be commended, as it washes off all sins and promotes goodwill and

good disposition. It increases devotion to the Lord, and reduces miseries. When listened to the story improves good nature and habits, heroic spirit, splendour and respectability in the listener. He attains Divine grace who relates the story to others, on important days like the full-moon days, Sundays, and Sankramana.

Angaraja and his wicked son Vena

Sage Narada is a great votary of the Lord, and he propounded Kriya Yoga or the method of worshipping the Lord. The righteous Prachetasas propitiated the Lord by sacrifices, at which Narada related several sacred stories, including that of Dhruva's progeny as under.

When Dhruva left for the forest, his son Utkala did not want to ascend his throne and enjoy imperial fortune. He was of a tranquil mind and was always devoted to the Lord. He was of pure wisdom and absolute bliss. He was always in Yoga. He was unmindful of everything material, and so looked blind, deaf, dumb and mad; and so his younger brother Vatsara, son of Bhrami, was installed as king.

Vatsara's wife Svarvati bore him six sons. Pushparna and others. The first son had two wives Prabha and Dosha. Prabha bore three sons-Pratar, Madhyandiva and Sayam; and Dosha also had three sons-Pradosha, Nisita, and Vyushta. Vyushta had a very brilliant son, Sarvatejas, who had, by his wife Akuti, a son called Chakshus Manu. This Manu's wife was Nadvala, whose sons were Puru, Ulmuka and ten others. Ulmuka had by his wife Pushkarani, six sons-Angaraja and five others. Angaraja had a wicked son Vena by his wife Sunita. Being disgusted with his son's cruel ways, the saintly King Anga left the kingdom and the city. The angered sages pronounced a curse on Vena, who fell dead; and as a result of the sages churning and prayers to the Lord for a worthy ruler, the first lord of the earth called Prithu was born with an Amsa of Narayana.

A little more of Angaraja's life will not be out of place. The king performed a great Asvamedha sacrifice, but the gods did not attend it, though invoked by Vedic Brahmins. The materials

offered were all pure and righteously obtained, and Vedic texts of excellent virtue had been sung. There was nothing to offend the gods and induce them not to attend and accept the offerings. Anga was disappointed and sought the help of the assembly to know the cause and setright matters.

Sadasaspatis said that the king had done nothing sinful in this birth, but the only defect was that he had no son, due to a sin in his previous life. They suggested that he should worship Yajna Purusha and secure an issue, when the gods will be pleased to accept the offerings. If the Supreme Lord is invoked by his son, the other gods will accept their portions. Hari bestows upon man all that he desires, but the fruits will be in accordance with the worship offered. Accordingly, the king offered Purodasa to Sri Vishnu. Then rose, from the sacrificial fire, a person wearing gold ornaments, clad in pure silk, and bringing ready-made Payasa in a golden jar. With great joy, the king received it with joined hands, and gave it to his queen. She tasted the Payasa, conceived, and had a son in due course.

The boy grew up to be unrighteous. He constantly went to the forest in search of game, and heartlessly killed poor innocent animals. So the people called him 'Vena.' He was very cruel, and sometimes seized children and his playmates, and killed them like animals. The king was sad that he could not correct his son even after various punishments. Childless persons worship the Lord, but the misery of wicked children is unbearable. Such a child fills the household life with troubles, bad name and great loss of Dharma. He becomes an enemy, giving endless anxiety. A man may have to renounce the house full of troubles, due to a bad son.

Thus, with a sore heart, the sleepless king departed from the palace of abundant prosperity in the dead of night, leaving his sleeping queen and unobserved by any one. His subjects, ministers and friends searched in vain for the king all through the land. They returned to the city, bowed to the assembled sages, and informed them of the loss of the king, with tears in their eyes.

Vena was crowned: He was unrighteous

Bhrigu and other sages felt the want of a ruler for the land and they installed Vena as the king. On ascending the throne, he

dealt out severe punishment, and the rogues in the country soon hid themselves like rats before a cat. Soon Vena, puffed with pride of power, grew haughty and self-conceited; and ill-treated the great sages. Blind with pride, and insolent like an elephant, he caused much agitation, and prohibited Dharma. He ordered that no Yagas should be performed, no offerings should be poured into fire, and no charity should be given.

Urged by compassion for the country, the sages assembled together to avert the calamity that had befallen. For fear of anarchy, Vena was made king. But the remedy became worse than the disease, as there was then fear from both the rogues and the king. The wicked Vena had been nursed like a snake with milk. He was advised by the sages to behave better, but he was adamant. Performance of Dharma, in thought, word and deed, **was** advised to promote his long life, health, wealth, **reputation** and the happiness in the land, and to encourage the performance of sacrifices by Brahmanas, to propitiate Sri Hari and secure His grace for the welfare of the kingdom.

Vena laughed at their advice and said that they were mistaking Adharma for Dharma, just as a vicious woman preferred a paramour to her husband. He said that the people should regard the king as their Supreme Lord, and reap good in this and the other world; and that he was himself the embodiment of all gods—Vishnu, Brahma, Rudra, Indra, Vayu, Yama, Surya, Parjanya, Kubera, Chandra, Agni and Varuna. He invited worship for himself from the sages and others with all righteous performances and offerings.

The king was thus deeply perverted and sinful, lost all auspiciousness about him and was overtaken by misfortune. The Brahmana sages, thus disregarded, were enraged and cursed the king with death, and returned to their hermitages. The king died; and his mother, was full of sorrow and protected the lifeless body of Vena by means of powerful charms.

Later, the sages gathered on the banks of the Sarasvati river for performing ablutions; and considered the conditions of anarchy in the country infested with robbers and depredators having sway in the kingless land. They decided that the Anga race

should be perpetuated, and churned the loins of the dead prince, which produced a dwarfish man named Nishida, very black, with a small trunk, small arms, protruding chin, small limbs, flat nose, red eyes and copper hair; and his descendants were Naishadas, frequenting **mountains** and forests.

Birth of Prithu and Archas

Thereafter, the sages churned the two arms of the childless king; and a son named Prithu and a daughter named Archas were born. The son was an Amsa of the glorious lord, and the daughter was an Amsa of Sri Lakshmi. Their birth augured well for the empire. **Gandharvas** offered praises and sang panegyrics; celestial damsels danced and Siddhas showered flowers. Gods, Sages and Pitris assembled; and Sankha, Turya, Mridanga, and Dundubhi sounded musical **notes**

In due course, Prithu was enthroned as king with great pomp and splendour, amidst Vedic chantings by Brahmanas. Even **rivers**, seas, mountains, Nagas, cattle, birds and brutes offered **homages**. Kubera presented Prithu an excellent throne of gold, Varuna an umbrella, Vayu two Chamaras, Dharma a garland, Indra an excellent crown, and Yama a sceptre. Brahma presented the king with Vedic virtue, Sarasvati a wreath of pearls, Parvati a sword, Soma horses, Tvashtri a nice chariot, Agni a bow and the sun presented good shafts and mother earth gave sandals of magical virtue. Gandharvas and Charanas taught him dancing and music. The Rishis showered **real** benedictions and Samudra presented a Sankha. Sutas and Magadhas crowded round him and sang praises.

Prithu felt burdened by the numerous praises and presents, and addressed the assembly to direct their sweet praises to Sri Hari, as he was himself, after all, His humble devotee. Noble and modest people are naturally averse to hear praises of themselves. May the Supreme Lord be praised and prayed.

The great Prithu

The celestial bards, impelled by the nectar-like speech of the king, joyously praised him and extolled his greatness thus: "He

was an Avatar of the Supreme Lord, deluding the minds of even Brahmins. He was the foremost that practised Dharma, leading the world righteously. He safeguarded Dharma, and punished Adharma. He was an Amsa of the eight protectors of the world. As king, he levied tribute in time, and spent it in time for the people's good. He was an impartial ruler, just as the sun was impartial in shining over the land. He was merciful and patient. He comforted his subjects with his bright face of affectionate and charming smiles. He was the abode of innumerable and glorious attributes. He did not punish anyone not at fault, though he was the son of his enemy, and did not spare even his own son, if he was at fault. Prithu's sway extended from Mount Manasa to where all the sun's rays reached. He delighted the world by his good deeds, fascinating to all people. He was firm in his vows, true to his promise, devoted to Brahmins and the aged, and respectful and tender to the afflicted. He treated any other woman as his mother. He had paternal affection to his subjects, and he was a servant of those versed in Vedas. He contributed to the joy of all creatures. He was the king of kings, and the one protector of the whole earth, as far as Udaya mountains, driving in his chariot, with bow in hand, all round the world. Other kings and rulers bore him presents, and their women looked upon him as Vishnu, and sang his glories. Like Indra, he broke down the mountains with the ends of his bow easily, and converted the place into a level plain, to yield food grains for the people. He was a man of irresistible force; and wicked men ran away and hid themselves in different directions. He performed a hundred Asvamedha Yagas, where Sarasvathi made her appearance; and while the hundredth Yaga was being performed, Indra carried away the horse. He worshipped Sanatkumara in the garden adjoining his palace, and obtained pure knowledge to realise the Supreme Lord. At different places, Prithu's exploits were celebrated, and the Lord's stories were sung. He brought all the quarters under his unquestionable sway, and by dint of his powers, removed the ills of the world. He became the Lord of the earth, and his glories were sung by Suras and Asuras."

King Prithu sees food famine

Prithu was celebrated for good qualities and good deeds. He was kind and sympathetic to his subjects granting them their

desires. He was impartial to the different classes of his subjects, and gave due regard to Brahmins, ministers and priests. He was really an Avatar of Sri Krishna come to improve the bad conditions during Vena's regime.

When Prithu was installed as king, there was food famine, the people were emaciated and hungry, and the earth was not productive. The hungry people clustered round the king for succour. He knew that the food famine was because the earth did not produce grain. He took up the bow, fixed an arrow to it and aimed it at the earth very angrily. Mother earth took the form of a cow and ran away in terror like a deer. Prithu pursued her wherever she ran. She could not escape although she ran in all directions up and down. Pained at heart and full of fear, she came back and took refuge with the king. She pleaded helplessness and innocence, and sought protection. She said that she was at fault for not producing food, though she was given her share in sacrifices. She argued that simply because a cow was fed on grass, but did not yield milk, she should not be punished. Prithu accused earth that she did not reproduce the plants and seeds first sown into her by Brahma. The earth trembled, implored mercy and bowed to the king, who was Himself the Absolute Power. She craved for mercy, as He Himself did everything and caused everything to be done as the Supreme Creator, Preserver and Destroyer of the entire universe. His powers were perfect and boundless. It was He Himself as Varaha that lifted the earth from the bottom of the sea and placed it firmly on water. The same Lord Varaha was now in the form of King Prithu, to whom goddess earth bowed again and again.

Food famine averted

Goddess earth thus respectfully counselled patience to the angered king, and suggested the adoption of expedients, previously employed by seers and sages, to accomplish purposes positively. She said that the plants and herbs first produced by Brahma were consumed by wicked creatures, destitute of pious observances, and that when the world was invested with robbers, she was unprotected and neglected by the rulers, the plants and herbs were

withdrawn into the bowels, as there was no sacrificial activity, and they became decayed. The goddess earth promised to yield everything desired, provided a calf and milking vessel (pail) were arranged. Then milk could be drawn and used as a nutritious food for all beings. If the earth was levelled plain, the pouring rain water would collect on the land for producing food grains.

Thereupon, the king broke down mountain peaks and heights with the ends of his bow and converted most of this earth into a level surface. Villages, towns, cities and forts were formed, with suitable dwelling places, and habitation for herdsmen and cattle, comprising grounds, quarries and agricultural farms. Then he made Svayambhuva Manu the calf and extracted all the plants into his own hands. Everything essential was prepared for a prosperous empire. With Brihaspati as calf, the Rishis extracted the milky Vedic lore from mother earth into themselves. With Indra as calf, the celestials extracted Soma in a golden pail. Prahlada was the calf for the sons of Diti, and Danu to extract Sura and Asava into an iron pail. Gandharvas and Apsarasas got the sweet milk of honey, employing Visvavasu as calf. With Aryaman as calf, the Pitris got their milk food (Kavya) into an earthen vessel. Siddhas made Kapila as calf, and secured Ashtasiddhis of Anima and Mahima into their vessel of Akasa. Kimpurusha and other Mayims derived Maya (magical powers) by employing Maya as calf. With Rudra as calf, Yakshas and Rakshasas drew the wine of blood into their skulls. So also, Nagas and other serpents made Takshaka as their calf and drew poison as their milk into their holes. The quadrupeds made Nandi as their calf and secured grass into their vessel of the forest. The lion and the Garuda were the calves for the beasts and birds, to secure flesh and other foods for them. Trees and mountains made the banian tree and the Himavat as their calves, and milked juice and various minerals respectively into their heights. Similarly, the earth yielded every desired thing for all other creations, which employed the excellent ones in their classes for their calves. The great King Prithu and the entire population derived all food and prosperity from Goddess earth, employing a calf and a vessel differently. During his reign, the people were free from fear, and spent their lives in perfect comfort, peace and plenty, with all devotion to the great king and the Supreme Lord.

One hundred Asvamedha Yagas

King Prithu inaugurated the performance of a hundred Asvamedha Yagas at Brahmavarta, where the Sarasvati river flows eastwards. Indra grew jealous that the king would excel him by the performance of the Yagas, which would be graced by the Supreme Lord, who would be seen by all in the Yaga Sala.

The Yagas proceeded, and Lord Sri Hari was present accompanied by Brahma, Siva, Indra and other Devas. The great sages, Gandharvas and Apsara-women sang praises. Siddhas, Vidyadharas, Daityas, Danavas, Yakshas, Sunanda, Nanda, Kapila, Narada, Datta, Sanaka, other great masters of Yoga and renowned votaries of Hari were also present. Goddess earth, who was eager to yield materials for righteous performances, readily yielded everything desired at Brahmavarta, and supplied the master of the sacrifice all he wanted. The streams bore floods of tasteful fluids, milk, curd, rice, ghee, and buttermilk; and gigantic trees rained honey and delicious fruits abundantly. Oceans provided precious stones and jewels, and mountains produced food stuffs. The subjects and statesmen waited with various presents.

The prosperity at Prithu's sacrifice intensified Indra's jealousy, and he put obstacles in the way. When Prithu began to propitiate Sri Hari by the hundredth Asvamedha, the jealous Indra carried away the consecrated animal. On information by Atri that Indra was hastening away in the sky, Prithu's son pursued him with his arrow, and asked him to stop. But Indra disguised himself as a pious person with matted locks and sacred ashes; and so, Prithu did not aim his arrow against him. Instigated by Atri, Prithu's son pursued Indra to kill him. Indra abandoned the horse and vanished. The prince recovered the horse and returned, famed as 'Vijitasva' (one that succeeded in recovering horse). Once again, Indra, carried away the horse adorned with gold chains, creating dense darkness. Sage Atri hinted that Indra armed with Kapala and Khatvanga was taking away the horse, and the enraged king's son aimed an arrow at Indra, who again stood away invisible, and abandoned the horse. He got back the horse to his father's sacrifice.

While thus Indra was carrying away the horse and interrupting the sacrifice, the mind of man was taken up with sinful theories of seeming righteousness, such as those of Digambara Jainas, Buddhas of red cloths and others of charming misapprehension. At last, Prithu was enraged, and himself took up his bow and arrow against Indra. The priests however desisted him from doing so, pointing out that the sacrificer should not, during the sacrifice, kill any one, except the consecrated animal. They undertook to invoke by Vedic meditation Indra's presence and mend matters, by pouring offering to the enemy. Brahma appeared and appeased them that Indra was the ruler of all Devas and should not be afflicted by the sacrificer. The king had completed ninety-nine yagas quite well, to deserve Moksha. There was no need to complete the hundredth Yaga, and excel Indra. Prithu was an Avatar to protect Dharma, which had declined due to the wickedness of his father Vena. Thus counselled by Brahma, he did not mind the illusion of Indra in the seeming righteousness, but cherished a friendship for Indra and made peace with him.

All those of renown, who had been propitiated during the sacrifice, bestowed many a boon upon Prithu, who performed the concluding ablutions gloriously. Great Brahmins, whose blessings always prove true, received various gifts made in perfect faith, and pronounced their benediction upon the king. All the invitees, Devas, Pitris, Danavas and others were properly honoured with gifts and due deference, and the happy occasion was successfully concluded.

Lord Vishnu himself initiates Prithu

The glorious Lord Narayana was pleased with the sacrifices, accepted the sacrificial worship, and spoke to King Prithu, (while Indra was present) thus: "Indra has obstructed your sacrifices. Dignified as you are, excuse him, as he is making an apology to you. Wise and righteous men never harm any one or anybody, for body is not Atma, and Paramatma abides in all bodies. You should not be deluded by Maya. The body is the product of Avidya, Kama and Karma, and the wise feel no attachment to it. Such men do not consider the house, offspring or wealth as belonging to themselves. Paramatma is pure, self-luminous, omnipresent, and is a witness to everything. He is unaffected by the bodily states of

childhood, youth, manhood, etc., whose filthy and dull environment does not touch the Indweller, who is a mere onlooker of absoluteness. Similarly, he who knows that the Lord abides in his own self, is unaffected by Maya, and ceaselessly worships Me, constant in his own duties, as per his Varna and Asrama, and attains mental serenity. He gets pure vision, leading to Moksha."

"He who knows the Lord to be different from everything, though presiding in everything, is a true Yogi, fit to attain the blessed state of Mukti. The wise centre their love in Me, and are unaffected by experience of prosperous or adverse conditions, and regard equally the superior, inferior, and middling creatures. Therefore, controlling the senses and the mind, and helped by your ministers and others, do your duty of protecting the world, which is a king's most sacred duty. Be solely devoted to Dharma, approved of and handed down by the foremost Brahmins, and be unattached to Dharma, Artha and Kama. The great sages Sanaka and others will soon pay a visit to you. You are pious and good. Ask of me a boon, and I shall pleasingly grant it."

Prithu respectfully bowed to the Lord's command, and embraced Indra without the least tinge of enmity. Indra of hundred sacrifices felt ashamed for his own act, and touched Prithu's feet with deep love and reverence. Then Prithu worshipped the Lord with great devotion and due presents, and touched His feet. Overpowered with tears of joy brimming his eyes, the king could not see the Lord. With folded hands, he embraced Sri Hari in his own heart, and stood contemplating Him. Then wiping his tears, the king looked at the Lord, who was about to depart on Garuda. Prithu addressed the Lord thus:

"You have lovingly offered me a boon. Boons beset men with Ahankara due to the desires fulfilled, and prosperity gained. Even dwellers in hell can have boons by doing devotion to you. How can I therefore aspire for a boon? I do not desire anything, however great, which is other than the drinking of the nectar of Your lotus-like feet. Instead of all other property, let me have a thousand ears to hear Your nectar-like stories. A story with even just a drop of the nectar of Your lotus-like feet, issuing from the mouth of a great devotee is what I crave for. Your Grace is all the boon I crave for. I eagerly worship and contemplate You, the one

abode of excellent attributes. Let me be blessed with absolute love for Your feet. Then Maya can never affect me, and I shall devote myself to remembering and contemplating Your own feet. Your offer of a boon to me is only to delude me, by virtue of my own Karma. Your Maya makes people entertain desires for things bereft of truth and wisdom. So I pray, be pleased of your own accord to do what is good to me, just as a father works for the good of his child."

The Supreme Lord was immensely pleased that the king was really devoted to Him, and was not seeking after vain desires. Faith in His commandment is real worship of the Lord. The Lord blessed the king with instant and constant devotion to Him, and with all auspiciousness. The Lord retired from his view, and then all the gods, Rishis, Pitris, Gandharvas, Siddhas, Nagas, Kinnaras, Apsaras and all other attendants of Sri Hari went away pleased with the king, who honoured them all with kind words, wealth, love and folded hands. Having won the grace of the Lord, the king returned to the city.

Prithu expounds Dharma

As Prithu returned to the city, he witnessed decorations with wreaths of pearls and flowers, and with silks and golden festoons, perfumed with burning incense. The city streets and quadrangles were moistened with water, scented with Chandana and Agar, and adorned with flowers, fruits, tender shoots of barley, fried rice and lights. It was everywhere decorated with plantain trees and areca palms, bearing fruits and flowers, with wreaths of tender shoots. The subjects went forth to receive the king worshipfully with all auspicious things. Conches and drums sounded; and the king unassumingly entered the palace, accompanied by priests chanting Vedas. Great honour was done to the king, who pleasingly presented several gifts. Prithu ruled the earth virtuously, established world-wide fame, and was blessed with the heavenly abode. The king held sway over the seven Dvipas, but had great respect for the Brahmins and the devotees of Sri Vishnu.

Once, he performed a great sacrifice, where Brahmin sages, royal sages and even Devas had assembled. Worthy people were all honoured. The king rose and addressed the assembly with

gentleness and affection thus: "I am your ruler and should protect you. I should afford my subjects the means of living and maintain them properly. The king who levies taxes, but does not keep the people in righteous ways, becomes a sinner and loses his own good fortune. Therefore, I require you to do your own duties, with the Lord's name, uppermost in your mind, and without mental jealousy or envy; and that is the favour I seek of you. May the holy Pitris, Devas, and Rishis lead us on the righteous path of Dharma, Artha, Kama, Svarga and Moksha. We should all worship the Supreme Lord's feet, which remove our accumulated sin. Those taking shelter under His feet develop spiritual strength and superior wisdom, pursuing their own duties. The Lord is the embodiment of pure and perfect wisdom. Blessed and happy will I be, if you observe your own righteous duties, and worship the Lord, whose glory purifies the whole world, and who dwells in the heart of all creatures, as the absolute ruler and beloved of Brahmins. The worship of the Brahmin race is very essential, as the Lord does not so gladly accept the oblations put into the sacrificial fire, as He does the offerings made with perfect faith, through the mouth of the Brahmin. I desire to wear all my life on my crown, the dust of the lotus-like feet of those, who with faith, austerity, auspicious observances, self-control and steady mind, always bear the eternal and faultless Vedas, and propagate their Divine teachings. I seek the grace of the Lord, through the race of the sacred Brahmins and cows."

The Pitris, Gods and Brahmins were highly pleased with the king's address, propagating righteousness in the land and consequent material, mental and spiritual prosperity of the subjects. One attains to higher worlds by means of a son. Even so, the sinful Vena crossed over hell by the birth of his son, the virtuous Prithu. Similarly, Hiranyakasipu doomed to hell due to his misdeeds, got over it by virtue of his pious son, Prahlada. The most Supreme and Perfect Person inspires the Brahmin race and the Kshatriya race to act righteously, and lead the universe to prosperity and peace, by virtue of His own force and will.

Sanat Kumaras visit King Prithu

Sanat Kumaras, the four brilliant sages, came to the king, who rose and went forth along with his courtiers and attendants;

and received and worshipped the sages, offering Arghya and seats. The king then very faithfully and delightfully addressed the sages thus: "I am overjoyed at your kind visit which is a source of all auspiciousness. Fortunate I am, blessed with your visit, which cannot be had even by Yogins. Blessed are the people, who offer some water, a seat or accommodation to the worshipful. Wealthy houses, which are destitute of the holy water of the feet of the Lord's devotees are, after all, like trees that harbour venomous reptiles. Most welcome is your visit to me, seeking salvation with a resolute mind and practice of austerities. I take courage and seek your advice and blessings for my attaining salvation. You are perhaps the manifestation of the Great Lord, going about this earth as Siddhas to shower His Grace on His devotees."

Delighted at the sincere and faithful address of the king, the Kumaras smilingly and gracefully replied thus: "Your good enquiry is really pleasing to us, as righteous conversation and discourses are auspicious to advance the happiness of all. Recounting the excellent stories of the Lord's feet washes off all our sins. Worship of the glorious Lord, contemplation of the Lord by Yoga and daily listening to His holy stories bring all happiness. Avoiding sense gratification, delighting in seclusion and blissfulness and craving for the nectar of His stories are the ways to real happiness. We should win His grace by practising harmlessness, by imbibing the nectar of His deeds, by self-control and self-denial, and by eschewing desires and refraining from acts to gain worldly objects and their protection. Devotion grows by constant singing of the Lord's stories. The mind of those bent on worldly things is distracted by the senses, which are drawn away by the objects, and the power of reasoning from intellect is lost. Next, memory is lost, and then wisdom. Gratification of senses brings about the loss of all purposes to man, and he loses both direct and indirect knowledge, and becomes inanimate in nature. Attachment to things is the worst impediment to the four-fold purpose of Dharma, Artha, Kama and Moksha. Of these purposes, Moksha alone is the final and supreme goal. The Lord is eternally blessed, absolutely pure with perfect wisdom and truth. You should therefore find asylum in Him, through devotion to the glory of the toes of His lotus-like feet, which cut the knot of Karma, an achievement that cannot be attained even by ascetics, who control

their senses, and keep their mind vacant. Great is the difficulty to cross the sea of Samsara which abounds in the alligators of six-fold passions and misery, except by the boat of the worshipful feet of the glorious Lord."

The king heartily praised Sanatkumaras for the discourse, and recollected the blessing conferred on him by Sri Hari, which became a fact by the visit of Sanatkumaras and their instruction. The king then offered his life, children, house, kingdom, army and treasure to them. The desireless sages of Atma-Yoga were highly pleased, blessed the king, and rose into the sky, while all others stood gazing. Prithu became more firm in devotion, and he performed his righteous duties at due times and places, and dedicated all his deeds to the Lord. He became rid of attachment and serene in mind; and realised that Prakriti was different from Atma (Jiva), which was different from Paramatma (Supreme Lord). He had, by his wife Archis, five sons Vijitasva, Karyaksha, Dhumrakesa, Dravina and Vrika, who all came up to his ideal of devotion to the Lord in mind and heart. Prithu was an ideal ruler of charming qualities, irresistible like Agni and unconquerable like Mahendra; and he made his kingdom as happy as Svarga for his subjects. He granted their desires, like the clouds; he was deep like the sea, he was strong in spirit like the Meru, and he was like Dharma in meting out punishment. He was like the Himalayas in his righteousness and wonderful characteristics, rich like Kubera in treasures, and like Varuna he possessed secreted wealth. He was present everywhere like Vayu, and was also strong, enterprising and righteous. He was like Manmatha in beauty and was undaunted like a lion. He loved his subjects like Manu and ruled over them like Brahma. In Vedic discourses, he was like **Brihaspati**; and in conquest of senses he was like **Sri Hari**. He was devoted to cows, elders, preceptors, Brahmins and devotees; and possessed modesty, humility and good nature, always labouring for other's benefit. His fame was sung by all good men all over the three worlds.

Prithu and his Queen perform Tapas and ascend to Heaven

King Prithu had ruled the land righteously and had provided permanency of gifts for all Dharma. He had grown very old; and therefore entrusted the kingdom to his sons, and betook himself,

with his queen, to a hermitage. He observed rules of self-discipline uninterruptedly, and took to the austere penance of a Vanaprastha.

He ate roots, fruits and dry leaves. Some weeks he subsisted on water only, and then he contented himself with mere air. In hot summer, he practised austerity standing in the midst of the five fires. He was dauntless and contemplative, and exposed himself even to heavy downpour of rain. In winter, he stood immersed in water upto the neck and slept on bare ground. He was full of endurance, controlled his tongue, senses and organs; kept celibacy, conquered the vital breaths, and performed the hardest penance to please Lord Krishna. By his Tapas, he was rid of his sins and became pure in mind. He completely nipped the six passions by control of breath. He worshipped and contemplated the Lord by the very means of Yoga, which the worshipful Sanatkumaras had taught him. The righteous king's devotion to the Lord became perfect, and he attained perfect renunciation and powerful wisdom. Having realised the Lord, he gave up all activity, with a view to shake off the mortal frame. With his heels pressed on the rectum, he forced up the breath from Muladhara Chakra, allowing it to stop at the different Chakras of the navel, heart, chest, throat, and head (Bhramadhya). He carried the breath still higher to the crown of the head (Sahasrara Chakra) and was absolved of all passions. He made Vayu mix with air, his body with earth, his senses with Akasa; and earth with water, water with fire; fire with Vayu, and Vayu with Akasa. He contemplated the absorption of Manas into the senses, senses into their objects in the order of creation, and Ahankara into Mahattatva; and attained final release by dint of wisdom and renunciation.

His devoted wife, the great queen, who had followed him to the forest, and had partaken in his austere practices, was much afflicted, but took courage and overcame distress. When her Lord's lifeless body was placed on the funeral pile of fuel, she bathed and performed the appropriate rites, poured libations to her lord, bowed to the Devas, went round the pile thrice, and contemplating her lord's feet, she threw herself into the fire. Seeing the chaste Archis follow her lord Prithu, even Devas sang

her praises, bestowing many a boon. They showered flowers, and the celestial trumpets blew.

The Devas expressed that the queen was a blessed wife, who heartily followed her lord to heaven. The queen was unsurpassable in her dutifulness and wisdom, leading to salvation. She attained the highest world along with her lord, the world that could be secured only by those who contemplate none but Achyuta.

So sacred is the story of Lord Prithu and his queen that he, who reads their holy account to himself or to others, or listens to it, attains the path of Prithu. Thereby, a Brahmin adds to his Brahmanic glory, a prince becomes the lord of the earth, a Vaisya becomes a commercial magnet, and a Sudra becomes a most worthy man. Listening to the story thrice assures a issueless man with children, a poor man with riches, a nameless man with high reputation, and a dunce with good scholarship. It brings men prosperity, auspiciousness, happiness, reputation, longevity and heavenly blessings; and wards off the evils of Kali. Faithful reading of, or listening to, the story is a right step for Dharma, Artha, Kama and Moksha. A devotee reading or listening to the story will win God's Grace and develop contemplation and realisation of the Lord, and cross smoothly the ocean of Samsara.

Prachina-Barhis and Prachetasas

Prithu's son, Vijitasva became emperor. He was a learned man, and was affectionate to his younger brothers, giving each of them a different direction to rule over. He gave the east to Haryaksha, the south to Dhumrakesa, the west to Vrika, and the north to Dravina. Vijitasva obtained from Indra the power of going about unseen and was therefore known as Antardhana. By his queen Sikhandini, he had three sons Pavaka, Pavamana and Suchi; and by another wife, Nabhasvati, he had a son named Havirdhana.

Vijitasva was vexed that he, as emperor, should have to exact tributes, inflict punishments, levy taxes and so on; and so he gave them up, and commenced a prolonged 'Sattra Yaga' sacrifice. He devoutly worshipped the Lord and attained to His abode.

Havirdhana had six sons, and the eldest, Barhishad, came to the throne. He was a good Yogi and was interested in doing sacrifices. The empire became a big hall of divine sacrifices. He married Satadruti, daughter of Samudra. She was very beautiful in every limb and was highly decked in ornaments. The Devas, Asuras, Gandharvas, Rishis, Siddhas and Urugas were captivated by the beauty of the newly married damsel with the sweet ringing sounds of the ornaments on her feet.

Barhishad had ten sons, who were known by the same name, and so the father became known as Prachinabarhis. The sons were learned and righteous, and were later known as Prachetasas. Commissioned by their father to make the world populous and prosperous, they went down into the sea for Tapas, and worshipped Sri Hari for 10,000 years, repeating the sacred Mantras taught by God Siva, whom they had met on their way. In this connection, it is necessary to know a detailed account of the meeting of Prachetasas with God Siva, the interview they had, and the instruction and initiation they received.

In obedience to their father's command, the Prachetasas set out westwards for doing Tapas. Near the sea, they saw a great lake, abounding in aquatics. It was the house of blue and red lilies, lotuses, Kalharas, and Indivaras, with sweet voices of swans and other ~~water~~ birds. In it, grew trees and creepers luxuriantly; and music of nourishing sweetness of Mridanga, Panava, etc., was heard. From the lake, rose God Siva with his retinue. He looked a pile of shining gold, dark in the neck, with three eyes, smiling countenance and promising grace. The Prachetasas bowed to Him reverently. He was pleased with the pious princes of good Dharma and blessed them thus:

"I have shown myself to you, to extend my grace unto you. May you be happy. Beloved of me is he who is devoted to the glorious Lord Vasudeva. A person doing his own righteous duties in hundred lives attains to the position of Me and Virincha. On the other hand, a devotee of Lord Vasudeva attains to His place directly, as I and other Devas do. Now you are devoted to the Lord as much as I am. Please listen to the Mantra, I now teach you. It is a highly sacred and auspicious one, which leads to

Moksha. It should be separately and constantly repeated in secrecy. I pray for success to you all.

'I bow to the Lord Vasudeva, who is perfectly blissful, changeless and self-luminous. He is the subtle and unlimited awakener of the world. He rules the mind and senses, and is present in every pure heart. He is the Lord of the three Vedas, the Pitris and Devas. He rules all the worlds. He is the embodiment of the highest righteousness and unlimited wisdom. He is the Lord of Sankhya Yoga. His form is beautiful with four charming long arms and a well shaped and smiling face. The Lord's eyes are like the inner petals of a lotus, with graceful eye brows. He is clad in silks, shining like the glowing lotus filaments, and his ear-rings are set with jewels. He wears brilliant ornaments of the crown, bracelets, wreaths of pearls, anklets and zones of surpassing splendour, and also Sankha, Chakra, Gada, Padma and Vanamala. His form is charming with the Kaustubha jewel and brilliant ornaments about the neck and shoulders; and is adorned with a gold zone, fastening the splendid silk cloth. He is charming to the eyes with symmetrical and graceful feet, shanks, thighs, and depressed knees; and above all, with graceful looks. His feet are beautiful like the petals of autumn lotus, with rays shooting from the nails. His form has rescued Prahlada and others from fear. Contemplation of His form purifies the mind. He is not accessible to all mortals, but only to those full of devotion. Yama of great power and prowess seeks the shelter of His feet. Perfect devotion to Him is superior to Svarga or even Moksha, which are at His command. We should therefore seek the association of those, who have washed off their sins by their bath in the dust of His holy feet. He is the Supreme Light, which clears all darkness and impurity. He is the Absolute and Supreme Being, who by various forms of Maya, creates, preserves and destroys the world. Yogins worship the Lord's form to get wisdom and heaven. He is the One, the First and Perfect person, ruling the entire universe of Mahat, Aham, Akasa, Vayu, Agni, Water, mountains, Devas, Rishis, and all others. Our bodies are worthless, if we only neglect His Holy Feet. The fourteen Manus did intense devotion to His feet. Prolonged and intense devotion are the only means to win His Grace. To the wise, He is the one fearless and safe resort.'

"Therefore, O pious princes, repeat this Mantra and set your mind on the glorious Lord and His feet. Be righteous in your own duties and you will be happy. You should constantly worship, praise and meditate on Sri Hari, who loves his devotees and is ever present and receptive to shower His Grace on one and all beings."

Initiated to the Hymn called Yogadesa, the princes committed it to memory, practised it with good concentration and full faith, leading a saintly life. Originally, Brahma taught this Mantra to his sons, Bhrigu and others. Wisdom is the highest blessing leading to heaven, freed from the ocean of Samsara. The wise should, with faith and concentration, practise the Mantra to please the Lord, who will be pleased to bestow all blessings. He who reads or listens to it will become sinless. The princes were thus instructed to sing the Hymn and offer to the Lord praises, which constitute a great Tapas for the attainment of the highest good.

Prachetasas perform Tapas: The story of Puranjana

Prachetasas devoutly worshipped God Siva, and repeated the Mantra taught to them. They performed tapas under water for 10,000 years. Meanwhile, Narada visited Prachinabarhis to impart to him true knowledge of the real import of the practice of righteous duties. Narada reminded the king of his mercilessness in killing thousands of animals during his sacrifices and the curse that the pitiable animals pronounce against him. The sage narrated to the king the story of the learned King Puranjana.

