

of a hundred yojanas. But, as soon as Garuḍa set foot on a branch of the tree it (branch) crumbled down. On that broken branch were the sages called Bālakhilyas doing tapas hanging their heads down. Fearing that the sages might fall down Garuḍa continued his flight holding in his beak the torn branch of the tree. But he could not find a safe place to deposit the branch with the sages. So he came again to Mount Gandhamādana and saw Kaśyapa, who apologised to the Bālakhilyas on behalf of his son and also explained to them about his mission. The Bālakhilyas were pleased and they left the place for the Himālayas. As advised by Kaśyapa Garuḍa deposited the branch of the tree on an uninhabited mountain peak. Garuḍa ate the elephant and the tortoise there, and therefrom flew to Devaloka (Ādi Parva, Chapter 29, 30).

6) *Bālakhilyas cursed Indra*. Even before the arrival of Garuḍa ill omens began appearing in Devaloka. Indra asked Bṛhaspati for explanation about the ill omens. Bṛhaspati with his divine eyes saw Garuḍa approaching Devaloka for Amṛta, and he told Indra about Garuḍa born out of the powers of the tapas of Kaśyapa and the Bālakhilyas. He also told that such a fate as the present one befell Indra due to a curse of the Bālakhilyas. Indra and the other Devas stood guard over the pot of Amṛta ready to repel all possible attacks.

There was a reason for Garuḍa's birth from the powers of the tapas of the Bālakhilyas, and also for Indra to be put into the present predicament due to the curse of the Bālakhilyas. Kaśyapaprajāpati, a long time ago, began a terrific yajña for a son, and Indra and the Bālakhilyas who numbered more than 60,000 were deputed by Kaśyapa to collect firewood for the yajña. The Bālakhilyas were only of the size of a thumb, and Indra who very easily collected all the firewood needed for the yajña laughed at the tiny Bālakhilyas who were carrying small twigs etc. for firewood. Angered at the insult the Bālakhilyas removed themselves to another place nearby and began a yajña directed against Indra who alarmed at it sought the help of Kaśyapa who then held peace talks with the Bālakhilyas. They transferred their yāgaśakti (yajñic powers) also to Kaśyapa and agreed to be satisfied with the condition that as the result of Kaśyapa's yajña a son should be born to him, who (the son) would defeat Indra. Thus, for the time being Indra escaped from the wrath of the Bālakhilyas. After the yajña was over Vinatā came to Kaśyapa and he blessed her with a son wishing that he should become exceptionally strong and powerful, and that was Garuḍa. (Ādi Parva, Chapter 30).

7) *Amṛtakalāśāpahaṛaṇam*. (The pot of nectar carried away). Garuḍa approached the pot of nectar, and Viśvakarmā who attacked him first was felled to the ground. The dust storm raised by the waving of Garuḍa's wings blinded everybody. The Devas and Indra, nay, even the sun and the Moon lined up against Garuḍa, but he defeated them all, and entered the particular place where the pot of nectar was kept. Two terrific wheels were rotating round the pot and they would cut into mince-meat anybody who tried to lay hands on the pot and a machine circled the wheels. Below the wheels were two monstrous serpents with glowing eyes and protruding tongues like flashes of fire, and the serpents never closed their eyes. The very

look with those eyes was enough to poison anyone to death. Garuḍa blinded those eyes by raising a torrent of dust, pierced them in the middle with his beak and through the hole, his body reduced to such a tiny shape, went nearer to the pot. He destroyed the wheels and the machine, and carrying the pot of nectar in his beaks rose to the sky shielding the light of the sun by his outspread wings. Mahāviṣṇu, who became so much pleased with the tremendous achievements of Garuḍa asked him to choose any boon. Garuḍa requested Viṣṇu that he should be made his (Viṣṇu's) vehicle and rendered immortal without his tasting amṛta. Both the boons were granted.

8) *Garuḍa and Indra became friends*. Indra hit with the Vajra (his special weapon) the wings of Garuḍa who was returning from Viṣṇu. It did not wound his body, but a feather of his fell in the atmosphere. Everybody who saw the feather acclaimed Garuḍa as Suparṇa (he with the good wings). Indra was wonder-struck, and he approached Garuḍa and requested that they should be friends in future and the pot of nectar be returned. Garuḍa replied that the nectar would be returned if he was granted the power to make nāgas his food, and Indra blessed him that he would live by consuming nāgas. And then Garuḍa told Indra thus : "I took this pot of amṛta not for my own use. The nāgas cheated my mother and made her a slave, and she will be freed if only this pot of nectar is given to them (nāgas). You may snatch off the pot from the nāgas; I shall not object to it."

Indra and Garuḍa thus became friends and the former followed Garuḍa on his way back home.

9) *Garuḍa handed over the pot of amṛta to the nāgas and Indra cheated them of it*. Garuḍa handed over the pot of nectar to the nāgas, who on the suggestion of the former placed the pot on darbha grass spread on the ground. Also, in accordance with Garuḍa's advice that they should take a purificatory bath before tasting the amṛta the nāgas went out to have the bath, and in their absence Indra carried off the pot of nectar back to Devaloka. Failing to find the pot of nectar on their return from bath the aggrieved nāgas licked the darbha on which the pot was placed with the result that their tongues were cloven into two. It was from that day onwards that the nāgas became double-tongued (dvijihvas). And, thus Garuḍa redeemed his mother from slavery. (Ādi Parva, Chapter 34).

10) *The fig tree which Garuḍa broke with his beaks and Laṅkā*. It has been noted above that Garuḍa on his way to Devaloka rested on a fig tree. That fig is called Subhadra in Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa.

Rāvaṇa saw the fig tree around which sages were sitting and which bore marks made by Garuḍa sitting thereon. (Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa, Araṇyakāṇḍa, Canto 35, Verse 26).

There is some connection between this tree and Laṅkā. Garuḍa had, as directed by Kaśyapa, deposited in the sea the branch of the tree on which the Bālakhilyas hung in tapas and with which Garuḍa flew hither and thither fearing about the safety of the Bālakhilyas. At the spot in the sea where the branch was deposited sprang up an island like the peak of a mountain. It was this island which in after years became reputed as Laṅkā. (Kathāsaritsāgara, Kathāmukhalāmbaka, Taraṅga 4).