

When the coronation of Śrī Rāma was about to take place, Kaikeyī demanded of Daśaratha, on the strength of the two boons granted to her on a previous occasion, to send Śrī Rāma to the forests for fourteen years and crown Bharata her son as King. Daśaratha was compelled to accede to her request and so Śrī Rāma went to the forests. Sītā and Lakṣmaṇa accompanied him. Lakṣmaṇa during the fourteen years of their exile followed his brother Rāma like a shadow. Lakṣmaṇa cut off the breasts and nose of Śūrpaṅakhā, the demoness who made amorous overtures to them. Lakṣmaṇa acted promptly and bravely when the notorious trio, Khara, Dūṣaṇa and Triśiras attacked them and he was responsible for the slaughter of the three. Rāvaṇa, coming to know of that, carried away Sītā to Laṅkā.

Grief-stricken, Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa roamed about in the forests searching for Sītā. At last they came to Sugrīva with whom they made an alliance. Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa got back for Sugrīva his kingdom of Kiṣkindhā and Sugrīva in return helped Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa to fight Rāvaṇa. Accompanied by an army led by Sugrīva Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa went to Laṅkā and defeating Rāvaṇa took back Sītā to Ayodhyā. Śrī Rāma was crowned King and Lakṣmaṇa helped his brother in his duties. When there arose a scandal about Sītā from the people, Śrī Rāma asked Lakṣmaṇa to take Sītā away to the forest and leave her there. In the Aśvamedha conducted by Śrī Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa led the sacrificial horse and the horse was blocked and captured by Lava and Kuśa and Lakṣmaṇa fought against them.

When the purpose of the incarnation of Rāma was over, god of Death in the garb of a sage approached Śrī Rāma for a private talk. Rāma and the sage were closeted in a room and Lakṣmaṇa was asked to keep watch over the door with instructions not to allow anybody inside. After some time sage Durvāsas came there and Lakṣmaṇa entered the room to give his brother the information of his arrival. Rāma was angry and abandoned Lakṣmaṇa and, feeling repentant later, Śrī Rāma jumped into the river and drowned himself before a huge crowd of weeping subjects. Lakṣmaṇa immediately ended his life by drowning himself at the same place where his brother did so.

2) *Birth.* Lakṣmaṇa was born on the day of Āśleṣā in the lagna of Karkātaka. (Śloka 15, Chapter 18, Bāla Kāṇḍa, Vālmiki Rāmāyaṇa).

LAKṢMAṆA II. A very brave son of Duryodhana. He was a great archer. The Mahābhārata gives the following information about him.

(i) In the great battle Abhimanyu defeated this Lakṣmaṇa. (Śloka 32, Chapter 73, Bhīṣma Parva).

(ii) Lakṣmaṇa fought against Kṣatradeva. (Śloka 49, Chapter 14, Droṇa Parva).

(iii) Abhimanyu killed him in the battle-field. (Śloka 17, Chapter 46, Droṇa Parva).

(iv) After the great war when once, at the request of Kuntī and Gāndhārī, Vyāsa by his yogic powers arrayed the dead warriors for Kuntī and Gāndhārī to see, this Lakṣmaṇa was also among them. (Śloka 11, Chapter 32, Āśramavāsika Parva).

LAKṢMAṆĀ. One of the queens of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. (Chapter 33, Sabhā Parva, Dākṣiṇātyapāṭha).

LAKṢMĪ I. Consort of Mahāviṣṇu.

1) *Origin.* Devī originated from the left side of Paramātmā (Supreme Being). The beautiful Devī by a command from the Supreme Being divided herself into two enchanting damsels both equal in figure, splendour, age, majesty, adornment and love. One of these was Lakṣmīdevī and the other Rādhādevī. That born of the left was Ramā and that of the right, Rādhā. Rādhā wedded herself to the two-handed Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Lakṣmī also wanted the same person and so Bhagavān himself became two, Śrī Kṛṣṇa from the left side as a two-handed person and as four-handed Viṣṇu from the right side. (9th Skandha. Devī Bhāgavata).

2) *Different incarnations of Lakṣmī.* Lakṣmī had many incarnations and she had been on earth in different forms at different times. They are given below:

(i) *Birth from the ocean of milk.* Once the Devas became aged and afflicted with rugosity and grey hairs by a curse of Durvāsas. Indra lost his majesty and was ousted from Svarga. Svargalakṣmī deserted Devaloka and went to Vaikuṅṭha and merged with Mahālakṣmī.

The Devas were greatly aggrieved on account of this plight of theirs and they went to Satyaloka and appealed to Brahmā to find a solution to their difficulties. Brahmā was helpless in the matter and so they all together went to Vaikuṅṭha and represented their grievances before Mahāviṣṇu. Viṣṇu smiled and told Mahālakṣmī thus : "You go and be born as Kṣīrasāgarakanyakā using a part of your inherent power and do give relief to the Devas." Accordingly when the Devas conducted the churning of the ocean of milk (Kṣīrābhdhimathana) Mahālakṣmī, the goddess of beauty, wealth and prosperity arose from the ocean as Kṣīrasāgarakanyakā (Daughter of the ocean of milk) and blessed the Devas and put a Vanamālā (garland of wild flowers) on Mahāviṣṇu. The Devas got back all their lost wealth and prosperity and they, on going to Devaloka, worshipped Lakṣmīdevī properly. (9th Skandha, Devī Bhāgavata).

(ii) Mahālakṣmī was born as a mare. (See under Ekavīra, Para 2).

(iii) Mahālakṣmī was born as the Tulasī plant (Holy Basil). (See under Tulasī.)

(iv) Mahālakṣmī was born as Sītā and Vedavatī. (See under Sītā).

(v) *Other births :* Mahālakṣmī was born as a daughter to the sage Bhṛgu of Khyāti. When Mahāviṣṇu incarnated as Sūrya, Lakṣmī rose up from the lotus. When Viṣṇu became Paraśurāma, Lakṣmī became the earth. When Mahāviṣṇu incarnated as Śrī Rāma, Lakṣmī became Sītā and when Viṣṇu was born as Kṛṣṇa Lakṣmī became Rādhā. Thus whenever and wherever Mahāviṣṇu changed his form, Mahālakṣmī also changed hers to form part of the changed life. (Chapter 9, Amśa 1, Viṣṇu Purāṇa).

3) *Mahālakṣmī cursed Viṣṇu.* Once Mahālakṣmī cursed Mahāviṣṇu, her husband, that his head would drop off from his body. (See under Cīta).

4) *Two forms of Lakṣmī.* Mahālakṣmī has two forms, Viṣṇu-priyā Lakṣmī and Rājyalakṣmī. The former is the embodiment of chastity and virtuousness. The latter goes about courting Kings. Rājyalakṣmī is fickle and unsteady. This Lakṣmī enters all places where virtue and charity are found and as soon as these two vanish