King Puranjana had a friend, with whom he traversed the earth to find a safe abode, but was disappointed. Continuing his search on the southern heights of the Himalayas, he found a city of excellent structure with nine openings. There were ramparts, gardens, balconies, windows, festoons, with crests of gold, silver and iron, and studded with houses on either side. It was splendid like Bhogavati. The floors were inlaid with azure stones, diamonds, topazes, pearls, emeralds and rubies. In the city, there were courts, court yards, paved streets and markets, adorned with villas, banners and platforms, built of coral slabs. The park outside the city was inviting with grand trees, creepers, and tanks with humming bees and birds. There, the king saw a beautiful damsel, attended by ten servants, each leading a hundred others. She was

guarded on all sides by her attendants and a hooded serpent. She was the embodiment of loveliness and was in quest of a consort. She was young with well formed nose, good teeth, graceful mouth and well set ears with splendid ear-rings. She was of azure complexion with her golden waist, and feet adorned with sounding anklets. Her youthful breast, **captivating glances** and bashful smiles were enchanting. King Puranjana made kind and searching enquiries of her, her attendants and the cobra going before her. He addressed her thus: "Are you a sage in hiding, or are you the goddess Hri, or Parvati, or Sarasvati, or Lakshmi, from whose hand the lotus has dropped? The great Manmatha appears commissioned by you with bashful smiles and rolling brows to pierce my heart, with your side glance, which harasses me. Be pleased to lift up and show me your face of brilliant smiles, with feeling bashfulness."

The lady conceived a **passion**, smiled and reciprocated the courtesy of Puranjana. She gracefully replied: "We are now in this city, whose maker I do not know. **These men and women** are my friends. When I sleep, the cobra keeps awake and watches the city. I welcome your visit seeking sensual pleasures. You are welcome to take possession of this city of nine faces and enjoy for a hundred years, the pleasures procured by me. Whom would I care to delight except you? The objects of house-holder's life are righteous duties, wealth and pleasure, the joy of having issue, salvation, reputation, and Svarga. House-holder's life is the safe asylum in the Samsara of Pitris, Gods, Rishis, men and other beings. My heart has become captive to you of charming looks of good compassion."

The couple thus mutually made a contract, entered the city, and lived delightfully for a hundred years. The king was engaged in sports, surrounded by women and was sweetly sung by birds. He went down to a pool in summer. There were seven gateways in the upper part of the city and two in the lower parts. Five entrances were on the east, one on the south and one in the north; and the remaining two were on the west. When in the harem, the king was subject to delusion, cheerfulness and joy, arising from his wife and children. The unwise king, full of desires, came to be deceived, as he was doing only the queen's dictates. He drank and ate when she

drank and ate; similarly singing, standing, sitting, walking and running, he did things copying her. He was glad when she was happy, and lamented or rejoiced when she lamented or rejoiced. Thus deceived by his queen, though unwilling by his ignorance and powerlessness, King Puranjana became an imitation like a deer kept for amusement.

Puranjana goes out hunting and humours his Queen on return

One day, King Puranjana went out to the forest hunting, mounting his chariot drawn by five horses. The chariot was an excellent one with all accomplishments. It had five kinds of motions and had gold decorations. The king was clad in gold armour and had, at his back, an inexhaustible quiver. He led eleven regiments and set off. Mad with passion for game, the king hurried forward armed with bow and arrows, leaving back his wife. The proud king was cruel and merciless, killing all creatures in the woods, instead of only sacrificial animals as prescribed religiously. Proud and indiscriminate hunting resulted in loss of wisdom and affliction. His hunting was reckless, merciless and pitiful. He slew hares, hogs, buffaloes, deer, porcupine and all others indiscriminately and became fatigued.

Fainting with hunger and thirst, he hurried back home, and took rest after bath and food. Then he had his toilet, pigments, garlands, and dresses; and satisfied, gladdened and proud with love, he went to his wife's apartment, but missed to see her. He made searching enquiries as to her whereabouts, and at last found her lying stretched on bare ground. He became nervous in a confused state. In vain, he tried to appease her. The king was an expert in the art of love; but all his efforts, even gently touching her feet and caressing her on his lap, were in vain. He appealed to her thus: "O brilliant and fair-faced lady, you are the queen. Let me see your smiling looks of weighty love and bashfulness, charming with sweet accents. Pray, tell me, who has wronged you; and I shall punish him, wherever he be, in or out of the three worlds. Your face was never so dull, without Tilaka, so cheerless, angry, terrific, untrimmed and cold. Your lips are now rid of their ruby shine. Be pleased to restore your favour to me, though I went out for hunting without you, being mad with passion. Pray,

lovingly accept the dutiful services of me, who is rendered powerless by the violence of Manmatha."

Puranjana enjoys life and grows old

King Puranjana subdued himself to his queen, and lived in delight. He rejoiced at the sight of her, especially after bath and charming decorations; embraced her and lost all reason. He was so taken up by romance that he did not perceive the speed of time. In overflowing pride, sleeping on princely bed, resting on his queen's arms, the highly intelligent king, became over-powered by darkness, unable to know what was what. So much he enjoyed his youth and life, that his reason became clouded, and his youth passed away as if it were half a minute.

The King had, by his wife Puranjani, several sons and daughters of good and generous nature. The sons were married to worthy wives, and the daughters to deserving youths. The sons had each many sons, and the Puranjana dynasty grew and extended to the Panchalas. The King became more and more attached to his palace, his treasury, his kith and kin and other sense objects. He performed sacrifices slaughtering animals, propitiating the Devas, Pitris and Asuras. His age was advancing, though it was unwelcome for his romantic life. There was a Gandharva chief called Chandavega, with 360 strong Gandharvas under him. Chandavega came upon the city of Puranjana to plunder it and President Prajagana offered resistance. He fought with the 360 Gandharvas and their 360 wives, vigorously and single-handed for years. He was tired, but King Puranjana was rolling in wine and women, and little did he concern himself about the danger.

Daurbhagya, daughter of Kala, wandered far and wide in search of a consort. She conferred a boon on Pura. She offered her hand to sage Narada, who refused; and being displeased, she cursed Narada that he should not stay in any one place. Courted by Yayati's son, Prince Puru, and pleased with him, she conferred a boon that he should succeed to his father's throne. Later, she chose for her husband Bhaya (fear). The wise pity these two, Daurbhagya and Bhaya, as the former never gives and the latter never receives due to fear. By unmanifest ways, the couple enjoy

the world created by Karma, bringing about destruction of creatures.

Puranjana's Death and His Rebirth

Puranjana's city was rich in earthly pleasures and was guarded by an old serpent. Slowly, the soldiers of king Bhaya and consort Daurbhagya and Prajvara roamed about the kingdom. They and the Yavanas entered the city on all sides, and there was violent harassment. The Gandharvas and Yavanas completely shattered the city, and King Puranjana became powerless, even his own sons, grandsons, attendants and ministers disregarding him. He reluctantly quit the city; and Prajvara, the elder brother of Bhaya burnt the whole city. Families were distressed and the sufferings were great. They bitterly wept and the king too. The old serpent went out abandoning the city and was seized by the Yavanas. King Puranjana could think of no well-wishers, and he had even the curses of the various sacrificial animals mercilessly slain by him. After long years of suffering, he lost his memory, and breathed his last, his mind attached to women.

Later, he was born as a beautiful woman in the house of Rajasimha of Vidarbha dynasty. The Pandya King, Malayadhvaja married the princess, who was offered to him as a prize for his valour in vanquishing other princes. By her, he had a daughter of blue eyes, and seven sons, who became the seven kings of the Dravida country. Every one of the seven kings had very many sons; and a Manvantara thereafter, the earth was enjoyed by their descendants. The first born daughter was virtuous, and was married to Agastya. Their son was Dridhachyuta, who had a son called Idhmavaha. The sage-King Malayadhwaja intended to do penance and worship Sri Krishna. He portioned out the kingdom among his sons, and left for the Kulachala mountain. The queen Vaidarbhi also left the house, children and pleasures, and went with the king, even as moonlight follows the moon. There, the sacred rivers Chandravasa, Tamraparni and Vatodaka flowed; and, in them, the king and queen washed themselves. The king did Tapas, subsisting upon roots, seeds, fruits, flowers, leaves, grass and water, which slowly reduced his physical body. He did not mind opposite conditions of heat and cold, wind and rain, hunger and thirst, or pleasure and pain, regarding them as equal. By

Tapas, contemplation, Yama and Niyama, he controlled his senses and breaths, and meditated on the Lord. For a century, he stood motionless at one and the same spot, delighting in the Lord and ceasing all other activity. He gained perfect realisation and could see the Lord within himself. He thus rose out of this Samsara.

Princess Vaidarbhi renounced pleasures, and affectionately waited on Malayadhvaja; for he was God Himself for her. Clad in bark, thin by denial, with her hair locks matted, she shone by her husband's side. He was firm in his sitting posture; and when once worshipping his feet, the princess did not feel the warmth, she became confused and heart-broken, and lamented; for, the Jiva had left the body. She loudly wailed, bathing her breast with tears and fell on the feet, showering tears. At last, she laid the body on a pile of fuel in the lonely forest, set fire to it; and with perfect mind-control, she decided to die with him. Just then, a brahmin friend appeared there and consoled her thus:

"Who are you, and who is there lying? Whom do you lament? Do you know me, your friend, with whom you lived in happiness before this creation? Even if you do not know, know at least that you had an unknown friend, whom you left and went in search of some place, and was lost finding delight in Samsara. I am a swan, companion of the Lord in the Manasa lake. You left me and set your heart upon vulgar pleasures, went down the earth, wandered about and found a house, constructed by a woman (Maya), with five parks, nine gates, one watcher, three enclosures, six ware-houses, five market places, five sources, and a woman as its ruler. The five senses are the parks, the gates are the openings for Pranas; fire, water and earth are the enclosures, the senses are the ware-houses, the market is the energy for work, and the five Bhutaś are the sources. Sakti is the woman ruler. You have come to this sinful state, through attachment and loss of memory of Brahmatva. You are not the daughter of Vidarbha King, this warrior is not your friend. You are the husband of Puranjani, who imprisoned you in the city of nine gates."

Thus instructed by Hamsa (Paramatma), the Hamsa in the Manasa (Jiva), became calm and blessed, and recovered memory, lost in having strayed away from Him.

Sage Narada's lessons to Prachinabarhis.

When Prachinabarhis questioned as to the real import of the aforesaid stories, Narada explained thus: "One should understand Puranjana to be the Jiva in a body, bringing about a body for himself, with two or more feet, or having no foot at all. The Supreme Lord is the friend of the Jiva. Jiva desires worldly enjoyment with a human body of nine passages, two hands and two feet. Woman is Buddhi or intellect, by which Jiva enjoys the objects of senses. Senses are the friends being the source of mental and physical activities, which are female companions; and the five Pranas constitute the five-hooded serpent. Mind is highly powerful. Panchalas are the five sense objects of the body of nine gates (two eyes, two ears, two nostrils, a mouth and two lower passages). The left and right eyes are Khadyota and Avirmukhi. Nalini and Naalini are the nostrils, and Saurabha is smell. Sense of smell is Avadhuta. Mukhya is the mouth, and Vipana is the organ of speech and taste. The active speech is the market, Bahudana is food, and Pitrihu and Devahu are the right and left ears. Panchala is the treatise of worldly activity; and through the ear (Sutradhara), the path of Pitris or Devas can be taken. Durmada and Nirriti are the lower passages, and Asuri is the organ of vulgar delight and procreation. Naraka is the lower passage. Lubdhaka and Andha are the hands and feet. The harem is the heart, and Vishuchi is the mind, with which the Jiva comes to senselessness, serenity and delight. The body is the chariot drawn by the sense-horses. The two wheels are the two kinds of Karma, and the three qualities are the flag staffs. The chariot is strongly built of five Pranas. The Manas is the rein, Buddhi is the charioteer, the heart is the seat, the sense objects are the receptacles, and the enclosures are the seven Dhatus—Blood, bone, etc."

"Akuti is the external activity, the eleven organs form the army, Chandavega is the year of good velocity, the days are Gandharvas, the nights are Gandharva-women, and by their 360 turns they reduce the age of man. The daughter of Kala is oldage, the lord of Yavanas is death. Mental afflictions and diseases are Yavanas, and Prajvara is the form of fever. The ordinary Jiva with Prana, Indriya and Manas, enjoys trifling pleasures, and does Karma with the notions of "I" and "mine". He loses self-control, involves in various activities and attains full light, or hardship,

darkness and grief. According to Karma, the Jiva is a male or a female human being or a beast. One Karma is no final remedy for another. It is like a dream in a dream. The eradication of ignorance and Samsara is possible only by means of perfect devotion to the Lord, which engender both renunciation and wisdom. Such devotion to Him is secured by daily and faithfully studying and listening to the sacred books and stories in the midst of devotees. Those singing or listening to His glory in the assembly of devotees, are untouched by hunger, thirst, fear, grief and delusion, which are the real impediments to find delight in the nectar of Hari's stories."

"Brahma, Siva, Manu, Daksha, Sanaka, and other sages devoted to the Lord, and Marichi, Atri, Angiras, Pulastya, Pulaha, Kratu, Bhrigu, Vasistha and others, given to the study of Vedas and devoted to Brahma, are all, by means of Tapas, Upasana, and contemplation, trying to see Him; but do not see Him, while He sees all. They do not see Him by worshipping Him, in limited-aspects as described in Mantras. Vedas are unlimited both in sense and extent. When anyone contemplates Him in his mind, the Lord graciously receives him, and puts him in right path. The Karma which pleases Hari is the highest, and that is wisdom by which Hari is seen. He abides in all bodies. His feet are the true asylum. He is learned, who knows this truth. One should abandon unrighteous gatherings, and delight the Lord. Even after leaving the body, the Jiva has to reap the results of his Karma in another world through a different body. Whatever body the Jiva assumes by virtue of his thought "I am so and so. These are mine," he carries with him the Karma; for, every successive birth is determined by the memory of previous Karma. Just as the mind is affected by senses and organs, so is the action of previous life inferred by the propensities of the mind. It is the mind that tells what past or future Karma awaits the man. All Jivas are endowed with a mind. When the mind is solely endowed with Sattva and devoted to the Lord, even this impossible world becomes possible. But the Jiva with notions of "I" and "mine" is beset with environments of intellect, mind, sense objects and the three gunas. In infancy and boyhood, the eleven forms of the notion "I" do not distinctly appear, as the senses and organs are not fully developed. But later, the selfish notion predominates and overtakes the Jiva.

"The combination of the five objects, three gunas, and their development into sixteen modifications, with the faculty of understanding, comes to be called Jiva, which assumes or casts off a body or is subject to the experience of joy, sorrow, fear, misery or happiness. If the Jiva broods over what he enjoyed through his senses and organs, he accumulates Karma, and the course of the Karma exists uninterrupted even in the following birth. To set it aside, one should worship the Lord of creation, subsistence and destruction, with intense devotion and dedication to Him, and attain release from Samsara. The fruit of Karma to be enjoyed in Svarga, or other regions, would then vanish, as a dream would melt on weakling. The Supreme Lord is the one secret hidden in all the Vedas."

The Sage Narada then retired to the celestial regions. The king then handed over the reigns of administration to his sons, and retired to the hermitage of Kapila for Tapas. There, free from all attachment, and with perfect concentration of mind, the King contemplated the lotus-like feet of Govinda with intense devotion, and attained the Lord's abode. This holy account, expounded by sage Narada, is very sacred; and he who listens to or reads it, attains emancipation from mundane bondage. The Lord's glories purify the world, make our mind serene, and bear the highest fruit. We are lifted from miseries of Samsara, and are blessed with everything auspicious for the present and all future.

Sri Hari reveals Himself to Prachetasas

Prachetasas, sons of Pracheenabarhis, propitiated Lord Sri Hari by Japa and Tapas. At the end of 10,000 years, the Lord graced them with His presence, riding on Garuda, clad in yellow cloth, shining brilliant and dispelling all darkness and miseries. He wore a brilliant crown and bright gold ornaments, and was **worshipped** by attendants bearing eight weapons, as well as by sages and other gods. His praises were sung by Kinnaras. He wore Vanamala and had merciful looks and sublime tone.

The glorious Lord blessed them and said: "I am pleased with you for your devotion. O princes, ask me for any boon. You have all brotherly feeling; and so the man, who daily remembers you,

shall have the same affection and love for his brothers and all beings. Those, who pray to Me singing the Mantra taught by Rudra, shall have My grace and bright intellect. You will be glorious as you obeyed your father. A celebrated son will be born of you, and his progeny will fill the three worlds. Premalochana, a celestial damsel, bore a beautiful daughter and abandoned it. The trees took charge of the child, and king Soma fed it with nectar. The child is now grown up, you marry her, and she will be your good wife. I bless that you will have good strength and long life; and will enjoy the pleasures of this earth and the celestial world. Then you will have pure mind and devotion to Me, and you will reach My abode. Even those in Samsara will not be liable to bondage, if they do good deeds, dedicate them to Me, and spend their time in **telling** or hearing My stories. I am the Over Lord. I enter into **the** heart of those who hear of me from those well-versed in the Vedas. They are blessed. They have no grief or needless joy. They have peace of mind and attain Me."

Thus instructed, Prachetasas were rid of all sins, and addressed the Lord thus: "O Lord, salutation to You, pure and serene. You are Hari of pure essence, who could end our miseries. You are Krishna, Vasudeva and the Lord of all Satvatas. Your navel is adorned with lotus. You wear a wreath of lotuses. Your feet are like lotuses. You are clad in pure cloth of golden hue, and You are the abode of all beings and the witness of all. Mercifully you have manifested your Graceful form to us. You are seated in the heart of even wretched creatures. You have ended our sins and miseries. This is our desired boon. You are our goal and our preceptor to show the way to heaven. There is no limit to Your Glories. When Parijatha is ready at your hand, the bees do not resort to any other. So also, having attained the bottom of Your feet, we are not in quest of any other thing. We seek, in every life, the association of Your devotees. That we deem superior to any Svarga or Moksha. In the assembly of devotees, your purifying stories are sung, which give no room for hatred or fear. Your devotees go about on foot to purify the sacred waters, which liquidate the miseries of Samsara. By our association or contact with God Siva, we are led to you, the best physician for the miseries of Samsara. May you be pleased with our rigid Tapas, propitiating preceptors. Brahmins, elders, well-wishers and

brothers. Brahma, Rudra, and Manu, who have purified themselves by Tapas and wisdom, praise Thee to know Thy glory more and more. Therefore we humbly praise You as best as we can. You are the pure, perfect and distinct Sattvic form of Vasudeva."

Pleased with the praises, the Lord of unlimited glory and power, granted their prayer, and vanished out of their sight. Prachetasas rose from the waters of the sea and saw the earth covered with trees, obstructing their path to heaven. The angry Prachetasas, like Kalagni Rudra, breathed through their mouth fire and wind, and stripped the earth of all roots and herbs. Seeing the trees reduced to ashes, Brahma came and pacified the Prachetasas. The trees that remained were afraid of destruction, and being advised by Brahma, they bestowed their daughter on Prachetasas, who married her. Daksha was born of her. This is that Daksha, who had lost his previous body through force of time, and who now, in Chakshusha Manvantara, created people as intended and directed by the Lord. Daksha was dexterous in his performances, and so he was so named. Brahma installed him as protector of all living creation; and having been so commanded, he in turn directed all other progenitors for the work.

Prachetasas became ascetics, performed Tapas and attained

Moksha

Prachetasas, on whom superior wisdom had dawned, remembered the command of the Lord, left their spouse to the care of their son Daksha, and left their home. They dwelt on the sea-shore in the west, where Jajali attained perfection. They had perfect control over their breath, mind, tongue, and eyes; and were firm, erect and unagitated in their posture. They set their mind on the Lord. Sage Narada arrived there; and they rose, prostrated themselves and received him cordially, offering a comfortable seat. They sought divine light from him to cross over the ocean of Samsara.

The praiseworthy and worshipful sage Narada instructed Prachetasas thus: "Sri Hari is the one beloved goal of all beings as the dispenser of self-realisation. All that pleases Hari is righteous, and everything, not aiming at that, is a waste, be it sacred study,

Tapas, good strength; efficient senses, Yogic practice, ascetic life, or self-denial. Lord's worship is the worship of everything else, just as pouring water at the root of a tree nourishes its trunk, branches and twigs. Sri Hari is the Indweller of all embodied existence. He is time, material, efficient cause and Supreme Ruler. Do you worship him with the clear understanding that through His Grace, the devotees should eschew various other thoughts. He is all-powerful. There is nothing equal to Him."

"By kindness to all beings, by contentment with anything, and by withdrawal from sense objects He is soon propitiated. Hari is always present in the heart of the righteous of growing contemplation. He is easily bound by His devotees. Hari loves the poor. He is rich in His Grace, and He appreciates blissful devotion. He does not accept the worship of those who have a crooked mind, and who are proud of their study, wealth, parentage and deeds, or who do evil to the poor and good. The Lord is more attached to His devout servants than even to His consort Sri or even kings who resort to Sri."

"It is remarkable that Emperor Dhruva of your race devoted himself to the Lord, while yet a child. He attained the highest place, where Vishnu sits enthroned, a place far higher than heavens, which even divine sages could not reach even to this day. The Supreme Lord dwells in all beings as their inner guide. Do you therefore worship Him, as instructed by Rudra, to be rid of Samsara of births and deaths."

Narada then retired to Brahmaloka. Prachetasas worshipped the Lord as instructed and attained to His world.

All the above sacred account was disclosed to Vidura by sage Maitreya. It deals with the line of kings commencing from Uttanapada, and tells how Priyavrata, who obtained divine knowledge from sage Narada, ruled the earth, divided it among his sons and finally attained to the Lord's abode. Having heard the glorious story of Lord Sri Hari, Vidura bowed to the feet of sage Maitreya with his head, overflowing with devotion and with his eyes full of tears of love and reverence. Vidura took leave of the sage and went to Hastinapur with a peaceful mind, to see his kith and kin. He who listens or recounts this good account of devoted kings would obtain long life, wealth, glory, happiness and all sovereignty.

V SKANDHA

Emperor Priyavratha's Life

VYVASVATHA Manu had two sons—Priyavrata and Uttanapada. The former was devoted to the Glorious Lord and found profound **delight** in Him. Still he lived the life of a house-holder, the root of bondage that obscures one's essential nature.

In the course of a discourse, King Parikshit questioned the great sage Sri Suka as to why a great devotee like Priyavrata, who was free from attachment, should take to house-holder's life, in spite of his **serene** and happy mind under the shelter of the glorious Lord's feet.

Sri Suka replied that those who were charmed by the honey in the lotus of the sacred feet of the glorious Lord, did not, in spite of obstacles, 'abandon the most happy path towards the beloved Lord. Priyavrata had worshipped Sage Narada's feet, and obtained full light, for contemplating the Supreme Lord, to whom he had directed all his senses and resigned their functions to His service. Still, when his father called upon him to rule the land, he did not refuse, though he did not welcome it. At that time, Brahma descended by his vehicle of the swan into the valley of Mount **Gandhamadana**, accompanied by Siddhas, Gandharvas, **Sadhyas**, Charanas and Rishis; and sage Narada went forth to **worship** his father, along with Manu and his son Priyavrata, who all offered prayers.

Brahma lovingly accepted their worship and prayers, and smilingly instructed them that the Supreme Lord commanded the entire universe, including Himself and Lord Siva. None could alter His will, either by Tapas, knowledge, Yoga or intellectual power, or by force of wealth and righteous acts by himself or through others. He is the cause of creation of beings, birth, death, Karma, grief, delusion, fear, pleasure and pain. Just as the oxen are governed by the strings run through the nostrils, human beings are controlled by the knots of Guna and Karma, as ordained by Him. **Pleasure or pain, whatever He has bestowed upon us, abiding in**

the various bodies, we enjoy. One should enjoy the fruits of his Prarabdha Karma, though he has realisation which only helps him not to acquire or add to Karma or Vasana, leading to more bodies or births. To one, who has subdued his senses and is devoted to the Lord, householder's life could do no harm. He who has conquered the six enemies, is safe as in a stronghold. Priyavrata was one such, and could rule the world, renouncing all attachment, and then return to **his** essential nature.

Priyavrata bowed to Brahma and accepted to follow his command **and** rule the land. Showering his blessings on the king, Brahma retired to his abode with Narada.

Manu crowned Priyavrata to rule the world, with the permission of the divine sage Narada and retired to solitude. Priyavrata ruled the earth with a pure heart and mind. He married Barhismati, daughter of Visvakarma and had by her ten sons, and a daughter by name Urjasvati. Three of the sons Kavi, Mahavira, and Savana remained bachelors for their life, adopting the highest form of ascetic life. By intense devotion to the Lord, they became the best Rishis and eventually obtained Moksha or liberation.

By another wife the ruler had three sons, Uttama, Tamasa, and Rivata, who became rulers of Manvantaras.

Pleased with the progeny of worthy sons, who progressed righteously, the king ruled the world for eleven Arbuda years and subdued all enemies by the twang of his bow-string with his stout and strong arms. The king led a happy life and enjoyed the pleasures of life, afforded by his wife's womanly graces, hesitating smiles, bashful looks, and entertaining jokes and conversations.

Like the **shining** sun, going round Mount Meru, the king who possessed superhuman glory, developed by the Supreme Lord's Grace, made seven circuits round the world, riding in his greatly luminous chariot. The hallows caused by the tyres of the chariot wheels became the seven seas, and the seven seas enclosed the seven Dvipas, named Plaksha, Salmali, Kusa, Krauncha, Saka, Jambu and Pushkara. Every two was divided by a sea, and every Dvipa was in area double that of the one, which was interior to it. The seven seas were the Ikshu, sugarcane juice, nectar, butter,

curd, milk and pure water holds, and they were the moats of the seven Dvipas, each sea being equal in extent to the Dvipa enclosed by it. The king appointed his other seven sons—Agnidhra Idmajihva, Yajnavaha, Hiranyaretas, Ghritaprista, Medhatithi and Vitihotra as rulers of the seven Dvipas in the order, and bestowed his daughter, Urjasvati upon Usanas, of whom was born a daughter. Devayani.

Priyavrata was a perfect man, having controlled the six enemies. He had incalculable strength and prowess. He was a disciple of Sage Narada; and naturally, with his ripe age and experience, he became disgusted with the domestic life. Therefore he divided the land among his dutiful sons, and abandoned his queen and his great wealth. Realising a true sense of the Lord's presence, he followed the footsteps of the worshipful Narada. **Priyavrata** was a perfect ruler, having made the classification of land, fixing rivers, mountains and forests, as boundaries in the Dvipas distinctly. He sought the sacred feet of the Supreme Lord, having regarded as hell the glories of Patala, Svarga and mortal worlds by means of Karma Yoga.

Agnidhra and his progeny

The retired king was engaged in doing Tapas; and his eldest son Agnidhra ruled over Jambudvipa righteously. In course of time, Agnidhra desired to have children; and for this purpose, he performed Tapas, in the Mandara mountain, which was the sporting ground for damsels. Brahma was pleased with the Tapas and sent down to him a celestial damsel, called Purvachitti, who was singing in His own court.

She came and went about the garden near the hermitage, which was dense with big trees and branches, intertwined with golden creepers, played about harmoniously with pairs of birds. The garden was picturesque with also water birds—fouls. Karandavas, swans and the like; and lotus ponds of crystal waters added to the beauty. Disturbed by the charming sounds of the ornaments on the feet of the damsel of gait, the meditating prince opened his eyes a little, and saw before him real beauty. Her gait, sportfulness, bashfulness, modest glances, sweet voice and ac-

cents, and charming features intoxicated him with intense love, like wine and nectar, for her.

Purvachitti made kind enquires of the Prince. She addressed him thus: "My mind is agitated at your sight. Your face is a wonderful store of honey, graces and nectar. You are an Amsa of Vishnu, and the atmosphere is filled with the sweet smell of sacrificial offerings. You are rich in Tapas; but your beauty even wrecks the Tapas of others. May the Supreme Lord be pleased to make you perform Tapas with me, and confer on us Samsara. Brahma has willed it, and my mind and eyes are fastened to you. Lead me, your servant, whither you desire; and let your attendants leave us, or go with us, waiting upon you."

The highly skilled and intelligent Prince suitably answered wittily in vulgar aspects of life and greatly propitiated her. Her heart was won over by the intelligence, character, dutifulness, youth, splendour and liberal disposition of the lord of Jambudvipa, and she spent long long years, enjoying the pleasures of heaven and earth.

They begot nine good sons, Nabhi, Kimpurusha, Harivamsa, Ilavrita, Ramyaka, Hiranmaya, Kuru, Bhadrasha and Kethumala. The damsel entrusted them to the Prince's care, and returned to wait upon Brahma. The nine sons were endowed with adamant frame and strength. Jambudvipa was shared between them, and they ruled over the continents, which were named after them.

Agnidhra was not satisfied with the earthly pleasures and was always thinking of the damsel. He performed sacrifices and Vedic rites; and attained to the world where Purvachitti was, and lived in delight. Thereafter, the nine sons married the nine daughters of Meru, viz., Merudevi, Praturupa, Ugradamshtri, Lata, Ramuja, Syama, Nari, Bhadra and Devaviti, and lived happily.

Nabhi propitiates the Lord, who was himself born as his son

Nabhi's wife was barren, and the Prince being desirous of having an issue, worshipped the Lord by sacrifices, with a concentrated mind, good faith and pious heart. The rites called Pravargyas were observed with due attention to substance, time,

place, Vedic texts, priests, presents, rules and methods. The Supreme Lord, though ordinarily inaccessible, but all merciful to His devotees, was pleased by the sacrifices, and presented Himself in His absolute self in a most attractive and charming form. His luminous personality was clad in silk of golden hue, with splendid Srivatsa mark on His chest, and with His weapons, the great conch, lotus, Vanamala, Chakra, Kaustubha, Gada, radiant jewels, earrings, bangles, zones, pearl wreaths, Keyura, and Nupura. The Prince, priests and sages respectfully waited on Him with Arghya, and prayerfully addressed the Lord thus:

“Supreme Lord, you are delighted by the simple worship of Your devotees with only prayers in faltering accents, water, pure and tender shoots, Tulasi, and Durva grass offered in true love. You have however, nothing to gain by the sacrifices however rightly done. We seek Your highest blessings, which are of unlimited value. Like an ordinary being, you show yourself in Your perfect form to shower Thy glory and salvation. You are perfect with excellent attributes, which are sung by wise sages; and even their mere mention is a source of the highest and auspicious success to the human beings. We pray for your blessing that Your excellent names and qualities be ever on our tongue. Your names remove all our sins. May we remember Thee in falling, in hunger, in tumbling down, in yawning, in sickness and even at the moment of death. Our king desires to have a son like Yourself. Your Maya is unconquerable and highly inscrutable, clouding our understanding. Worship of Your feet alone can correct the bad ways of our senses. Be pleased to pardon our insult of inviting You, our Overlord, and grant our king’s desire.”

The Lord replied that the prayers to Him could not prove barren, and He would Himself appear in the world, exhibiting a ray of His own, since He did not find another like unto Him, to be born as desired. Brahmanas are like the Devas among the twice-born, and their words or prayers ought not to prove false. The lord then vanished; and in due course, reappeared as the worthy son of Nabhi and Marudevi by name Rishabha, with a pure personality and as a world teacher.

Rishabha and His Progeny

Lord Rishabha revealed Himself with special marks of Supreme Deity. His greatness was daily seen enhanced by His qualities of equality, tranquility, self-denial, majesty and great powers; and the Brahmanas and Devas eagerly wished that he should rule the earth. He was rightly named Rishabha in view of His stature, reputation, force, strength, splendour, celebrity, determination and promise.

He was born as a human being and showed himself as such. Indra became **envious** of his greatness, and stopped rains in his kingdom. Rishabha, the Lord of Yoga, by virtue of His Yoga, brought down showers in his continent—Ajanabha.

Nabhi felt great happiness and joy, having obtained a son, who was really the Supreme Lord, who had put on human form; and affectionately called Him 'my child, my father, my dear, etc.' Rishabha was **the** object of love to all citizens, courtiers and subjects; and **the** father installed him as king to rule the land, and entrusted him to the care of Brahmanas. Nabhi then went with his queen Marudevi to Visala, and did Tapas with good serenity, skill and deep devotion. He worshipped Lord Nara-Narayana, and became a Jivanmukta. The royal sage was so righteous and pure that the Lord Himself became his son.

Rishabhadeva was very interested in righteous duties, lived in the house of a preceptor; and, with his permission, married Jayanti, bestowed on him by Indra and entered the house-holder's life, observing duties prescribed by Vedas and Smritis. He had a hundred worthy sons, of whom Bharata, after whom this continent was named, was the eldest. Nine others, who were famous were Kusavarta, Ilavarta, Brahmavarta, Malaya, Ketu, Bhadrasena, Indraspruk, Vidarbha, and Kikata. Nine others were good devotees and showed to the world the duties of votaries. They were Kavi, Hari, Antariksha, Prabudha, Pippalayava, Avirhotra, **Drumida**, Chamasa and Karabhajana. The remaining 81 sons were dutiful to their father, highly pious and docile, thoroughly versed in Vedas and **devoted** to sacrificial duties. Purified by their duties, they became Brahmanas and were devoted to the Lord.

Emperor Rishabha was ever purely blissful, untouched by any evil. He did righteous duties as an example to the world. He was kind and compassionate; and he ordained his people in domestic life, conditioned by righteousness, wealth, renown, children, pleasures and salvation. He taught people by practice rather than by precept, and did sacrifices a hundred times with proper observance of substance, place, time, age, earnestness, priests and Devas, as per Sastras. The subjects were peaceful and contented, and had nothing to desire. They never cast a visting look on others property, but cultivated a daily growing and intense love for the Supreme Lord. Rishabha was an ideal example for the parents to instruct their sons regarding right conduct.

Rishabha's precepts to His Sons and His Sanyasa

Rishabha's precepts to his ideal son Bharata and all his other sons were very valuable not only for them, but also for all worthy people in general. They were these: Human beings should take to the divine duty of Tapas for mental purity and everlasting happiness, but not indulge in miserable pleasures, which even beasts and birds command. The way to salvation is to wait upon the great, who are possessed of equanimity, serenity of mind, freedom from anger, goodness to all, righteousness and love to all, which serve as love to the Lord. Gratifying senses is a sin carelessly committed, which leads to misery. Men must seek after truth and devotion, and not sway the mind after selfish Karma. The desire for sex, house, lands, children, relations and wealth, leads to rebirths of unending Samsara. Non-attachment leads to the highest goal.

Devotion to the Lord desirelessly, endurance of pleasure and pain with equanimity, enquiring spirit, Tapas, righteous duties, recounting His glories and singing His excellent attributes, freedom from animosity, keeping a calm heart and mind, living in seclusion, subduing the breaths, senses and mind with absolute faith in the right, strict celibacy, control of speech, and alert dutifulness are highway paths to win His Grace and Mukti. Meditation, concentration, courage, energy, sense of discrimination and absence of Ahamkara are also necessary.

The world is by nature blind to what is good. Hating others leads to endless misery. Ignorant men should be shown the right

path. We should return good for bad. A bad man should not be hated, but should be sympathised, and corrected if possible. Dharma abides in a pure Sattvic mind. People should serve their parents dutifully, and princes should rule the subjects justly, carrying out the commands of their worthy elder brother, Bharata.

In the creation, plants occupy a high place, as they grow themselves; higher are reptiles and worms, which can move about; and higher still are animals. Human beings are of the highest class, in which Pramathas, Gandharvas and Siddhas are superior. Higher to them are the Devas, Indra, Daksha, Siva, and Brahma in the ascending order. The Almighty Lord is the Most Supreme Overlord, to whom Brahmanas are very endeared. The highest are the Brahmanas, who are of most sanctifying Sattva, serenity of mind, control of senses, truthfulness, gracious disposition, Tapas, spirit of endurance and realisation of self. They have nothing to seek after, except the Grace of the Lord of Svarga and Moksha, obtained by means of true devotion and worship to Him. Dedication of everything done by mind, tongue, eye, ear or other senses, with a full sense of devotion, constitutes His highest worship.

