

and Lohajaṅgha for a walk. After some time Lohajaṅgha came as usual and entered the house and Makaradaṁṣṭrā introduced Lohajaṅgha to the prince. At once the servants of the prince beat Lohajaṅgha and carrying him away out of the house put him in an excrement pit. Lohajaṅgha somehow escaped from there and ran away. He was sorry to part with his love and he went on a pilgrimage. He walked for a long distance in the hot sun and feeling tired searched for a shady place to take some rest. Then he saw the carcass of an elephant. Jackals entering through the buttocks had eaten all flesh and the animal lay hollow inside with the skin intact on the skeleton. Lohajaṅgha entered the inside of the elephant and slept there. That night it rained heavily and the hole at the buttocks contracted with little space for Lohajaṅgha to get out. The rains continued, the water-level in the river Gaṅgā rose and soon the carcass of the elephant was carried away to the river and it gradually reached the ocean. At that time a great kite taking it to be flesh for food drew it up and took it to the other side of the ocean. When it pecked it open it found a man inside and frightened left it there and flew away. By this time Lohajaṅgha awoke from his slumber and while he was looking around him in surprise he saw two demons approaching him. The demons thought he had come to the place crossing the ocean like Śrī Rāma to bring disaster to them and so they immediately ran up to Vibhīṣaṇa and told him of the incident. Vibhīṣaṇa asked his servants to bring Lohajaṅgha before him and when he was brought before him enquired very politely who he was and why he had come there and how he had come. In reply to the enquiries Lohajaṅgha said thus: "I am a brahmin from Mathurā. I did penance to please Viṣṇu to get relief from my poverty and one day Viṣṇu appeared before me in person and said, 'Go to my devotee Vibhīṣaṇa, and he will give you enough wealth to live happily'. It was in a dream and when I awoke I found myself on this shore. I do not know how it all happened."

Vibhīṣaṇa was immensely pleased to hear the story of Lohajaṅgha and gave him immense wealth including many precious diamonds, golden replica of the emblem of Viṣṇu consisting of Śaṅkha, Cakrā, Gadā and Padma and a small kite from the mountain of Svarṇamūla. Accepting all these Lohajaṅgha flew on the back of the kite back to Mathurā and alighted at a deserted place there. Keeping all his valuable articles in a secret place he took one diamond and selling it acquired some cash and with that purchased some ornamental dress for himself. At dusk he dressed himself and holding the emblem of Viṣṇu flew on the back of the kite to the house of Rūpiṅikā and addressing Rūpiṅikā in private said, "I am Viṣṇu. I have come to you for a union because you are virtuous". Hearing that Rūpiṅikā respectfully surrendered herself to him. Before dawn Lohajaṅgha left the house and flew back to the deserted place. Rūpiṅikā felt herself to be a goddess and did not speak to anybody in the morning. The mother was perplexed to find her daughter observing a vow of silence and questioned her. Rūpiṅikā then told her mother all that had happened on the previous night. Makaradaṁṣṭrā wanted to confirm the story of her daughter and so she kept awake that night to see what took place. She found Lohajaṅgha arriving as Viṣṇu

on the back of Garuḍa and fully believing him to be Mahāviṣṇu was overjoyed at the fortune of her daughter and running to her the next morning said "Oh, dear daughter, by the grace of Śrī Nārāyaṇa you have become a goddess. How fortunate am I? You should do one thing for me. You must send me to heaven with this body of mine along with your husband-god."

Rūpiṅikā agreed to do so. That night she told the fake Viṣṇu the desire of her mother. Then Lohajaṅgha said: "Your mother who is a great sinner is not eligible to go to Svarga in her present state. Day after tomorrow on the Dvādaśī day the gates of heaven will open. Early morning on that day the goblins of Śiva would enter Svarga. I shall then try to send your mother along with them. But your mother should then appear as a goblin. The hair on the head should be shaved at five places and the remaining hair locked to form five tufts of hair. She should wear a garland of bones and the body should be painted black on one side with charcoal and red on the other side with saffron. The painting should be in oil and she should not wear any clothes. This would make her appear like a goblin of Maheśvara (Śiva) and then there will be no difficulty for me to allow her to enter Svarga."

Lohajaṅgha left the place early in the morning and Rūpiṅikā told her mother all that her husband told her. Makaradaṁṣṭrā dressed herself as instructed by Lohajaṅgha and awaited the arrival of the fake Mahāviṣṇu. Lohajaṅgha came at night and Rūpiṅikā showed him her mother dressed as desired by her husband. Lohajaṅgha took Makaradaṁṣṭrā on the back of his kite and flew up. As he rose high he saw a tall flagstaff of a temple nearby. It had a wheel on its top. Lohajaṅgha placed her on the wheel and said, "Do sit here for a while. I shall soon come back to you and bless you". To the people assembled in the temple he spoke from the air, "Citizens, today the goddess 'Māri', destroyer of everything, will fall on you. If you want to avoid that, remain in this temple and worship Viṣṇu".

People were frightened when they heard the warning from air and all remained in the temple chanting prayers and reciting devotional songs about Viṣṇu. Makaradaṁṣṭrā sat there for a while dreaming about the happiness in store for her in Svarga and awaiting her daughter's husband to come and take her. But Lohajaṅgha had come to the temple in an ordinary dress and was with the crowd in the temple. Time dragged on and it became midnight and Makaradaṁṣṭrā sitting on the wheel of the flagstaff felt uneasy. She could not sit there any longer and she cried aloud, "Oh, I am falling". People mistook her for Māri and cried back, "Oh, goddess, do not fall". It became morning and in the sunlight they saw a figure sitting on the top of the flagstaff and were surprised. The King was informed and he came to the temple and so also all people from the place. When the people on scrutinising the figure knew it was Makaradaṁṣṭrā, they all clapped their hands laughing loudly. Hearing the news Rūpiṅikā also came to the temple and she somehow got her mother down from the flagstaff. The King then made the prostitute tell her story and when it was finished he declared thus: "Who has thus played fraud on this prostitute who had throughout her life cheated other people? If he comes before me