

Nine thousand yojanas to the north of this there are two mountains named Hemakūṭa and Ratnakūṭa. The centre of that is Rṣabhavaṛṣa. On a big Kāraskara tree there will be hanging a king with his face downwards after being cursed by the sage Durvāsas. He will be released from the curse by you. If one eats the fruits of this tree one will be free from greying of hairs and rugosity.

If you go farther north from Hemakūṭa you will reach the mountain Niṣadha. There is a lake there. If one bathes there one will be granted all prosperity by Lakṣmīdevī. Farther to the north is situated Mahāmeru. The greatness of this mountain is indescribable. Mahāmeru has got four supporting mountain pillars named Mandara, Merumandara, Supārśva and Kumuda. The abode of the three deities is on the top of this mountain. On a peak in the centre is living Brahmā with his wives Vāṇī, Gāyatrī and Sāvitrī as creator of the universe. This place is called Satyaloka and to the west of it is Śrī Vaikuṅṭha the abode of Mahāviṣṇu. Mādevī and Bhūdevī are his two wives. He is the god who protects us all. To the east of Satyaloka is Kailāsa, the abode of Śiva. He lives there with his wives Gaṅgā and Pārvatī and sons Gaṇeśa and Śubrahmaṇya. To the south of Satyaloka is the city Samyamānī the abode of Yamadharmarāja. He lives there with his wife Kālīnī and sons Viḍava, Mahimā and Dipaka. To the east of this is the wonderful Devaloka. There lives Indra, his wife Śacīdevī and son Jayanta with thirtythree crores of Devas. Celestial nymphs like Urvaśī, Rambhā and Tilottamā live there. Kāmadhenu, the Kalpa tree, Airāvata, Uccaiśśravas, and Cintāmaṇi are all there. You will find Amarāvati the Capital of Indra and Sudharmā his court there.

On the northern side of Meru is a tall Aśvattha tree. To the north of that is the Nīla-mahāgiri (the great blue mountain). Kaśyapa has installed a deity named Śvetavarāhamūrti there. Beyond that is the Rṣabhādri (ox-shaped mountain). It is believed that a divine ox became a mountain there. Its two horns are like two peaks. This mountain contains many divine medicines of which Śalyaharaṇī, Viśalyakaraṇī, Sandhānakaraṇī and Mṛtasañjīvanī are the most important.

Once the asuras defeated the Devas. Then Parameśvara and Mahāviṣṇu gave the Devas these four medicinal herbs. They planted them here and watered them from the Milk-sea. Around these precious plants stand guard the pārśadas of Śiva and the Discus Sudarśana of Viṣṇu." (Yuddha Kāṇḍa, Kamba Rāmāyaṇa).

There is another statement in the Mahābhārata that Sañjīvanī is an art, the use of a mantra. Śukrācārya by this art brought to life all the asuras killed in a war with the devas. (Śloka 8, Chapter 76, Ādi Parva). Again Śukrācārya brought to life three times his disciple Kaca whom the asuras killed three times. Śukrācārya taught the art to Kaca. (Śloka 28, Chapter 76, Ādi Parva).

**MRTTIKĀVATĪ.** A place of habitation in ancient Bhārata. (Śloka 10, Chapter 254, Vana Parva).

**MRTYU.** The goddess of Death. Agni Purāṇa gives details about the birth of Death. Himsā was the wife of Adharma. They got a son named Anṛta and a daughter named Nikṛti. From them were born Bhaya,

Naraka, Māyā and Vedanā. Of these Māyā gave birth to Mṛtyu, the destroyer of matter.

Mṛtyu has been described both as a god and goddess in Mahābhārata. The statements regarding Mṛtyu as a deva are as follows :—

(i) Three sons were born to Nikṛti, wife of Adharma. One of them was Mṛtyu. Mṛtyudeva has neither wife nor children because he is the destroyer of all. (Śloka 54, Chapter 66, Ādi Parva).

(ii) Once the son of an old Gautamī was bitten by a snake. A hunter seeing it rushed to kill the serpent but Gautamī objected to it. She advised him that it was a sin to injure any living being. The serpent then said, "It is not my fault that I bit the boy. I was persuaded by the god of death to do so." The god of death Mṛtyudeva also appeared there then. He confirmed the snake's statement and added that God had programmed all events beforehand and the boy's death was not due to any mistake on anybody's part. (Śloka 50, Chapter 1, Anuśāsana Parva)

(iii) Once Mṛtyu followed the King Sudarśana, but Mṛtyudeva had to withdraw after accepting defeat because the King had been living a virtuous life of high standard. (See under Sudarśana).

The statements regarding Mṛtyu as a goddess are the following :

(1) This devatā was born from the body of Brahmā in the shape of a woman. (Śloka 17, Chapter 53, Droṇa Parva).

(2) Brahmā gave the work of destruction to Mṛtyu. When she got that work she wept aloud. (Śloka 21, Chapter 257, Śānti Parva).

(3) The goddess of Mṛtyu once did severe penance. (Śloka 17, Chapter 54, Droṇa Parva).

(4) Brahmā assured the goddess of death that any destruction by her would not be deemed as a sin. (Śloka 44, Chapter 54, Droṇa Parva).

(5) The terrible strength of Mṛtyudevatā is described in Chapter 819, Śānti Parva, Mahābhārata.

**MUCUKUNDA.** A celebrated King of the Solar dynasty.

1) *Genealogy.* Descending in order from Viṣṇu — Brahmā — Marīci — Kaśyapa — Vivasvān — Vaivasvata Manu — Ikṣvāku — Śaśāda — Purañjaya (Kakutstha) — Anenas — Pṛthulāśva — Prasenajit — Yuvanāśva — Māndhātā — Mucukunda.

Māndhātā got three sons named Ambarīṣa, Mucukunda and Purukutsa and fifty daughters and all the fifty were married to a sage named Saubhari.

2) *How Mucukunda attained salvation.* (For the story see para 72, under Indra).

3) *Other details.*

(i) Mucukunda had a daughter named Candramukhī. She was married to Śobhana, son of Candrasena. Once, when Śobhana came to his wife's house it was an Ekādaśī day and all were observing fasting and so Śobhana also did so. The next day Śobhana was seen lying dead. The soul of Śobhana went to the valley of the mountain of Mandara and started enjoying heavenly bliss. One day a pilgrim from the country of Mucukunda named Somaśarmā met the soul of Śobhana and coming to know that it was the son-in-law of their King he started making enquiries about him. Śobhana then said that all his happiness was