Not content with instructing his sons as above, emperor Rishabha wanted to exemplify himself in the duties of Paramahansa by devotion, wisdom and renunciation, which characterised great sages. He crowned his eldest son, Bharata as the Ruler of the land, and he himself went out of Brahmavarta, as an ascetic, with no belongings, except his mere body, sky-clad, with dishevelled hair. He observed a vow of perfect silence, appearing like a mad man, blind, dumb and deaf. With uninterrupted thought, he roamed about everywhere—cities, villages, hamlets, avenues, habitations, hill camps, stables, pilgrim places, hermitages and mountains. Very well shaped were his hands, feet and chest; and large and proud were his arms, shoulders, neck and face. His charming smile brightened his well-formed face, and he looked delightful with his red, broad and bright eyes, which were like the petals of a fresh blown lotus. His cheeks, ears, neck and nose were symmetrical and captivating. What else could be the beauty of one who was the Supreme Lord Himself. The wind charged with the fragrance cast off from his body perfumed the country to a distance of ten Yojanas all round.

Thus; the glorious Lord of salvation exhibited various Yoga practices. He displayed extraordinary powers of Yoga, swiftly passing through the air, entering into another's body, and seeing things distanced by time and place. His example and precept were perfect for the present and future generations to follow.

Lord Rishabha's later life

For those that have burnt up the seeds of Karma, Yogic powers acquired by God's grace are not a source of disturbance or inconvenience. Still Rishabha did not pursue Yogic powers. For, desire for such powers is like an unchaste wife for a good husband. Desire, anger, pride, greed, grief, infatuation and fear lead to the bondage of Karma. Rishabha was loathe to show to the world His Divine Glory. He was rid of attachment to the body and was indifferent to everything. By chance, he passed through the countries of Konka, Venka, Kutaka, and South Kanara; and reached the forest adjoining Kutakachala, with a stone in his mouth, leaving his hair blowing by the winds and looking insane. There, a fearful forest fire broke out among bamboos; and the flames, fanned by wild winds, burnt up the whole forest including Rishabha's body.

Later, King Arhat of Konka, Venka and Kutaka became an unrighteous ruler, deluded by fate, in the unrighteous Kali age; and he took to wicked and horrible ways of Pashandas. Destitute of right conduct, he degraded men, Vedas, and Brahmanas; sacrifices were condemned; and bathing, achamana, ablutions and daily rites were neglected.

Of the several Dvipas, surrounded by the seven oceans, Bharathakhanda is the most sacred Karma Bhumi, where the people are devoted to the Lord and sing His Glories and His auspicious Avatars. Blessed is the race of Priyavrata, in which appeared Lord Rishabha, and practised righteousness leading to Moksha, thereby teaching the subjects by practice personally, acting as the father of the Vedas, the world, Devas, Brahmanas and cows, which purify men of all their impious actions. Whoever listens to, or reads to others, this story of the Lord, becomes a worthy devotee of the Almighty. Such devotion leads to the final goal of highest happiness. Salutation to the glorious Rishabha of

eternal realisation, untouched by desires, and unequalled in showering His Grace on the mankind.

Life of Bharata and His Tapas

Bharata, who was entrusted with the empire, was the foremost votary of the Supreme Lord. He married Panchajani, daughter of Visvarupa. By her, he had five sons named Sumati, Rashtrabhrat, Sudarsana, Avarana and Dhumraketu. The king, like his father and grandfather, was very loving to his subjects; and the latter were dutiful in their respective duties. Since then, this land is called Bharatakhanda. It was previously known as Ajanabha.

Bharata worshipped the Lord of Yajna and Kratu by doing various sacrifices, big and small, such as Agnihotra, Darsapurnamasa, Chaturmasya, Pasusoma and others at due hours, morning, midday and evening, as laid down in scriptures. Gods were invited to accept the offerings from the hands of the priests called Adhvaryus.

Thus **Bharata** developed intense devotion to the Lord, who revealed Himself in the former's heart, distinguished by Srivatsa, Kaustubha, **Vanamala**, Chakra, Sankha, Gada and other marks. He righteously ruled the land for ten-million years; and being fed up with the fruits of Karma, he divided the land among his sons, and left his abode of wealth, and betook himself as a hermit to the hermitage of Pulaha, where even now the Lord reveals Himself in the desired form to His Devotees. There the sacred river Gandaki, known as Chakranadi flows. The river is full of stones, having navel-like dimples on both sides and marks of Chakra. There, the devotee secures perfect tranquility and a state of complete happiness, by worshipping the Lord, with various kinds of flowers, shoots, Tulasi, water, roots and fruits. By intense devotion and constant worship, Bharata's heart melted by weight of his love for the Lord, and he developed perfect contemplation of the lotus-like and crimson feet of the Lord; and he secured supreme blessedness. Then Bharata looked very charming with the deer skin and with his matted hair, brown and moist on account of his regular ablutions, morning, midday and evening, praying to the Lord of

golden hue by hymns which describe Him as the Light, which is the glory of the sun and the source of wealth. He creates the universe by His thought and protects it by His intelligent force, which light and power, Jivas seek after.

Bharata is reborn as a Deer

While staying at the hermitage of Pulaha, Bharata was one day sitting on the bank of the river Gandaki, after his bath and daily duties, doing Japa of the sacred syllable 'Om.' There came a deer to quench her thirst; and when it was drinking water in the river, a tremendous roar of a lion was heard. The deer became **trifling**, and weak; and filled with fear, she took a leap. The **she-deer** was then in advanced pregnancy, and due to the intense fear, the young deer in the womb was discharged and fell into the river **flood**. The mother deer afflicted by delivery pains and separation from her herd, rushed into a cave and there fell dead.

Seeing the baby deer floating down the current, the Royal Sage Bharata took pity, picked it up and took it to the hermitage. He reared it tenderly as it was motherless, regularly fed it and took delight in caressing it. He found a strong attachment to the deer; and his daily Tapasic duties grew weaker and neglected almost, in course of time. **The** worthy and righteous sage overlooked his sacred divine duties in preference to the charitable work of caressing the wretched and unfortunate. His heart was bound by his affection for the young deer always, whether sitting or lying down, walking or standing, bathing or eating. When he went about to get fruits, leaves, roots, or water, he took the deer with him; sometimes bore it on his shoulder; and often caressed it on his lap and bosom. When the deer was out of sight, he was greatly anxious in a pitiable mood, like one who had lost his fortune; and was full of pity and eagerness, highly troubled at heart. He would even lamentably pray to the Almighty for its safe return uninjured by wolves, wild **dogs** or other beasts. He would go about in search of it with a very troubled heart, till it was found and fondled over.

Thus, attached to the young deer, due to Prarabdha Karma, the Royal Sage fell back from his Yogic practices and Lord's worship. Bharata, who once considered his sons and home, **impediments** to salvation and **separated** himself, became a

creature of affection for a member of animal kingdom; and was devoutly protecting, gratifying and caressing a deer. At the time of his death, the deer stood weeping by his side; and his thought of the deer was so intense; that, after a time, he was born as a deer. But being a great soul, though born as a deer, he remembered the cause of his rebirth as such; and he felt painful for his degradation from the human kingdom to the animal kingdom. He grieved intensely for his foolish attachment to the deer neglecting Tapas and Lord's worship. Full of deep-rooted morose, he left his mother deer; and from his birth place, he retraced his steps to the hermitage of Pulaha and Pulastya, and waited for his time for the better, living on dry leaves, grass and herbs. Eventually, he plunged into the holy waters and gave up his body, and he was born as a Brahmana.

Bharata reborn as a Brahmana

In the Angiras race, there was a very holy Brahmana, famous for his tranquility, control of senses, Tapas, Vedic study, charity, contentment, **endurance**, modesty, knowledge of Vedic rites, self-realisation and **felicity**. He was free from envy and jealousy. By his first wife, he had nine sons of good learning, character, conduct, beauty, generosity and all other virtues. By his second wife, he had twins a son and a daughter. This son was the reborn saintly King Bharata, who had cast off his Body as a deer. He was a great devotee, who had his last birth as a Brahmana before attaining salvation. He ever remembered the series of his previous lives, and was disgusted with the vain glory of Samsara. He was indifferent to worldly things, and looked mad, stupid, blind and deaf. The father loved his son much, and performed for him all the auspicious ceremonies and his Upanayanam as well, and instructed him in his duties. He was taught Vyahritis and Gayatri, but the son did not look interested in any.

In due course, the father died, and younger wife entrusted the twin-children to the first wife's care, and followed her husband in Sahagamana. The elder brothers of the reborn Bharata, took the latter as a mad, dull or deaf man, and neglected him. He ate whatever food—good or bad—he got by alms, and was quite contented. He had divine bliss and **pure** intelligence, and was indifferent to pleasure or pain. He exposed himself to cold and hot

winds, and showers of rain, neglecting his body; but yet he was stout and strong limbed. He did not wash or bathe, and was clad in rags. He looked a fallen Brahmana in his soiled sacred thread. Still he was full of Divine glory. His brothers asked him to work in the fields, and he did the work unassumingly.

On one occasion, a Sudra chieftain proceeded to offer human sacrifice to Bhadrakali, in order to discharge a vow. A man, who had been tied and kept ready as the animal for the sacrifice, had escaped; and the servants ran about in search of him; and not finding him, pitched upon the venerable son of Angiras, who was sitting in Virasana pose and watching the field from deer, hogs and other beasts. They took him to the temple, binding him with ropes, to be sacrificed. He was given a bath, clothed with new clothes, and was decorated with ornaments, pigments, and flowers. He was fed well and brought before Bhadrakali, to be cut and offered to the Goddess. But he was a sage and a blessed Brahmana, who was quite harmless, and a friend and lover of all creatures. So the Goddess made her appearance, owing to the unbearable force of the Brahmana's virtue. She was in boundless rage and indignation, and was very fiery with formidable jaws, violent eyes and thundering roars. She sang and danced, and played balls with the heads of the propitiators of the sacrifice, for their sin of putting on the alter a pious Brahmana. Naturally, the wrong done to the pious recoils itself on the wrong-doers. The Supreme Lord, in various forms, is ever alert with His foremost weapon, the Chakra of Time, to give shelter to those, who are friends of all beings and hate none.

Bharata forced to bear The Palanquin of Rahugana

Rahugana was the King of Sindh and Sauvira countries. He was proceeding in a palanquin to the hermitage of Kapila on the banks of the Ikshumati. The Chief, who accompanied the King, saw on the way a Brahmana (Bharata), who was stout and strong, and imposed forced labour on him, and commanded him to bear the palanquin along with others. Bharata obeyed implicitly; but as he was not used to the work, the palanquin moved jolting irregularly. The King warned the bearers, but the bearers could

not adjust on account of the novice of the Brahmana, and complained so to the king, who became enraged and reprimanded the Brahmana. He chided him that, though he was young, stout, well built and strong, he was stumbling in the duty. Bharata was calm and quiet, but bore the vehicle as usual to the best of his ability. As the palanquin moved inconveniently, the King grew angry and burst out that he would punish the 'wretched' man. The King was proud, haughty and infatuated. Bharata put on a smiling countenance, and replied: "I am untouched by your remarks, but rely on the Divine Will. Your remarks of stoutness, thinness, health, strength, hunger, thirst, fear, old age, sleep, pleasure, pain, anger, grief and insolence wound a man attached to his body and not me. The notion of king and servant, and command and duty, do not seem real to me. Tell me what you want of me. I am mad in a state of self-realisation. What is your remedy, lesson or punishment to me? Please yourself."

Having said so, Bharata continued to carry the palanquin calmly, intent on exhausting his Prarabdha Karma completely. The king was surprised at Bharata's reply of great import, stopped, got down from the vehicle, prostrated himself at Bharata's feet, and begged pardon; and, with all humility, said:

"Who are you, a great Brahmana or sage with a sacred thread on, but with true nature concealed? Where from do you come and whither do you go? Are you sage Kapila himself, for whom I am going? I am very much afraid of having treated you with contempt, though I am not afraid of Indra's Vajra, Rudra's Trisula, Yama's rod and the missiles of Agni, Surya, Chandra, Vayu, and Kubera. Be pleased to answer me. Your concealed glory and wisdom indicate your infinite greatness and righteousness. Perhaps you are Lord Kapila Himself, going about incognito to see how the world goes on. You have truly said that the state of Samsara accrues to Jiva through his relation to the body, senses, breaths, mind and environments. You are really great. Please cast a friendly look on me, and pardon my pride and insolence to the righteous. You are a well-wisher and friend of all, and are free from all attachment. Pray, save me the peril for violation of the great."

Bharata's precepts to Rahugana

"To get a proper grasp of truth, one should know that domestic happiness is fit to be cast off as the experiences of a

dream. Sattva, Rajas and Tamas proceed unchecked, to work out good or bad by means of sense organs, Instigated by Maya, the mind embraces the Jiva and creates on all sides pleasure, pain or other inevitable fruit. If given to objects, the mind leads to misery; and if otherwise, it leads to happiness. The mind has eleven courses—five relating to the physical body, five to the sense organs, and one attached to itself. They are smell, colour, touch, taste, sound, urination, pleasure, motion, speech, work and the body. The twelfth is Aham. These changes become hundreds, thousands, and crores in relation to individual objects, nature, experience and Karma, which are commanded by Kshetrajna, who is above change and who is the intelligent principle, merely witnessing the various mental forms of the Jivas, as a result of Maya. The mind is of impure activity; while Kshetrajna is pure and unaffected, being the all-pervading Atma, the first cause of the universe, self-realising, self-luminous, unborn Vasudeva Himself, in whom all beings exist and who abides in the Jiva as his Inner Ruler. A person wanders about in Samsara, so long as he is not able to shake off Maya, which he can do, when knowledge dawns on him, enabling him to subdue the six enemies and realise Atma. Samsara produces grief, delusion, disease, passion, covetousness, hatred and selfishness. Devotion to the feet of Lord Hari alone can put an end to this great enemy of enormous strength."

Bharata's further precepts

Rahugana told Bharata that his words were an immortalising medicine to himself, whose understanding had been badly poisoned by the serpent of attachment to worldly things. They were like an unfailing remedy to one suffering from fever, and like ice-cold water to one scorched by summer heat. More light was sought by Rahugana, regarding the truth of worldly action and its fruit, and the real import of Atma.

Bharata discoursed thus in reply: "You have been utterly blind with the pride that you are the king of Sindhu country. You say you protect the people but you are merciless to these pitiable and afflicted creatures, who have been forced to bear the heavy palanquin with your officious heavy body in it. That is unwise. Truth must dawn on you."

"All material things—substance, nature, experience, time, and creation, are the making of Prakriti or Avidya. Jnana alone is pure, absolutely real, undivided, uninterrupted, perfect, true and glorious; and it is essential to win the Grace of Lord Vasudeva. Such Jnana cannot be attained by austerities, sacrifices, charities, domestic virtues, Vedic studies or by the worship of water, fire, sun, etc. Resort to the dust of the feet of great men, and hearing their discourses on the excellent attributes of the Glorious Lord, shutting out all talk or thought of vulgar objects, is the real means to Jnana. Such discourses, daily listened to, produce pure thought of the Lord in those that seek salvation. Formerly, as King Bharata, though I had ~~shaken~~ off attachment, and endeavoured to worship the Lord, I myself became a deer and thus failed in my purpose. Still by Sri Krishna's Grace, memory did not fail me; and even as a deer, I avoided attachment to the fellow populace and emerged from the birth in due course. Therefore, we should cut off delusion by the sword of wisdom, acquired by intimate association with the worthy elders, by recounting and listening to the glorious work of Sri Hari, which help to obtain proper insight to end Samsara and attain to Sri Hari."

Samsara is a forest

Bharata described Samsara to King Rahugana thus: "Samsara is a company of Jivas devoted to the purpose of wealth and pleasure, marching on the path of Pravritti, turned to activities according to their individual impulses of Rajas, Tamas or Sattva, and wandering through the forest of Samsara. There, in the forest, highway-men rob the company of the riches; jackals steal into the fold, and steal away what they want; and similarly wolves carry away other things. The forest is impenetrable with dense-grown creepers, grass and bushes; and the company is badly attacked by fearful ~~flies~~, mosquitoes and fleeting devils of fire brands. The caravan runs here and there in search of some abode, water and wealth in all directions, darkened by the dust of whirl-winds. Stricken with hunger, and troubled in mind by the hooting of owls, the company runs after the ~~mirage~~ of water. Being robbed of wealth by armed men, it becomes bewildered and swoons. Walking over thorns and gravel, it feels the path hard and mountain-climbing. It loses its own self-respect by being stung by

bees, in seeking after honey. It stands incapable of warding off heat and cold, wind and rain and such other great enemies. Being in great want, and seeking after another's property, it falls into disgrace."

"At last, somewhere resting on the arms of creepers, the **company** fondly listens to the warbling notes of birds, but is soon frightened at the sight of the approaching herd of lions. Friendship of **cranes**, kites, vultures, swans and monkeys is contracted. Fondly attached to wife and children, losing self-control, the **company** falls a prey to misery."

Rahugana was instructed to place himself under strict discipline, showing love to all **beings**, practising non-attachment and worshipping Sri Hari with **all** wisdom. The King worshipped the Brahmana's feet and became divested of Avidya and practised all righteousness.

Bharata's further disclosures

For the Jivas, Samsara is a hard mountain path, of entering into and departing from various bodies, resulting from good or bad karma induced by the individual Gunas of Sattva, Rajas and Tamas. By virtue of Maya, the Jivas desiring fortunes, land themselves in Samsaric wilderness of robbers. The little hard earned money, which should be spent righteously in the faithful worship of the Lord, is spent on vulgar enjoyments of sight, touch, hearing, taste, smell or other low aims and purposes, led by wicked and worthless ill-advisers. In this wilderness, his kith and kin, rob the miserly house-holder like wolves and jackals. Just as a field, though ploughed every year is not free from seeds of weeds, the Samsaric field is never free from the dense growth of bushes, grass and creepers. Wealth, which is external life to men, is sapped by bad men, who sting like insects, locusts, thieves, rats and others. Thus sapped and tossed about, the Jiva's mind and heart are steeped in ignorance, desires and actions; but still the Jiva considers these undesirable things as real blessings; and pursues vicious habits of drink, and food; and sees objects, fleeting like the mirage. To find a means of living and several comforts, he runs to find an abode, food, drink and other properties.

Enthroned on the lap of woman, the Jiya violates every good rule, prompted by the force of Rajas and his mind is overcharged with follies committed in disregard of the witnessing deities of cardinal points. He may, for a moment, perceive the futility of worldly objects; but by force of habit and craving, his erring mind runs after the same objects, which are like currents of mirage. Having exhausted the merit due to his previous good karma, and bereft of comforts, he plods on living in name, but actually dead and hated by others. In the company of the wicked, he goes over to Pashandas; and leads himself to misery, like one tumbling down on the rocky bed of a dried-up river. Uncared for by any, and starving without food, he proceeds to pray upon his own helpless parents or children. There, he finds himself in a household, which is like a burning forest of misery, grief and disgust. He lives like a dead man, divested of anything desirable. Sometimes, he fancies unreal fulfilment of desires and enjoys mental pleasure, as in a dream. His mind is distracted by worldly passions, and he languishes with pain, and vents his anger on the household members. He is full of confusion and darkness, and he is neglected by his kith and kin. His pride is broken, his heart is troubled, and he is immersed in hopeless ignorance and misery.

Seeking after vulgar pleasures, he interferes with others wives, and is subjected to good beating by the people, elders or kings. He goes on acquiring more Karma, sowing seeds for future Samsara. He becomes despondent in his endless anxiety. He borrows money from others or misappropriates others properties, and reaps enmity. In Samsara are present pleasures and pains, desires, hatred, fear, pride, madness, grief, delusion, greed, envy, jealousy, disgrace, hunger, thirst, anxiety, diseases, birth, oldage and death.

Sometimes, embraced by a woman, he loses discrimination and wisdom, and surrenders his heart to her, her utterances, looks and actions; and loses his mind control and lands himself in a shoreless hell of blinding darkness. Neglecting the worship of the Supreme Lord's feet, he betakes himself to Pashanda deities, which are verily kites, vultures, and cranes. He seeks pleasure; and like a monkey, pursues vulgar gratification of sexual pleasures. He grieves, loses senses, entertains fear, disputes, and cries out helplessly.

Generally men and even kings do not take to the discipline of Yoga, and form good habits of self-control and tranquility. But that was not the case with Bharata, who was a great and wise king. While yet young, he thirsted for Lord's grace and drew away from family, friends and kingdom. He had no desire for worldly pleasures, children, kith and kin, and royal fortune, which even gods envy. He renounced them all, and devoted his mind and heart to the Supreme Lord's worship, not desiring even Moksha. When he cast off body as deer, he bowed to Hari, the defender of his righteousness and the Supreme Ruler of the Universe, without a second or an equal. The pious King Bharata's pure qualities and actions were such that whoever listens, or narrates them, or is rejoiced at them, will obtain all auspiciousness, long life, merit, and renown, paving his way to Svarga and even Moksha.

Bharata's race detailed

Bharata had a son named Sumati, who by Vriddhasena had a son called Devajit, whose family line is traced below:

Devajit	had by	Asuri	a son named	Devadyumna;
Devadyumna	"	Dhenumati	"	Paramesti;
Paramesti	"	Suvarchala	"	Pratiha;
Pratiha	"	his wife	sons named	Pratiharta and two others;
Pratiharta	"	his wife	sons named	Aja and Bhuma;
Bhuma	"	Rishikulya	a son named	Udgitha;
Udgitha	"	Devakulya	"	Prasthava;
Prasthava	"	Niyutsa	"	Vibhu;
Vibhu	"	Rati	"	Prithusena;
Prithusena	"	Akuti	"	Naktha
Naktha	"	Dhruthi	"	Gaya;
Gaya	"	Gayanthi	sons named	Chitraratha, Sugathi and Avarodhana;
Chitrarathi	"	Urna	a son named	Samrat;
Samrat	"	Utkala	"	Marichi;
Marichi	"	Bindumati	"	Binduman;
Binduman	"	Saragha	"	Madhu;
Madhu	"	Sumanasa	"	Viravratas;

Viravrata	"	Bhoja	a son named	Manthu and Pra- manthu;
Manthu	"	Satya	a son named	Bhowvana;
Bhauvana	"	Dushna	"	Thvashta;
Thvashta	"	Vochana	"	Viraja, and
Viraja	"	Vishuchi	sons named	Satajit and 99 others, and a daughter.

Viraja embellished the race of Priyavrata by his true glory, even as Vishnu does the hosts of gods.

In the above family line, King Gaya, son of Naktha, was a great saintly person of vast learning, imbued with an Amsa of Lord Vishnu, the World Protector. He was a glorious person of good self-control, keen on righteous duties of protecting the subjects, giving them a living, delighting them, caressing and controlling them. His good devotion to the Lord purified his mind from worldly attachment, but still, untouched by pride, he ruled the land. The people sang that this scion of the Pandavas had no equal in righteousness. He had extensive learning: and fortune smiled upon him. The chaste daughters of Daksha extolled him in extreme joy, sprinkling on him the sacred river waters. Mother earth showered on him and his subjects her blessings. The Vedas blessed him. The kings under him honoured him. Worthy Brahmanas assigned him one-sixth of their accumulated merit. The Supreme Lord evidenced His delight and satisfaction at Gaya's righteousness and performance, by keeping his empire happy and prosperous.

Description of the Earth

It has been already pointed out that the seven seas were formed by the seven moats caused by the wheels of Priyavrata's chariot;

and the seven Dvipas were also formed. This, our Jambudvipa, is situated like a seed vessel at the centre of the lotus-like circular globe. In this Dvipa, there are nine continents each 9000 Yojanas in extent and demarcated by eight ranges of mountains, as their boundaries. The inner continent of Ilavrita is at the centre. The all-gold mount of Meru is at its centre.

North of Ilavrita are three mountain ranges—Nila, Sveta and Srīngavan, which are the boundary mountains between the Varshas of Rāmyaka, Hīranmaya and Kuru.

Similarly south of Ilavrita are three ranges—Nishadha, Hemakuta and the Himalayas, running eastwards, and forming the boundaries of Harivarsha, Kimpurusha and Bharata.

So also on the east and west of Ilavrita are two ranges—Malyavat and Gandhamādāna separating Ketumala and Bhadrās-va Varshas respectively.

Mandara, Merumandara, Suparsva and Kumuda are on the four sides of mount Meru as its side-supports. On these four ranges stand four great trees—the Mango, the Jambu, the Kadamba and the banyan, standing aloft like mountain flags. There are also four pools of milk, honey, sugarcane juice and fresh water, the drink of which endows great Yogic powers. There are besides four celestial gardens—Nandana, Chaitraratha, Vaibhājaka and Sarvatobhadra. In these gardens, sport the great Devas with celestial beauties, listening to their glories sung by Gandharvas.

In the Mount Mandara, the mango fruits are as sweet as ambrosia. As the fruits ripen and break, the abundant sweet and charming juice forms a river called Arunoda, and the flow irrigates Ilavrita Khanda on the east.

Similarly from the juice of the fruits of the Jambu trees, flows the Jambu river, flowing from the tops of Merumandara. It flows southwards and irrigates that portion of Ilavrita.

From Kadamba tree on the Suparsva mount, flow five currents of honey spreading joy.

From the banyan tree called Satavalaya on the Mount Kumuda, flow down streams of whatever is desired—milk, curds, honey, ghee, sugarcandy, food, raiment, beds, seats or ornaments. They cover the northern slopes of Kumuda and are useful for Ilavrita.

Those making use of these supplies are free from wrinkles, grey hair, fatigue, sweating, bad odour, old age, disease and other troubles; and they enjoy the greatest pleasures life-long.

Twenty mountains surround the base of mount Meru, like filaments on the seed vessel of a lotus. They are Kuranga, Kurura, Kushumba, Vaikanka, Trikuta, Sisira, Patanga, Ruchaka, Nishadha, Sitivasa, Kapila, Sankha, Vaiduriya, Jarudhi, Hansa, Rishabha, Nira Naga, Kalanjara and Narada.

On the east of Meru, are Jathara and Devakuta extending northwards; and on the west, are two ranges Pavana and Pariyatra. Likewise, on the south extend eastwards Kailasa and Karavira, and on the north are the two, Trisringa and Makara. Thus shines the Meru, highly golden and picturesque.

The very centre on the summit of Meru is the city of Brahma, in the form of a square called Satakumbhi. Surrounding the outskirts of the city are the eight guardian cities of the world at the eight cardinal points. They are all of a befitting and beautiful style.

Ganga descends

When Sri Vishnu appeared as Trivikrama in the sacrifice of Bali, and proceeded to measure out the three feet of ground given Him by Bali, the firmament above Bhumandala was pierced by the tip of the toe of the Lord's left foot; and through the opening, rushed down a stream of expansive waters, which was charming with crimson rays, as they washed the Lord's lotus-like feet. That Ganga is the sacred water, which is pure, and it purifies the world of the sins: She is called Bhagavatpadi, and she reached the high celestial regions called Vishnupada, where Dhruva practised intense devotion, tears of joy flowing from his half-closed eyes, with sacred waters sprinkling on his head. Again, there sat the seven holy sages in great devotion and reached the final goal of

their Tapas. Then the waters passed through the sky and the spheres of the moon, and entered the city of Brahma. There she divided herself into four rivers, Sita, Alakananda, Chakshus and Bhadra, which flowed towards the cardinal points and entered the sea.

Flowing over the Kesara and Gandhamadana mountains and traversing Bhadrasva, Sita entered the sea on the east. Chakshus descended from the Malayavati, flowed over the Ketumala and entered the sea on the west. Bhadra descended from Meru upon Shringavat, irrigated the North Kurus, and entered the sea on the north. Alakananda came down the southern slopes of Meru, flowed through the Hemakuta and the Himalayas, traversed the Bharatakhanda on the south and entered the sea. Those bathing in these waters acquire the merit of having performed Asvamedha, Rajasuya and other great sacrifices. The several rivers running east and west are the daughters of Meru and other mountains.

Bharatakhanda is Karma Bhumi, where man's actions ensure future attainment, the remaining eight continents being only places of enjoyment for those returning from Svarga, with some unexhausted portion of their merit.

In all the nine continents, the Supreme Lord Narayana is present in His various forms for showering His Grace on the inhabitants. His lotus-like feet are the supreme abode of all glorious attributes, not at all coloured by Maya. He is the cause of existence, creation and destruction of this universe. Of Him, was born the four-faced Brahma, with body of Mahat Tattva; and of Brahma, was born Rudra with Ahamkara Tattva. Then were created other Devas, the Tamasas, the Bhutas, the five principles of Akasa and the senses. All the creation is controlled by the Lord, who is the source of everything, and in whom everything finds its end.

Bhadrasva and other Varshas

Dharma's son Bhadrasrava and his chiefs live in Bhadrasva Varsha in the direct vision of Lord Vasudeva called Hayagriva. They worship Him and sing His praise. The righteous Lord purifies our body, mind and soul. He is the origin, subsistence and

destruction of the Universe, and He is the cause and effect of everything.

In *Harivarsha*, the Lord reveals Himself as *Narasimha*. Virtuous *Prahlada* worships and contemplates on *Narasimha*, who purifies and even exalts the race of *Daityas* and *Danavas*. He is the fearless asylum of His devotees. The Lord is the direct and main support of all embodied beings. Therefore, the wise should resort to His feet, shunning the uninterrupted series of mortal passions, attachments, despondency, anger, pride, desire, fear and humiliation.

In *Ketumala*, the Lord reveals Himself as *Lakshmikanta*, giving delight to *Sri Lakshmi*, with charming facial splendour, winning and gentle smiles, and sportful and engaging gait. He is also *Hrishikesa*, who is the main source of all the living, and the embodiment of all blessedness, for strength, energy and prowess. *Sri Lakshmi* worships His feet only. To win His favour, *Brahma*, *Rudra*, all other *Devas* and *Asuras* perform severe *tapas* for gratification of their desires.

In *Ramyaka Varsha*, King *Manu* worships the Lord in *Matsya* form, who is pure *Sattva* and the source of *Prana*, energy and prowess. He is the great power protecting the world and abiding in all the multitudes of worldly beings.

In *Hiranmaya Varsha*, He is worshipped in *Kurma* form by *Aryaman*, the chief of the *Pitris*. He is omnipresent, and supports all—*Devas*, *Rishis*, *Pitris*, *Bhutas*, the sky, earth, mountains, rivers, seas, islands, planets and stars. He is the very doctrine of *Sankhya* system and true knowledge. He is both *Yajna* and *Kratu*, and is known by *Mantras*. He is seen by those whose perception is rendered keen and powerful by careful enquiry and observance of *Yama*, *Niyama* and other duties. He is the Omnipresent Lord, the first cause of the world in *Varaha* form, who bore the earth up on His tusks from the bottom of the sea.

Kimpurusha and Bharata Varshas

In the *Kimpurusha Varsha*, the Supreme Lord, *Sri Rama* is worshipped by His foremost devotee *Hanuman*, and the people

there. Hanuman listens to the auspicious glories of the Lord sweetly sung by Gandharvas, and he also himself sings thus: "The Lord is the embodiment of the noblest character, nature and principles. He is the King of the kings, and is very kind to Brahmanas. His essential nature is absolute bliss. He is the best friend of those who have subdued their mind and heart. He is not pleased with the make-up of personal beauty, high birth, skillful speech or bright intellect, but by true devotion and friendship, which become evident from the love shown to Him. So it was that He led the beings of the Kosala country to the celestial world, be they Suras or Asuras, men or monkeys, provided they worshipped Him."

In Bharata Varsha, the Lord with the name Nara Narayana exhibits in Himself growing righteousness, wisdom, renunciation, supreme powers, perfect control of senses, and realisation of Atman. He bestows His Grace and compassion on the righteous. The worshipful Narada and the devotees of all Varnas and Asramas sing the Lord's Glories thus: "He is the glorious Lord in two forms Nara and Narayana, and He is the Father and Preceptor of Paramahamsas. He is the creator of the Universe but is quite untouched by Ahamkara or the three Gunas of Sattva, Rajas and Tamas. He is the Lord of Yoga and showers His Grace on His devotees for Yogic achievement."

The more important of the mountains in Bharatha Varsha are the Malaya, Mangala, Prastha, Mainaka, Trikuta, Rishabha, Kutaka, Kollaka, Sahya, Devagiri, Rishyamuka, Srisaila, Venkata, Mahendra, Vaidhara, Vindhya, Suktiman, Rikshagiri, Pariyatra, Dronah, Chitrakuta, Govardhana, Raivata, Kakubha, Nila, Gomukha, Indrakila, Kamagiri, and others, from which descend several rivers. The important rivers are the Chandravasa, Tamraparni, Avatoda, Kritamala, Vaihayasi, Kaveri, Veni, Payasvini, Sarkaravarta, Tungabhadra, Krishna, Venya, Bhimarathi, Godavari, Nirvindhya, Payoshni, Tapti, Revi, Surasa, Narmada, Charmanvati, Sindhu, Andha, Sona, Mahanadi, Vedasavriti, Rishikulya, Trisanna, Kausiti, Mandagiri, Yamuna, Sarasvati, Drishadvati, Saptavati, Sushoma, Satadruha, Chandrabhaga, Marudvridha, Vitasta, Asikni, Visva and other sacred rivers.

It is in Bharata Varsha, that Jivas coming into mortal existence attain, according to their Karma, the goals they deserve—divine, human, or hellish, as per their Varnas and Asramas, and even Moksha, when deserving by virtue of intense devotion, untouched by passion or desires. Even the Devas and Gandharvas desire their birth in Bharata Varsha for the remembrance and worship of Mukunda's lotus-like feet, which are far superior to sacrifices, Tapas, austerities and charitable gifts, which only pave the way for Svarga. Even after a whole life in Svarga, return to Samsaric birth is inevitable. But a short span of devoted life in Bharatakhanda, with but a mortal body, can get rid a person of Karma and lead permanently to the sacred feet of Hari. The devotees should resort to the region, where the nectarine floods of discourses on Hari are heard and where the worshipful festivities of the Lord are held.

Cursed are the human beings born here, who, though endowed with understanding, courses of action and abundant means, do not endeavour after Moksha, from which there is no return to mortal life, but who are caught like birds in the meshes of Samsara. But blessed are those pious devotees, who offer sacrifices and worship the one perfect Lord, invoked under different names. He confers on man anything that is prayed for, but desireless devotion and prayer ensures the permanent attainment of His feet in Moksha.

Even gods desire to be born in the land of Bharata in order to store up the great, inexhaustible, pure and glorious merit. The pious Jivas ever yearn to be born in Bharatakhanda to attain to the highest place of Vishnu by earning extensive merit. They always wait to reach His place by means of gifts, sacrifices, worship and Tapas in Bharata land. He is a great soul, who always sings the praises of the Lord, who is doing the service of His real devotees, and whose mind and heart are devoted to the study of the Vedas and Puranas. He, who abandons righteous duties, is really abandoning the cistern of nectar in search for a poison pot. He who neglects the worship of Vasudeva and takes to wicked ways, is really neglecting Kamadhenu and thirsting for Arka milk.

The eight other sub-continentes attached to Jambudvipa are Svarna Prastha, Chandrasukla, Avartana, Ramanaka, Mandaraharina, Panchajanya, Simhala and Lanka.

