

could not bear the heat of Agni, told them the secret. Then Agni deprived them of the power of speech by a curse. After that he went and hid himself on the Mandara mountain. Elephants and parrots disclosed the secrets of Agni, who was hiding within the hollow of the trunk of a tree. Agni deprived them of their tongues by a curse. At last the gods discovered Agni. They sent him at once to Śiva to stop him in his amorous dalliance. Agni succeeded in his mission by his intense heat. Śiva transferred his semen to Agni who became pregnant. Being unable to bear its weight Agni deposited it in the river Gaṅgā, who at the behest of Śiva himself, left it in the woods on the Mahāmeru mountain. Śiva's attendant bhūtas (spirits) offered Pūjā to it there. After a thousand years a boy with six faces (Subrahmaṇya) was born out of it. He was suckled by the Kṛttikās employed for that purpose by Pārvatī and the boy grew up with astonishing rapidity within a few days. Having been suckled by the Kṛttikās, the boy got the name "Kārttikeya".

In those days, Devendra who was defeated by Tārakāsura, decided to give up war and was living in Mahāmeru. The Devas and the sages used to go to Subrahmaṇya for protection. When Devendra knew it, he became angry and went to war with Subrahmaṇya. Subrahmaṇya was wounded on the face with Indra's weapon. From the wound two sons named Śākha and Viśākha were born to Subrahmaṇya. With their help Subrahmaṇya encountered Indra again. At this stage Śiva appeared there and informed Indra that Subrahmaṇya had been born with a mission to kill Tārakāsura and to restore Indra's kingdom to him. It was then that Indra recognized Subrahmaṇya. He begged pardon of Subrahmaṇya and expressed his desire to instal him as his military commander. When he tried to perform the ceremony of installation by sprinkling the holy water on Subrahmaṇya's head, the water refused to come out of the pot. Śiva told Indra that it was because he had tried to perform the installation before propitiating Gaṇapati. Indra then offered worship to Viḡneśvara (Gaṇapati) and the ceremony went off without any hitch. Subrahmaṇya who thus became Indra's commander, killed Tārakāsura shortly afterwards. (Kathāsaritsāgara, Lāvāṇakalāmbaka, 6th Taraṅga).

41) *Indra and Mahābali*. The vanquished Mahābali who had left his home and country was in gloom and despair when once Indra paid him a visit. At that time Mahālakṣmī emerged from Mahābali's body and entered Indra's body. (M.B. Śānti Parva, Chapter 224).

42) *Indra and Godāna (gift of cow)*. Once Indra asked Brahmā about the efficacy of godāna or giving a cow as gift. Brahmā told him that there is a world free from the infirmities of old age and diseases and it is called "Goloka". He added that those who perform Godāna would get a place in Goloka.

43) *Indra and a bird*. A hunter in Kāśī once went to shoot birds with poisoned arrows. One of his arrows hit a big tree accidentally and the powerful poison dried up the whole tree. In the hollow of the trunk of that tree there lived a bird with mystic powers. It did not like to leave that tree which had been its refuge ever since its birth. One day Devendra, in the guise of a Brahmin came to the bird, who recognized him by

its mystic power. In the conversation between them Devendra advised the bird to leave the tree and find some other suitable place for its residence. The bird did not accept his advice. Indra was pleased at the bird's loyalty and gratitude towards that tree which had been its shelter all along. So he took the bird along with him to Devaloka. (M.B. Anuśāsana Parva, Chapter 5).

44) *How Indra turned Bhaṁgāśva into a woman*. There was a King named Bhaṁgāśva. Once he performed a sacrifice called "Indradviṣṭa" which was believed to have the power of blessing him with children. Indra being not invited was displeased with him and was waiting for an opportunity to wreak vengeance on him.

One hundred sons were born to Bhaṁgāśva. Once he went to the forest after entrusting the affairs of the kingdom to his sons. Indra cunningly misguided him and made him lose his way in the forest. Wandering alone with his horse in the forest, he reached the bank of a river. Weary and thirsty, he stepped down into the river. To his amazement, he was instantly transformed into a woman! The bewildered "woman" somehow reached Bhaṁgāśva's palace. All the members of his family were deeply grieved over his change of sex. To avoid embarrassment to himself and others, Bhaṁgāśva returned as a woman to the forest and there lived as the wife of a sage and became the mother of a hundred sons. After some years "she" went back to the palace with the sons and leaving them there returned again to the forest.

Indra went to the palace at this time and made the two sets of hundred sons quarrel with one another until all of them perished in fighting. Hearing about this the mother who was in the forest, wept bitterly. Indra visited her (Bhaṁgāśva) there and she told him the whole story of her misfortunes and begged his pardon for performing Indradviṣṭa sacrifice without inviting Indra. Pleased with her repentance Indra promised to resuscitate one set of her hundred sons. She wanted all the hundred sons who were born when she was a woman, to be restored to life. Indra was ready to restore her manhood too, but she preferred to continue as a woman. Indra restored to life all the 200 sons of Bhaṁgāśva and leaving Bhaṁgāśva as a woman, returned to Devaloka. (M.B. Anuśāsana Parva, Chapter 12).

45) *Indra and Mataṅga*. A story is found in the Mahā-Bhārata under the title of "Indra-Mataṅga-Saṁvāda" which illustrates that a Kṣatriya, Vaiśya or Śūdra can never become a Brāhmaṇa by any means. It was told by Bhīṣma to Arjuna as follows :—

"Long ago a Brāhmaṇa's wife gave birth to a boy. The boy was given the name Mataṅga. His father sent him in a chariot drawn by a donkey, in connection with a yāga which he wanted to perform. Mataṅga whipped the donkey mercilessly. Seeing this, the donkey's mother said to Mataṅga—"You are not a Brāhmaṇa. Brāhmaṇas cannot be so cruel. You are a Caṇḍāla (a man of the lowest caste) born to your mother by a barber."

Mataṅga sadly returned to his father and after telling him what he had heard from the mother-donkey set out to perform an austere penance with the object of becoming a Brāhmaṇa. Devendra appeared to him and asked him what he wanted. Mataṅga asked for a