

dhvaja went straight to the forests and performed penance to propitiate Brahmā. When the austerities became severe, Vidyuddhvaja observed fasting without break and the whole world became excited due to anxiety. So Brahmā appeared before him in person and gave him many divine weapons like Brahmāstra. For Brahmāstra the only counter-missile was Pāśupata and so Brahmā warned him that it should be used only when it was found absolutely necessary.

Vidyuddhvaja became arrogant with the possession of such divine weapons and started for Indraloka with his father and his army to conquer Indra. He knew that Indra was ready to face him with a big army headed by Candraketu and Padmaśekhara.

The battle that ensued was very grim. Even Brahmā and Rudra came to see the fight. In a combat with Indra, Vidyutprabha was killed. Vidyuddhvaja saw his father killed, got furious and sent Brahmāstra against Indra who in turn opposed it with Pāśupata. Vidyuddhvaja fainted. Devas sounded the trumpets of victory and left the place.

After some time Vidyuddhvaja awoke from the swoon and lamented thus to those of his men who were around:—"My tapobala (strength resulting from penance) was of no use. I have decided to die fighting against Indra. I do not want to return to a country where my father is not alive. On hearing this his aged minister pointed out to him his mistake in having used the Brahmāstra untimely.

Vidyuddhvaja decided to attain more powers and so he went to the base of the Himālayas to perform penance to propitiate Śiva. Pleased at his penance of five thousand years Śiva appeared in person and asked him to name the boon he wanted. Vidyuddhvaja demanded "I must be able to kill Indra in a battle." Śiva granted him the boon.

Vidyuddhvaja once again attacked Indra with a huge army. In the fierce battle that followed Indra fell down fainting by the weapons of Vidyuddhvaja. At once a voice from the air commanded, "Take away Indra from the battlefield. It is dangerous to keep him there." Vāyu came and carried him away swiftly. When Indra awoke from fainting he went to Brahmāloka with all the other devas.

Vidyuddhvaja established himself in Amarāvati, the capital city of Indra and lived there enjoying his life as Indra. In the meantime Candraketu, King of the Vidyādharas was sitting in Vāyuloka musing thus, "How long should we remain thus displaced from our positions! There is no waning of the power of Vidyuddhvaja. My friend Padmaśekhara, King of Gandharvas, has gone to Śivapura to perform penance. I do not know whether he has been blessed by god. Anyhow I will act after hearing from him."

As his musings came to an end Padmaśekhara himself appeared before him and said: "I have come to tell you the glad news that Śiva told me. Śiva said "Son, do not grieve. You will get your country back. You will get a son and a daughter. They will be top-ranking men in all activities. The husband of your daughter will kill Vidyuddhvaja."

A happy Candraketu went to Kailāsa with his wife Muktāvalī and started penance. Padmaśekhara went and mentioned to the devas all that had happened. The devas then went to Mahāviṣṇu and told him of

the boons which Vidyuddhvaja had received from Śiva and how he was ruling Indraloka then. After hearing them patiently Viṣṇu said that only Śiva could do anything in that matter. They all then went to the temple of Siddhīśvara and sat there meditating on Śiva.

In the meantime Bhagavān appeared before Candraketu and blessed him and said he would get a very valorous son who would kill Vidyuddhvaja and restore Devaloka to the devas. But after that he would be born as a man on earth by a curse. Padmāvati daughter of a Gandharva King, would by the strength of her penance release him from the curse and help him to get his original state as a Gandharva. He would then marry Padmāvati and remain as emperor of the Vidyādharas for ten Kalpas together. Candraketu and wife came back to Vāyuloka.

At this time Śiva appeared in person to those sitting in the temple of Siddhīśvara and said that a son would be born to Candraketu from a part of his and that valorous youth would kill Vidyuddhvaja. Muktāvalī wife of Candraketu became pregnant at that time and soon delivered a son. He was named Muktāphalaketu. Even from boyhood he became an ardent devotee of Śiva and started performing penance to propitiate Śiva. Śiva appeared before him and gave him the secrets of many techniques in archery.

Vidyuddhvaja was once bathing in a river when muddy waters flowed from up the river and the arrogant demon sent a servant to find out the cause thereof. When he went up by the shores he saw an ox and an elephant bathing in the river. They were the Vāhanas of Śiva and Indra. The elephant was the famous Airāvata. He came back and intimated to Vidyuddhvaja what he saw. The demon then ordered his people to bring the culprits to his side. But the Vāhanas killed those who went to capture them and then they went to their masters, Śiva and Indra. Hearing about this audacity of the demon-chief the Devas challenged the asuras to a fight. This time the army of the devas was led by Muktāphalaketu.

A Gandharva princess named Padmāvati grew up to be a beautiful maiden at that time. She was in love with Muktāphalaketu. Padmāvati was one day plucking flowers from a pond in the Gandharva land thinking about Muktāphalaketu who had gone to war against the asuras. A demoness who was going to eat flesh in the battle-field of the devas and asuras saw Padmāvati, took her and went up. Muktāphalaketu coming to know of this went up with her and got back Padmāvati who was struggling in the hands of the demoness like streaks of lightning among clouds. Then he asked her maids about her and they said, "She is the daughter of the Gandharva King Padmaśekhara. Padmāvati is her name. She is unmarried. But she is betrothed to the son of Candraketu named Muktāphalaketu, who is born to destroy Vidyuddhvaja. She has come here to practise penance for the success of her father and Muktāphalaketu in this war between devas and asuras."

Padmāvati recognised Muktāphalaketu from the words of his followers. But the latter had to go back to Devaloka under instructions from Indra. The Devāsura war became fierce. By the valour and skill of Muktāphalaketu many of the asuras were killed. The war was won. Muktāphalaketu was given a grand reception at devaloka