The Remaining Dvipas

The salt sea, round Jambudvipa, is surrounded by Plaksha Dvipa, which is double the dimension of Jambudvipa, around which lies the sea of sugar-cane juice. Each other outer Dvipa is in area double that of the preceeding interior Dvipa, and is surrounded by a sea equal in extent to the Dvipa it surrounds. In their order, the other Dvipas and their seas are:

Samala Dvipa	has around it Suroda (sea of Sura)
Kusa Dvipa	" Ghritoda (sea of ghee)
Krauncha Dvipa	" Ksheera (sea of milk)
Saka Dvipa	" Dadhi (sea of curds)
Pushkara Dvipa	Suddhodaka (fresh water sea)

Around the fresh water sea, lies the chain of mountains called Lokaloka, beyond which stretches a tract of land, all gold, between Meru and Manasotara. Each of the seven Dvipas is ruled by a son of Priyavrata.

The Plaksha Dvipa is called after a great Plaksha tree, which is of golden essence. This Dvipa was ruled by Priyavrata's son Idhmajihva, who divided the land into seven continents and entrusted them to each of his seven sons. The continents are Siva, Yavan, Subhadra, Santa, Kahema, Amrita and Abhaya; and the seven mountains therein respectively are Manikuta, Vajrakuta, Indrasena, Jyotishman, Suparna, Hiranyastiya and Meghamala, which form the boundaries. The seven rivers therein respectively are the Aruna, Nrimuna, Angitasi, Savitri, Suprabhata, Hritambara, and Satyambara. The classes of people in the Dvipa are Hamsa, Patanga, Urdhwayana and Satyanga, who live a thousand years, free from the effects of Rajas and Tamas. They worship the Lord by Vedic sacrifices and resort to Satya (righteousness), Rita (correct perception), Brahma (Vedic teaching) and Amrita (dharmaic food).

In the Plaksha and the outer Dvipas, the people are blessed with long life, sound organs, energy, prowess, strength, intelligence, and heroic activity life long.

Salmali Dvipa is called after the Salmalai tree in it, which is the abode of Garuda, the king of birds, who ever chants Vedic hymns in praise of Lord Narayana. It was ruled by Yajñabahu, who later divided the land into seven continents to be ruled by his seven sons—Surochana, Saumanasya, Ramanaka, Devavarsha, Paribhadra, Apyayana, and Abhijata. The mountains in the respective continents are Svarasa, Svetasringa, Vamadeva, Kunda, Kumuda, Pushpavarsha and Sahasrasruti; and the rivers are Anumati, Sinivali, Sarasvati, Kuhu, Rajani, Nanda, and Raka. The people in the continents are known as Sutradhara, Viryadhara, Vasundhara and Ishundhara, who worship the Lord in the form of Soma, described in the Vedas.

Kusadvipa derives its name by the presence of the divine clump of lustrous Kusa grass. Hiranyareta ruled the land, and divided it among his seven sons—Vasu, Vasudana, Dridharuchi, Nabhigupta, Stutyavrata, Vibhikta and Vamadeva, and himself took to Tapas. The boundary mountains in the continents are respectively Cakra, Cathusringa, Kapila, Citrakuta, Devanika, Urdhvasena and Dravina; and the rivers are Rasakulya, Madhukulya, Mitravinda, Srutavanda, Devagarbha, Ghritachyuta, and Mantramala. The people known as Kausalas, Kovidas, Abhiyuktas and Kulakas, worship the Lord in the form of Agni righteously by offering sacred offerings.

Krauncha Dvipa, called after the Krauncha mountain therein, was ruled by Ghrithaprastha, who divided the land among his seven sons named Ama, Madhuruha, Meghapristha, Sudhama, Brajishtha, Lohitarna and Vanaspati; and retired to the lotus-feet of Sri Hari. The boundary mountains of the continents are Sukla, Vardhamana, Bhojana, Upabarhana, Nanda, Nandana, and Sarvatobhadra; and the rivers in the respective continents are Abhaya, Amritaughra, Aryaka, Tirthavati, Vrittirupavati, Pavitratvati and Sukla. Purushas, Rishabhas, Dravinas and Devakas, who inhabit the land, worship the Lord in the form of water, which is endowed with great virtues, and purifies the three worlds, washing off the sins of mortals.

Saka Dvipa, named after the Saka tree therein of great fragrance, was ruled by Priyavrata's son Medhatithi, who divided it among his seven sons Parojana, Manojana, Pavamana, Dharmnika, Citrarekha, Bahurupa and Visvadhara; and retreated to a hermitage for Tapas. The boundary mountains of the continents are Isana, Urusringa, Balabhadra, Satakesara, Sahasrasrota, Devapala and Mahanasa; and the rivers therein are Anagha, Ayurtha, Ubhayasprishti, Aparajita, Panchapadi, Sahasrasruti and Nijadhriti. The continents are peopled by Ritavratas, Satyavratas, Danavratas and Anuvratas, who purified themselves of Rajas and Tamas by Pranayama; and concentrated on the Lord in the form of Vayu, the inner-ruler and controller of all beings.

The outermost Dvipa is named Pushkara in the middle of which rises the Manasotara mountain, which is the boundary of the two continents of the land. The Dvipa is surrounded by fresh water sea, which contains the gigantic lotus of a hundred million golden petals, which is the throne of the four-faced Brahma. The Dvipa has four cities in the four directions for Indra and other gods, who are the guardians of the world.

The land was ruled by Vitihotra, who commanded his sons Ramanaka and Dhataki to rule the two continents, and himself betook to the worship of the Lord. The inhabitants worship the Supreme Lord in Brahma by righteous duties leading to Salokya and other attainments.

Lokaloka mountain chain surrounds the fresh water sea. It is called Lokaloka, as it lies between Loka (region illuminated by the sun) and Aloka, which is not lighted by him. Beyond this mountain chain, lies the land of gold, between Meru and Manasottara.

Thus, the Lokaloka is the outer boundary of the three worlds, beyond which the rays of the innumerable luminaries, from sun to Dhruva, do not go. The chain of Lokaloka occupies a fourth of the area of the globe. Beyond it, the Lord has stationed the four great elephants—Rishabha, Pushkarachuda, Vamana and Aparajita to maintain the worlds in position. The Supreme Lord has enthroned Himself on Lokaloka, exhibiting His pure Satya of righteousness, omniscience and His great eight-fold accomplishments with His

eight arms, resplendent with His Supreme weapons for the welfare of the worlds. Beyond Aloka is a pure region traversed by the Yogiswara, Sri Krishna. The sun is in the middle of the great egg of Universe. The distance from the sun to the circumference of the sphere is twenty crore Yojanas. The sun is called Martanda, as he is in an inanimate globe. He is also called Hiranyagarbha, as being born of the golden egg.

The sun divides the cardinal points, the heavens, the celestial region, the earth and others, as well as the regions of pleasure and final beatitude, and the regions of hell, nether worlds and all. Among the Gods, Surya is the Lord enthroned in the eyes of men, lower animals, birds, beasts, serpents, creepers, plants and all living beings.

Starry regions and the Sun's position

The heavenly regions are just like the two halves of certain beans; and between them is placed Antariksha or mid-air, which is bounded by the line of horizon. From the centre, the sun (Lord of luminaries) warms the three worlds with his heat, and lights them with his rays. He makes days and nights, longer, shorter or equal, as per seasons. Uttarayana, Dakshinayana and Vishuvat are also due to him. Till Dakshinayana begins, days grow longer; and till Uttarayana begins, nights grow longer.

The sun's rays traverse round the Manasottara mountain, on which lies Indraloka (Devadhama, abode of gods) to the east of Meru. To the south is Samyamani, city of Yama. On the west lies Nimlochini, Varuna's city; and on the north lies Vidarbha, Soma's city. On the sides of Meru, at particular points of time, Sunrise, Midday, Sunset, and Midnight occur. The sun is always at the zenith for those on the mount Meru. The chariot of the sun has but one wheel with 12 spokes (months), six tyres (Ayanas), and three navels (Sankramanas). One end of the axil rests on Manasottara and the other end is fixed on the summit of Meru. The sages known as Valakhilyas sing the praise of the sun by Vedic Hymns. Other sages, Gandharvas, Apsaras, Nagas, Yakshas, Yatudhanas and other gods wait upon the glorious Surya doing their duties.

Moon and other planets

Kalachakra or Solar system has Dhruva and Meru on its right. It is the manifestation of the glorious Narayana. The mortals worship the sun with righteous duties as per their Varna and Asrama.

The moon is placed at a height beyond the range of the sun. He is the ruler of the mind, giving satisfaction to all human beings, animals, birds, reptiles, plants and creepers. Beyond the moon's range are the 28 stars, including Abhijit. Still higher up is Sukra, shedding good influence on the world. Beyond him is Budha, son of Soma, who does good to the humanity. Still further is Angaraka, who indicates evil influence. Further still is Brihaspati, who is generally favourable to cultured Brahmanas. The Saturn is further above, and he bodes evil generally. The seven sages (Saptarshis) are further beyond, going round the abode of Vishnu and wishing well of the world.

The position of Dhruva

Lord Sri Vishnu's abode is far beyond the range of the Sapta Rishis; and there remains the great devotee Dhruva, son of Uttanapada, who along with Agni, Indra, Prajapati, and Kasyapa, in the form of stars, go round the Lord with great veneration. Dhruva shines constant in his place, as a post, supporting all the hosts of luminaries, planets and constellations, which ceaselessly go round him, serving as Kalacakra. The system of the heavenly bodies is supported by the Will and Yoga power of the Lord Vasudeva, who has the form of the Gangetic porpoise. Dhruva is stationed at the tail end of that Simsumara. A little down are placed Prajapati, Agni, Indra and Dharma; and at the root are Dhata and Vidhata. The different stars and planets are in different positions on the porpoise, which is a manifestation of the glorious Vishnu, the contemplation of which form is very auspicious to the devotees.

The worship and contemplation thrice daily of Simsumara form, which embodies all planets, constellations and stars, purify the devotees of all sins and assure them a very worthy place.

Atala and other happy regions

Rahu, son of Simhika, makes his circuit in the form of a Nakshatra below the sun. Rahu cherishes enmity towards the sun and the moon and interrupts their rays during the eclipse periods on new moon and full moon days. Below the region of Rahu are the abodes of Siddhas, Caranas and Vidyadharas. Still lower down is the region of the sky, the sporting field of Yakshas, Rakshasas, Pisacas, ghosts and demons reaching down to the winds and clouds. Below that, lies this earth of human beings, animals, birds and other lower beings. Below the earth, there are seven worlds, separated from each other by 10,000 Yojanas. They are Atala, Vitala, Sutala, Mahatala, Rasatala, Talatala and Patala.

In these nether-Svarga regions, dwell Daityas, Danavas, and Kadrus, with their loving kith and kin, enjoying wealth, pleasures and joys, much more than in Svarga proper. There shine Maya-created cities, with wonderful mansions, ramparts, towers, courts, temples and other edifices, wrought with excellent gems with all artistic excellence. There are splendid gardens with trees of bewitching beauty, embraced by soft and tender creepers, with clusters of flowers, lovely shoots and bunches of fruits, as well as lakes, ponds and rivers, full of crystal waters; and charming birds in pairs make their houses in beds of lotuses, lilies, kalharas, blue lilies, and red lotuses, which are agitated by sporting fishes. There, gems on the hoods of the great serpent dispel all darkness. The people have no fears and anxieties, and are free from diseases, oldage or other afflictions. There is not even the changing conditions of boyhood or oldage, fatigue or weariness.

Bala, Asura Maya's son, dwells in Atala; and he created ninety-six magical performances, some of which are even today known and practised by jugglers. From him, emerged three groups of women called Svairinyah, Kaminyah and Pumsalyah, who strengthen persons, entering their region, with a preparation called Hatakarasa; and delight them with their sportful glances, lovely smiles, conversations, embraces and charming acts. With the influence of the Rasa, the persons think themselves to be Siddhas, and boast of their strength, blind with intoxication.

In Vitala, the region below, Hatakeswara rules with his retinue of Bhutas. Lord Siva with his consort exemplifies the

house-holder's life. There, the great river Hataki emerges; and, from its waters issues gold called Hataka, by force of the wind and fire. The Asura men and women there wear ample ornaments of the gold.

Lower down in Sutala is the great Asura devotee, Bali son of Virocana, who gifted the three worlds to the Supreme Lord, who made them over to Mahendra. Though deprived of his empire, Bali was again endowed with overflowing wealth and prosperity, which far excelled the gifted empire. Bali even now dwells there in perpetual worship of the Lord, who is the real guide to Moksha.

People try to attain Salvation by shaking off Karma, in several ways. But they forget that utterance, but once even unawares, of the name of the Lord, while sneezing, coughing, falling or in any condition, shakes off all bonds of Karma. Bali was wise. He knew that the grace of the Lord was far superior to the emperor-ship of the three worlds, which was after all limited to a period of a Manvantara out of the unlimited time passing with great velocity. Hence Bali was particular to walk in and approach the path trodden by Prahlada. The Lord was so pleased with Bali's gift that He even now keeps watch, with Gada in His hand, at the devotee's door.

In Talatala which is lower down, Maya, an Asura, rules the three cities, appointed by Lord Siva. In Mahatala, live Krodhavasas—serpents born of Kadru with many hoods. Eminent among them are Kuhaka and Takshaka, who have extensive heads and huge bodies. Even they tremble at the sight of Garuda, the vehicle of the Lord.

In Rasatala lower down dwell Daityas, known as Panis, Nivatakavachas, Kaleyas, and Hiranyapuris, who are strong, proud and spirited. They hate the Devas. But they are in terror of Indra.

Patala is the lowermost region, where live the chiefs of Nagas, viz., Vasuki, Sankha, Kulika, Maha-Sankha, Sveta, Dhritarashtra, Sankachuda, Kambala, Asvahara, Devadatta and others, who are possessed of extensive hoods, highly revengeful. In their hoods are set big jewels of great effulgence, by which the great darkness in Patala is completely dispelled.

Adi Sesha supports the globe on His Head

Far below Patala, there is an Amsa of the Supreme Lord known as Ananta (Sesha), who has a thousand heads. On one of them rests the earth. From between the agitated brows of Lord Ananta, rose Rudra called Sankarshana, exhibiting himself in eleven forms, with three eyes, holding up a trident. There, the Lord is worshipped by lordly serpents with intense devotion. The Naga princesses besmear His arms with pigment of Aguru, Candana and Kumkuma. They put on smiling countenance and bashfully look at His lotus-like face and swim in excessive joy, as His eyes glow with abundant Grace.

There, the Lord is being contemplated by Suras, while His eyes swim in joyous bewilderment. He comforts them by His very soft, winning and nectar-like words. He wears the Vaijayanti garland of sweet juice, fragrance and unfading freshness. He wears blue clothes, ear-rings, and a golden bell; and shines highly sportful.

Contemplated as above, the Supreme Lord Ananta, enters the heart of His devotees, and cuts their knot of Sattva, Rajas, Tamas, Avidya and the rooted tendencies of long Karma. Thus Sage Narada sang His glories in the court of Brahma. His ways of creation, preservation and destruction of the universe are mysterious.

Through His unlimited overflowing grace, He attracts to Himself the minds of His devotees and bestows salvation. The utterance, but once, of His name removes the sins of his devotees and assures them freedom from all miseries.

His prowess is immeasurable. The whole earth with all its mountains, rivers, seas and living beings rests but on just one head of the Sahasrasirsha (the 1000-headed). How can we ever, even if endowed with a thousand tongues, recount His wonderful deeds. He is of unlimited energy, excellent attributes and glorious powers. Though He lightly bears the whole earth on one head, He is Himself unsupported at the bottom. Unequaled He is, unsurpassed are His powers, and all-merciful He is.

Sins and their results in hells

The fruits of Karma vary according to the nature of our action, righteous or unrighteous. Karma indulged in under the force of Avidya lead the Jivas to the hells, which are between the three divisions of the Universe. There dwell the groups of Pitris, who always invoke their blessings on their descendants. The divine king of Pitris is Vaivasvata, and he carries out the commands of the Supreme Lord, and punishes the sinners according to their misdeeds.

There are twenty one regions of hell and seven others, which are the places for various hellish sufferings at the hands of Yama-kinkaras. Tamisra is the dark hell, where suffer those that usurp other's wealth, wife or children. They are tormented with no food or drink, and beaten black and blue to a state of swoon.

Andhatamisra of blinding darkness is for those of graver crime of misappropriation, and the suffering is more intense, as that of a tree, whose roots are cut.

Raurava is the hell for the selfish person, who enriches himself deceiving others and identifies his decaying body as his self. Here Ruru worms, which are more cruel than serpents, torment him.

In Mahaurava, carnivorous Rurus, called Kravyadis, torment the sinner more intensely.

In Kumbhipaka, cruel and merciless sinners, who kill and cook living beings, are tormented in boiling oil, by Yama's servants.

He who is treacherous to Pitris, wise men or Brahmanas suffers in Kalasutra hell in an actual burning state, with added hunger and thirst.

Asipatra hell is for him, who goes off his Vedic path and embraces Pashanda faith; and there, he suffers great pain due to the severe whipping, which tears up the limbs of his body.

He who inflicts punishment on innocent and cultured persons, falls into Sukaramukha. There he shrieks in distress and swoons,

as his limbs are crushed like sugarcane, and he suffers a wretched plight.

Andhakupa is for him, who does not feel sympathy for others suffering but causes pain to them. There, in darkness, he is tormented by beasts, birds and serpents; and he suffers restless and sleepless.

Whoever fails to perform the five Yajnas and eats food like a crow, without sharing it with others, falls into a hell of worms, lives like a worm, eats worms, and is preyed upon by worms.

Burning balls of iron and tongs torment him, who either steals, or robs others of gold, jewels and other property.

He who accuses or abuses other innocent persons is thrashed by whips by Yama's men and is burnt by red hot iron.

A king or his employee, who transgresses his powers, falls into the Vaitarani river, which is flooded with refuse, urine, pus, blood, hair, nails, bones, marrow, flesh and fat; and there, he is bitten cruelly by aquatic monsters. A similar hell of an abnoxious sea is for him, who neglects all pious habits, cleanliness and self-discipline, and leads a shameless life.

A Brahmin who is immoral and kills animals is, after death, pierced by arrows. Likewise, he is put into a slaughter house and cut to pieces, who indulges in hypocritical animal sacrifices.

A fall into a hell, where one is voraciously munched by numerous hounds with adamantite teeth is the fate of him, who lays his hand on others property, or sets it on fire, administers poison to others, or plunders villages or caravans.

Avichimat is the hell for him, who behaves falsely in giving evidence or in making gifts; and, here, he has no support to stand on, but he is tossed to a summit and hurled down, shattering his body to pieces.

The person, who being a worst creature, flatters himself as one of high merit, and does not honour those that are really great by birth, learning, conduct, caste, or order of life, is, after death,

thrown head-on into a hell of brimish mire and subjected to endless torments.

Dandastoka is a hell for those who are cruel like snakes and terrify other beings. Here, they are attacked by many hooded snakes and devoured like rats.

In hell, they are shut up in an atmosphere of fire and smoke, who confine human and other beings in dark holes, granaries and closed houses.

Those, who frequently get angry and look upon guests at their door with cruel eyes, will have their eyes violently plucked by the hard bills of vultures in hell.

Sachimukha is the hell intended for persons, haughty and proud of their wealth, watch their wealth like a devil, look down upon others, and who, for any loss of money, feel heart-broken with a preched-up face. There, these demons of wealth are bound and teased by Yamakinkaras.

There are numerous other regions of hell, into which those of unrighteous ways are hurled. But righteous persons are peaceful and happy in Svarga. When Jivas return from Naraka or Svarga, and are reborn, the fruits of their remaining merits and demerits are enjoyed by them on this earth.

Blessed are those persons of pure understanding, who, full of faith and devotion, earnestly read, listen to or get others to listen to, the description of the working of the Lord's creation. They should control the mind and senses; study and concentrate His gross form; and win His Grace, leading to salvation.



VI SKANDHA

Sacredness of Srīman Narayana's name: Ajāmila's story

IF the sins committed by word and deed are not properly expiated, the result will be a fall into the hells already described. Therefore, men should, before death overtakes them, or before their body is not yet disabled, try to expiate for their sins by suitable means, just as the sick should cure themselves by suitable remedies. Washing off sins cannot be absolute and complete by ritualistic Karma alone. True Bhakti and real knowledge are essential for complete expiation. The wise and righteous devotees rid themselves of their sin committed by thought, word, or deed, by self-denial, perfect celibacy, control of mind and organs, charitable gifts, truthfulness, cleanliness, innocence, pious habits and perfect devotion. Good devotion to Vasudeva removes sins, even as sunshine dispels mist. Tapas and other means cannot so thoroughly and positively remove sins as devotion to Sri Krishna and service to His devotees can. That is the best and safest way. For, mere acts performed by one, who has set his face against Narayana, cannot purify, just as no rivers can purify a liquor pot. Those who set their mind but once on the lotus-like feet of Sri Krishna, charming with excellent qualities, are ever free from fear of Yama or his servants.

The above fact is illustrated in the following story: In the Kanyakubja country lived a Brahmana named Ajāmila, who was attracted to, and wedded, a Sudra servant. Defiled by her association, he left off pious habits and righteous conduct. He maintained his family by ransoming captives, gambling, fraud and theft, causing suffering to others. Thus when he became old, he had ten children, the youngest being a boy called Narayana, who was his great pet. He loved him so much that he never ate, drank or chewed anything before feeding the boy. His life drew to an end; and then, from his death bed, he called out his beloved son Narayana. He beheld three frightful persons with wry faces,

holding nooses in their hands; and quite bewildered, he shrieked out 'Narayana,' and breathed his last. The three Yama Kinkaras set about dragging out Ajamila's Jiva from his heart. Then suddenly Vishnudutas appeared on the scene, having heard their Lord's name uttered by the dying man; and stopped the Kinkaras from their duty, by force.

Yama's servants were put out. But they saw the Lord's servants, quite dignified and good, with eyes like lotus petals, wearing yellow silk raiments, crowns, ear-rings and shining lotus garlands. They were young and beautiful with splendid bows, quivers, swords, Gada, Sankha, Chakra and Padma in their arms. They shone lustrous, dispelling darkness and filling light all round.

Questioned by Yama's servants why they were obstructed from carrying out their master's command, Sri Vishnu's men laughed and asked the former to explain how they were right in enticing away the Jiva of a person, who had the Lord's name on his lips at his last moments. Yama's servants defended themselves and explained thus: "The Jiva is conditioned by the body. He has to follow Vedic Dharma, as revealed to the world by Lord Narayana, and as witnessed by Surya, Agni, Chandra, Marut, Yama and other Devas. The unrighteous Jiva deserves punishment according to the degree of his misdeeds. Virtues or vices earn the sweet or bitter fruits to be consumed later. The present life is an index of the virtuous or vicious course of life in the past and the future."

"Yama, the god of perfect insight, gauges the merits or demerits of the Jiva. To act wisely, the Jiva is endowed with the physical organs, the senses, jnanendriyas, Karmendriyas, and the Manas. With these equipments and Linga Sarira, the Jiva continues in Samsara of joy, grief, fear and affliction."

"This Ajamila had the advantage of a Brahmana birth, Sastraic study and pious habits of gentleness, purity and truth. He was all virtuous and righteous. But, once, when he was returning from a forest after collecting flowers, fruits, sacrificial sticks and Kusa grass, he saw an intoxicated Sudra paramour in romance with a maid servant, dancing, singing, and standing mated shamelessly. Passion of love over-powered the Brahmana and he fell in love with the woman, having lost all reason. He ceased to do

all his religious duties and began propitiating her with all his ancestral wealth and vulgar pleasures. He abandoned his virtuous Brahmana wife of good family, and maintained the big family of the unchaste woman. He led a sinful life, and now he stands condemned. Commanded by our Lord Yama, we are leading the sinner to him to punish him and purify him by his rod."

Hari Nama Smarana: The best Panacea

The Supreme Lord's angels expressed surprise at the explanation of the servants of Yama, the protector of Dharma, and asserted thus: "Ajamila did not deserve any punishment, as he had expiated for sins committed through all his lives, as he uttered the name of Lord Narayana and paved his way even to heaven. The utterance of His name, even but once, which is the means of envisaging the glorious attributes of the Lord, clears a person of all sins of theft, drink, murder, treachery, violence to the life of a woman, preceptor, king, father or cow, or any other objectionable act. The process of such expiation should be followed by frequent discourses of Hari's qualities and forms, for absolute purification of mind, heart and soul. Ajamila uttered the Lord's name when about to die. Such utterance washes off all sin, though it is done conventionally, or in joke, or even in ridicule."

"No doubt, Tapas, Dana, and Japa remove the sins, but they cannot purify the heart, which is purified only by the worship of the Lord's sacred feet. Hari Nama Smarana burns up all sins as fire burns up all fuel. Just as a powerful medicine taken by chance, acts effectively, though the person is ignorant of its virtue, Mantras, including Lord's names, do good positively. Your Lord Yama knows this secret; and you may refer your doubts if any to him."

Thereupon the Yama's servants loosened the cords, and let go the Brahmana's Jiva to his body. They went back and reported the happenings to their Lord. Restored to life, Ajamila bowed to the Lord's angels, who were a feast to his eyes, and who vanished quickly. Ajamila who was attentive to the conversation, became a changed man, repented for his sinful folly and conceived intense devotion. His mind and heart became serene and peaceful. He controlled his mind, senses and breath; and took up praying to the Lord and singing His praise.

Thus, by the momentary presence of the righteous and glorious angels and the sweet truth, that fell from their lips, Ajamila felt a disgust for worldly life, shook off Samsara and retired to Gangadvara or Haridvar. There he practised Yoga, and concentrated his mind on the Supreme Lord. The Lord's angels reappeared before him. He became blessed and shook off his body in the sacred Ganges waters. A golden Vimana waited here; and in it, he and the angels set off to Vaikuntha, the Lord's abode.

By uttering but once Sri Hari's name, the fallen Brahmana, who was being dragged to hell, was released, and was later taken to heaven itself. To seekers of Moksha, there is no other weapon to cut the roots of Karma and sins than Sri Hari Nama Smarana and singing the praise of the glorious Narayana. When a fallen Brahmana attained Vaikuntha itself, for just uttering His name unawares, need it be doubted that singing His name with faith and devotion will secure all prosperity and Vaikuntha itself finally. Blessed are those who read or listen to this story or recount it; and they become sinless, honoured and happy.

Yama accepts the Angel's version: Vahnu is the Supreme Lord

Yamadharmanaraja was appraised of the events by his servants, who were vexed that their master's command was vetoed. They had thought that the ruler of Samyamani-pura, the punisher of the sinners, was all-powerful, and so questioned as to the existence of any higher power; and how the wonderful angels were justified in thwarting Yama's command. Then Yamadharmanaraja contemplated the Lotus-like feet of Sri Hari, and explained thus to his servants that Lord Narayana was the Supreme Being ruling the Universe, with no superior or equal to Him: "He creates, preserves and destroys even Brahma, and one and all in the Universe. The Vedas are His commandments. I am created as an Amsa of Him. So also are created Indra, Nirriti, Varuna, Soma, Agni, Siva, Vayu, Surya, Sadhyas, Maruts, Rudras, Siddhas and others, besides Bhrigu and other sages, in whom Sattva predominates but His Maya operates. The angels you met are blessed with His form, qualities and disposition, and they go about to protect His votaries."

"Even the Rishis and Devas rarely understand the secret of righteousness. How can Siddhas, Asuras, Vidyadharas, Charanas and others know the subtle divine secrets. Brahma, Narada, Siva, Sanatkumara, Kapila, Manu, Prahlada, Janaka, Bhishma, Bali, Sukracharya and I know the truth of the righteousness ordained by the Lord. Pure Dharma is difficult to perceive, and he who knows and realises it attains salvation. Devotion to Him by remembering and uttering His name is the highest Dharma. Ajamila escaped from death, and attained Mukti by virtue of his having merely uttered His sacred name 'Narayana,' without any devotion. The saying of His excellent qualities, deeds, and names with devotion is highly efficacious and ensures the maximum measure of Divine Grace."

"But deluded by His Maya, according to their Jiva Samskara, even great and wise men focus their minds to the Vedas and sacrifices, which are like sweet flowers promising various fruits. However, wiser men set their mind and heart wholly on the Lord of unlimited space, time and power. The latter class of people never merit punishment at my hands, even if they have committed sin; for, Vedas declare that the utterance of Sri Hari's name destroys all sins."

Yamadharma-raja commanded his servants never to go near righteous souls, whose sacred life and deeds are sung by even Devas and Siddhas, and who are protected by the Lord's Gada. Only wicked souls, who are averse to the sweet honey of Mukunda's excellent qualities, deserve punishment. Those who do not sing the Lord's names and their excellence, those not remembering His lotus-like feet, those who do not worship Sri Vishnu, and those whose head does not bow to Sri Krishna even once, deserve punishment in hell.

Yama prayed to the Lord to forgive him and his servants for the mistake of meddling with His votary. Singing the Lord's praises is the most auspicious work, for the complete expiation of even worst sins. The mind does not become so purified by fasting and other vows, as by good devotion and constant listening to and singing the glorious and extraordinary powers of Sri Hari. The common man of desires does Karma to wipe off sin, but that Karma may lead to the growth of another sin. But the wise man,

who tastes the honey in the lotus of His feet, never finds delight in the material desires.

Prachetasas' marriage and progeny

Now, with the present story of the Prachetasas, the thread of the creation is resumed. Prachetasas are the sons of Prachina-barhis, and they rose from the bowels of the sea. They saw the wild growth of trees on the earth, and set about burning it down. King Soma prevented them from the destruction of trees, which were all useful in the world. Trees and plants serve as edibles and food for the living beings. Immobile things form the food for mobile beings, the footless beings for those having feet, the handles for those that have hands, and four-footed for the bi-footed. The Prachetasas were appeased and were further instructed that parents protect children, eyelids protect the eyes, the husband protects the woman, the ruler his subjects, the house-holder the ascetics, and the wise protect and guide the ignorant. The Supreme Lord is the Indweller and real Protector of one and all beings.

The Prachetasas were advised to propitiate the Lord and earn His Grace. King Soma offered his daughter Varkshi to them in marriage. They accepted her hand and led a righteous life. Daksha was born of her and Dakshaprajapati's progeny comprised the Devas, Asuras, and human and other beings, inhabiting the world. Further Prajapati performed austere Tapas at the foot of the Vindhyas to propitiate Lord Hari, by singing the hymn 'Hamsa-guhya', the essence of which runs thus: "Purushottama is the highest Director of the Jiva, and is self-existent and is beyond all means of comprehension. He is the Indweller of the body of Jivas with the vital Pranas, senses, mind, and Tattvas. The Jivas know all these, but forget the Almighty within. The Lord is of unlimited powers and is incomprehensible and unmanifest to ordinary senses. He is enthroned in the Jiva's innermost heart, and is revealed by virtue of Mantras called Samidheni. He is all-blissful and bears every name and every form, which His devotee comprehends."

"Para Brahma is the first cause of everything; and on Him everything depends, and from Him everything originates. With

Him everybody works, to Him everything is related, towards Him everything tends, and He is the absolute agent of everything and in all matters. He is the Perfect Being of endless attributes. He is known by Yoga and Sankhya Sastras. He is the unlimited Supreme Being, who assumes names and forms, for bestowing His Grace on the devotees, worshipping His feet."

While thus Daksha was singing His praises for the grant of his wish, the Lord appeared there, riding on Garuda, and having eight long arms, holding Chakra, Sankha, Gada, a sword, a shield, a bow, cords and arrows. He was clad in Pitambara of azure complexion, with beaming and graceful face and eyes, adorned with Vanamala and brilliant Sri Vatsa and Kaustubha. He wore a most valuable crown and bracelets, radiant ear-rings, zones, rings, braces, anklets and Angadas. His beautiful person was captivating the three worlds; and He was surrounded by Narada, Nanda and other divine attendants. Siddhas, Gandharvas and Charanas were singing His praise. Seeing the glorious Lord, Daksha fell prostrate on the ground and bowed to Him. Due to overpowering joy that filled his heart and senses, he could not utter anything.

The Lord was pleased with Daksha Prajapati's devotion, and blessed him with more progeny, befitting the world. By His Grace, Daksha realised that Tapas was His heart, learning His body, action His form, sacrifices His limbs, virtue His mind, and Devas His breaths. First He existed alone, with nothing within, and nothing without. It was a sleep everywhere with consciousness unmanifest. Brahmanda arose, and Brahma proceeded with the creation.

Then the Lord offered the hand of Asikni, daughter of Panchajanya to Daksha, and bade them to observe righteous duties in married life, and achieve more creation for the world. Showering His Grace on the couple, the Glorious Lord vanished from their view at the very spot.

Daksha's Progeny

By Lord Sri Vishnu's grace, Daksha Prajapati begot on Panchajani 10,000 sons called Haryasvas. They were all alike in

righteous conduct and disposition. Daksha commissioned his dutiful sons to further creation in the world.

They went westwards to the sacred lake Narayanasaras, which was resorted to by Sages and Siddhas, and where the river Sindhu met the sea. A bath in, and a drink of, that water, purified their heart and mind for the righteous course of Paramahamsas.

Dutiful to their father's command, as they were performing austere Tapas for promotion of population, Sage Narada appeared and exhorted them thus:

"Haryasvas! I pity your course of action for creation. You have good inborn intelligence and reasoning power, and you should not take to worthless Karma. The perfect and omnipotent Supreme Being should be your goal, reaching whom, one does not return to miserable Samsara, which only leads to temporary Svarga or to hell itself. Samsara is the Maya of creation and destruction, aimless and endless. Actions are thus futile. The Supreme Lord should therefore be the only resort for your salvation, and therefore surrender yourself to Him."

The Haryasvas realised the truth of the Sage's precept, went round him, and took to the divine path. Narada went his way about the worlds, devoting his mind to the Lord's sacred feet.

Daksha was much pained to know the way his sons adopted, and lamented his sons having become a source of grief to him. However, consoled and blessed by Brahma, Daksha had a thousand sons called Sabalasvas by Panchajani; and they were again commanded to create people. They obeyed and proceeded to Narayanasaras for Tapas. With a clean mind and heart, they worshipped Sri Vishnu, living on water for some months and on mere air for some more months, when Sage Narada appeared and instructed them to take to the divine path of Salvation, as their elder brothers did. They bowed to the sage and followed their brothers' footsteps. Narada went his way.

Daksha Prajapati was very much enraged at Narada's spoiling his sons, by distracting them from his command, and crippling them from discharging their threefold debt to Rishis, Devas and

Pitris, living a righteous householder life. Daksha cursed Narada that he should be homeless in the world; and thus the latter came to wander about, for having tried to destroy a dynasty. Daksha was of the view that by leading the life of a householder, his sons would not only help increase of population; but by actual experience, they could realise intensely the evil of worldly objects; and thus cultivate a real and mature feeling of renunciation and aim at final salvation.

Daksha's daughter: birth of Visvarupa

Daksha Prajapati was very much grieved for his sons having abandoned family life; but he was again consoled by Brahma, and was blessed to have daughters thereafter, instead of sons, who had disappointed him. Daksha begot daughters on his wife Asikni in due course. He gave away ten of them in marriage to Dharma, thirteen to Kasyapa, seventeen to Soma, two each to Bhuta, Angiras and Krisasva, and four to Tarkshya alias Kasyapa himself. These daughters led a happy life, and had progeny, with whose descendants the three worlds are now filled.

In the line, Tvashta begot, on his wife Rochana, two worthy sons Sannivesa and Visvarupa. When Brihaspathi forsook the Devas, who treated him with contempt, the latter requested Visvarupa to be their priest, and he accepted to be their honoured Guru.

How Visvarupa became Deva Guru Vice Brihaspati

Indra had the worship of the three worlds, waited on and praised by Maruts, Vasus, Rudras, Adityas, Ribhus, Visvedevas, Sadhyas, Asvins, Siddhas, Charanas, Gandharvas, Sages, Vidyadharas, Apsaras, Kinnaras, and by even birds and serpents. He was proud of his sweetly panegyrised seat on the throne in the court, with a white umbrella held over him and his queen Sachi seated beside him on the throne, with all insignia of supreme royalty—Chamaras and fans waving with fragrance.

