

Spirit) the Puruṣa (the Male creative Energy) pervades over everything, in all the living worlds. That Eternal Being is Brahmā, Viṣṇu, Śiva.

Knowing that the world was lying in pure water, the Bhagavān (Supreme Being) cut the egg open. From it the Omkāra (the sacred syllable 'Om') emanated. The first sound of it was 'Bhūh', the second, sound, 'Bhuvah' and the third sound 'Svah'. So they came to be known as "Bhūrbhuvah Svah". Then the glorious radiance of the sun was born from it and Brahmā the grandfather of the worlds originated in the centre of the egg.

3) *Instigation to compose Rāmāyaṇa.* It was Brahmā who instigated Vālmiki to compose the Rāmāyaṇa.

A fowler of the forest tribe shot down one of a couple of snipes which were carrying on love-making, on the banks of the River Tamasā. Seeing this Vālmiki cursed the fowler. The curse came out of the mouth of Vālmiki in the form of a verse,¹ "mā niṣāda pratiṣṭhām tvama-gamaḥ śāśvatīḥ samāḥ, yat krauñcamithunādekam, avadhīḥ kāmamohitam," which according to hearsay, is the first piece of poetry in the world. Brahmā who was attracted by the poetry came to the hermitage of Vālmiki and instigated him to compose the story of Rāma in verse. It is stated in Vālmiki Rāmāyaṇa, Bālakāṇḍa, Sarga 2, that the Rāmāyaṇa was composed thus.

4) *Rāvaṇa is given a boon.* It was Brahmā who made Rāvaṇa an ever-powerful hero. Penance was done by Rāvaṇa in the vicinity of the Himālayas and Brahmā appeared before him and granted him the boon that no living creature except man, would kill him. (Vālmiki Rāmāyaṇa, Bāla Kāṇḍa, Sarga 16).

5) *The loss of a head.* Long ago Śiva plucked off a head of Brahmā. This story occurs in various purāṇas with slight changes. Two of them are given below:—

(1) In olden days, in the period of Satyayuga, Mahāviṣṇu did penance in Śvetadvīpa (the island Śveta) to obtain Eternal Bliss, being deeply engaged in the study of Brahminvidyā. Brahmā also went to another place and began to do penance for the suppression of passions. Both were doing severe penance. So they began to walk in order to take rest from the penance. On the way they met each other. One asked "who are you?" The other also asked the same question. The talk ended in a contest as to who was the greater of the two. Each claimed himself to be the supreme power of the world. Neither of them was prepared to recognize the claims of the other. In the midst of this contest, a phallus, extra-ordinarily bulky and fair appeared before them and an ethereal voice said from the sky: "You need not quarrel as to who is superior. He who reaches the extremity of this phallus is the superior person. So both of you proceed, one upwards and the other downwards and find out the end." Hearing this Viṣṇu went downwards to find out the bottom and Brahmā, upwards to the top. Viṣṇu travelled for a long time and finding no end thought the attempt futile and returned to the starting point with disappointment and sat down.

Brahmā travelled upwards for a long time and found no end. On the way he saw the petal of a paṇḍanus flower, coming down from the sky. Brahmā took it and joyfully returned and said haughtily to Viṣṇu: "See, I have taken this flower from the head of the Phallus. I have

brought this to convince you. You have been defeated. So can you not admit that I am the superior?" Mahāviṣṇu did not believe the words of Brahmā. So he called the Paṇḍanus flower to him and questioned it. The Paṇḍanus flower took false oath and witnessed in favour of Brahmā, who had asked the flower beforehand to be on his side. Mahāviṣṇu did not believe this either and said, "Let Śiva be witness to this flower". Śiva at these words appeared before them and revealed the deceit played by Brahmā and the flower and then cursed the Paṇḍanus flower that thenceforward it should not have a place among the flowers of oblation to Śiva. Then Śiva got angry and plucked off a head of Brahmā. That is the skull Śiva uses for receiving alms. (Devī Bhāgavata, Skandha 5.)

(2) In days of old all the worlds with everything in them were under water in a single ocean. The Sun, the Moon, the Stars, air, fire, everything was destroyed. A day of utter darkness appeared. Grass, bush all were destroyed. Nothing could be seen and recognized. All existents and non-existents were destroyed. Bhagavān, (Supreme Being) was sleeping continuously for so many thousands of nights. At the end of the night Bhagavān assumed the attribute of Rajas (Activity) and got ready for the work of creation. He, the knower of all Vedas and Vedāṅgas appeared in the shape of a wonderful being with five faces. Another being with three eyes, matted hair, a trident in one hand, and a garland of beads in the other, and with darkness as its attribute took shape. That being was called Puruṣa (the male creative energy). Then the Mahātmā (the Supreme Spirit) created Ahaṁkāra (Egoism). It affected Brahmā and Śiva. Overcome by egoism, Śiva said to Brahmā:—"Who are you? Who created you?" Swelled with egoism Brahmā asked in reply:—"Who are you? Who are your parents? Let me hear it." This talk ended in a quarrel. The origin of Bhagavān (the Lord) was from this quarrel. Immediately after his birth the Lord took an unparalleled lute and playing it, went up to the sky. Śiva being defeated by Brahmā, bowed his head and coloured. While Paramesvara was standing angrily thus, the fifth face told him, "You, who are having three eyes and whose attribute is darkness! look here! I will tell you all. You, who wear air as garments, and ride on an ox, are the destroyer of the world." Hearing these words Śiva grew more and more angry, opened his third eye and looked steadily at Brahmā to burn him. Seeing the faces shining like the Sun Brahmā said, "When you beat on water, bubbles will appear. But do they have any prowess? Hearing this, Śiva plucked off the head of Brahmā with the tip of his finger nails. (Vāmana Purāṇa, Chapter 2).

5) *Changing Vijayalakṣmī to Laṅkākālakṣmī, by curse.* Vijayalakṣmī, one of the eight Lakṣmīs, was the treasury-keeper of Brahmā. Once she became careless in discharging her duties. Brahmā got angry and cursed her. "You go to Rāvaṇa and keep his tower". She humbly requested for absolution from the curse. Brahmā said, "At the time of the incarnation of Śrī Rāma, a monkey-hero named Hanumān will reach Laṅkā in search of Śrī Rāma's wife, whom Rāvaṇa had kidnapped. You will obstruct him, and he will strike you down. On that day you will be absolved from the curse and you will return here instantly." Accordingly Vijayalakṣmī was born in

1 You forester, your life will not continue for many years since you have killed one of the couple of snipes.