

Mahiṣa. When he tried to pierce the Asura's chest with his trident, the latter thwarted the blow with his own lance and aimed it at Śiva's breast. Although it actually lit him, Śiva disregarded it and gave another thrust to Mahiṣa with his trident. By this time Mahāviṣṇu had recovered from his swoon. At once he returned to the field of battle and joined Śiva in his attack on Mahiṣa. When Mahiṣa saw that both Śiva and Viṣṇu were launching a combined attack against him, in his wild fury he assumed his own buffalo form and lifting up his tail and shaking his head rushed towards his mighty adversaries. With his terrible horns he lifted up mountain peaks and hurled them at the enemy. But the Deva leaders stopped them with their shower of arrows. Viṣṇu sent his Cakra against him and it made the Asura chief drop down senseless. But he soon recovered and rushed forward to renew his attack with a terrible roar. Viṣṇu then sounded his divine conch "Pāñcājanya" and drowned the sound of his roar. Just as the roaring of the asura frightened the Devas, the sound of Pāñcājanya struck terror in the minds of the Asuras.

5) *Mahiṣa's Death*. The Asuras were terrified at the sound of Pāñcājanya. In order to encourage them, Mahiṣa assumed the form of a lion and rushed into the midst of the army of Devas roaring. Even the Trimūrtis were alarmed for a short while when they saw the fierce beast advancing through their battle-array killing and mauling hundreds of the Devas on either side. Mahāviṣṇu at once sent his weapon Cakra against the lion. The lion was reduced to ashes by it, but Mahiṣa rose up again in the form of a buffalo and rushed forward. He gave a severe cut on Mahāviṣṇu's chest with his long and powerful horn. Mahāviṣṇu started fleeing to Vaikuṅṭha. At the sight of this, Śiva concluded that Mahiṣa was proof against killing and so he also fled to Kailāsa riding on his bull. When Viṣṇu and Śiva took to their heels, Brahmā also flew to Satyaloka, riding on this swan. Although the leaders left the field, the rest of the Devas under the leadership of Indra, encountered Mahiṣa again. Indra drew his Vajra. The Aṣṭadīkṣpālakas assisted him. The battle raged fiercely again. The Devas began to flee for life. Taking this opportunity, Mahiṣāsura forced his way into Heaven. He planted his Daitya flag highly. He drove out all the remaining Devas. In this way the Asuras took possession of Devaloka. The Devas took shelter on the tops of mountains.

Several centuries passed. The Devas assembled and prayed to Brāhmā. He took them again to Vaikuṅṭha. Śiva also arrived there. The Devas submitted their grievances to Viṣṇu. They prayed to him to devise some method by which Mahiṣa could be killed. Brahmā had given him a boon that no Man was capable of killing him.

Mahāviṣṇu said to them :—"By Virtue of the boon, Mahiṣa could be killed only by a woman. If we can create a woman who is part of the Devas with their power and glory, we could kill him with her help. So let us try to create such a mighty woman, concentrating all our powers on her. After her creation, we must give her all our weapons."

As soon as Mahāviṣṇu spoke these words, a figure with dazzling effulgence issued forth from Brahmā's face. Both Viṣṇu and Śiva were amazed at the sight of this

figure radiating beams of light which were partly cool and partly warm. Similar figures, embodying the peculiar powers and qualities of Viṣṇu, Śiva, Indra, Kubera, Varuṇa and all other gods, emanated from them. In a moment all these figures merged into a single figure and transformed themselves into a single woman with celestial beauty and having eighteen arms. This woman of exquisite beauty combining all the powers and glories of all the Devas was Devī herself.

The devas supplied her with jewels and ornaments and gorgeous clothes. Decked in all glory and with fascinating beauty, riding on a lion, she took her stand at the entrance of Devaloka and challenged Mahiṣa. At the very first sight of Devī, Mahiṣa fell in love with her. She declared she would become the wife of the person who could defeat her in battle.

So Mahiṣa made up his mind to defeat her in a fight. It was a terrible battle. All the Ministers of Mahiṣa, like Bāṣkala, Durmukha, Tāmra, Cikṣura, Asilomā and Biḍāla were slain. At last Mahiṣa himself appeared on the scene to fight with Devī. Mahiṣa started with a shower of arrows and Devī countered them all with her own arrows. In the end she attacked him with Viṣṇu Cakra. The Cakra cut off his throat and he dropped down dead. The devas raised a thunderous shout of joy and triumph. (Devī Bhāgavata, 5th Skandha).

MAHIṢADĀ. A woman follower of Lord Subrahmaṇya. (M.B. Śalya Parva, Chapter 46, Verse 28).

MAHIṢAKA. (MĀHIṢAKA): A special tribe. They were once Kṣatriyas but they became Śūdras by their evil mode of living. (Ślokas 22, 23, Chapter 33, Anuśāsana Parva). Arjuna during his victory march conquered this tribe in the south. (Chapter 83, Aśvamedha Parva).

MAHIṢAKA (M). The name given by the Ancient people to modern Mysore. (M.B. Bhīṣma Parva, Chapter 9, Verse 59).

MAHIṢĀKṢA. An Asura who came into conflict with Subrahmaṇya. (Skanda Purāṇa).

MAHIṢĀNANĀ. A follower of Subrahmaṇya. (Śloka 25, Chapter 46, Śalya Parva).

MAHIṢMĀN I. A King of the Hehaya royal family. It was this King who constructed on the banks of the river Narmadā, Māhiṣmatī, the capital city of Kārtavīryārjuna. It got the name of Māhiṣmatī because it was constructed by Mahiṣmān (Chapter 2, Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa).

MAHIṢMĀN II. A King of the Vṛṣṇi dynasty. He was the son of a King called Kuṇi. (Kuṇi is called Kunti in some of the Purāṇas). Kuṇi had three other sons named Sabhājit, Bhadrāsena and Durdama. (9th Skandha, Bhāgavata).

MAHIṢMATĪ. Sixth daughter of Aṅgiras. Mahiṣmatī was known as Anumatī also. (Śloka 6, Chapter 218, Vana Parva).

MĀHIṢMATĪ. An ancient city on the banks of river Narmadā. There is reference to this place in many places in the Purāṇas and a few of them are given below :

(i) King Nīla was reigning in a country with Māhiṣmatī as its capital. Sahadeva, one of the Pāṇḍavas during his victorious march to the south conquered this country. (Chapter 31, Sabhā Parva).