When Indra was thus shining foremost, the Divine Guru. Brihaspati entered the court hall; and Indra neither went forth to meet him nor even rose from his seat. The wise and powerful sage

Angirasa, who was present in the court, noticed Indra's pride of wealth and power, and the discourtesy shown to the Deva Guru. He left the court and went home. Seeing the walk-out, Indra came to his senses and censured himself publicly, for his unrighteous Asura mood. He rose and proceeded to bow his head at the feet of Brihaspati, who however quit the court and became invisible by his supreme Maya powers. Indra became perplexed and had no peace of mind.

Seeing the plight of their lord, the haughty and rowdy Asuras among the courtiers united to fight the Devas. They sought the help of Brahma in their crusade. Brahma sympathised with them, but pointed out that their lord should not have been so proud and shown disrespect to the Brahmana (Brihaspati) of supreme spiritual power. He pointed out also that the Asuras once disregarded their Guru and became weak, but later devoted themselves to Sukracharya for power and took sides against Indra.

Indra was however consoled by Brahma and told that evils do not befall those wise men and kings, who respect the Brahmana, sages, cows and the Supreme Lord Govinda, and win their Grace. Brahma advised Indra to worship the Brahmana sage, Visvarupa of good Divine Grace.

Indra became emboldened and ran up, with the other Devas, to Visvarupa's hermitage, and embraced his feet. The sage blessed him and Indra regained peace of mind; and he realised that an Acharya (Guru who initiates one into the Vedas) was the personification of the Vedas. Similarly in the universe, father is the embodiment of Brahma (the progenitor); the elder brother, the mother, and the sister, are the embodiments of the chief Marut, the earth and kindness respectively. A visiting guest is Dharma personified, and a staying guest is Agni Deva himself. In fine, all beings are a personification of the Supreme Being.

Indra and other gods humbly entreated Visvarupa to be their Deva Guru, and help and guide them to overcome their enemies. The sage could not refuse the request of the world rulers, and acceded to the entreaty, though he was aware that priesthood would lead to loss of spiritual power, and one should not rejoice to

possess the reproachful priesthood. The sage was of a kind and obliging temperament.

Thereafter, Visvarupa, proceeded by virtue of his divine powers to snatch the power and fortune from the hands of Asuras, who, though protected by Sukracharya, were weaker; and made Indra supremely powerful. Further, Visvarupa taught Indra the Sacred Narayana Kavacha or Narayana Varma Mantra, by virtue of which, he protected himself and conquered the hosts of Asuras, as easily as a lion could subdue poorer animals.

Narayanavarma Mantra

By virtue of Narayanavarma Mantra, taught by Visvarupa, Indra subdued the hosts of enemies, their horses, vehicles and wealth of the three worlds, vanquishing the ruffian enemies in battle. The Mantra is very sacred and powerful, and it should be practised with a very pure body and mind, after a bath and Achamana, armed with a Pavitra of Kusa grass, sitting facing north, observing silence, remaining undefiled, and contemplating the different limbs of Lord Narayana, who is the embodiment of wisdom, energy and all Tapas,

The person should contemplate on the lotus-like feet of the Lord, who sits on Garuda, armed with Sankha, Chakra, Charma, Sword, mace, arrows, bow and cords in his eight hands. He should be prayed in His Matsya form for protection from aquatic monsters, as Vamana for protection on the land, and as Trivikrama for safety in the sky. Lord Narasimha is the saviour from Asura hosts in battles and dangers. Dangers on the roads and mountain peaks are warded off by His forms as Varaha and Parasurama respectively.

Likewise, numerous are His forms to save His devotees from the various risks and dangers that people are heir to. To name a few of them for contemplation and prayer, Dattatreya is the master of Yoga; Kapila is the controller of Gunas; Sanatkumara is the Lord of love; Hayagriva bestows Bhakthi; Kurma is the saviour from bells; Dhanvantri gives perfect health and longevity; Rishabha guides the mind; Balabhadra relieves human troubles; Sesha saves from serpents; Dvaipayana guards against ignorance;

Buddha against errors; and Kalki protects from the evils of the unrighteous Kali.

All the above forms and those to follow are the manifestations of the Supreme Lord, one and the same Almighty, who is without an equal or one higher to Him. His Grace is invoked in whatever form, without distinction. Kesava, Govinda, Narayana, Vishnu, Madhusudhana, Madhava, Hrishikesa and Padmanabha protect the humanity morning, noon, afternoon, evening, night, over-night, and at all times.

So do Janardhana and Damodara with Chakra, fierce to the enemies of His devotees. Gada is His Vajrayudha to crush the evil spirits of Yakshas, Rakshasas, Bhutas and demons, afflicting the devotees. Sri Krishna's Sankha drives away Brahmarakshasas, ghosts and other evil spirits. Nandaka is His sword to cut asunder and destroy the sinful enemies. The utterance of the names, forms and powers of these Divine weapons puts to flight Grahas and Bhutas.

In the Narayana Varma Mantra, the Grace of the powerful Garuda, the embodiment of Soma hymns and Vedic songs, and of Visvakshena is invoked. For, Sri Hari's names, forms, weapons and vehicles protect our thought, mind, heart, breaths and senses from all dangers. Protection from the omniscient and glorious Lord is to be sought for all means.

Indra, who learnt this Mantra from Visvarupa, conquered the Asuras in battle, and enjoyed the royal fortunes of the three worlds. People who devoutly learn, or repeat, or at least listen to this Mantra will get over all fear.

Visvarupa is killed: Vritra is born

Though Visvarupa was the Guru of Devas in place of Brihaspati, he had his own bias for Asuras due to his love for his mother, who was of Asuric family. So, though he offered the entire sacrifices openly to Indra, Agni and so on, he gave a share of the offerings under cover to Asuras. This pretended righteousness and double game, enraged Indra, who cut off the three heads

of Visvarupa and ended him. The head with which Visvarupa drank Soma became Kapinjala bird; that used for drinking liquor became Kalavinka bird; and the other with which he ate food became Tittiri bird. The killing of the Brahmana with his hands, subjected Indra to the sin of Brahmahatya.

The loss of Visvarupa pained his father Tvasta intensely, and he poured offerings into the fire for Indra's destruction. From the sacrificial fire, rose a dreadful spirit, of fierce eyes, holding a brilliant trident, roaring aloud and shaking the earth with his foot. Day by day, he grew in size wonderfully, as if to swallow the whole sky, lick up the stars and devour the three worlds. He had terrible tusks and was a terror in all the ten directions. Tvashta named the spirit Vritra, as he could cover the worlds with darkness.

The Devas, in vain, tried to fight their new enemy Vrithra, as he was swallowing up all the missiles hurled at him. Much disappointed, they prayed to the Supreme Lord for protection thus:

"We pray to You, who are the Highest Overlord to whom Brahma, Yama, Vayu, Varuna, Agni, Akasa and Bhu reverently pay their humble homage. You are unlimited by conditions, and are perfect in your own realisation. May You mercifully protect us from the wrath of the dreadful Vritra. Eternal You are, and through Your Mercy and power, and Avatara among gods, Rishis, human beings and even animals, You have protected us, when badly beaten and harassed by enemies. You are the one Lord, Pradhana, Purusha and all, fit to be resorted to as the asylum. Protect us and bestow on us, Your devotees, happiness."

Thus prayed to, the Lord revealed Himself, wielding Sankha, Chakra, Gada and Padma. He was waited upon by sixteen persons like unto Himself, but without Srivatsa and Kaustubha. His eyes were like the autumn full-blown lotus; and the gods were overjoyed at the sight, and fell prostrate; and slowly rising, offered thus their praises to the Lord, who was the highest goal to be reached:

"The Lord is the omnipotent Vasudeva, the First and the Supreme Person, most powerful, auspicious and merciful, of

highest bliss and pure intelligence. The creation is His sport. He has nothing to depend on, and no help to expect from any. By His own will, He creates, preserves and destroys this universe of Sattva, Rajas and Tamas. He delights by Himself, unagitated in, His undiminished and unaffected spiritual essence. He is the absolute Lord of infinite and excellent attributes. Maya is His will, but He is untouched by Maya. He is the ruler of all; He is the essence of everything; and He is in everything. He is the intimate friend of all beings and the Antaryamin of all. He cures the miseries in the hearts of beings by His bright, charming, soothing and smiling looks. The sweet accents from his lips are real drops of nectar. The shade of His lotus-like feet refresh His devotees from the fatigue of Samsara. He is the abode of unlimited bliss, the seer of all, the dweller in every heart, to whom the Devas prayed for protection from Vritra, who was swallowing the worlds and overpowering their race."

The Lord was pleased with the cherishing devotion to Him, directed Indra to go to Rishi Dadhyan, and beg of him his body, which was very strong by virtue of his Yoga, austerities and Tapas. The Rishi was a realised soul, who had taught a sacred Mantra to Asvins, who attained immortality thereby. Dadhyan of Anatarvan family knew the Mantra (Narayanavarma), and he taught it to Tvashtri, who in turn gave it to Visvarupa. The Rishi had good insight into Dharma. The members of his body could be forged into best weapons, imbued with the Lord's Grace, and capable of ending Vritra. The Lord thus blessed the Devas with energy, missiles, weapons and wealth; and vanished from view.

Rishi Dadhyan grants Indra's request & casts off His body

Dadhyan was a great Rishi of Atharva race. He was approached by Indra with his request, as suggested by the Lord. Dadhyan was rejoiced at the request, which he knew was prompted by the Almighty; and he smilingly, but jocularly, said the physical body was a source of pleasure, and death was an unbearable misery to embodied beings. The body was a beloved possession, and no one would part with it, even if Lord Krishna Himself should ask for it.

The Devas however coaxed the Rishi and said that great men of compassion for others were always prepared to do worthy deeds, which were sung by glorious souls. Great men never reject a request for a righteous cause, and never realise pain, just as common people feel.

The Rishi was pleased with the truth of righteousness expressed, and prepared himself to offer them his body. He set his mind on the Supreme Narayana, controlled his senses, Prana, mind and thought, by highest Yoga, realised the truth, cut off ties, and left the body, which fell off. Such is the path of the righteous, who are eager to help others with their wealth, kith, kin, and body, which would otherwise become a dirty prey to others.

Indra was then armed with Vajrayudha forged by Visvakarma out of the bones of the Rishi, and became strengthened and endowed with Lord's power. Thus Indra shone riding on his excellent elephant, surrounded by hosts of Devas, and promising joy to the three worlds.

In great rage, Indra ran up against Vritra and the Asura army. A terrible battle ensued on the banks of the Narmada between Devas and Asuras. This was then the beginning of Treta Yuga.

Indra was accompanied by Rudra, Vasus, Adityas, Asvins, Pitris, Agnis, Maruts, Ribhus Sadhyas and Visvedevas. Vritra offered resistance accompanied by hosts of Asuras—Namuchi, Sambara, Anarvan, Dvimoordhan, Rishabha, Ambara and numerous others. The proud Asuras became bewildered; and they roared like lions; and struck the Devas with maces, bolts, arrows, Prasas, and Mudgaras. The Devas were also the targets of Sulas, axes, swords, Sataghnis, Bhusundhis and other weapons and missiles. The clouds of arrows very dense. The weapons and missiles were cut into a thousand pieces with divine weapons by the quick-handed Devas. Exhausting all weapons and missiles, the Asuras threw trees, stones and peaks on the Devas, who resisted them ably.

Asuras became filled with consternation and utter disappointment, as their repeated efforts became ineffectual, just like abusive and harsh words uttered by vulgar people on the noble

persons. Their pride was broken and their energy sapped; and they were taking to their heels. The army was broken and scattered. Vritra was terrified, but pretended to laugh; and encouraged his Asura leaders Namuchi, Pullaman, Maya and others to be undaunted. He told them that death was inevitable for every one born, and that they should not be afraid of it. He preached that the most desirable way of ending life was by either controlling breaths, by Yoga practice in contemplation of Para Brahma, or by fighting in a battle as warrior and giving up the ghost without turning.

Indra fights Vritra, who expresses His devotion to God

Vritra, seeing that the Asuras were frightened and his army was shattered and scattered, became indignant and impatient; but, however, he offered resistance to the Devas with his own prowess and energy. Vritra challenged his enemy to fight him, and not lay hands cowardly on his fleeing enemy. His terrible roar, full of rage, stunned the Devas, as if by lightning. The mighty Vritra marched against the gods, with his trident and trod down under his feet the opposing army.

Indra was enraged and threw his Gada against the enemy, who however took hold of it, and hit Indra's elephant on its head with the same Gada. The elephant, Iravata, was not a little injured, and ran away in great affliction, with Indra on its back. Indra patted his elephant, infused courage and health into it by his divine touch, and stood forward in battle with his new Vajrayudha in hand.

At the sight of the Vajra, Vritra was much perturbed, and addressed Indra thus, and further offered prayers to the Supreme Hari:

"O wicked Indra, You have slain my brother, who was your preceptor and a Brahmana. My trident will today break your heart, hard like stone. By this sinful act, you are destitute of shame, nobility, mercy, good name and fame. Even cannibals will censure you, and your body will be split up and exposed to vultures. I shall propitiate the chief Bhutas; and even if you cut off my head with the Vajra, I shall have my debt discharged, after even offering my own body to Bhutas, and shall attain to the rank

and file of great heroes of hallowed memory. Vajra is sharpened and strengthened by Hari's energy and Dadhichi's Tapas. It is not your power but Vishnu's. I know that victory, fortune and merit are on the side of the Divine Vajrayudha. I also know that the Lord does not confer wealth and power on His devotees on the earth, as such assets only blind them and create in them passion, concern, anxiety, insolence, discord, misery, and physical pain. The lot of His votaries is His Grace and not Trivarga of Dharma, Artha and Kama."

"O Lord Hari, help me to remember Your excellent qualities, sing your praises, and do Your duties, and remain a servant of the servants, worshipping Your feet. I do not desire anything than the dust of Your feet. I desire not earthly wealth, heavenly position, Brahma's seat, kingship, lordship over Rasatala, Yogic powers or even Moksha. I want You and Your Grace. I yearn to see You. Rid me of my attachment, by force of Your Maya, to the body, wife, children, house, and the ocean of Samsara; and bless me with intimacy to Your devotion.

Indra slays Vritra

Realising his fate against Indra's Vajra, and deeming death preferable to doubtful victory, Vritra was eager to die in battle, and ran up to attack Indra. He hurled his trident barbed with spikes at Indra. Indra was undaunted at the sight of the fire brand of trident; and with his Vajra, he cut off the trident and one arm of Vritra. Much enraged, Vritra dashed against Indra with a Parigha and dealt him and his elephant a severe blow, at which Vajra fell down from Indra's hand. Vritra's splendid feat was applauded by both the Asuras and Devas; but the critical condition of Indra evoked great concern in the minds of the latter. Indra felt ashamed even to pick up the fallen Vajra, when Vritra sportfully addressed the former thus:

"Take courage, take up Vajra and fight on. The Lord is the cause of victory or defeat, and not you or I, nor our valour. The Lord in the form of Time is the real cause of energy, strength, dauntlessness, perseverance, mortality and even Moksha. He controls and guides everything. The Jiva is nowhere in the absence of His Grace and help. If one has a good time, health, wealth,

longevity, authority, name and fame fall to his lot. Wise men should therefore be unchanged by glory or inglorious, victory or defeat, happiness or misery, life or even death. Look at me, without an arm and without my weapon, still striving my best to fight. We may live or die in the battle field, which is a gambling house, where the arrows are the dice, and vehicles are the boards."

Indra appreciated Vritra's address, and felt really encouraged to fight on. He took up his Vajraayudha, and dignifiedly replied Vritra thus:

"I am pleased with the tenor of your mind, your wisdom, your devout reliance on the Lord. You have got over Sri Vishnu's Maya, and have triumphed over Asura nature. You are a good devotee of the Lord, with a good Sattvic nature. By virtue of your high devotion to Lord Hari, you are sporting in the sea of nectar; and the shallow waters of pits and wells, as in this fight, are of little concern to you."

Thus righteously encouraged, Indra and Vritra fought on. Vritra brandished his Parigha and hurled it at Indra with his left hand. But Indra cut it off and his enemy's other arm also by his Vajra. With both his arms cut at the root and blood streaming, the Asura stood like a mountain, whose wings were chopped off.

Vritra was terribly enraged. He wide opened his mouth the lower jaw touching the earth and the upper jaw reaching the skies. His tongue was terrible and his tusks were dreadful. The wide mouth threatened to devour the world. The Asura then devoured Indra and his elephant, just as a big serpent would devour a frog. The Devas and sages were terror-stricken.

The skilful Indra calmly cut open the Asura's stomach with his Vajra and came out; and with it, he chopped off his enemy's head. Then the celestial drums were sounded, and the overjoyed Gandharvas, Siddhas and Rishis showered flowers over Indra and sang his praises. As all the people looked on, the spirit of Vritra issued forth from his body to attain Aloka.

Indra performs Asvamedha Yaga

The end of Vritra was a glad news, and the people were all happy. Indra had however no peace of mind. He had himself slain Vritra, who though an Asura, was a Brahmana. The sin of Brahmahatya, that he had committed, troubled his mind. The Devas, Rishis, Pitris, Bhutas, Brahma, Rudra, and all others returned to their respective abodes, quite cheerful and happy. Indra alone was unhappy; and seeing his misery, the Rishis suggested to him to perform Asvamedha Yaga, in expiation of the Brahmahatya. They advised that the Yaga would wash off even the sin of slaying the whole world. This is no wonder, as even mere singing the Lord's name itself cleanses off great sins. Asvamedha propitiates the glorious Lord, and therefore it is a great panacea for all sins and evils.

Indra was very sensitive, and was a man of good self-respect. He could not therefore put himself up with the censure of the world for his act. Further, Brahmahatya was rushing towards him in the form of a Chandala woman, old, trembling and suffering from pthisis, and clad in blood-soaked clothes. The atmosphere was charged with her abnoxious breaths, stinking like rotten fish.

To be rid of the sight and the sin, Indra hastened to the Manasa lake and was there unperceived for long years, pondering how to cleanse himself of his sin. At the time, Nahusha ruled the Indra's celestial region. But he became proud of power, position and wealth; and Indra's wife Sachi, cursed his fall. Indra's contemplation of Sri Hari at the Manasa lake for the long period had freed him from the sin of Brahmahatya, and Indra returned to Svarga and was cordially welcomed by his subjects. He however undertook to finalise his expiation of the sin by performing the sacrifice of Asvamedha with the help of Rishis and sages, well versed in the Vedas; and thus worship the Perfect Almighty. The sacrifice was conducted on a large scale to propitiate the Supreme Lord. Lord Sri Hari was immensely pleased, and Indra became blessed and quite sinless.

So sacred is the memory of the Lord and the sacrifices to propitiate Him, that reading or listening to, such Divine accounts as this, will secure people divine blessings and glory, success in all

their attempts, victory over enemies and all auspiciousness; and assure physical and spiritual welfare.

Vritrasura's previous life

Vritra was an Asura of Rajasic and Tamasic nature. Even sages and Rishis of pure Sattva and of good mind and heart, fall betimes to be devoted to the feet of Sri Mukunda. It is therefore a surprise how the Asura, who harassed all the worlds, cherished strong devotion to Sri Krishna during his raging battle with Indra. It will be of interest to know the previous life of the Asura.

Long ago, Chitraketu was the king of Surasena country. The king was young, beautiful, generous, learned, powerful, wealthy, and glorious. His kingdom was very prosperous. He had several wives but no children. With all his riches and beautiful queens the king was unhappy.

One day, Sage Angiras came to the king, who ceremoniously received him. Kind and cordial enquiries ensued, and the sage elicited that want of an issue was troubling the king's mind. The worshipful and merciful sage, son of Brahma, worshipped Tvashtri, caused Charu to be cooked and offered. The remainder of the sacrificial offering was given to Kritadyuti, the foremost queen; and the sage blessed the king and the queen with a son, who proved to be their grief and joy. The queen conceived and bore a son in due course, to the extreme joy of one and all. The joyous king had the benediction of Brahmanas, performed Jatakarma pompously, and made liberal gifts of gold, silver, cloths, ornaments, villages, houses, elephants, and thousands of good cows. The king showered on people what all was desired.

The child was lovely and was very dear to the parents. The mother-queen's co-wives felt very jealous, seeing the king very fond of the child and its mother. They reproached themselves for their childlessness, and the king's indifference to them. Their burning jealousy waxed strong, and they lost good sense. They administered poison to the child, which died.

The queen-mother did not know the horrible misdeed done when she saw the child later. She thought the child was sleeping

too long. A nurse noticed that the child was dead, with its eyes wide open. She ran to the queen, who hastened alas to find the child lifeless. She and the king fell down and swooned. One and all shared the distress and shed tears; but the cruel co-wives pretended grief. The king and queen lamented long and cursed their fate and the merciless Yama. Being unfortunate, they no more saw their darling of sweet smile, cheerful looks, lotus-like face, and charming and lisping accents. With unbearable grief, the parents wailed aloud; and, men and women present joined them and they seemed lifeless. Seeing their wretched plight, sage Narada and Angiras appeared there.

Narada and Angiras console the King

Chitraketu was overpowered with grief, and lay like a dead man beside the child, when sages Narada and Angiras brought him to his senses with soft and convincing words. They instructed him thus: "O king, in vain you are wailing. Please know how the child is related to you in the previous, present and future set up of the creation. Time brings together or separates embodied Jivas, just as sand is heaped up or washed away by water currents. It is all the Lord's Maya. Creation, protection and destruction of beings happen as per His Will. Birth, growth, decline and destruction are conditions affecting the body, and their relation to the Jiva is a misapprehension due to Karma. The fearful Samsara does not affect a man in deep sleep. Likewise, one without Abhimana or Ahamkara is unaffected by the miseries of Samsara. So, forget thy darkness of 'I' and mine,' and devote your mind on the Supreme Hari, and you will be blessed."

Thus consoled, the king wiped his face, and made kind enquiries of the sages. He worshipped the sages and sought further light to clear his blinding darkness and get wisdom. Angiras, who had blessed the king with a son, and Narada, the sacred son of Brahma, proceeded to enlighten the king thus:

"You are a good devotee of the Lord. We pity that you are immersed in darkness of Samsara and progeny. You desired a son, and you were given. The desire has ended in this misery. The clear lesson therefore is that you should do Nishkama Karma (desireless

action), and act as a matter of duty, dedicating every act of yours to the Supreme Lord. Forget your misery of loss of son, and devote yourself to Lord Sri Hari and His votaries. The conditions relating to the household, wife, wealth, kingdom, earth, strength, treasure, servants, ministers and all, are all transient; and they are all causes of some temporary joy, but of continuing grief, delusion fear and affliction. The physical body and ignorance cause the various sorrows and afflictions. So renounce these false states, and seek after truth and Divine Grace."

"Piously and devoutly learn Mantropanishad and concentrate your mind for seven nights, and you will see Lord Sankarshana. The ancients got over illusion, betook themselves to the feet of Sankarshana and attained Salvation. May you be wise and attain to that highest position."

**The Child's Jiva re-enters the body and gives good precepts:
Chitraketa propitiates Ananta and gets His Grace**

At the bidding of Sage Narada, the child's Jiva came and reentered its dead body. The child came to life in the presence of its parents, the sages and all the rest. All were happy.

To the surprise of the parents, kith and kin, the child spoke thus: "By force of Karma, I am tossed through different bodies of men and beasts. You have been my parents just here. In births and rebirths, we meet as relations, cousins, enemies, friends, haters or so. The Jiva wanders through many bodies and lives; just as gold and other merchandise go from place to place, and from one dealer to another by turns. My cow today, is another man's after a sale; and thereafter, I have no attachment for it. Jiva is eternal, but it is transient in relationship to other Jivas, invested with body, as per his personal Karma. But Atma is eternal and subtle, never subject to any change. He is all-powerful, creating, protecting and destroying the universe as He wills. To Him, there is none beloved, none hateful, and none related or unrelated. He is the one witness of all beings and their Karmas, good and bad. He has no pleasure or pain, and is not conditioned by the body or other environments."

The Jiva then departed, and the parents and others felt astonished. They ceased sorrowing as their affection was cut off, by the child's mature precepts. The child's body was removed and due rites were performed. The child taught them to be free from grief, delusion, fear and distress. The co-wives, who had poisoned the child, felt ashamed for their crime of infanticide, and repented on the banks of the Yamuna and did penance. King Chitraketu recovered his good sense. He poured oblations of water at the Yamuna, controlled his breath, and made obeisance to Sages Narada and Angirasa, the blessed sons of Brahma. Pleased with the king, the sages taught him a Mantra, in which the prayer to the Supreme Person was this:

"Salutation to the omnipotent Lord Vasudeva, Pradyumna, Aniruddha, and Sankarshana. You are pure knowledge, perfect bliss, self-delighted and serene. You are the Supreme ruler of the senses, whose body is the Universe. You are the Supreme Person on whom the universe stands. You pervade everything in and out, but are untouched by Pranas, mind, thought and senses. Still they all function by Your grace. You are the Highest Person of unlimited power, endless forms and activities. I bow to you, my beloved Lord, whose lotus-like feet are worshipped in great love with lotus-buds by Satvatas with joined hands."

The prayer is all praise of the Lord, but desireless, as it should be. Sages Narada and Angiras then departed to Brahma Loka. King Chitraketu observed a week's course of worship and meditation, with perfect control of mind, and subsisting on mere water. His mental powers highly expanded, and he was blessed with Lordship over Vidyadharas. He further gained access to the feet of Sesha or Ananta

He saw the Lord in the midst of great Siddhas. He saw Him white like lotus stalk, clad in violet clothes, adorned with brilliant crown, Keyuras, zones, and bracelets. His countenance was gracious and His eyes were lotus-red. At His sight, the king was freed from all sins and impurities. In perfect silence and profound devotion, he prostrated himself before the Lord. His intense devotion and love overpowered him, and he slowly regained calmness of mind, recovered the power of speech, and addressed Lord Ananta thus:

“You are the glorious Lord of the world, its origin, existence and dissolution. You are the smallest Paramanu, as well as largest, one of the highest dimensions, having this Brahmanda, together with the numerous universes as an atom on Your head. Human brutes they are who thirst for worldly objects and worship Your Amsas in other gods, but not You, the Supreme Lord. You are the one glorious Lord, without one higher, or at least one equal; and it is no wonder that all sin is dissolved on seeing You. Even by hearing Your name but once, a Chandala too attains release from Samsara. Your sight cleanses our heart of all impurity. You are the Atma of the whole world, and You know everything done by every being in this world: and there is nothing to be made known to You. I bow to You of a thousand heads and of immense powers.”

Lord Ananta was immensely pleased with the devotion of Chitraketu, king of Vidyadharas, and blessed him in the following words: “I am the Antaryamin and support of all beings. Sabda Brahma and Para Brahma are my eternal forms. Atma pervading the world, and the world resting on Atma are both pervaded by Me, and are both superimposed by Me. The whole creation is My Maya. Paramatma (My will) is a mere witness. Ignorance leads to Samsara of going from birth to birth, and suffering death after death. In human life, Jnana and Vijnana can be developed. He who fails in this finds happiness nowhere. Desireless action done as a matter of duty is fruitful; and action prompted by desires brings on great suffering, contrary results and fear. Men should be completely unaffected by experiences in sleep, dream and wakefulness; and should find true knowledge, wisdom and devotion to Me. Remember these precepts, act carefully, and you will be blessed with knowledge, wisdom and highest good.”

King Chitraketu is born as Vritrasura

King Chitraketu, ruler of Vidyadharas, spent a happy life in the villages of the great Kulachalas, where everything could be had for mere wish. He was there a hundred thousand years, strong in body, organs and senses. He was much respected by Siddhas and Charanas; and he made Vidyadhara women sing the praises of Lord Hari.

Going about in Vishnu Vimana, he once saw god Siva surrounded by sages, Siddhas and Charanas. Siva had embraced with his arms his consort Parvati, who was seated on his lap. Chitraketu laughed at them, and even slighted them for their embrace, without a sense of decency or shyness. The glorious Siva smiled and kept quiet. Parvati was however angry at the proud king, who considered her shameless. She cursed the king that he should fall into a sinful Asuric life.

Chitraketu was alarmed, alighted from his divine car, bowed, and begged Parvati for pardon. He said: "Mother, I accept your curse. What is to happen is predestined. In the wheel of Samsara, a creature deluded by ignorance wanders about, and gets pleasure and pain, always and everywhere. Neither himself nor any other could be blamed as having caused them. Due to the Lord's Maya, resulting from one's Karma, bondage or release, pleasure or pain, come about as misery or happiness, heaven or hell, grace or curse. To Him none is beloved or hateful, none a relation or cousin, and none an enemy or friend. He is pure and is equal to all, and everywhere. Still one's Karma is displayed as virtue or vice, pleasure or pain, good or bad, salvation or bondage, and even birth or death. O Goddess, I do not seek freedom from your curse, but I seek your pardon, if you consider my expression as unrighteous."

Thus appeasing Siva and Parvati, Chitraketu rode away in his car. Siva spoke thus to his queen in the assembly of the Devas, Rishis, Daityas, Siddhas and others: "See how noble-minded and desireless the king has been. He is a great devotee of Sri Hari. Such people are afraid of nothing. Their highest purpose is devotion to the Supreme Lord, and they care not for Svarga or even Moksha. Ignorance causes a sense of difference between the opposite pairs of good and bad. Wise men make intense devotion to Sri Vasudeva. Their strength is wisdom and renunciation. None of us, Brahma, Sanatkumara, Narada or other great sages, who regard ourselves as separate rulers and great, could fathom the Lord's course or His true nature. He is the Indweller of all beings, and is beloved of all of them. Chitraketu has a serene and blessed nature. He regards everything equally. There is therefore no wonder in the high-souled person's behaviour before us."

The truly righteous devotee accepted the curse, though he was capable of pronouncing a counter curse upon Parvati. Thereupon, Chitraketu assumed the body of an Asura and rose out of Tvashti's sacred fire (called Dakshinagni), and became famous as Vritra. His knowledge and wisdom remained unclouded. This story of the high souled king and the Supreme Lord's glories is highly auspicious for those who read or listen to the same.

Aditi's other descendants and Maruts

Savita's wife Prisni bore Savitri, Vyahriti, Trayi, Agnihotra, Pasu, Soma, Chaturmasya and Maha Makhas. Bhaga's wife Siddhi brought forth Mahiman, Vibhu, and a daughter called Assis. Dhatri had four wives, and each bore a child. Samanantara's sons were Purishyas. Varuna's son was Bhrgu.

Sage Valmiki was born out of an ant hill; and Rishis Agastya and Vasistha were the sons of Mitra and Varuna. Revati had three sons, and Indra also had three sons called Jayanta, Vrishabha and Midhavan. Prahlada and Bali were the sons of Hiranyakasipu and Hiranyaksha respectively, who were born of Kasyapa on Diti. Their progeny covers a wide field. Bana was the eldest son of Bali. The forty nine Maruts were the sons of Diti. They were childless, and were converted into Devas by Indra.

It will be of interest to know how Indra turned the Asuras to divine nature. Diti's sons had been killed by Indra; and she was grief-stricken, and revengeful against Indra. She liked to have a son, who could quell Indra's pride. Kasyapa was touched by his wife's earnestness to have a worthy son. He told her that the desire of a wife, faithful to her husband, was sure to be fulfilled. The husband was the supreme lord for a woman. Sri Hari dwelt in the heart of all beings. So devotion to the husband was devotion to the Supreme Ruler Himself. Kasyapa granted Diti's prayer for an immortal son. He did not however like his wife's intention of their son killing Indra.

Kasyapa instructed Diti to observe a vow for one year to achieve her object. The conditions of the vow were that no beings should be harmed or cursed, and no lies uttered. Nails should not

be pared nor hair cut. Nothing inauspicious should be touched. She should not be angry or talk to bad people. Unwashed clothes and used flowers should not be worn. The remainder of the food eaten by others, or meat food, should not be taken. She should not go out without a proper wash, and without a proper wearing apparel. There should be no needless talk. Sleeping at dawn and dusk was prohibited. One should go to bed after a wash, with mind and body clean, and with head placed towards the east or south. The breakfast should follow worship of cows, Brahmanas, Lakshmi and Sri Hari. Sumangalis should be worshipped with flowers, sandal paste, ornaments and other presents; and the Supreme Lord should be contemplated as present within oneself.

Diti strictly observed the vow and cherished her object. Indra knew his aunt Diti's intention, and he wanted to guard himself against any evil. So he attended on her supplying flowers, fruits, leaves, roots, shoots and water. He waited upon her like a hunter in the guise of a deer, to find out any defect in her observance and doom her vow. One day, she was defiled; and being tired, she did not wash herself and her feet, but slept away. The vow was doomed; and the waiting Indra managed to cut the brilliant infant in her womb into seven pieces with his Vajrayudha, and each piece again into seven others. However, each of these became instantly embodied with all limbs. These forty nine are the Maruts, who implored to Indra for mercy. The latter was compassionate to his brother Maruts, and took them to his side as his associate Devas, devoted to the Supreme Lord. Thus Diti had forty nine worthy sons, instead of one son she prayed for. Indra prayed to his aunt for pardon. He and the Maruts bowed to her, took leave of her, and proceeded to the celestial region, quite happy and peaceful.

Pumsavana Vrata described

By Pumsavana Vrata, Sri Vishnu is propitiated. It is the means of obtaining all desires by women. It is commenced in the beginning of the Margasira month. The woman doing it should take permission of her husband and the Brahmanas, and listen to the account of the Maruts' birth. She should bathe, put on white silks and ornaments, and should worship, before dawn, the Supreme Lord Narayana with His consort Sri Lakshmi.

She should bow to Lord Narayana and Sri Lakshmi, who are perfect in all attainments and power. The Lord is rich in mercy, wealth, prowess, glory, energy, and all excellent attributes. Sri Lakshmi is the mother of the world with immense power. Their praise or Mantra should be repeated, day after day, with concentrated mind, and worship done with Arghya, Padya and Acamana, followed by offerings of clothes, sacred thread, ornaments, sandal paste, flowers, incense, lights, and other presents, with all attention and devotion. Food also should be offered and twelve food oblations should be offered into the fire. Sri Lakshmi Narayana, who confers all boons and blessings, should be devoutly worshipped everyday, repeating the Mantra ten times. He is the Supreme Ruler manifesting all sacrifices, performances and activities. He is the Atman of all embodied beings, and Sri Lakshmi forms the body, senses, thought and light. They are most Supreme, bestowing all blessings on the three worlds.

Sri Hari should be worshipped again with a submissive and devoutful heart, having smelled some remnant of the articles offered to the Lord, and singing His praises. The husband should be devoutly bowed to and all services done to Him, full of affection. Proper observance of this Vrata with perfect control of mind is fruitful to both the couple.

The Vrata is intended to please Vishnu; and when once begun, there should be no break in the middle. With great piety, Brahmanas and Sumangalis should be honoured with presents of flowers, sandal paste, fruits, ornaments, etc. Having completed the Vrata, the food offered to the Lord should be first taken for personal purification and attainment of all desires.

After one year's observance as above, the wife should fast on the last day of the **Kartika** month. The following morning, Sri Hari should be worshipped, and the husband should offer twelve oblations of rice cooked with milk, and mixed with butter. The Lord should be contemplated in twelve forms as present in the twelve Suryas; and Brahmanas should be fed, presenting them also sugar, water and drinking vessels. She should receive the benediction of the Brahmanas, devoutly bow to them, and break her fast.

In the company of relations and the priest, the husband should offer the remnant of the Charu to the wife, as ensuring a good issue, as well as good fortune. The Lord will be pleased and the woman will be blessed with beauty, health, wealth, issue, long life, good reputation, and all prosperity.

The Vrata is a very sacred one for one and all, granting all desires, and banishing all ailments and misery, and ensuring God's grace, so essential for the attainment of all happiness here and hereafter. The Vrata is so great that he, who reads or listens to the above account, will derive boundless satisfaction and auspiciousness.



