

(rays) of the fire Marīci the father of Kaśyapa was born. From the Kuśa-grass spread on the floor of the hall of sacrifice, the Bālakhīyas were born. Atri also was born from the Kuśa-grass. The noble hermits called Vaikhānasas, who have grown powerful by penance and became the seat of all good qualities, were born from the sacrificial ashes. From the stream of fire which are the eyes of the sacrificial fire the handsome Aśvins were born. The rest of the Prajāpatis were born from the ears of the fire. From the pores of the skin of fire were born the hermits, from the sweat the 'chandās' (metre of Vedas) and from might, the mind. For this reason the Vedic scholars and knowers of the Śruti and those who see the superiority of Vedas, say that fire is a combination of all the gods. The trees that feed the fire are called Māsas (months), the sap of the tree is called Pakṣa (half of the month i.e. full moon to new moon and new moon to full moon), the pith of the tree is called night and day and the flames are called Muhūrtas (auspicious moments). Rudras were born from the blood of fire and the golden coloured gods, the Maitras, also were born from the blood of fire. From the smoke of the fire, the Vasus, from the flame of the fire Rudras and the Ādityas of the extreme radiance were born. The planets and stars which stand in their places in the sky are the charcoal of the fire. Brahmā declared that fire was Brahmā the supreme spirit, eternal and the giver of all wishes. The sinless Mahādeva, who was in the form of Varuṇa said, "This sacrificial fire is mine, and I am the sacrificer. So the children born as the first fruit of this sacrifice are mine. So Bhṛgu, Aṅgiras and Kavi are my sons, no doubt. Let everybody who moves along the sky know that these three are my sons, the fruit of my sacrifice." Agni said, "These are born from my organs. They had been depending on me for their sustenance. So they are my sons." Brahmā the teacher of all the worlds and the grandfather of all living beings said, "They are my sons. I offered my sperm to the fire, and these sons were born therefrom. How can they be claimed by anybody else? Here, I am the utterer of the spell and the offerer of the sperm. I am the owner of the sperm. Am I not the owner of the fruit? There is no contest on the point that the birth of Bhṛgu and others is from the oblation of my sperm." The Gods who heard these arguments bowed their heads before Brahmā and greeting him said, "Lord Brahmā, It is not only us that are born from you, but the entire world of living and non-living is born from you. So let Agni and Deva in the shape of Varuṇa have their wishes."

12) *Brahmā and the giantess Karkkaṭī*. In days of old, a ferocious giantess named Karkkaṭī lived on the northern side of the Himālayas. Because of the hugeness of her body and the scarcity of food she became famished. She began to do penance for the alleviation of her hunger and thirst. She stood on one leg in the Himālaya Mountain, fixing her eyes on the sun in the day and on the Moon in the night, and the severe penance continued for a thousand years. Then Brahmā appeared before her and told her that she could ask for any boon. She said "I wish to become a Sūcī (Needle) as hard as iron, having the form of disease. This is the boon I pray for, Brahmā". Brahmā blessed her and said, "Let it be so, my daughter, you shall be a sūcikā (needle) with the prefix 'V' that is Viśūcikā (Spasmodic cholera) You can eat those who eat stale food, those who are wicked,

those who sit in places where they ought not to sit and those who are hard-hearted. Enter into their bodies and affect their hearts, spleens and life-breaths. Thus carry out the work of destruction? You can affect both the good and the bad. But good people should not be killed. So to save them from death, you can use this mantra (spell).

"oṃ, hrām, hrīm, śrīm, śām, viṣṇuśaktaye, namaḥ; bhagavati viṣṇuśakti ehi, enāṃ hara hara: dehe hana hana? paca paca! matha matha : utsādaya utsādaya : dūre kuru kuru svāhā—viśūcike! tvam himavantaṃ gaccha? jīvasaraḥ caudrainaṇḍalāṃ gatāsi svāhā."

Saying these words Brahmā disappeared. Karkkaṭī made her body smaller and smaller and finally assumed the shape of a needle. After that she began her work by entering the body of those who had lost their energy because of illness, in the form of a needle of gout and caused Cholera, and the body of those who were lean and worn and weary, in the form of internal cholera. Thus assuming two bodies and killing countless people she travelled for a long time in the earth and the sky, until she herself felt aversion to her work. When she remembered her original form she loathed the needle-form. Karkkaṭī again went to the vicinity of the Himālayas and began to do penance, which lasted for another thousand years. Thus she became pure and by the power of thinking, she acquired spiritual knowledge. Then she wanted to be saved from the mirage of birth and death, to attain which, she did penance for yet another thousand years at the end of which, the highly pleased Brahmā appeared before her and said, "daughter Karkkaṭī, all the darkness is erased from your heart and you have attained deliverance from delusion. Now I will bless you according to your wish. Receive your original body and walk about in the worlds eating the ignorant, bad beginners, the imprudent, those who sit in bad places and dwell in bad places."

She became a giantess again, but as she had attained purity of soul, she engaged herself in deep meditation which was free from doubt. The meditation lasted for a long time. Finally her mind wavered. Then she remembered about worldly things and felt hunger. She remembered, "Brahmā has ordained the wicked as my food. So I shall seek them." Thinking thus she went to a jungle in the vicinity of the Himālayas. That was the dwelling place of foresters. In that dark night the King and the minister of the foresters approached the place where Karkkaṭī sat. Karkkaṭī seeing them thought, "let me know first if they are good or bad." So she decided to ask them some questions.

She asked them in a voice like thunder. "Who are you? Are you enlightened sages or ignorant fools? say quickly." The king of the foresters hearing this replied in a cynical way. "You insignificant ghost? What is your form? Where do you sit? Let us see your powerless body. Who is there to fear at your sound which is like the humming of a she-beetle?"

Hearing this reply Karkkaṭī showed her tusks and laughed loud, to spread light, and to terrify them. They heard the loud roaring sound of her laugh and saw her huge form in the light. But those mighty heroes were not at all shaken by the sound they heard or the sight they witnessed. The Minister looked at her and said, "Hei, Giantess? These delusions of yours will have no