

Brahmā when he created the universe also laid down laws to keep living beings in the path of righteousness. But, the asuras did not conform to those laws. So, the maharṣis decided that there should be some other means to instruct the asuras. They conducted a Brahma-yajña at the Himālayas. A terrible Jin (Evil Spirit) emerged from the sacrificial pit.

At the emergence of the Jin the earth shook; the great sea grew wild with waves and eddies. Lightning and shooting stars appeared and branches of trees were torn asunder. A vicious whirl-wind swept the ten regions. All living beings trembled at the sight of the Jin.

Brahmā appeared to the frightened maharṣis and told them that it was not a Jin, but only the sword for the destruction of the asura tribe. Śiva took the sword in his hand, and as soon as he touched it he became possessed of four hands. "Śiva, whose head touched the sun, who had the third eye and from whose mouth flames of fire emerged, who changed himself to various colours like blue, white and red, who wore deer skin with golden spots, who had on his forehead an eye as effulgent as the Sun—such Śiva took in his hands the fiery sword and raising his shield he swirled the sword in various directions."

When Śiva, who thus became terrible, walked with the sword amidst the asura army the entire asura forces were annihilated and the Devas came out victorious.

7) Daring deeds of Śiva.

(i) *Clash With Viṣṇu*. Though there were differences of opinion between Śiva and Viṣṇu on many occasions, only very rarely had occurred actual clashes between the two. The Purāṇas refer to two such important clashes. One has reference to a direct fight Śiva fought with Viṣṇu and the other is about Śiva's fight with Nārāyaṇarṣi, an incarnation of Viṣṇu.

There was no reason for the direct fight between Śiva and Viṣṇu. The Devas wanted to test who was the more powerful of the two, Śiva or Viṣṇu, and they told Brahmā about the idea. By carrying tales to them, one against the other, Brahmā made Śiva and Viṣṇu mutual enemies. The enmity led to a fight between the two. Viśvakarman made a bow for each of the contestants. In the fight between the two Śiva got defeated. Śiva, who got angry at his temporary defeat presented his bow and arrow to Devarāta, King of Videha. It was this bow, which Śrī Rāma broke at the wedding of Sitā in a later period. As soon as the fight was over the Devas realised that Viṣṇu was greater than Śiva. After the fight Viṣṇu gave his bow to Rciḱa, the Bhīrgava muni. Jamadagni got it from Rciḱa, and he gave it to Paraśurāma. It was with this bow that Paraśurāma confronted Śrī Rāma on his way back after wedding Sitā. (Vālmiki Rāmāyaṇa, Bālakāṇḍa, Canto 75).

The following story is related in the Anuśāsana Parva of Mahābhārata about the fight between Nārāyaṇarṣi, incarnation of Viṣṇu and Śiva.

Śiva, in great fury, threw his Śūla into the Yajña hall of Dakṣa, and the Śūla after reducing the Yajña, to ashes, hit the breast of Nārāyaṇarṣi, who was doing tapas in Badarikāśrama. Nārāyaṇa raised the sound 'Hum' as a result of which the Śūla returned to Śiva's hands, who, in great anger, rushed forward to Nārāyaṇa. Nārāyaṇa placed his hand on Śiva's throat with the result

that it became dark in colour. Thenceforth Śiva came to be known as Śitikaṅṭha also.

Nārāyaṇa plucked a blade of grass and recited some mantras. It became a paraśu (axe). He threw it at Śiva, who broke it into pieces, which act gave him the additional name of Khaṇḍaparaśu also. The fighting became fierce and the world began burning. Fire refused to receive offerings made; Ṛṣis could not recollect the Vedas; Rajas and Tamas attacked Devas; the earth shook; planets became dim and dark; Brahmā fell down from his seat; sky came down; oceans got dry; the Himālayas crumbled. On the continuous appearance of such ill omens Brahmā and all the Devas came to the battlefield. Saluting Rudra Brahmā told him thus: "Oh! Lord! Let good happen to the world. In the interests of the welfare of the world, you would please give up arms. The Naranārāyaṇas are upholders of righteousness; they are the incarnations of the indestructible and supreme sages. I was born from their pleasure. You were born from their wrath."

On hearing these words of Brahmā Śiva cooled down.

(ii) *Rendered Kāmadeva bodiless (limbless)*. See under Kāmadeva, Parva 4).

(iii) *Bore Gaṅgā on the head*. See under Gāṅgā.

(iv) *Consumed Kālakūṭa*. Owing to the curse of Durvāsas the Devas were subjected to symptoms of old age, and to produce amṛta (nectar) as remedy for this unfortunate development, the churning of Kṣīrābdhi (ocean of milk) was started. Vāsuki, the snake, was used as cord to rotate mount Mandara, which was used as the churning rod. When the churning became very intense, the mortal poison Kālakūṭa emerged out of Vāsuki's mouth. (Another view is held that Kālakūṭa rose out of the milk-sea). On the emergence of the deadly poison the asuras ran off in great fear, the Devas got bewildered, Bāli and Sugriva too got frightened; and without exhibiting his fright Viṣṇu covered his face; on the whole it appeared as though the entire world would be reduced to ashes.

At this critical moment, Śiva, reputed for his reckless daring, put all the Kālakūṭa into his mouth. Frightened at it Pārvatī held Śiva's throat by her hands so that the poison did not enter his stomach. At the same time Mahāviṣṇu covered with his hands Śiva's mouth so that the poison was not spitted out. Kālakūṭa thus prevented from going down into the stomach or being vomited from Śiva's throat got itself digested in the throat giving it a blue colour. Thus did Śiva become Nilakaṅṭha (of the blue throat). Viṣṇu and Pārvatī who were affected by the flames of the poison became Nilavarṇa and Kālī respectively. (Kamba Rāmāyaṇa, Yuddhakāṇḍa).

(v) *Destroyed Dakṣa's yajña*. See under Dakṣa Para 3).

(vi) *Fought Śaṅkhacūḍa*. (See under Tulasī, Para 5).

(vii) *Burned the Tripuras*. (See under Tripura).

(viii) *Fought Sūrya*. Śiva once plucked out Brahmā's head (See under Kapālī 1), and Brahmā cursed Śiva that he should beg for food with that head (skull) in his hands. This fierce curse of Brahmā affected Śiva so much that, in uncontrollable wrath, he beat whomsoever he met. Thousands of Devas and others were killed. Sūrya, who relished not these atrocities of Śiva confronted him with out-stretched hands. Śiva held with one hand of his, both the hands of Sūrya from the fingers of which blood began to flow. Śiva turned Sūrya round and