VII SKANDHA

The Supreme Lord is impartial

THE Supreme Being is the embodiment of perfect bliss, and is untouched by Prakṛti Gunas of Sattva, Rajas and Tamas. His glories are wonderful, and promote His votaries' devotion to Him. They are meritorious and are sung by Sage Narada and other Sages. The lives of the wicked, who do not sing His praises, are wasted. Blessed are those who listen to or sing the Lord's glory.

He is impartial; and, according to Kala and Karma, He is on the side of Devas, Rishis, Asuras, Yakshas or Rakshasas, as per the time for domination of Sattva, Rajas or Tamas. To illustrate this, the following topic related by Sage Narada to Yudhishthira at the Rajasuya Sacrifice is worth mention.

The Lord is absolute. Whatever He does is for the good of others. He is never harmful. To attain Him, one should contemplate Him whether through devotion, friendship or love, or even fear or hatred. The worm, imprisoned by a wasp in its hole, so intensely and constantly thinks of the latter with fear, that it attains to the form of that wasp. So also, intense contemplation helps the individual. The Gopis attained His grace through love, Kamsa through fear, Chaidya through hatred, Vrishnis through relationship and affection, and several others through friendship and devotion.

Sisupala and Dantavakra were important attendants of Sri Hari; and they fell from their place under the curse of sages. Here is their story: Once, Chaturmukha Brahma's sons Sanandana and others visited Vishnuloka during their tour of the three worlds. They were old, but looked like boys 5 or 6 years old, and were sky-clad. As they tried to enter Vaikuntha, the two Dvarapalakas at the gate prohibited their entry. The boy-looking visitors became angry, and cursed the divine gate-keepers to quit the place, and be reborn in the sinful Asura race. The young merciful sages later

allowed that they might return to Vaikuntha after three Asura births. They were born in this world as Hiranyakasipu and Hiranyaksha (the honoured sons of Diti), who were killed by Sri Hari by His Avatars of Sri Narasimha and Sri Varaha. Their next birth was as Ravana and Kumbhakarna, who harassed the worlds; but were killed by Sri Rama. Their third birth was as Sisupala and Dantavakra, who became free from the sage's curse, by the stroke of Sri Krishna's Chakra, and attained Sri Hari's presence again as His Dvarapalakas.

Hiranyakasipu's rage at Sri Varaha's killing Hiranyaksha

When his brother was slain by Sri Hari, Hiranyakasipu was sorely oppressed with anger and grief. His eyes were burning with anger, and he looked terrible with horrible tusks, knit brows and dark face. He summoned his leaders of Danavas and Daityas, and commanded them thus:

"My brother Hiranyaksha was killed by Sri Hari at the instance of our weak enemies. I shall gratify my brother and ease the pain in my heart, by cutting off Hari's head with my trident. That done, the celestials whose life is Vishnu will wither away. Now I want you to go to the earth, which is made prosperous by Brahmanas and Kshatriyas; and slay those who are engaged in Tapas, sacrifices, Vedic studies, purifying vows and charitable gifts. Vishnu has His root in religious performances. He is the embodiment of righteousness and He is the one support of Devas, Rishis, Pitris and all Dharma. Destroy and root out Brahmanas, Vedas, Varnas and Asramas; and please me quickly."

The Danava leaders bowed their heads earnestly, and began their campaign on earth against all righteousness. They set fire to towns, villages, stalls, parks, fields, gardens, hermitages, cowpens, farmers and cowherds. They broke down dams and bridges, ramparts and towers; and mercilessly felled fruit yielding trees. The celestial regions became abandoned.

Hiranyakasipu was pleased with the devastation caused; but lamented the deceased brother, and consoled his brother's sons, their mother and his own mother Diti with soothing words. He told them that attachment to the body constituted Karma and

Samsara, and that birth, death and sorrow were a result of want of discernment and discrimination. Diti and others, who were lamenting, felt consoled by the instruction that this body of the Atma was the result of delusion, but being a product of Bhutas, it was different from Atma, just as a house was different from the occupant. The bodies were like bubbles formed of the particles of water. Like earthenware, made of earth and fire, the body was subject to change and destruction. The bodies came into existence, and completely went out of existence, as a result of the various actions, depending on Lingasarira. Though the Jiva remained in association with Prakriti or body, he was not affected by the conditions of Prakriti, for he was quite different in nature from it. Just as fire in the fuel was different from it, the Jiva in the body remained distinct from the body. The sky pervaded everything, but stuck to nothing. Likewise, the Jiva, though associated with the body, the senses and other things, as their support, was still distinct from them all.

So, the lesson we have is that the eternal Jiva forms attachments to various bodies, constituted of the five Bhutas, the senses and the mind; and identifies himself with them, though he is really distinct from them. In due course, by force of wisdom, he abandons them; and gets himself free. As long as Atma is attached to the body, Karma continues to be the cause of bondage; and so long, Maya continues; and the perverse undesirable state leading to misery is seen. Everything in the range of senses is unsubstantial and fanciful, as is a mere dream. Pleasure, pain and the like are all false attachments.

Hiranyakasipu's Tapas and prayers to Brahma

Though Hiranyakasipu consoled his kith and kin, he was himself revengeful. He wanted to become an unequalled warrior and one absolute ruler, quite invincible and destitute of old age and mortality. He went out to the Mandara mountain and did Tapas of a very fearful character, with his arms stretched upwards, eyes fixed in the sky, and standing on his great toes on the earth. With his glowing and matted hair, he shone radiant like the fire of Pralaya, shooting off rays of heat and light. The fire and fumes from his head spread everywhere, afflicting the world above,

below and on the sides. Rivers and seas boiled, the earth tottered, planets and stars dropped down, and the ten cardinal points flamed forth.

Scorched by that fire, the Devas abandoned Svarga; and they went to Brahma in Brahmaloaka, and represented that they were unable to stay in Svarga, being burnt by the fire of Tapas of the great Daitya; and prayed to him to put it out. By virtue of Tapas and Yoga, Brahma occupied his exalted place over all other regions, and the Daitya desired to come up to such an exalted position by his Tapas and Yajna. The obstinate Daitya should be quelled by the great Brahma, who should promote the origin, welfare, prosperity, protection and exaltation of the Brahmanas and the kine.

Brahma was compassionate; and immediately went to the hermitage of the Daitya, accompanied by Bhrigu, Daksha and others. The Daitya was covered over with an ant-hill, grass and bamboos; and his skin, flesh and blood had been preyed upon by ants. Brahma bade the Daitya of Kasyapa race to arise; and pleased with his Tapas, Brahma offered to confer boons on him. Instantly, he conferred all blessings and also immortal sight. Brahma sprinkled water, from his jar of unfailing virtue, over the moth-eaten body of the Daitya; and there arose from the ant-hill a youth perfect in his limbs, endowed with energy, endurance, strength and adamant frame. Hiranyakasipu bowed to Brahma, and offered his praises thus:

"Salutations to thee, who is the support of Sattva, Rajas and Tamas. You are the first cause, the embodiment of knowledge and wisdom, manifested through the modifications of Prana, Indriyas, Manas and Buddhi. You are the controller of the mobile and the immobile through Mukhyaprana. You are the protector of all beings, ruling their mind, heart and senses. You direct the Bhutas, Gunas and Vasanas. The three Vedas constitute your body. You are the Antaryamin of all living beings. You are the changeless Atma of exalted position, unborn and unlimited. You are the support and guide for the living world. You hold in your womb the golden egg of the universe. You are the perfect Brahma, far different from Prakriti of three Gunas. This huge and gross world

is your body. You are the Atma, the most ancient and perfect person. You pervade all this universe by your unlimited and unmanifest force. I desire three boons from you; first, that I should not meet with death at the hands of any being of thy creation; second; that I may not meet with death indoor or outdoor, during day or night, from any one, by means of weapons, on the earth, in the sky, at the hands of men or beasts, by means of the dead or living, be they Suras, Asuras or the great Nagas; and third, that I may have the boon of being without an equal or an opponent in combat; and that I may be the one ruler of all embodied creatures. Lastly, let me be the great power over all the protectors of the world and others of their own and of Thine, who are powerful by Tapas and Yoga, in fine, that power which will never diminish."

Hiranyakasipu harasses Indra & deprives Him of Svarga

Brahma was very much pleased with the Daitya's Tapas, and conferred on him the three boons desired. By virtue of Brahma's grace, the Daitya was endowed with a golden body. The latter remembered the destruction of his brother, and cherished hatred towards the Supreme Lord Narayana. With vengeance, the Asura conquered all the cardinal points and the three worlds; and subdued the Devas, Asuras, Kings, Gandharvas, Nagas, Siddhas, Charanas, Vidyadharas, Rishis, Yamas and Manus. He subdued Yakshas, Rakshasas, Pisachas, Pretas and Bhutas, and declared paramount victory.

He set up his throne in Svarga, the celestial region of great splendour, charming with beautiful gardens; and took his seat in the very place of the great Indra, constructed by Visvakarma, the centre of all wealth and prosperity, where the steps are built of coral; floors are paved with precious emeralds; walls are built of white crystals; and the rows of columns are built of cat's eyes. There, the canopies are of various colours and of wonderful workmanship; and the seats are wrought with rubies; and the foamy beds are adorned with wreaths of pearls. Damsels fill the mansions with sweet sounds; and their charming faces are reflected on the floors of precious jewels.

There ruled Hiranyakasipu of great strength and a proud heart, as the conqueror and one ruler of the world. He enjoyed his life, his feet being worshipped by Devas, groaning under his yoke of an iron hand. He was always intoxicated with strong wines, with fiery and swimming eyes. All the protectors of the world, except Brahma, Vishnu and Siva, waited on him with tributes and presents in their hands. As he was seated on the throne of Indra, his praises were sung by Visvvasu, Tumburu, Narada, Gandharvas, Siddhas, Rishis, Vidyacharas and Apsaras women. He appropriated for himself the offerings and sacrifices performed by people of different Varnas and Asramas. Svarga yielded him everything desired, the earth bore rich harvest, and the sky was a field of all wonders. Mountains afforded him pleasure grounds; trees yielded him flowers and fruits in all seasons; and he singly exercised all the powers of all the world protectors. In spite of all his power and enjoyment, he was not satisfied, as he had no control over his senses. Saturated with power, he was haughty; and acted in violation of Sastras, subjecting himself to the curse of Brahmanas.

The Devas, Rishis and other good people in the world were groaning under his cruel punishments, and they prayed to Lord Sri Hari for succour, with a concentrated mind, and rid of impurities, by fasting and the like discipline. Their intense prayer to the Almighty, Omniscient and Omnipresent asylum for the distressed, had the desired effect. A thunderous voice, filling the cardinal points, was heard to say: "Do not be afraid. You will be safe. Just wait; and the wicked wretch will be put out in time. He will wrong his own virtuous son; but will destroy himself, though he is strongly rooted in his boons."

The Devas and others now felt satisfied and were care-free. In due course, the Daitya had four sons, of whom Prahlada was the foremost. He was of pious character and was devoted to Brahmanas. He controlled his senses, and was truthful. He was the beloved friend of all creatures. He was dutiful to his elders, affectionate to the distressed, cordial to his friends, and respectful to his preceptors. He was untouched by pride and insolence, though highly endowed with wealth, knowledge, beauty and birth. His mind was clean, untouched by desires. Asuric character was

totally absent in him. In assemblies, even his enemies held him up as an example of an ideal person. He was all love and devotion to the Almighty Vasudeva. Though sitting, walking, eating, lying down, drinking or speaking, he was constantly living in the embrace of Govinda. By worshipping the lotus-like feet of the Lord, he not only made himself happy, but often brought peace of mind to others, spoiled by bad association.

Prahlada's devotion to Vishnu enraged His Father

Sukracharya was the Guru of the Asuras and the king. The king appointed his Guru's sons, Chanda and Amarka, as instructors for his beloved son Prahlada, to give best education, including politics. Chanda and Amarka gave tuition to Prahlada and other Asura boys. He listened to everything and repeated, but was not impressed by the wrong ideas taught.

When one day, the king called his boy and asked him what he had learnt, he replied that domestic life was ruinous, and that devotion to Sri Hari in a forest was ideal. The king was upset, but thought that the boy's mind had been poisoned by some Brahmanas and others in disguise. He wanted his boy to be kept carefully in the preceptor's house and taught lessons properly. The teachers were taken aback, and calmly questioned the boy as to how he came by devotion to Sri Hari. He replied that the Lord gave him the mind, and attracted it to Him, as a magnet would attract iron. He was the One All-powerful, wielding Chakra.

The teachers chastised the boy and threatened to cane him, if he proved himself to be the evil genius of the family, as presently betrayed. The boy was instructed regarding Dharma, Artha and Kama, and the four branches of learning. He was warned to please his father (the king), exhibiting his knowledge, as taught to him.

The boy was given a bath and adorned; and the priest took him to the king a second time. The boy fell at his father's feet; and the father was immensely pleased, blessed him and embraced him lovingly. The king asked the boy to repeat some lessons he had been taught. He replied that what all he had learnt were the nine forms of Bhakti to Lord Sri Hari—to hear His praises, to sing His

names and glories, to remember Him, to do His service, to worship Him with flowers, etc., to bow to Him, to resign to Him all things done, to confide in Him as a friend, and to offer up the body to His service and care. The king was enraged beyond all bounds, and reprimanded the teachers for having taught him quite worthless lessons, disregarding his command. The teachers humbly represented to the king that what the boy repeated was not what they or others taught him; but that was what was inborn in him; and they pleaded not guilty.

Questioned by Hiranyakasipu as to whence that wicked and inauspicious devotion got into his mind, Prahlada replied that settled thoughts on the Lord did not come from another or in the association of those fallen in Samsara, but were obtained by the grace of the glorious Lord. The mind cannot escape from Samsara, and reach the feet of Sri Vishnu, except by a complete plunge-bath in the dust of the feet of His sinless devotees. The king became blind with rage, pushed the boy aside; and with fiery eyes, directed his cruel servants to kill the boy. He cried out thus:

"It is Hari that killed my brother. This wretched boy abandons his well-wishers, kith and kin; and worships like a slave, the murderer of his uncle. This inimical son is practically a disease to me, and is a thorn by my side. He is my enemy in the guise of a son. Kill him at once."

The cruel Rakshasa servants, with a terrific face and long tusks, took the boy away, to deal him with the trident in their hands and satisfy their master. They struck him with Sula; but the boy fixed his mind on Sri Hari, and was quite unaffected. All torture proved useless. Setting up mad elephants and cruel serpents against him, black magic, starvation, administration of poison, and all stratagems proved useless to end him. He survived all the torments and afflictions, by his singleminded devotion to the Lord. He was of immeasurable power and feared nothing. He proved immortal.

At last, the king was disgusted; but a sense of affection for the son, made him feel that the boy might improve with age, and a more steady and prolonged instruction regarding the duties of kings and householders. Thus the boy was again sent to the

teacher, to take lessons along with other boys of his age. Instead of the boy learning the lessons taught in the class, the class mates began to learn his lessons, when the teacher was out. The boys evinced great regard for the boy, and waited on him, fixing their mind and heart on the boy-devotee of the Lord.

Prahlada's precepts to His companions

When Prahlada was free with his companions, he taught them right conduct, and encouraged them to follow his precepts, and thus assure themselves of all happiness, real happiness and bliss. He instructed them thus: "The Supreme Lord Sri Hari is the real source of all prosperity. Righteous conduct leads to Him. Desires, which are inconsistent with righteousness, lead to afflictions. Devotion to Him, who is the support of all, gives us His highest blessings. Even while still young, wise men should perform righteous duties, which immensely please the Lord. The most fruitful and worthy course for men is to resort to the feet of the Lord, who is the Ruler and Friend of all created beings. One cannot attain to happiness without taking to the safest resort to the Lord's lotus-like feet. Man's life is one hundred years, of which half is spent in sleep and blinding darkness of the night. Childhood and boyhood occupy twenty years, and another twenty years are invaded by old age. The remaining few years at least should be usefully spent, by not being wasted totally in Samsara, tied by the ropes of love and affection for the kith and kin.

"Though full of knowledge, one falls into darkness, if he is bent on merely cherishing his family without looking at his own real self, with a mind corrupt with notions of 'I' and 'mine.' Nobody addicted solely to worldly life, being like an animal kept for the amusement of lovely women, could rescue himself; and his productions, as sons and grandsons, only forge fetters for him. Therefore, Diti's sons! abandon attachment to Daityas, but soon resort to the eternal Lord Narayana, who is the only liberator. He is the all-pervading Atma of all creatures, and is present everywhere in the world. He is all-merciful, and no great effort is needed to please Him. He is the Almighty Ruler of all, high or low, from Brahma to the immobile tree, all modifications of lifeless matter, the sky, the Bhutas, Prakriti and all Tattvas.

"The Supreme Lord is of pure consciousness and essence. His Maya conceals His Lordly nature from the undeserving beings. The Benign Lord should be pleased by casting off all Asuric tendencies, and by loving all beings. When He is pleased, what is unattainable? Even Moksha is of little value to those who sing the praise of His sacred feet. Even the true meaning of the Vedas, all Dharma, Artha and Kama, philosophy, logic and politics, constitute a virtue only when they become the means of resigning one's self to that Supreme Lord, the true friend of all. Lord Narayana imparted true knowledge to sage Narada, and a glimpse of that knowledge can be gained only by those, who bathe in the dust on the feet of the sinless and absolute devotees of the Lord. I bow to sage Narada, from whom I realised knowledge and instruction, in the unalloyed course of righteous duties pleasing the Lord."

Prahlada's further precepts to His companions

Questioned by his friends as to how he came by all the knowledge he possessed, Prahlada told them that when he was in his mother's womb, Sage Narada paid a visit to her, and preached her Dharma; and that, by the Supreme Lord's grace, though a baby in the womb, he had the sense to hear his lessons, remember them even after birth, and practise them.

Prahlada disclosed the divine knowledge that he obtained to his friends thus: "These births and other states, six in number, relate to the body only, and not to Atma. The Lord institutes the different states through Time. Atma is eternal, does not decay, is pure and unmixed, subject to no change, the all-pervading, one, untouched by anything and unlimited by any condition; and is perfect in every respect. The wrong notion of 'My and Mine' in relation to body and other things, is the result of ignorance. Atma Yoga is the means of realising Atma. Prakritis are eight and their Gunas are three, the modifications are sixteen, and the Supreme Person is but one, in intimate relation to them.

"The Lord should be sought after by positive and negative of inference, by power of discrimination, by purified mind, by good patience, and by examining the phenomena of

creation, preservation and destruction. The Lord is the presiding Person over the three states of Buddhi of wakefulness, dream and sleep. All things are dependent on Karma, worked out by the mind, and they are transient like the dreamy and wakeful states. They are the causes of grief, delusion and fear. Births and deaths accrue according to one's attachment to the three Gunas. Constant contemplation of Sri Hari is the means to attain to the highest goal.

"Proper performance of duties leads one to find delight in devotion to the Supreme Lord. Devout service to the Preceptor, offering to Him all that is earned, association with pure and righteous devotees, worshipping the Lord, faithful listening to His stories, singing His praises, contemplating His lotus-like feet, and seeing and worshipping His representations are the simple means to obtain His eternal grace. With perfect belief that the Lord is present in all creatures, one should treat them with true regard and compassion, and help them. The six inimical passions should be conquered to develop devotion to the Lord. Hearing His great deeds, His excellent qualities, and His heroic exploits, one should become overjoyed, singing and dancing. One should worship the Lord in his own heart, and devote himself to Him as present in it. No real benefit could be had by the various objects of desires—such as, wife and children, house and lands, elephants and horses, and treasures and other fortunes. These are fleeting things.

"The regions which one can reach by means of sacrifices are imperfect. Still higher region of permanent value can be attained by self-realisation and by devoutful worship of the Supreme Lord. The mortal considers himself wise, and performs actions for some objects, which reap the very opposite fruit. Attempts made to ward off misery and get more happiness, often result in greater misery, in the absence of the Lord's grace. When the body, for the sake of which a man seeks after enjoyments, itself evidently belongs to others, as food for jackals or kites, and is transient, there is hardly any need to say that still more foreign to self are the other possessions, such as, wife, children, house, riches, kingdom, treasures, elephants, ministers, servants and relations. These poor perishable things, leading to evil, are of poor avail to the Atma, who is a rich ocean of eternal blissfulness. Therefore, men should

set aside needless wishes and betake themselves to the Supreme Lord, who can Himself assure them all worthy purposes, all desires, all righteousness and auspiciousness. One becomes blessed by worshipping the sacred feet of Sri Hari; and this applies to one and all, whether a Deva, an Asura, Yaksha or Gandharva. It is unmixed devotion to Sri Hari that pleases Him, not merely extensive learning, or even good conduct, gifts or Tapas, sacrifices or penances. Therefore all should cherish good devotion to the Lord, who is the Supreme Ruler and the Antaryami of all beings. Absolute devotion to the Lord and a regard for everything else, on account of His presence there, are the means by which even several Rakshasas, Yakshas, women, cowherds, birds, beasts and many sinful Jivas even have obtained immortality.

Sri Narasimha Avatara

Prahlada's discourse convinced the Daitya youngsters more than their teacher's instructions, and they accepted the precepts as faultless. The teacher was worried that not only could Prahlada be not changed, but that the minds of his companions had been poisoned, beyond correction. So the teacher hastened and acquainted the king of the painful state of things. The painful news of his son's misbehaviour upset and enraged Hiranyakasipu. He made up his mind to do away with his son.

The Daitya condemned his son in the harshest words, though he deserved them not; and the cruel man in sinful rage, hissed like a serpent trodden under foot; and cried out to his son that he would consign him to Yama's abode, for thwarting his command.

Prahlada calmly replied thus: "The Supreme Lord Sri Hari is the real strength of heart and soul for myself, yourself and all others. He is the strength of all these, high and low, mobile and immobile creatures. He is the real mighty ruler, who is the essence of energy, endurance, reason, strength and power of all organs and senses. He is the controller of the three Gunas, creating, preserving and destroying the whole universe. Please abandon the Asura disposition of yours; and keep your mind serene, keeping in view that the worship of the Lord is the highest duty for the humanity. You think that you have conquered the ten cardinal points. Enemies are within one's own delusion; and one should

first conquer the six thieves (Arishadvargas) within oneself, by controlling the mind."

The above words enraged the Asura beyond all bounds, and he challenged his son whether his Lord existed at all, and, if so, to show him in the pillar beside them. He leapt forward to cut off the head of the boy. First, he took up his sword, jumped from his high throne, and knocked at the post with his fist. That very moment rose from it a terrible sound, which appeared to threaten the collapse of the worlds. The Daitya was taken aback by the thundering noise, unheard of before. To prove His devotee's words that the Supreme Lord pervaded all beings and things, the Lord came forth from the pillar in the court hall, in a most astonishing form of neither beast nor man. It was the form of a man and a lion put together. It was Narasimha form, with terrible eyes like molten gold, a horrible mouth and a radiant mane. The tusks were fearful, and the tongue was like a sharp sword. The horrible face, the knit brows, erect ears, open mouth and nostrils, and the terrific chin disheartened the Daitya. The high stature, stout and short neck, slender waist, and the numerous arms with claws frightened the other Daityas, who fled away in all directions. Hiranyakasipu thought that was the Hari's form that put an end to his brother. He however took courage; and roaring and vociferating, he fell on the Lord with his Gada. Alas! the Daitya deservedly proved to be a moth that fell into a fire. The great Daitya struck Sri Narasimha with his Gada of tremendous force, but the Lord took hold of the Asura as a Garuda would catch a serpent. As easily as a serpent would seize a rat, Sri Hari seized the Asura, sportfully set him on His thigh at the threshold, and tore him with his nails, just as Garuda could do with the most poisonous serpent. With His terrific eyes and sharp tongue, and with His face and mane red with drops of blood, Sri Hari, with but His claws, tore open the Asura's body, and garlanded Himself with his intestines.

It was a terrible sight, the clouds fled away, the planets lost their lustre, the seas tossed and rolled in high waves, and even the elephants at the eight cardinal points were frightened and screamed aloud. The heavens became disturbed, the earth in parts heaved up, and mountains rolled down; and in the Lord's dazzling

splendour, the sky and other quarters could not even be seen. The Lord then took His seat on the exalted throne, with burning indignation and a terrific face; and no one dared approach Him. Learning that the Daitya had been struck down, the celestial women joyously showered flowers over the Lord. The sky became clouded with celestial cars, in which the Devas came to see Him. The celestial Anakas and Dundubhis sounded loudly. Gandharvas danced, and their women sang the Lord's praises.

With folded hands, Brahma, Rudra, Indra, other Devas, Sages, Pitris, Siddhas, Vidyadharas, Nagas, Manus, Prajapatis, Gandharvas, Apsaras, Charanas, Yakshas, Kimpurushas and Kinnaras, and the Lord's attendants Sunanda, Kumuda and others joyously came up to the presence of the Lord, and offered their prayers reverently thus:

"You are the unlimited Lord of incomprehensible powers, of wonderful energy and hallowed activity, sportfully carrying on the universal creation, preservation and destruction. Your anger has ended this Asura. Be pleased to protect his son, the young devotee. O Lord, no Svarga, not even Moksha, is of any avail to us. Your humble devotees we make our obeisance to You, who split open this wicked and insolent Asura with Your claws. You have brought us joy by ending the sinful Asura, who was a terror to us and our jewel-like women. Your Avatara is most auspicious, and we are at your command. We have taken shelter under your lotus-like feet, which is the one means of freedom from Samsara. You are the one, and the only one, source and support for our welfare; and blessed we are by the sight of Your Most Sacred Sri Narasimha Avatara, which has bestowed Your Grace on us all."

Prahlada offers his praises to the Lord

Brahma, Rudra and others offered prayers to the Lord from a distance, as Lord Sri Narasimha was in a very wrathful mood, and was unapproachable. The sight was unheard of and unseen before; and it was so frightful that Sri Lakshmi Herself was afraid, and did not approach Him. Brahma suggested to Prahlada to go near and appease the Lord. The boy devotee slowly went near, and prostrated himself before the Lord, with joined hands. The All-merciful Lord raised him, and placed His hand on the

devotee's head. By the touch of His hand, the boy was rid of all evil, and felt happy. With his heart full of love and devotion, and his eyes full of tears, he contemplated at his heart the Lord's lotus-like feet, in a blissful state. Then having fixed his heart and eyes on Him, Prahlada offered his Praises to the Lord thus, in faltering accents:

"I am born of an Asura family, and I feel myself unfit and unable to sing the praises of You, My Lord, of whom even Brahma and others could not adequately comprehend and sing praises. I know that wealth, noble birth, personal beauty, Tapas, learning, energy, exertion, intelligence and Yoga practices cannot win Your Grace. Devotion, unalloyed devotion, is all You want. A Chandala who has resigned his mind and heart, wealth and life, and word and deed, in devotion to You, is superior to a proud Brahmana possessed of all advantages but is averse to worship Your feet. You are Your own master, and are perfect. You do not require the devotion and worship from others; but You accept them being highly merciful. The devotee's worship of You turns to his own benefit, just as the decoration added to the face is reflected to its own image on a mirror. Therefore, let me sing Your glory, so as to purify myself. Your sport, in most delightful Avataras, is just intended for the safety, prosperity and happiness of your devotees.

"I pray, kindly withdraw Your angry mood. The worlds have attained peace with the destruction of the Asura chief. I am not terrified at Your formidable mouth, tongue, eyes, agitated brows, fearful tusks and the mane soaked in blood, but I am terribly afraid of the horrible pains of the wheel of Samsara, bound by Karma. Be pleased to call me to the presence of Your feet, which is Moksha itself. Make me Your servant. Without Your grace, parents are no use as protectors, medicine is no use as a remedy, a vessel is no use for a drowning man, and no wealth is of any avail to one afflicted in Samsara. Unless one is devoted to You, all Vedic studies and rituals are a waste. I do not seek of You all blessings of long life, wealth, glory, pleasures, Indra's position, or even Anima and other great powers; but I crave of You to extinguish the fire of desire in me, and to infuse in me the desire to serve and worship Your devotees.

"You are the whole universe. You are its beginning, the middle and the end, and you are the creator, preserver and destroyer of the same. Having previously withdrawn the universe into Yourself, You lay on the flood of deluge in perfect inaction, with Your eyes closed in Yoga. Then, when you rose from the bed of Ananta and willed creation, a lotus rose from Your navel, out of which Brahma was born. By austere Tapas, Brahma perceived Your Will and Your Maya, and created the worlds, as willed by You. To Brahma, you restored the Vedas assuming Hayagriva Avatara, after destroying two powerful Daityas, Madhu and Kaitabha. You protected the world by Your various other Avataras, destroying the enemies of the world and maintaining Dharma. May You glance at those, who have by force of Karma, fallen into the Vaitarani of Samsara, and are oppressed by the fear of birth and death, want of food and clothing, and are torn with hatred and love, in a pitiable condition. My mind is deeply immersed in the rare ambrosia of singing Your glory, and I do not fear the difficulty of crossing this Vaitarani; but I pity those, who are immersed deep in Samsara for illusory pleasures for gratifying senses, and consequently do not take to devotion to You, my Lord. Pray, save them from the perils.

"Vow of silence, sacred studies, practice of austerities, learning Vedas, good precepts, Mantras, postures and meditation may all be a source of living but they are of little value, unless they are dedicated to you. You are the air, fire, earth, sky, water, objects, breaths, senses, heart, mind and Ahamkara. You are also destitute of all these. There is nothing in the universe that is pointed to or conveyed, by thought or word, other than Yourself. O Lord, I bow to You, pray to You, worship You, remember Your deeds, and hear the story of Your feet, as without these, devotion to You is imperfect."

Sri Narasimha was immensely pleased with the devotee's intense devotion, suppressed His angry mood, and spoke to Prahlada in a suppliant attitude. He blessed the good devotee, and desired him to choose any boon. The Lord expressed His immense pleasure, and showered all blessings on Prahlada, who stood devoted to the Lord.

The blessed Prahlada is enthroned as King

Knowing that boons for all prosperity are only a hindrance to the practice of devotion. Prahlada prayed to the Lord not to tempt him with boons, but to release him from material bonds. He said: "I cannot choose objects of desires, which are the seeds of Samsara and knots of the heart. You are full of mercy, and You are the shore to him, who is groping in darkness anxious to reach the shore. I am Your servant, and not a merchant to expect blessings. I cannot be Your servant, if I hope to secure comforts from You. I am Your devotee free from all desires. If still You are determined to confer boons on me, I pray this boon—that no desires should germinate in my heart. For, desires contaminate the senses, the mind, vital breaths, the body, righteousness, fortitude, judgment, modesty, energy, memory and truthfulness. It is only freedom from desires that will fortify devotion to You. Salutation to You, Supreme Lord, Perfect Person, Sri Hari, Paramatma and Parabrahma."

Lord Narasimha was pleased, but blessed that Prahlada should enjoy for the Manvantara the rulership of the great Daityas. He was advised to worship the Lord in all sacrifices, to betake himself to His delightful stories, and meditate on Him, resigning all his activities to Him. The Lord willed that Prahlada should go to Him, when he completed his good deeds, extended his fame to be sung in the celestial regions, and cast off his bondage by force of time.

Prahlada was quite content, but extended a last prayer to the Lord, that his father, who had highly sinned against Him, should be pardoned and purified of his sins. The Lord replied that he was already purified by His glance at him, and His touch, and by the birth of himself (Prahlada), the purifier of the family, as his son. Wherever there are the Lord's devotees of righteous duties, there even sinful people become purified. Prahlada was directed to perform funeral rites for his father, who would attain to the higher worlds; and then rule the kingdom from his father's throne. Prahlada obeyed, and he ruled the country righteously.

Brahma praised Lord Sri Narasimha for slaying the sinful Asura and thus ending harassment of the noble-minded in the

world. He regretted his thoughtless deed in having granted boons to the great Asura, who turned naughty and unrighteous. The Lord said that boons conferred on cruel beings was like feeding venomous serpents with milk. Then Sri Narasimha vanished from sight.

Now, Prahlada worshipped Brahma, Siva, Indra, Prajapatis and other Devas, who were the Lord's Amsas, and bowed to them humbly. Brahma, assisted by Sukracharya and others, installed Prahlada as the ruler of Daityas and Danavas. Brahma and others invoked the highest blessings on Prahlada; and having been properly honoured, they returned to their respective abodes.

Hiranyakasipu and his brother were the two attendants of the Lord in Vaikuntha. After their life as aforesaid, in pursuance of the curse pronounced by Sanatkumaras, the two were reborn again as two Rakshasas, Kumbhakarna and Ravana, who were put an end to by Lord Sri Rama. They had a third Rakshasa birth as Sisupala and Dantavakra, who attained their goal, by continued inimical feelings towards Hari, at the hands of Sri Krishna. Intense devotion to the Lord, in whatever form, leads to the goal of Sri Hari's feet. This sacred story of the Supreme Lord's Avatara inculcates devotion, true knowledge, and renunciation, which are essential to attain Moksha. Reading or listening to or even recapitulating the glorious deeds of the Lord, ensures people freedom from the bonds of Karma.

Sage Narada describes the duties of Varnas and Women

In his discourse to Yudhisthira, Sage Narada, the chief son of Brahma, occupying the highest place by virtue of his Tapas, Yoga and contemplation, described thus the duties of persons in various Varnas and those of women. The prescribed righteous duties for the various people are a source of great wisdom and devotion. The great sages, devoted to the Supreme Lord, know the highest and secret Dharma or course of right conduct. The great sage Narada knows the source of perfect Dharma, as he learnt it from the lips of Sri Narayana Himself. The Lord made an Avatar as Sri Badari Narayana to propagate Dharma for the welfare of the worlds.

Righteous course of Dharma comprises of truthfulness, kindness, Tapas, purity, endurance, wisdom, control of mind and senses, harmlessness, celibate life, charity, Vedic study, contentment, service, withdrawing from vulgar objects and worthless activities, silence on worthless topics, self-realisation, and to hear of and sing the Lord's glories.

The duties of a Brahmana comprise also of performance of sacrifice, study of Vedas, charitable gifts, and doing duties pertaining to the Asrama to which he is initiated. Adhyayana is also important. Kshatriya should protect the subjects. Vaisya should take to agriculture and commerce. Sudra should do faithful service to the worthy twice-born, whose duty it is to protect him and elevate him.

The Brahmana should be content, and should only accept what is given unasked. A Brahmana is an embodiment of Vedas and a Kshatriya is a personification of the ruling Lord. Service under others is shunned as detestable. Control of mind and senses, austerities, purity and piety, contentment, forbearance, forgiveness, straightforwardness, knowledge, kindness, devotion and truthfulness constitute the Brahmana conduct. Valour, prowess, fortitude, enterprising spirit, majesty, generosity, self-discipline, self-control, patience, devotion, graciousness and fearlessness constitute the Kshatriya. Devotion to preceptors and rulers, maintaining Dharma, Artha and Kama, faith in God, constant exertion and skill in commerce constitute the Vaisya. Submissiveness, piety, service without any treacherous disposition, devotion, truthfulness, protection of others and helpfulness are the characteristics for the last class.

A woman should look after her husband, contribute to his convenience and observe the vows and rituals practised by her husband. She should keep the house neat, clean, and auspicious with the customary decorations, and be herself properly decked, wearing clean clothes. Humility, self-control, truth, pleasant words, contentment, alertness and carefulness should characterise her. Faithfulness, love and devotion to her husband, and devotion to Sri Hari ensure her purity, piety, and prosperity, as is the case with Sri Lakshmi in relation to Sri Hari. The course of Dharma in every Yuga is determined by the nature of beings, according as

they are of the Sattvika, Rajasa or Tamasa disposition; and the right course of Dharma, as laid down in the Vedas are conducive to their welfare in this and the other worlds.

