

of all the three worlds. He should not be defeated by Devas or Asuras, and he should be as mighty as the wind, handsome and an expert archer." Agni replied :- "You will have such a son by the woman who wins your heart".

When god Agni had left after saying this, Rambha went to visit Mālayakṣa, who was attended to by Yakṣas. There, they had a treasure known as Padma and numerous animals like elephants, horses, buffaloes, cows and sheep. Among them was a three-year-old she-buffalo of exceptional charm and Rambha fell in love with her. She was also irresistibly attracted by him. As fate would have it, a sexual union took place between them.

The she-buffalo became pregnant and Rambha took her with him to his own house in Pātāla. There, the other Dānavas, his kinsmen who came to know of his connection with the she-buffalo, expelled him from their midst as one who had committed a forbidden act. So he returned to Mālavaṭayakṣa. The pretty she-buffalo accompanied her husband to the holy Yakṣa-maṇḍala.

While they were living there, she gave birth to an attractive buffalo-calf. After that a he-buffalo came across her. But she remained loyal to her Dānava husband who drew his sword and rushed towards the he-buffalo. The terrible beast with his mighty horns attacked Rambha who fell dead on the ground. The widowed Mahiṣī (she-buffalo) sought the protection of the Yakṣas. They saved her from the Mahiṣa (He-buffalo). The disappointed and love-stricken Mahiṣa drowned himself in a holy lake and was reborn as a mighty and heroic Asura named Namara. The Mahiṣī spent some time under the protection of the Yakṣas. When they cremated Rambha's body, she jumped into the funeral pyre and burnt herself to death. At once from the middle of the fire there arose a monstrous being. That terrible monster, armed with a sword drove away the Yakṣas and killed all the Mahiṣas. Mahiṣa who was the son of Rambha alone was spared. He was the Asura named Raktabīja. He defeated all gods like Indra, Rudra, Sūrya, Vāyu and others.

Mahiṣāsura became the King of the Asuras. The alarmed Devas (gods) abandoned their posts of honour. All the worlds were plunged in darkness. (Vāmana Purāṇa, Chapter 17).

2) *Mahiṣāsura's Reign*. Mahiṣāsura who was intoxicated with pride on account of the boon he had received, became the undisputed and sole emperor of the three worlds. He formed a strong council of Ministers. Cikṣura who was puffed with pride and an expert in military Science, was installed as War-Minister and Tāmra, the gifted economist as Finance Minister. The Prime Minister was Asilomā. Biḍāla was Foreign Minister. Udarka became Military Commander. Bāṣkala, Trinetra and Kālabandhaka were assigned the posts of Members of the Executive Council. Śukrācārya was the Education Minister. Mahiṣa strengthened his army. The State Treasury overflowed with wealth. Kings of the neighbouring states paid tribute and bowed their heads to him. The Brāhmaṇas offered the share of yajña to Mahiṣāsura and prostrated before him. (Devī Bhāgavata, 5th Skandha).

3) *Outbreak of War*. After strengthening his position as Emperor of the world, Mahiṣa contemplated the conquest of Heaven. He sent a messenger to Indra. The messenger ordered Indra to surrender to Mahiṣāsura. Indra answered with utter contempt to the messenger and his master Mahiṣa. The messenger returned and reported the matter to Mahiṣāsura who began to tremble with anger.

Although Indra sent away the messenger with scorn, he had no peace of mind. He called together the Devas and discussed what was to be done. They decided to declare war on Mahiṣāsura. Brahmā and Indra, accompanied by the other Devas set out to Kailāsa. From there, taking Paramaśiva with them, they proceeded to Vaiṣṇava. On arrival there, they offered prayers to Mahāviṣṇu who appeared before them. They submitted to him their grievances and sufferings under the rule of Mahiṣāsura. After deep deliberations, Mahāviṣṇu supported the proposal for war. Thus the war between Devas and Asuras started.

4) *Devāsura Yuddha*. It was a dreadful war. Mahiṣa himself appeared on the scene of battle. He struck at Indra with his mighty club. Before he received the blow, Indra broke the club with his Thunderbolt. The Asura named Andhaka encountered Mahāviṣṇu. The five arrows of that Asura were broken to pieces by Mahāviṣṇu in the sky itself. Then they started a terrible fight with various weapons such as sword, spear, axe, arrow, discus etc. It lasted for about 50 days without a break. Bāṣkala fought against Indra, Mahiṣa against Rudra, Trinetra against Yamadharmā, Mahāhanu against Śrīda, and Asilomā against Pracetas. In the course of the battle, Andhaka, struck a blow at Garuḍa with his cudgel. Garuḍa, the vehicle of Viṣṇu was stunned by the blow, but Viṣṇu restored his energy by stroking him gently with his right hand. After that he took up his bow Śārṅga and tried to kill Andhaka with a shower of arrows. But the Daitya warrior countered all of them with 50 arrows which he shot at Viṣṇu. Viṣṇu smashed all of them and sent his destructive weapon "Sudarśana Cakra" against Andhaka. Without the slightest fear, Andhaka stopped it with his own Cakra weapon and kept Viṣṇu's weapon at bay and shouted in triumph. Finding that Viṣṇu's weapon had failed and hearing the scornful shout of Andhaka, the Devas were filled with panic. At this critical moment, Viṣṇu took up his club "Kaumodakī" and rushed into the midst of the Asuras and struck Andhaka with it. Under the blow, the Asura hero reeled and fell down unconscious. At his fall, Mahiṣa himself rushed forward to Viṣṇu with a terrible roar. Then there ensued a bitter fight between Viṣṇu and Mahiṣa. Each began a shower of arrows on the other. But not a single arrow injured either. In the thick of the battle Viṣṇu struck a blow on Mahiṣa's head and he dropped down unconscious. But ere long the Dānava rose up and taking up his iron pestle aimed a mighty blow at Viṣṇu's head and brought it down with deadly effect. Under the blow, even Viṣṇu fell unconscious on Garuḍa's back. Viṣṇu's condition made Garuḍa withdraw from the scene of battle temporarily, with Viṣṇu on his back. Indra and the other gods began to cry aloud. Śiva, who saw this desperate plight of the Devas, at once came to the battlefield, carrying his trident, ready to fight against