Duties of Brahmachari and Vanaprastha

The four Asramas are the Brahmacharya, Grihastha, Vanaprastha and Sannyasa. Here are described the duties of the first and the third Asramas. A Brahmachari should dwell in his preceptor's house, and obey his commands, with a sense of, not only service, but also good affection. He should, morning and evening, wait upon and worship the Guru, the sacred fire, the sun and the Devas. He should repeat Gayatri at dawn and at sun-set, and contemplate the Lord with perfect peace and silence. He should bow to the Guru, and study the Vedas at his feet. Besides the sacred thread, he should put on Mekhala, garments of skin and matted locks. He should carry a sacred staff and a jar of water. Morning and evening, he should obtain alms, and offer to his Guru, and partake of it with the latter's permission. He should be pious and pure in habits and conduct, moderate in eating, skillful in work; and control his senses. He should very sparingly talk to women, and that too, when absolutely necessary. He should observe the vow of Brahmacharya, and should scrupulously avoid talk of women. Woman is like fire, and man is like ghee; and so one should avoid the presence of the other, as much as possible. He should master his mind and senses, and devote good attention to his studies and his Guru's commands. These rules of conduct generally apply to the householder and the ascetic also, with some variations. A Brahmachari should strictly observe the vow of celibacy; and anointing the body, talks and transactions with women, pictures of women, flesh, garlands, wine, sandal pigment and ornaments are a taboo to him. Thus living dutifully in his Guru's house, he should master the three Vedas, six Angas and Upanishads, fulfil his Guru's desire, by offering any Guru Dakshina in his means, cash, kind or service; and, with his permission, return to his house, to continue his further life or profession.

A Vanaprastha is a person living in a forest or a garden, after discarding his previous Asrama of Grihastha. Careful attention to his duties, and ideal contemplation of the Lord, will lead him to

the region of Rishis. He should not eat the produce raised by tillage or fire-cooked food, or what may grow out of season. He should eat only what is ripe, or that cooked in sun's heat. He should gather grains of wild growth, and offer with it Charu or Purodasa into the fire. For just maintaining the sacrificial fire, he should live in a cottage or mountain cave, and should brave the wind, snow, fire, rain, and sun's heat. He should own a water jar, deer skin and a staff. He should not cut his hair, beard or nails; but should remain content with matted locks. He should live in the forest for twelve years or a less period, till he is disabled from the course of his proper duties, by virtue of diseases or oldage. He should gain wisdom by observing fasts and other vows. He should renounce the notions of 'I' and 'Mine'. He should attain perfection by Self-realisation, and attain to the Lord's lotus-like feet, by constant meditation and concentration till he renounces the world.

Ascetic's duties: Sage Ajagara's story

An ascetic should have nothing to own, except his body. He should be desireless; and move about not staying more than one night in a place. He should wear an under-cloth only, and should renounce everything except his Sannyasa staff and the characteristics of an ascetic. He should live on alms, and should delight himself wholly devoted to Sri Hari. He should be a friend and sympathiser of all beings. He should not take to any trade, and should avoid disputations on controversial subjects. He should not have disciples or students, or establish monasteries or other institutions. He should not pose himself as a learned or devoted man, but should be simple and innocent-looking. His one duty should be devotion and concentration, and his one goal should be the attainment of the lotus-like feet of the Supreme Lord.

In this connection, it is relevant to mention the story of sage Ajagara and his vow. Once, King Prahlada went about the world with his ministers to study the conditions in the country, and saw a person lying on bare ground on a cliff of the Sahya mountains at the source of the Kaveri river. He looked very brilliant, though his limbs were thickly covered with dust. The king's party could not make out who he was and what he was. Prahlada bowed to him, and questioned him as to how it was that though he was lying perfectly idle, his body looked quite stout and well-developed,

which only wealthy means and comfort could bestow. He was bright, looked learned, with sweet and wonderful speech. Sage Ajagara replied thus:

“O King, You are a great devotee, I shall be plain to you, Sri Narayana is the sun that dispels all darkness. Pure and absolute devotion to Him is the only way to any attainment. My story is this. Due to my desires on the constant stream of Samsara, and disappointment with the enjoyment of objects, I had various births and rebirths. By force of my Karma, I am now in this human life, which is the way for Svarga or Moksha, or further birth as brute or man. In this life, I worked hard for pleasure in married life, but have fortunately turned away from it. Having realised that all experiences and fancies of mind are transient, I am lying quiet. Not knowing this secret, men fall into the horrible and wonderful Samsara. A person not knowing this, runs after mirage, longing for water. All miseries are the results of desires and pleasures.

The greedy and rich people have no control over their mind, suffer pains, and have no sleep for fear of danger to person and wealth. They fear the king, the thief, the enemy, the kith and kin, and even birds and beasts. Desires bring on grief, delusion, fear, anger, love, dependency and pain. See the bee and the great serpent, which are examples of renunciation and contentment. I have learnt contentment from them. I have desisted from all activity, and I am contented with what I get by chance, I eat some food, dainty dish or poor meal, tasteful or distasteful, a small or large quantity, heartily offered or got by chance. I wear anything—linen, silk, bark, or skin—that I get. I am contented and sleep on bare ground, grass, or leaves, or stones, or even ashes, in any place God wills. I do not censure or praise any one, but pray to the Lord for popular welfare and beatitude. I have disclosed my life to you, as you are a great devotee. A sage should aim at self-realisation and God perception, and cease to do other acts for material benefit.”

Householder's (Grihastha) duties

Sage Narada explained to Yudhisthira the proper course, by which even a Grihastha, clouded in the householder life, may pave the way to heaven. He said that the simple and direct means for

the Grihastha is to do the duties proper to his life, and dedicate all the acts to Sri Hari, and also worship the sages. A householder should have the association of pure-minded people, and listen to the nectar-like stories of the Supreme Lord. Following the example of the righteous and wise men, he should slowly and gradually cut off his attachment to his body, children, wife and the like; and free himself from them to the proper extent. He should get free from other material attachments as well, but should exhibit himself as a mortal in the mortal world. In spite of freedom from attachment, the wise man should sail with the wind, and give his assent to what his kinsmen, parents, sons, brothers, friends and others propose or desire. He should be content with the wealth, enjoyments or other circumstances the Lord has bestowed on him; and live peacefully, with kindness and love for all beings, kinsmen, animals, beasts or birds. He should trust in God, and do his right duty; and he should not exert beyond his capacity for extraordinary things. He should share general comforts along with others around him, high or low, and win the Lord's grace, which alone counts for everything. He should not, exclusively from others, feed fat his own body, which after all, is changed into ashes, worms or filth. With the wealth obtained by doing his own duties, proper to him, he should daily worship the Devas, Rishis, Men, Bhutas, Pitris, and above all, the Almighty Lord. Regular worship of the Lord, by means of Agnihotra and other sacrifices should be done to please the Lord, who accepts sacrifices not only through Agni but also through a worthy Brahmana.

Doing ablutions, Japa, Homa, vows of austerity, worship of Devas and sages, and offerings to Pitris, Devas, wise men and Bhutas bear lasting benefit and bestow Divine Grace. The place, where the sacred image of Sri Hari is put up, the house where there is Brahmana, Tapas and austerity, the land on which the Ganga and other sacred rivers flow, are holy places. A wise man should visit these places, and do righteous duties, which yield a thousand-fold the fruits, that accrue from acts, done elsewhere. The universe is filled with the tree of innumerable Jivas, whose root is Sri Hari; and therefore, His worship, brings satisfaction to all the Jivas. The Lord dwells in the bodies of men, beasts, birds, Rishis and Devas; and therefore He is called Purusha, the really Supreme Master. But, the Lord exhibits Himself in all these beings

with some graded difference of Adhishthana. Men should worship Sri Hari in images, but such worship is of little use, if they hate the Lord in all His creation of animate and inanimate beings. Vedas constitute the body of Sri Hari, and the Brahmana, who bears the Vedas, by virtue of his Tapas, knowledge and contentment, is worshipful. Therefore it is that Lord Sri Krishna loves those that are devoted to the sacred Brahmanas, who purify the three worlds, by propagating the glories of the Lord and His great devotees.

Right conduct for all Varnas and Asramas

Some Brahmanas are devoted to performing Tapas, some to the study of Vedas, some to teaching, and still some others to the attainment of wisdom and Yoga perfection. One longing for extensive merit should bestow gifts of food and other things to Pitris, Devas and others of knowledge and wisdom. Gifts to really worthy persons should be made, satisfying the conditions of proper place and time, piety, devotion and proper attention. Offerings given piously and devoutly to a worthy man, in the name of Sri Hari, please Him; and bear all the desired fruits and become a source of inexhaustible merit. Sacrifice of animals should be avoided, as harmlessness is the best Dharma or righteous course of conduct.

One should avoid all Adharma, which is of five varieties, viz., Vidharma, Paradharma, Dharma-Abhasa, Dharmopama, and Dharmachala. Vidharma is causing obstruction to Dharma; Paradharma is that laid down for another; Dharma-Abhasa is the course of action sketched by oneself, different from right conduct; Dharmopama is a heretic or hypocritic course of action; and Dharmachala is misinterpretation of the right conduct and an attempt to pretend to follow the letter of the rule. Everyone should follow a living, and wisely maintain himself, and do his duties to others; but he should not over-exert himself to grab money for performing some righteous duty or charity. Instead of running in quest of wealth, pleasure and covetousness, a quiet, contented, and devoted life brings all happiness. A discontented man loses spiritual power, learning, Tapas, reputation and wisdom.

Discontentment has lowered the prestige of learned men, of extensive knowledge, and leaders of great assemblies. Troubles arising from other beings should be got over through kindness and mercy, and sympathising with the beings, who little know the right course. Pranayama and the like Yoga practices should be cultivated and the Almighty contemplated. Sattvic food should be taken; and Rajas and Tamas should be conquered. All good conduct and good habits have but one purpose of restraining the six passions and cultivating contemplation and concentration. The mind should be divested of all passions, by fixing the eye sight on the tip of the nose, and doing Pranayama of Puraka, Kumbhaka, and Rechaka. The wise man should gradually concentrate on the Supreme Lord in his own heart, and control his mind.

A householder should not depart from the righteous duties of a Grihastha; and a Brahmachari should not violate his vow of celibacy. The physical body is a chariot, the senses are horses, the mind is the reins, the objects are destinations, the thinking faculty is the charioteer, and the heart is the all-composing cordage instituted by the Lord. The ten vital breaths form the axle, Dharma and Adharma the two wheels; the soul is the owner, the sacred syllable 'Om' is the bow, the pure soul is the shaft, and Paramatma is the aim. The enemies to be conquered are attachment, hatred, greed, grief, infatuation, fear, pride, haughtiness, disgrace, jealousy, deceit, harmfulness, envy, passion, ignorance, hunger and sleep.

Vedic Karma is two-fold, Pravritti Karma bestows Samsaric life; while Nivritti Karma leads to immortality or Moksha. Nishkamakarma is ideal as it brings on peace of mind, and paves the way to meditation and concentration on Sri Hari, and assures His Grace.



VIII SKANDHA

Description of Manvantaras

O the six Manvantaras so far, the first was Svayambhuva; and the dynasty of the Manu and the creation during the period have been described. In the line, the powerful Lord Satarupa renounced pleasures, and went to the forest for Tapas with his wife. There, on the banks of the Sunanda, he stood on one foot and practised Tapas for a century. Thereafter, he preached to the world as follows:

“Lord Sri Vasudeva lives in all bodies. He makes the beings live; but the latter do not know Him. He keeps always awake, while the universe sleeps. The whole universe and the life thereon depend on Him. He is the giver of all wealth and prosperity. Therefore everything that one enjoys should first be offered and dedicated to Him, as a matter of duty and thankfulness. He is the abode of all beings, but He soars aloft unconnected with everything. He has no beginning, end or middle. He is everything. He is truly the great and perfect Being, supporting the universe. He is radiant and unborn. He is All-Powerful, but remains free from activity. All righteous duties of the wise aim at attaining Him or Moksha. By following His example of freedom from attachment, the wise do not form attachments; and therefore they are free from difficulties and miseries. I seek the shelter of the Supreme Lord, who is free from pride, full of wisdom, seeking no blessings, perfect in Himself, and does duties as an example to men.”

As for the following Manvantaras, Svarochisha was the second Manu, son of Agni; and his sons were Dyumat, Sushena, Rochishmat and others. Rochana was then Indra; Tushita and others were the Devas; Urjjastambha and six others were the sages. The Supreme Lord was born by name Vibhu, as the son of Vedasiras. The Lord was a bachelor, firm in austerity; and from Him thousands of sages learnt the course of celibate life.

The third Manu was Uttama, son of Priyavrata; and his sons were Pavana, Srinjaya, Yajnahotra and others. Satyajit was the Indra then; Pramada and other sons of Vasishtha were the sages; and Satyas, Vedasrutas, and Bhadras were the Devas. The Lord was born of Dharma and his wife Sunrita; and He was known as Satyasena. Lord Satyasena and Satyajit combinedly destroyed Yakshas, Rakshasas and evil spirits, who were harmful to all beings.

The fourth Manu was Tamasa, brother of Uttama; and Prithu, Khyati, Nara and Kethu were his sons. Indra was Trisikha; the Devas were Satyakas, Haris and Viras; and Jyotirdharma and others were the seven sages. It was then that Lord Hari was born as the son of Harimedhas and Harini; and rescued Gajendra from the aquatic monster, which is a thrilling story.

Gajendra seized by an alligator in a lake

There was a beautiful and lofty mountain, called Trikuta, surrounded by the sea of milk. It was very high with three summits of gold, silver and iron, illuminating the sea of milk, the cardinal points and the sky. There were also other summits of precious jewels and minerals, covered with various trees, creepers and shrubs, and resounding with water currents. Its valleys were frequented by Siddhas, Charanas, Gandharvas, Nagas, Kinnaras and Apsaras women, gathering there for sport. The valleys were studded with many forests, containing noble lions, herds of beasts, charming trees, lakes, parks and birds of sweet voices. Crystal water rills and lakes glittered like jewels, and therein bathed and sported celestial women, while the fragrant and cool winds blew. The noble and glorious Varuna's garden 'Ritumat' was the play ground of the celestial women. It was adorned with celestial trees of bright flowers and juicy fruits, viz., Mandaras, Parijatas, Asokas, Champakas, Chutas, Priyalas, Jack trees, Mango trees, Amratakas, Kharjuras, Madhukas, Salatalas, Tamalas, Arjunas, Arishtas, Udumbaras, Plakshas, Kovidaras, Saralas, Draksha, Rambha, Jambu, Badari, Bilva, Jambira and various other trees. In the garden, there was a great lake, full of golden lotuses in blossom. It was delightful with the splendour of lilies, Utpalas, Kaiharas and Satapatras, and with humming bees and singing birds. It was also full of swans and Chakravakas.

Once the king elephant, Gajendra, resorted to that mountain and the forests, accompanied by his consorts. Perceiving by scent alone, other elephants and tigers, rhinoceroses and other beasts, and huge serpents were terror-stricken and took to flight. Gajendra and his company were oppressed with heat and thirst. They scented the breeze flowing from the lotus-lake, and came to the lake. Gajendra plunged into it, and drank the nectar-like water to his heart's content; and sucking up water with his trunk, showered himself with water and became refreshed. The elephant lord was compassionate to his companions, led them into the lake for a hearty drink and sportful bath.

As ill-luck would have it, providentially, a powerful alligator revengefully seized the king elephant by the foot, and the latter was unable to free himself. Gajendra was dragged in with great force, as waters are the powerful regime of the alligators. Gajendra was helpless, and the she-elephants helplessly shrieked, but in vain. Gajendra was trying to pull himself out, and the alligator was dragging him down. The duel was hard; and it continued for long, long years. The strength, force, courage and energy of Gajendra, thus dragged and harassed, were almost exhausted; but his enemy, an inhabitant of water, was quite alright. The hopelessly tired Gajendra pondered and concluded that his companions or others could not rescue him; and that his protector could be none but the Supreme Lord Narayana, who should be prayed to for freedom from the peril.

Gajendra prays to the Lord, who rescues him

By force of reason, Gajendra steadied his thought, and mentally prayed to the Supreme Lord for protection, thus: "Salutation to the Glorious and Perfect Lord, the Supreme Ruler of all rulers. In You the universe exists, from You it is evolved, and You are its very self. You are independent and absolute, higher than the highest, shining by Yourself and making other things shine. Pray, save me. Your course of action cannot be comprehended even by Devas or Rishis. You are of wonderful activity and are the embodiment of all blissfulness and consciousness in the state of Moksha. You are the cause of all. You are the Vedas and Agamas personified, to whom the great resort for Salvation. Save me. You are of boundless Grace and are not slow

to save Your devotees. Grant me deliverance. You are of unlimited mercy, granting the desired goal of Dharma, Artha, Kama or Moksha. You are the imperishable Parabrahma, the highest ruler, whose blissfulness is sung by Your devotees, worshipping Your feet. I bow to You, the Perfect Being, the last and the highest resort to the afflicted, tied down by their Karma. Pray, save me."

Hearing the devoutful prayer, Lord Sri Hari, hurried forth on His Garuda, with his Chakra, saw the devotee's plight, dragged out the aquatic monster, cut open its jaws, and rescued Gajendra, while others stood witnessing the Supreme Saviour with folded hands.

Gajendra was previously a Gandharva and the alligator a king

When Gajendra was saved from the jaws of the alligator. Brahma, Rudra, other Devas, Rishis and Gandharvas sang Sri Hari's praise, and showered flowers. The celestial drums were sounded, Gandharvas danced and sang; and Rishis, Charanas and Siddhas offered their praises to the Lord present there. The alligator was previously a Gandharva, called Hu Hu, who had been cursed, and had now regained his original form. He bowed to the Supreme Lord, whose touch saved him from the curse; and sang His praises. Gajendra was formerly Indradyumna, King of Pandava country. Due to sage Agastya's curse, he had been transformed into an elephant; but was now freed from the curse by the Supreme Saviour's presence and touch.

King Indradyumna was a good devotee of the Lord. Once he resorted to his hermitage on the Kulachala, controlled his mind, worshipped the Lord, and undertook a vow of silence. One day, Agastya Muni went there with his pupils; and found the king seated in a secret place and remaining silent, without offering worship to the sage. The sage got angry; and pronounced a curse that the proud king should become an elephant. The sage went his way. The king found himself transformed into an elephant and felt that the lot of his was the Will of the Almighty, and endured. But due to his devotion, he had reminiscences of his past life, though he was in elephant form.

After rescuing the elephant and the alligator from their fallen condition, the Lord, riding on His Garuda, returned to His abode. Hu Hu and Indradyumna were great devotees; and the story of their being saved by the Lord is very enchanting. Faithful recounting, or listening to it, removes the sins brought on by Kali, and also prevents bad dreams and evils.

Raivata and Chakshusa Manvantaras: Brahma's prayer to Hari

The four Manvantaras have so far been described. Now, the fifth Manu was Raivata, brother of Tamasa. His sons were Bali, Vidya, Arjuna and others. Then Vibhu was the Indra; Bhutaraya and others the Devas; Hiranyaroma, Vedasiras, Urdhva Bahu and others were the wise Brahmanas; and the Supreme Ruler was known as Vaikuntha, with His consort Sri, whose Grace showered all wealth and prosperity on the subjects, who were known as Vaikunthas.

The sixth Manu was Chakshusha, the son of Chakshus. His sons were Puru, Purusha, Sudyumna and others; and Mandruma was the Indra. Apya and others were the Devas; and the sages were Havishmat, Viraka and others. During the Manvantara, the Supreme Lord took His Avatar by name Ajita, as the son of Sambhuti and Vairaja; and it was then that the sea of milk was churned, and ambrosia was secured for the Devas. It was like this.

During this Manvantara, there were battles between the Devas and the Asuras, in the course of which several of the former were assailed by sharp weapons and fell dead. Due to the curse of Durvasas, Indra himself had lost his three worlds, and the sacrificial and other righteous observances fell into disuse. Seeing this miserable plight, Varuna and other Devas resorted to the court of Brahma, on the Meru, for help. Brahma suggested that they should all seek the Divine Grace of the Supreme Lord; and he, accompanied by Rudra, Vayu, Varuna and others proceeded to Lord Ajita, and represented the conditions. The Lord abides in everybody's heart and is all-merciful. He is the High and Perfect Person, independent and of boundless powers. He is the embodiment of the Vedas; and His eye is Surya. He is the strength for Mahendra, grace for the Devas, thoughtfulness for Virincha, and the senses for the Vedas. Sri Lakshmi came forth from His bosom,

and Dharma from His breast. The whole creation emanated from His Yogamaya. Actions of persons motivated by objects of senses only involve great trouble and sacrifice, unless they are dedicated to the Lord. But acts, however poor and insignificant, will be fruitful, if resigned to the Supreme Lord, for He extends His grace to those who seek His sympathy. Watering at the root of a tree, not only feeds the roots, but all other parts of the tree, the trunk, branches, stems, leaves, flowers and fruits. Similarly, if the Supreme Lord is prayed to, He feeds not only the devotee, but the good that is prayed for benefits His whole creation. Therefore, Brahma and the accompanying Devas and others prayed to Lord Ajit to be saved from the misdeeds of the Asuras.

Sri Hari reveals Himself and blesses the Devas with proper advice

Thus praised and prayed to by Brahma and others, Sri Hari revealed Himself unto them, brilliant with the effulgence of a thousand suns. Brahma and Rudra saw that form, but the others could not perceive, as their eyes dazzled. The Lord clad in Pitambara was graceful and lovely in every limb, with a charming countenance and winning eye-brows. He wore a crown, set with most precious jewels, and also two Keyuras on the two arms, and ear-rings. He also wore the Kaustubha jewel and Vanamala with Sri Lakshmi on His bosom. Brahma and all others prostrated and offered their prayers thus:

“O Lord, You are the sea of supreme bliss, the subtlest of the subtle, yet of immeasurable essence and of unlimited and glorious power. The wise men obtain from You all that is blessed by proper means, as fire is obtained from the fuel, ghee from the cow's milk, food from the earth, and living from a profession. You are the witness of everything, and there is nothing for us to detail to You. We are of limited understanding, and are just sparks of fire. We pray to be blessed with what is beneficial for peace and prosperity of the worlds.”

Sri Hari advised them to be cheerful, and assured them success. He advised them to make alliance with the Asuras, who were favoured them by Time. Such alliance with the enemy was necessary when the object to be accomplished was great and worthy. They were asked to produce nectar, which gave immorta-

lity, by churning the sea of milk, making the mount Mandara the churning rod, and Vasuki serpent the rope. He assured them of His own Divine Help. They were advised to agree to whatever the Asuras proposed, avoiding provocation, hatred and haste, through peaceful means. The Lord then vanished from their sight.

Thereupon, Brahma and others repaired to their abodes. The Asuras were impatient to wage war and kill the Devas. But the latter approached King Bali of royal splendour, who was the commander of the Asura armies. The wise Indra conciliated Bali with soft words, and gained the friendship of him and of Arishtanemi, Sambara and other Asura leaders.

Churning of the Sea: Poison first comes up

The Devas invited Vasuki, the king of Nagas, to co-operate with them, and promised him a share in the fruit. He gladly agreed. They and the Asuras bound the Mount Mandara with Vasuki, and resolved to churn the sea, and get nectar, a drink of which assures immortality.

As promised, the Supreme Lord was with them in His Avatar as Ajita. He took hold of the fore part of Vasuki for churning, and the Devas also joined him, holding the head end of the serpent-rope. The Asuras were hesitant to catch hold of the tail of the serpent, as they thought that to be degrading. Then the Lord quickly went over to the tail end, with the Devas; and the Asuras gladly took hold of the fore part of the serpent. The churning began joyously, in the hope of getting immortality by the drink of a little nectar. In spite of energetic churning, the Mandara which was unsupported below, began to sink down the water. All were disheartened and alarmed. To see that there should be no obstacle to the project helped by Himself, the Lord, remaining Himself at the churning, took another form as a gaint Tortoise (Kurma Avatara), went down the water under the Mandara, and supported it on His back. Then the churning rod of Mandara turned round and round, as a free-wheeled island; and the Devas and Asuras churned the sea jovially with great ease. The weight and movement of the Mandara gave but a light scratching sensation on the back of the Lord in the Kurma form.

The sea became very agitated due to the churning, and the aquatic monsters were tossed about terror-stricken. After a while, smoke and fire issued forth from the thousand eyes and nostrils of the great Vasuki; and that dried up the energy of the Asuras and their leaders Pauloma, Kaleya, Bali and Ilaya, who had desired to work at the head-end of the serpent. The Lord however encouraged them to continue churning, and they did so, cooled a little by the sea breeze.

They were all impatient that no nectar came up. But soon the deadly poison, Halahala or Kalakuta, issued forth from the sea, teaming with afflicted fishes, crocodiles, serpents, tortoises, alligators and whales. The poison spread in every direction and it became unbearable. The leaders of the churning parties ran up to Sadasiva for being saved from the peril, and prayed to him to hurry up and save them all from the great poison. Himself a great Bhakta of the Supreme Lord, he is ever ready to sympathise with and help his own devotees, and never refuses any boon or grace prayed for. He immediately ran up to the sea, squeezed the spreading poison Halahala into His palm, and drank it. The poison rendered his throat blue, causing a blue mark on his throat. It was thus that He came to be called Nilakantha. All assembled praised Him for having saved them from the calamity. While He hastily drank the poison, a few drops of it dropped down, which became turned into scorpions, serpents, cobras, and herbs and plants, which even now continue to be poisonous.

**The Churning brought forth other things,
and finally Amrita Kalasa**

Delighted at their rescue from the poison Halahala by Lord Siva, and thankful to Him for His timely help, the Devas and Asuras continued the churning enthusiastically. Then came forth Surabhi (a vessel for keeping sacrificial offerings), which the Rishis took for themselves for use. Next sprang forth a horse, called Uchchaisravas, white like the moon; and Bali took it for him. The next to come was Iravata, the king elephant of four tusks, which shone like Kailasa. Then came out Kaustubha, the precious ruby, with which Sri Hari adorned His chest. Then arose the Parijata tree, which supplied things desired. Apsaras women came next in excellent dress, with gold necklaces and with sweet

gait and dances. All present were enamoured of their beauty and complexion.

Then shone forth from the sea of milk the glorious goddess Rama (Sri Lakshmi, devoted to the most glorious Lord), illuminating with her splendour all the cardinal points. All the Devas, Asuras and others were stricken by her beauty, excellence, age and complexion. Mahendra himself brought her a highly wonderful seat; and all the great rivers brought pure water in jars of gold. Mother earth supplied all the herbs to be used for ablutions; and cows supplied milk, curds, cheese, butter and ghee. Rishis arranged for Abhisheka as per Sastras, while Gandharvas sang auspicious hymns, and damsels danced and sang. Clouds sounded like Mridanga, Panavas, Murajas, Anakas and Gomukhas; and produced notes of Conches, flutes and Vinas. Accompanied by Vedic chantings by Brahmanas, the elephants of cardinal points poured the consecrated waters on Sri Lakshmi, having a lotus in her hand. The ocean supplied her silk garments, and Varuna Vaijayantimala; Visvakarma offered her wonderful ornaments, Sarasvati a wreath of pearls, Brahma a lotus, and Nagas ear-rings. After all the auspicious preliminaries, Sri Lakshmi with charming cheeks and bashful smiles, took in her hands a garland of Utpalas and garlanded Sri Hari; and stood by in His presence. The Lord allotted his bosom to be Her permanent abode. She was the mother of the three worlds and the source of all fortune. All were happy; and Brahma, Rudra, Angiras and other sages sang praises, and showered flowers.

Next arose from the churning Varuni, a maiden with lotus-like eyes, whom the Asuras took, as per Sri Hari's will. The last, but not the least, to come out of the sea of milk, was Sri Dhanvantari, the Lord Himself, who revealed Ayurveda, the medical science, to the world. He was of blue complexion, with long and stout arms, lotus-like eyes, and was adorned with a wreath and ornaments. Clad in Pitambara, His limbs were winsome and his gait lion-like. He had a jar full of nectar, which the Asuras snatched away, to appropriate it for themselves, to the exclusion of Devas and others.

The disappointed Devas sought the protection of the Lord who always saved His devoted servants. As willed by Him,

quarrel arose among the Asuras, as to who should have his nectar first and foremost. The weaker Asuras envied the position of the stronger Asuras, who had the jar of nectar. Then Sri Hari assumed the form of a most beautiful damsel, Mohini; and appeared there, with an enchanting appearance. The form was like a charming lily, with charming limbs, symmetrical cheeks, engaging face, slender waist, and with beautiful arms and their ornaments, and sweet Nupuras on her feet. She greatly kindled the passion in the hearts of the Asuras, by bashful smiles, dancing brows and winning glances.

The Jar of nectar is entrusted to Mohini for distribution

The Asuras lost mutual affection, reproached one another, and snatched the jar of nectar from one another among themselves. In their hour of despair, they had one relieving feature in the sight of the damsel Mohini coming up. They admired her beauty, splendour and youthfulness; and approached her with touching enquiries, as to who she was, and whither she came. They extolled her that she must be the beauty sent by Brahma himself to delight their senses and hearts. The Asuras were so much enamoured of her that they decided to win her favour, by entrusting to her their most valued jar of nectar for fair distribution among them. Mohini, Sri Hari's Maya Avatar, laughed at them, with sweet side glances, and cautioned them that wise persons should not place faith in women as according to the saying, friendly relations with wolves and women are momentary, as the latter look for newer and newer things. The Asuras lovingly laughed at Mohini's words, and even agreed to the latter's condition that anything done by her, right or wrong, in any manner or direction, should not be later questioned. Mohini undertook the distribution without any risk.

Thereafter, they all bathed, poured offerings, kept fast, performed auspicious rites, and bestowed gifts. They wore brand new clothes and assembled ready to get Amrita. They all sat facing east in the beautiful hall, perfumed with scented fumes and flowers, and illuminated with lights. The beautiful divine damsel of symmetrical limbs, dignified gait, wearing brilliant silk garment, with swimming eyes, winning nose, cheeks and face and enchant-

ing appearance, entered the hall with the Amrita Kalasam. The Devas were eager to drink a little nectar to ward off oldage and death, but the Asuras' minds were carried away and charmed by the winning attentions and movements. She asked the Asuras and Devas to sit in separate rows, and they implicitly obeyed especially the Asuras due to their intense love for her. She began serving Amrita in the row of the Devas; and while the passionate Asuras did not mind priority and dispute with a lovable lady, the jar became empty, Rahu however, entered the row of Devas and drank nectar, and this was pointed out by the sun and the moon. Quickly Sri Hari cut off the head of Rahu; and his trunk fell down; as the nectar had not entered it. Benefited by the nectar, Rahu's head became immortal; and he cherishes enmity to the sun and the moon, and he chases them on some new moon and full moon days.

As the disappointed Asuras were looking on, the Maya Avatar, resumed the true form of Sri Hari. Thus, though equally circumstanced by time, place, means and objects, the Devas and Asuras differed in the attainment of the fruit. The Asuras failed, while the Devas got Amrita, as they were righteous and were devoted to the Supreme Lord's lotus-like feet. The lesson for us, therefore, is that whatever we do for our body, children and all other prosperity, at the cost of life, wealth, energy, thought and words, becomes fruitful and good, if the same is dedicated and resigned to the Lord. Otherwise efforts become futile. The Supreme Lord is the real strength of our heart and soul; and we should therefore trust in God and do the right.

The Asuras wage war with the Devas: Sri Hari appears

In spite of all their exertion, the Asuras failed to get Amrita, as they had set their face against the Supreme Lord. Having satisfied His devotees with the drink of the nectar, the Lord went out of sight on His Garuda. Seeing the good fortune and complete success of their enemies, the Asuras were very jealous, and went against the Devas with raised weapons. Deva-Asura battle ensued; and the Devas fought their foes, trusting the Lord's feet for their support. The battle was terrible; and it was a hand-to-hand struggle on the sea-shore. They struck one another with swords, arrows, and various other weapons.

Tremendous was the uproar of conches and trumpets blown of Mridangas, Bheri and Damaru beaten, and of elephants roaring, horses neighing, chariots grating, and infantry shouting. In the battle warriors on chariots were engaged with those on chariots, foot soldiers with foot soldiers, horses with horses, and elephants with elephants. Flags of various hues; black and white umbrellas, fans and chowries of peacock feathers, turbans and helmets, torches, and white and brilliant weapons dazzled under the rays of the sun; and the heroes on both sides looked like two oceans of sea monsters.

In the battle, the Asura commander was Bali, son of Virochana, and his vehicle as an aerial car, constructed by Maya, and capable of going anywhere desired. It was filled with all fighting materials, it surpassed all imagination; it defied all description; and it was visible or invisible, as desired. It was a wonder of all wonders. Riding in this aerial car, surrounded by the army leaders, and waited upon by Chowries and umbrellas, Bali shone like the rising moon on the eastern hill. Round him stood leading squadrons of several Asuras; Namuchi, Sambara, Bana, Viprachitti, Ayomukha, Sakuni, Virochana, Vajradamshttra, Hayagriva, Megha, Dundubhi, Jambha, Maya, and many more chiefs.

Seeing the proud and strong enemies, Indra was greatly enraged and perplexed. He was seated on Airavata, and round him stood with flags and weapons, Vayu, Agni, Varuna, Kubera and others with their hosts. Bali fought with Indra, Guha with Taraka, Varuna with Heti, Mitra with Praheti, Yama with Kalanabha, Visvakarma with Maya, Namuchi with Aparajita, Surya with Bali's sons, and Chandra with Rahu. Similarly several others countered with several others of the rival party.

Thus Suras (Devas) and Asuras met together in a hand-to-hand fight, and struck one another with sharp arrows, swords and spikes. Elephants and horses, foot-soldiers and riders were beaten down, with their limbs chopped off, and their banners broken. The battlefield was terrible, with cut-down heads, long arms and trunks. Bali struck Indra with ten arrows, but the quick-handed Indra cut them instantly with sharp Bhallas. Amazed at Indra's skill, Bali advanced Sakti, which Indra cut off. Then Bali took up

Sula, Tomara, Prasa, and Tishties; and Indra cut them all. Thereupon, Bali made himself invisible, rose up in the sky, and sent down Asuric illusion, by which a mountain descended on the celestial army. Great was the uproar, trees fell burning, rocks rolled down over the enemy army, Rakshasa women appeared with Sula in their hands, and in their nudity, roaring 'Chindhi' (cut) and 'Bhindhi' (break) and so on. Then Bali created a very extensive and terrible fire of strong gales to burn out the enemy army.

The Devas stood bewildered, and prayed to the Glorious Lord for protection. The Lord appeared, clad in Pitambar, carrying His eight weapons in His arms, wearing Kaustubha jewel on His chest, and a priceless crown and ear-rings. Instantly all the illusions created by the Asuras vanished by the Supreme presence of the Supreme Lord, as a dream would vanish on return of wakefulness. Seeing Sri Hari on Garuda, Kalanemi hurled his Sula at Him, but He playfully seized it, and with it struck down the enemy. Malyavan and others struck Sri Hari with their weapons, but He struck them down with His Gada, and He cut off the leaders' heads with His Chakra; and they fell dead roaring aloud.

Deva-Asura Yuddha ends after some more fight

Encouraged by the presence of the Supreme Lord, Vayu, Indra and other celestials beat back their enemies in the battle. Indra raised his Vajra against Bali; challenged him against his knave means of Maya; and threatened to kill him. Bali calmly replied that fame, success, failure or death happen in due course, timed by Kala and Karma, and that wise men do not grieve for or rejoice at them. The heroic Bali then hit Indra with his Narachas, which was countered by Vajra by Indra; and Bali's car fell. Seeing Bali's plight, his friend and well-wisher Jambha, struck Indra and his elephant with his Gada. The elephant fell down disabled. Indra's driver Matali instantly brought Indra a chariot to continue the fight. Jambha struck Matali with his Sula very severely. Indra was very much enraged, and he cut off Jambha's head with his Vajrayudha. Hearing the plight of the Asuras, their kinsmen, Namuchi, Paka, and Bala sped to the battlefield to help. They showered arrows on Indra. Paka struck Matali, and Namuchi

struck Indra. Asuras' arrows obscured Indra thickly. But Indra soon emerged out with his chariot, horses, and flags; and shone like the sun with his Vajra, with which he soon ended Bali and Paka. Namuchi was much enraged, and dashed against Indra, who directed his Vajra against the former. It reached the Asura's neck, but could not pierce the skin even and kill him, as he had a boon that he should not be killed by a dry or wet weapon. Indra got scent of this secret, steadied his mind, contemplated; and he ended Namuchi with foam, which was neither wet nor dry.

Indra had the upper hand; and sages and Gandharvas sang his praises, celestial drums were beaten, and damsels danced in joy. Next, Vayu, Agni, Varuna and other Devas slew their respective opponents. To prevent further destruction, sage Narada appeared, and congratulated the Devas on their success, due to the blessed Amrita they had got; and counselled them to stop fighting. Indra and other Devas returned to their abodes; and Bali, who was distressed, was taken to his mountain abode. The Asura-Guru Sukracharya restored back to life and health all those whose limbs were intact or necks unbroken, by virtue of his secret knowledge of Sanjivini. The wise Bali was aware of the true nature of the world and was of a philosophic conviction. He was not much grieved though defeated.

The Lord assumes Mohini form again at Rudra's request

Rudra, later on, learnt that it was Sri Hari Himself, who assumed the form of Mohini, deluded the Asuras, and secured nectar for the Suras. Siva was eager to see the Mohini Avatar once again, and proceeded to Sri Hari's place with his consort Parvati and his retinue. He paid His respects and prayers to Him, and expressed his wish to see again His Mohini Avatar, which blessed the Suras, and curbed the pride of the Asuras.

The Lord is All-merciful, and condescended to grant His great devotee's request. The Lord pervades the whole universe. He is universe itself, the cause and the ruler thereof. He is the truth, the Seer and the Seen. So it is that wise men, who seek the highest good and not other blessings, rid themselves of all attachments and devote themselves to the contemplation of the Lord, who is the perfect Parabrahma, absolutely blessed, un-

touched by lower Gunas and misery. He is the changeless and absolute Mahapurusha, called by various names, such as Brahma, Dharma, and Purusha of great powers. The Asuras acted in the wrong direction, and they were deluded by His Maya.

That Supreme Lord decided to assume the form of Mohini highly valued by passionate persons, love-stricken and thoughtless. He then vanished out of sight, and Siva and Parvati remained witfully looking in every direction. In a park closeby, in the midst of trees, wonderful flowers and crimson sprouts, a beautiful paragon appeared playing with a ball. She wore stout wreaths of pearls, and moved about on her feet, shining like corals. Her swimming eyes and shining ear-rings, loosened garment and disturbed locks were deluding the lookers-on. Her faint smiles and pretended bashfulness made lord Siva forget himself and the presence of his consort. Charmed by the side-long looks, Siva set his heart on her, and ran after her immodestly. Feeling abashed, Mohini disappeared amongst the trees with a laughter. The passionate Siva lost control over his senses. He ran and ran, and could embrace her at a distance. The Maya Avatar easily extricated herself from the embrace and took to flight. Siva pursued her in vain, subdued by passion. On the way, the seed of Siva escaped and dropped, but it never became a waste. The various spots, where the seed fell became the fields of gold and silver mines. A little later, Lord Siva recovered himself from the confusion, and became ashamed. The Lord then reappeared resuming His masculine form, and took leave of His devotee. When the great Lord Siva himself was deluded by Sri Hari's Maya, what should be said about the other ordinary created beings, who easily fall a prey to His will, timed by Kala and Karma. Great are the Lord's powers; and it is very auspicious to remember His glorious deeds, sing, or listen to them, with all devotion and concentration.

Later Manvantaras described

The present is the Vaivasvata Manvantara or the seventh period. Vaivasvata was also known as Sraddhadeva. His sons were Ikshvaku, Nabhaga, Dhrishta, Saryati, Narishyanta, Nabhaga. Dishta, Karusha, Prishadhra, and Vasumat. Purandhara was the Indra; the Devas were the Adityas, Vasus, Rudras, Visvedevas,

Maruts, Asvins, and Ribhava; and the sages were Kasyapa, Atri, Vasista, Visvamitra, Gautama, Jamadagni and Bharadvaja. Lord Vishnu appeared in His Avatar as Vamana, as the son of Kasyapa and Aditi.

Savarni will be the eighth Manu, his sons being Nirmoka, Virajaksha and others. The Manvantara will have Virochana's son Bali as Indra, and Sutapas, Virajas and Amritaprabhas as Devas. This Bali had gifted the earth to the Lord, who asked for three feet of ground; and the Lord was pleased to install him as the ruler of Sutala, surpassing the splendour of Svarga. For the Manvantara, the great Yogis Galava, Asvatthama, Kripa, Rishyasringa and Badarayana will be sages; and the Lord's Avatar will be called Sarvabhauma son of Devaguhyas and Sarasvati.

The ninth Manu will be Dakshasavarni, son of Varuna; and his sons will be Bhutaketu, Diptaketu and others. The Manvantara will have Ayushmat as the Lord's Avatar, Paras and Marishigarbhas as Devas, and Dyutimat and six others as sages. Brahmasavarni will be the tenth Manu, with his sons Bhourishena and others. The world will be happy then by the Avatar of the Lord, called Srimurti. The Manvantara will have Sambhu as Indra; Suvasana and Virudha as Devas; and Havishman, Sukriti, Satya, Jaya and Murti as sages.

The next Manu will be Dharmasavarni, with Satyadharma and nine other sons. The Manvantara will have Vaidhruta as Indra; Vibhangamas, Kamagamas, and Nirvanaruchis as Devas; and Aruna and others as sages. Dharmasetu, son of Aryaka, will be the Lord to protect the three worlds. The twelfth Manu will be Rudrasavarni, His sons being Devavan, Upadeva, Devasreshta and others. The Manvantara will have Svadharma, son of Satyasahas and Suprita, as the glorious Lord, Rithadhama as Indra; Harita and others as Devas; and Tapomurti, Yapasvi and Agnidhraka as sages.

The later Manu will be Devasavarni, his sons being Chitrasena, Vichitra and others. The Manvantara will have Devahotra son of Brihati, as the Lord's Avatar; Divaspati as Indra; Sukarma and Sutrama among the Devas; Nirmoka, Tattvadarsa and five others as the sages. The fourteenth Manu will be Indrasavarni,

having sons named Uru, Gambhirabuddhi and others. The Manvantara will have Brihadbhanu, son of Satrayana and Vitana, as the Lord; Suchi as Indra; Pavitras and Chakshusas as the Devas; and Agni, Bahu, Suddha and Magadha among the sages.

These Manvantaras (periods of Manu) relate to the past, present and future; and cover the present Sveta Varaha Kalpa of one full thousand Yugas: This auspicious narration of the Supreme Lord's Lila, or attention thereto, will bless the mankind with Divine Grace, which is so essential for the material, physical and spiritual prosperity of us all.

The why and wherefore of the Manvantaras

It will be of interest to know how the Manus are employed and what their duties and spheres are. The Manus, their sons, respective Indras, Devas and sages are created under the Supreme Lord's command and direction. Manu and others carry on the world's work as per the Will of the Lord's Avatars of Yajna and others. At the end of the four Yugas, the sages discovered the various Vedas, (lost by force of time), by virtue of their Tapas. The eternal righteous course of duties can be known only from the Vedas.

The Manus are created full of earnestness to understand Dharma, and propagate the same throughout the land in their respective Manvantaras. The Manus, their sons and grandsons carry on the protection of the world to the end of their Manvantara; and the Devas accept their shares in the sacrificial offerings, along with those entitled in the sacrificial performances.

Indra, who is the master of the fortune of the three worlds, as willed by the Lord, protects them and showers prosperity on the population. In every Yuga, Sri Hari appears as a Siddha, and imparts wisdom; as a Rishi teaches Karma; and as Yoga Purusha shows the method of Yoga. Sanaka and others are the Siddhas; Yajnavalkya and others are Rishis; and Dattatreya and others are masters of Yoga.

Sri Hari creates the world as Prajapati, punishes the wicked as King, and destroys everything in due course as Kala. In spite of

numerous names and forms, and glorious deeds and effulgence, He is invisible to the naked eye. Perfect devotion to Him and to His devotees is the only way to reach Him and win His Grace.

Sukracharya helps Bali to perform Visvajit Yaga

There was once a battle between Indra and Bali, in which the former deprived Bali of his wealth and life. Then Sukracharya restored Bali to life. Thus Bali became the disciple of Sukracharya and others of Bhṛigu race.

Bali desired to reconquer his kingdom of Svarga. For this purpose, Sukra and other Brahmanas enabled Bali to perform Visvajit sacrifice. Bali had Mahābhisheka with sacred waters. As a result of the sacrifice, Bali got from the sacrificial fire a chariot, made strong with sheets of gold, good horses of golden hue, and a banner bearing the ensign of a lion. He also obtained an excellent bow of gold fastenings, two quivers full of arrows and a divine coat-of-mail. Prahlada, his grandfather, gave him a garland of never-fading flowers, and Sukra a conch. Equipped with these, having performed auspicious rites, and bowed to his Guru Sukra and Prahlada, and surrounded by his army leaders, the powerful Bali marched towards the most prosperous city of Indira.

The city was beautiful with parks and gardens crowded with warbling pairs of birds and humming bees. It was surrounded by the divine river Ganga, and was protected with high ramparts, with towers of crystal, and royal roads symmetrically laid out. There were public halls, quadrangles and paved streets, with numerous mansions with platforms of diamonds and other precious stones. There, youthful and strong-built damsels shone with exceeding beauty. Cool breeze blew bearing the fragrance of Saugandhika wreaths. Celestial women walked through the paths dignifiedly. Sweet music of celestial women resounded with the voices of peacocks, pigeons and bees. The city was attractive with the sweet sounds of Mridangas, Conches, Anakas, Dundubhis, Muraja, Vina and flutes. It was splendid with the songs of Gandharvas and Kinnaras.

With a large army, Bali besieged this beautiful city, and blew the great conch, instilling fear into the inhabitants of the city.

Indra was unnerved; and accompanied by other Devas, he sought the counsel of his Guru Brihaspati. Indra was amazed at the surprising courage, strength and prowess of the enemy. Brihaspati informed Indra that the enemy was made powerful by Sukra and other Brahmanas of Bhrigu race; and that Sri Hari alone could subdue him, and not other mortals. Having known that Bali's irresistible prowess was the result of Visvajit sacrifice, and that it would be disastrous to face him then, Indra and his followers went out of the city of Svarga, assuming any form at will.

Then Bali took possession of the capital, and brought the three worlds under his control. Prompted and helped by the Bhrigus, Bali began performing a hundred Asvamedha Yagas. With the fame of the sacrificial course spread to the three worlds, Bali shone like the lord of the stars and enjoyed the well-developed wealth, so easily got.

Kasyapa instructs His wife Aditi to do Payovrata for her sons' success

Sage Kasyapa had two wives, Diti and Aditi. Diti's sons were the Asuras who came to power. Aditi's sons were Indra and other Suras, who had fled Svarga. After a long period of meditation, Kasyapa came to the hermitage of Aditi; and found her cheerless. He made kind enquiries, as to why she was unhappy. She replied that her sons had been exiled by the enemies, and that she was immersed in an ocean of grief.

Kasyapa smiled and consoled her that it was all the Lord's will and His Maya, the controlling power of Kala and Karma. He advised her to feel detached from these miseries and worship the Supreme Person, merciful to the afflicted, granting all wishes. Aditi sought her husband's advice as to how to worship the Supreme Lord. Kasyapa instructed Aditi to observe Payovrata, which Brahma himself had taught him, thus:

Payovrata is the worship of Pundarikaksha for twelve days with intense devotion. It should be done in the bright fortnight of Phalgun month. To observe the Vrata, one should bathe, and

pray to Goddess Earth, standing in a current of water, for purification from all sins. Then after one's daily duties, with a calm and serene mind, a particular Mantra should be repeated, in praise of Sri Vasudeva, who is the subtle and manifest Pradhana and Purusha. He is Kesava of emerald hue, who confers all boons on those who worship and contemplate His feet for their welfare. Abhisheka with milk should be performed; and offerings of sandal paste, flowers, ornaments and other precious things offered to Him. The best rice cooked with milk, better still with butter and sugar, should be offered to Him. The food should be given to a devotee, himself (Vrata-doer) taking a little of it.

The prescribed Mantra should be repeated one hundred and eight times daily; and at least two Brahmanas should be fed with the food offerings. Having honoured them and with their permission, the doer and his relations should eat the remnants. Strict celibacy should be observed throughout the period. He should observe the Vrata for twelve days, bathing thrice daily, subsisting on milk-food, with good devotion to Vasudeva, and avoiding talks on unholy topics. Finally, the preceptor and other worthy devotees should be given gifts of clothes, ornaments and cows; and even ordinary and sinful persons should be given gifts, as they deserve, for the gratification of Sri Vishnu. The daily worship of the Lord should be accompanied by the singing of Vedic hymns, and the narration of the Lord's holy stories. This Vrata is also known as Sarva Yajna and Sarva Vrata; and is a perfect Tapas for the gratification of the Supreme Lord.

Aditi observes Payovrata

As instructed by her husband sage Kasyapa, Aditi observed the Vrata for twelve days with great diligence and undivided attention. She subsisted on milk-food for the whole period, and meditated on Lord Vasudeva, controlling her senses completely. The Supreme Lord was quite pleased, and revealed Himself unto her, clad in Pitambara, and wielding Sankha, Chakra, Gada and Padma in His four arms. She rose, overcome with joy and love; and fell prostrate before Him. Then she rose, joined her palms, and stood up praising Him, with tears of joy in her eyes.

She expressed that the hallowed glory of the Lord's lotus-like feet was very auspicious, to remove the sins and troubles of those that seek His shelter. Great were His powers of creation, preservation and destruction. A blessed body, long life, unsurpassed fortune, celestial position in Rasatala, Yogic powers, Dharma, Artha, Kama and pure knowledge were all readily bestowed by the Lord on his devotees who desire them. She sought His grace just to overthrow the Asuras, who had vanquished her sons (Devas).

The Lord blessed her and said: "I know thy cherished wish. Your sons have been deprived of their fortune and expelled from their home. You want that they should recover their lost fortune from the haughty and mighty Asuras, and that you should live in their happy company. The Asura leaders are now invincible, due to their good time and divine blessings. Please wait for sometime. My worship will not go in vain. It bears fruit according to intensity of the faith of the doer. I am now pleased with your devotion; and I shall be born as your son, by My Own Amsa, and protect your sons. Be dutiful to your husband, contemplating Me as present in him; and you will achieve everything desired."

Then the Lord disappeared. Aditi was glad that she would gain the rare boon of Sri Hari's Avatar in her. She served her husband and waited on him in all righteous duties. In due course, Aditi conceived; and she was ever devoted to Supreme Lord, recounting His glories and singing His praises, in Kasyapa's hermitage.

Lord Sri Vamana's Avatar

The Supreme Lord, whose deeds, and praises are sung by Brahma himself, manifested Himself as the son of Aditi, in due course, in His divine form, clad in Pitambara, with eyes broad like lotus petals, and with His weapons of Sankha, Chakra, Gada and Padma in His four arms. His form was of violet complexion, His face was bright with the rays of Makarakundala, and His bosom marked with Sri Vatsa. He was adorned with bracelets, Angadas, a zone, a brilliant crown and beautiful Nupuras. With his splendid Vanamala, and the Kaustubha about His neck, He dispelled, with His lustre, the darkness in sage Kasyapa Prajapati's house. At the

sacred hour of His Avatar, there was tranquility; mankind rejoiced; lakes and ponds got clear; the seasons bore fruit; and all the creation—men, cows, birds and beasts was joyful. It was then Sravana star ruling on the twelfth day of the bright fortnight of Bhadrpada month. At that Abhijit hour, the position of the stars and planets indicated His Avatar to be most beneficial. Conches, Drums, Mridanga, Panava and Anakas sounded; the joyous Apsaras danced; Gandharvas sang; and sages, Devas and Pitris offered their prayers to the Lord. There was celestial singing and dancing with showers of flowers on the hermitage of Aditi. Kasyapa and Aditi enjoyed the Supreme presence of the Lord's Personality, uttering the words 'Jaya,' 'Jaya.' As they were happily witnessing, the Lord dramatically transformed Himself into a boy-Brahmachari.

Later, the Rishis were rejoiced to see the boy; and Kasyapa performed the religious observances for the boy, who soon grew up. At the Upanayanam ceremony, Surya taught Him Gayatri; Brihaspati gave Him the sacred thread; and Kasyapa presented Him the Maunji. Bhudevi gave Him a deer skin, Soma the sacred staff. Aditi a Kaupina and a cloth, and the sky an umbrella. Sarasvati gave Him a string of beads; Kubera a vessel; and Parvati gave Him alms. Thus initiated, the all-surpassing boy of Brahma Tejas, outshone in the assembly of Rishis and Brahmanas.

He worshipped the sacrificial fire daily and devoutly, as an example to the mankind; and, one day, He started to attend the Asvamedha sacrifice being performed by Bali on the northern bank of the Narmada river. Bali saw Him coming at a distance, like a rising sun, and noticed that the splendour of himself and his assembly was eclipsed by the glory and brilliance of the boy-Brahmachari, who had been named Vamana. Lord Vamana entered the sacrificial hall, clad in deer skin, with His staff, umbrella and a jar full of water. All rose from their seats and received Him. Bali heartily received Him, washed His feet, and worshipped Him. He also sprinkled the auspicious water over himself and his assembly; and thus purified the atmosphere. He expressed that the rare guest was an embodiment of all Tapas in the visible form of a Brahma-Rishi; and that His visit satisfied his Pitris; and purified his house and family. Bali offered to give

Vamana whatever He desired—earth, gold, good food, drink, houses, horses, elephants or chariots; or even a pretty girl, if he desired to marry and lead a family life. Lord Vamana was immensely pleased with the hearty hospitality, so earnestly extended to Him.

Vamana compliments Bali and asks for three feet of ground

Lord Vamana commended Bali for his spirit of kind and true Dharma, worthy of his race, and righteous and productive of good reputation and fruits. He said that there was none in Bali's family who ever refused to give gifts asked for, or who was so miserly as to refuse to give what was offered or promised. The Lord was glad that Bali was a worthy son in the glorious family of Prahlada, who shone high like the moon in the sky. From Bali, the liberal ruler of the world, Vamana asked for a limited gift of land, three feet of ground measured by His own foot, as wise men should not receive a larger gift than what was barely necessary.

Bali wondered and expressed his surprise at the young Brahmana's request but for just three feet of ground from a world ruler, who could give even a whole continent. Bali offered to liberally give Him ample land enough to give Him a living for His whole life. The Lord replied that a covetous Brahmana could not be satisfied even with the gift of the three worlds; nay even with nine continents, as then he would desire to possess the seven great Dvipas. Even Vainya, Gaya and others, who ruled the seven Dvipas, with all wealth and pleasure, did not cease to desire for more and more. Discontentment regarding wealth and pleasure caused Samsara of unfordable misery. One should be content with what he got by chance. The Lord said that He wanted nothing more than three feet of ground.

King Bali took up the jar of water to bestow the gift asked for by Vamana. But quickly, his Guru Sukracharya, intervened and warned Bali that the gift would undo Bali himself, as the boy-Brahmachari was no other than Lord Vishnu Himself, come to accomplish the purpose of the Devas. Bali was warned of the great danger, by the gift, to his own position, power, wealth, splendour, renown and learning, which would all be transferred to Indra. That charitable gift was not commendable, if it was harmful

to one's own living and was ruinous to himself. It was not right that one should risk all the wealth and prosperity, at his command; for, the wealth was the right of five sharers—charity, celebrity, pleasure, kith and kin. Satya was truly sacred, and formed the flowers and fruits of the tree itself; but if the tree itself was felled, there could be no more hope of getting fruits or flowers. One became poorer by whatever he gave to another; but he would be destitute of everything, if he gave away all he had, and become starved. Sukra told Bali that charity, ruinous to oneself, should be refused; and that Dharma to himself and his progeny should be maintained. Sukra even suggested that even to utter a falsehood might not be condemned, if it was in relation to women, in sports, in marriage arrangements, for one's living, in danger to life, in protecting cows and culture, and when one was likely to come to trouble.

Bali gives Vishnu the desired gift

Emperor Bali thought over the counsel of his Guru for a minute, and made up his mind to keep his promise of giving the desired gift; and told Sukracharya thus: "What your worship says is true; but that may apply generally to householders, who are much after wealth, enjoyment, reputation and living. How could I, born in the family of the Great Prahlada, deny like a gambler, the request of a Brahmana, having once promised it? Nothing is more unrighteous than being untruthful; and how can I bear the burden of not keeping my promise? I am not afraid of poverty or even hell, or of losing my position. I shall be satisfied that I have given the charity that I promised.

"When Dadhichi and Sibi were righteous even at the expense of their body and life, why should I not risk my land and other things? By virtue of their Karma and Kala, the great Asuras previously lost not only their earthly enjoyments, but also their right for the other happy worlds. They once ruled the whole world, but there is no trace of their fame on this earth. Greedy people commonly meet on the battlefield and give up their life, rather than faithfully spend their money on a worthy and holy man. It will be laudable if a thoughtful and merciful man comes to difficulty by gratifying the desires of those that resort to him. While so, why should I hesitate to keep my promise to a worthy Brahmachari,

whom you recognise as the Lord Himself. I shall keep up my promise, be He the worshipful Lord or even an enemy. I am faultless and harmless. I do not mind if I am bound. Just for the sake of land, the glorious Lord will not forfeit His name, and harm me eternally. I know, and I have decided."

Sukra was vexed that his advice did not prevail; and pronounced a curse that Bali should fall from his royal splendour, for his ignorance, obstinacy and disregard of his Guru. Bali did not mind the curse; but prepared himself to gift the land. His richly adorned wife Vindhyavali brought a jar of sacred water and the sacrificer himself washed the glorious feet of Vamana, sprinkled the water on his head and over the others there. In assurance of the gift of the desired land, Bali poured water from his hand into the hand of Sri Vamana held below.

That was a glorious hour. Suras thronged in heaven; and Gandharvas, Vidyadharas, Siddhas, Charanas and all sang the praises of the great Asura, and delightfully showered flowers. The merciful Lord Vamana never intended anything bad to Bali, but his present loss or plight was only made a spring board for his higher elevation to a state of divine splendour.

The boy form of Sri Hari wonderfully expanded itself encompassing all the earth and heaven. Bali, his wife, his Guru and others were amazed at the wonderfully huge form that the Lord had taken. His feet rested on Rasatala; the sky was in His navel; and the stars were high on His chest. Bali saw Dharma on His heart, Rita and Satya on his breasts, Sri Lakshmi on his bosom, Indra and other Devas on His arms, the moon in His mind, the sun in His eyes, Agni in His mouth, the Vedas in His speech; Varuna in His tongue, love in His touch, Maya in His laughter; and all the mobile and immobile creatures in the body of the Supreme Lord Vamana, who had now assumed the great Trivikrama Avatar in the huge form. The Asuras lost their heart seeing the Lord with His splendid Sudarsana Chakra and Sarnga bow. Bali delightfully saw Him, with His Gada, Panchajanya, Kaumodaki and Nandaka. Sunanda and other attendants waited on Him, with brilliant crowns, Angadas, ear-rings, Srivatsa mark, **Kaustubha, Pitambara and Vanamala.**

The Supreme Lord covered the whole earth of Bali with one foot; and with the second foot, He covered the Svarga. There was no space for Bali to bestow on the Lord, for the promised remaining extent of one more foot. The lifted foot of the Lord passed beyond Maharloka, Janoloka and Tapoloka; and even reached Satyaloka.

Asuras that came to attack Vamana were driven off

The Lord's foot that reached Satyaloka, eclipsed the splendour there by the brilliance of the moon-like nails of the Lord's foot; and all there were immersed in it. Brahma, sage Marichi, Yogi Sananda, and the various Devas presiding over the Vedas, Vedangas, Niyamas, Yamas, Puranas, and Samhitas, and also many others in Satyaloka had their Karma burnt up by the lustre shed on them. They all came up, bowed to and praised the Lord's foot, by contemplating which they had reached the region of Brahma, which was not attainable by means of Karma alone, however great. The pure and wise Brahma brought water to worship the Lord's foot. The water, hallowed by washing the sacred foot, became the celestial river in the heavens; and flowing down, it also purified the three worlds.

Brahma and all others then devoutfully brought their tribute of offerings to the Lord who was immensely pleased. He then withdrew from His huge form, and took the limited personality of Sri Vamana again. The Devas again worshipped the Lord with flowers and fruits, divine pigments and sandal fragrance, frankincense and lights, and fried grain and rice. They sang praises with shouts of victory, celebrating His power and greatness, with dancing and music, and with sounds of conches and drums. The victory of the Lord and the great festivity was proclaimed in all directions by the beating of drums arranged by Jambavan.

The Asuras took advantage of the small Vamana form taken by the Lord and ran enraged against Him. They roared that they had been deceived by the Lord of illusive powers, in the form of a boy-Brahmachari. They went against Vamana with Sula and Pattisa in their hands; but Bali did not like it. Vishnu's attendants resisted them; and Nanda, Sunanda, Jaya, Vijaya, Bala, Prabala, Kumuda, Kumudaksha, Vishvaksena, Garuda, Jayanta, Sre-

tadeva, and Pushpadanta beat back the Asura enemies very easily. Bali remembered his Guru's curse and directed the Asuras to desist from further fight, as Kala was then unfavourable to them, and it was the celestials' turn for power and prosperity. He reminded them that on several occasions they, strengthened by Providence, had vanquished the Devas; and they should conquer them again when Kala favoured them later on. The Asuras retreated to Rasatala. As willed by the Lord, Garuda bound Bali by ropes of Varuna, and brought him to the Lord's presence. The famous Asura king, though deprived of fortune, had good fame and presence of mind. The Lord told Bali that with His one foot He covered Bhuloka; and with the second foot the sky and Svarga too. He told him that he would go to hell, if he did not grant Him the ground to be covered by one foot more, as promised to Him. The Lord cautioned him to keep his promise, and not forego Svarga and fall down into hell.

Bali and Prahlada praise the Lord who orders them to the Sutala region

The Asura king Bali, though in worst circumstances, remained unchanged in his mind and nature; and nobly spoke thus: "My Lord, my word and promise were not insincere. I shall make them true. Please set Your third foot on my head; and kindly let me keep my promise. I fear not the bonds of Varuna, nor even hell of utter poverty. I am afraid of being called an unrighteous creature. Lord Vamana, You have been, indirectly in the guise of an enemy, a great preceptor to the Asuras. You have opened our eyes, blinded with pride. I am not pained or ashamed with the cords of Varuna binding me. My grandfather Prahlada, remained Your great devotee, in spite of the astounding cruelties he was subjected to by his father, who was opposed to You. I know that this body is worthless when it falls off; and that our kith and kin are only robbers, waiting to carry away the amassed wealth. I betake myself to Your lotus-like feet, following the foot steps of my wise grandfather, who subjected himself to all torture, trusting in You, who saved him finally. I am content with Your presence. I do not care for wealth and power, or life itself, which Yama snatches away any moment. I seek You, and You alone."

Prahlada of radiant glory and of high stature was there, with charming appearance and disposition. He saw the Lord, waited upon by Sananda, Nanda and others. With tears in his eyes, Prahlada prayed to the Lord to show His grace on Bali and rescue him, as he was no more infatuated with pride and power. The Lord Himself previously bestowed on him Indrapadavi; and nothing was lost by his being deprived of that status as per Lord's will.

Bali's wife Vindhyavali stood there with joined hands and drooping face. Brahma reverently prayed to the Supreme Lord Vamana to release Bali, since he had unflinchingly offered all he had, including his own body, in all humility to the Lord.

The Lord was immensely pleased, and addressed Brahma, Prahlada, Bali and all others present thus: "I put an end to the wealth of that person to whom I show My Grace, if he is wealth-intoxicated, gets deprived of reasoning and disregards the world and Myself. After several births and rebirths, Jiva is born as a human being; and if in that state, he does not become blinded by his birth, action, youth, beauty, learning, authority, wealth, and other favourable circumstances, that is certainly due to My Grace. If one is deluded by the aforesaid assets, and is arrogant and opposed to all good purposes, he alienates My Grace. The great Asura leader Bali, though conquered by My Maya and cast in suffering, has not lost his sense and devotion to Me, in spite of loss of wealth, fall from his position, thrown down and bound by enemies, and abandoned by his relations. He did not forsake his vow and word, though he was threatened and cursed by his Guru. He has not abandoned truth and Dharma. I now bestow on him the position, which even great Devas cannot easily attain. He will be protected by Me, and incarnated as Indra during the Savarni Manvantara. Till then, he will remain in Sutala, constructed by Visvakarma, with all his relations. There, I personally see that he does not suffer from anxieties, diseases, fatigue, laziness, defeat, contempt or danger from others. There, I protect him and his all; and My Chakra will put an end to any Asura that violates Bali's command. Bali will find Me always present there. There, all Asura disposition will be powerless, and vanish at the sight of My glory, always present."

Bali enters Sutala and Indra returns to Svarga

Bali was filled with joy at the Lord's expression of His Grace; and with his heart filled with devotion, and his eyes filled with

tears, he prostrated before the Lord, and offered his praises to Him. He bowed to the Lord, Brahma and Siva; and freed from the ties, he entered the Sutala region with his Asuras. Lord Vamana restored Svarga to Indra, and ruled the whole universe, thus accomplishing the desire of Aditi. The Lord commanded Prahlada also to be in Sutala, and be cheerful in the company of his grandson and his kith and kin, and assured that He would Himself be there always with Gada in His hand, to give them the great joy of seeing Him, and free them from the bonds of Karma. Asura Guru, Sukracharya, who was there, was directed to complete the Asvamedha Sacrifice, which had been commenced by Bali. Sukra was glad that he was given the sacred duty, and reverently bowed to the Lord. It was all a happy ending.

The glorious Lord accepted the gift of the worlds from Bali, and gave back to His brother Indra the celestial kingdom, which had been usurped by his enemies. To the satisfaction of sage Kasyapa and Aditi, the Lord took His Avatar as Vamana to protect the Vedas, the Devas, Dharma, all prosperity, Svarga and Moksha; and He was crowned as Upendra by Brahma, Devas, Rishis, Pitris, Daksha, Bhrigu, Angiras, Sanatkumara and Lord Siva. All the beings were highly rejoiced.

Brahma, Indra and others honoured Vamana, and escorted Him to the celestial capital in a celestial car. Then Brahma, Rudra, Indra and all others returned to their respective abodes with great rejoicing, commending Aditi, and singing the glorious deeds of the Supreme Lord. His glory is so great that no one, not even His own consort, Sri Lakshmi, could exhaustively sing the same, and how could poor mortals attempt it? Blessed will be those, who recount or listen to the most wonderful deeds of the Lord, as much as possible, and the act, or even an attempt at it, will be most auspicious to the mankind, for their prosperity and well-being.

The Supreme Lord's Matsya Avatar

The Supreme Lord assumes several forms at various times for the protection of the cows and Brahmanas, Devas and sages, Vedas and Dharma, and Artha and righteous purposes. His Avatar as Matsya was the first of them. At the close of Brahmakalpa, there was a great deluge; and then the earth and other regions were covered by the sea. Brahma, was then overtaken by sleep and dozed away, when a powerful Asura, Hayagriva, carried away the Vedas. To restore the Vedas from the Asura, the Lord took the Avatar.

At the time, a devout and saintly King, Satyavrata, was performing Tapas, living on mere water. It was this Satyavrata, who was also known as Sraddhadeva, son of Visvavat, whom Sri Hari nominated as the Manu.

When this Satyavrata was offering Arghya in the river Kritamala, a tiny fish was seen in the handful of water, he had taken. The fish craved for the king's protection; and out of love and pity, the king put it in his jar of water and took it to his hermitage. That night, the fish grew very big in the jar; and to find more space for it, the king put the fish in a bucket of water. Very soon, the fish grew bigger still, and requested the king to find for it a more spacious place to move about. He then removed it to a lake, where again the fish grew to a monstrous size. Being requested for a deep pool of inexhaustible water, the king left the fish in a sea. The fish grew still bigger there; and requested the king not to desert it there, as crocodiles and other sea monsters would eat it up. The king was amazed at the wonderful growth of the fish, and its request. Finally it came to his mind that the wonderful fish was the Supreme Lord Himself, friend, well-wisher, and indweller of beings; and offered praises to Him. The Lord made His appearance as a fish on the eve of the Yuga, to sport in the sea of deluge, and to delight His devotees.

The Supreme Matsya told the king that on the seventh day, at midday, there would be Pralaya, drowning the three worlds, and that a spacious ship would be sent to the king. The king was asked to board the ship, with the seven sages, all herbs, plants and seeds, and also typical animals; and sail about the sea, in perfect darkness, in the light of the sages' glory. The Lord promised to be by the side, and suggested to the king to moor the vessel by means of the great serpent to the horn of His great fish form. He said that He would sport in the sea along with the vessel and with the king and the sages aboard, for the entire duration of Brahma's night; and then reveal Himself in the king's heart, and shower His Grace on him. The Lord then disappeared.

The saintly king thereafter sat in deep meditation and concentration of His feet. On the seventh day, there was a great downpour of rain, and the seas overflowed. He prayerfully thought of the Lord's command; and there approached a great vessel coming up; and he boarded it with the sages, herbs and plants, as directed by the Lord. The king and the sages contemplated the Lord in His form of the great golden fish with a

horn. He tied the vessel to His horn, and praised His immeasurable glory thus:

"You are the highest preceptor and father, who can confer Moksha on us, who are subjected to Avidya, afflictions and anxieties. We pray for Your Grace. Due to our ignorant actions, we are bound by Karma and suffering; and in vain we do Karma again to find happiness. You should alone cut the knots of evils at our heart, and shake off our wrong notions. Your Grace only can purify us thoroughly from our impurities, just like a piece of silver blown pure by fire. We resort to You for shelter and Grace, and to none others; because all Devas, preceptors and great people together cannot confer on us even a thousandth part of the Grace You can bestow on us. An ignorant person seeking guidance from an unwise person is like a blind man being led by an eyeless person. But You are the One affording perfect light to all our senses and lead us to a proper goal. To the whole world You are the friend, the beloved and Supreme Ruler. Still, with blinded understanding, and steeped in passions, we fail to remember You as present in our heart; and the mind runs after everywhere in vain. We pray to You, Omniscient Lord, to cut the evil knots in our heart, give us wisdom, and reveal Yourself to us in our heart."

The Supreme Lord taught the truth to the good king; He gave the divine scripture, called Matsya Purana, to the king; and taught him the mystery of Atma. The Purana treats of the Sankhya knowledge and the practice of Yoga. Thus taught by the Lord, the king and the sages listened to the Lord's teachings, and had no more doubts left in their mind.

When Pralaya passed away, Sri Hari destroyed the Asura Hayagriva; and to Brahma, who then woke up, He restored the sacred Vedas. King Satyavrata, who thus gained knowledge and wisdom, was made Vaivasvata Manu of this Kalpa, by the Supreme Lord.

Very great are the Lord's glories; and he, who recounts or listens to them, becomes absolved of all sins. He who sings His praises, as aforesaid, will accomplish all his desires, and will attain to the highest goal. The Lord imparted true knowledge to the king and the sages; and restored the Vedas, which had been stolen from Brahma, in dormant sleep.

SRI KRISHNARPANAMASTHU

