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10. BHAGAVAT PURANA

CHAPTER FIRST

OBESISANCE TO THE SUPREME BEING

We meditate to that Paramatma (Supreme Being) who is the eternal truth; and who creates the universe, holds it and causes Pralaya. He is the light independence and from of knowledge in himself. He causes illusions even for the most knowledgeable ones. Yet, He is far beyond all the illusions.

In Srimad Bhagavat, created by the great sage Vyasa, There is a description of the supreme religion, which is free from desire. There is also a description of Paramatmatatva (the metaphysical entity) that every pious people with holy spirit must know about. Srimad Bhagavat is a delicious and relishing fruit of Vedas. Because of a touch of Sri Shukacharya's lips, it is impregnated with blissful nectar. So, as long as there is life in his body, a devotee keeps on relishing this nectar of divine scripture. It is easily available right here on the earth itself.

PERFORMANCE OF JNANA-YAGYA

In the beginning of the Kali Yuga, sages like Shaunak et al organized a vast Jnana Yagya in the holy region of the Naimisharanya. The purpose of the yagya was the benefit of the common people and it was to last for a millennium. To quench the spiritual curiosity of the sages, Suta, the orator of Puranas, also arrived there. Felicitating him, the sages asked Suta, " O great sage, by the grace of Vyasa, you have learned all the Puranas, history, religion etc. You also know about all the other subjects as well. So kindly narrate the tale which could surely benefit the common people so that they too can experience the real spiritual joy."

Pleased by the curiosity of the sages, Suta said, " O great sages, it is extremely auspicious to talk about Lord Krishna. Only by discussing about the God, can the mind of the people be freed from illusions. Love then begins to emerge in it for God and it begins to detach itself from physical comfort and experience the blissful joy.

LORD VISHNU - THE SOURCE OF WHOLE CREATION

Driven by the desire, the Adi Purusha (primitive being) Narayan took the help of his Prakriti (nature's female creational force) and generated himself in Chaturbhuj (four-armed) form. And from His navel appeared Lord Brahma, the creator. That form of God was full of pure truth and from the parts of His body, all the Lokas (worlds) got extension. Metaphysicists saw the God with innumerable heads, eyes, arms and legs. That endless, eternal Supreme Being was the source of all the Avatars (incarnations) and from the parts of His body was created Gods, human beings, birds animals and all other creatures.

From the ages, twenty-four incarnations of that Supreme being, like Sanakadi Kumar, Varaha, Narada, Nar-Narayana, Kapila, Dattatreya, Rishabhdev, Prithu, Matsya, Kachchhap, Dhanvantari, Mohini, Narasinha, Vamana, Parshurama, Vyasa, Sri Rama, Balarama, Krishna and Buddha have appeared to guard the people and to remove the burden from the earth, and to save their devotees and gentlemen. Suta says, " Blessed are those who have unconditional love for Lord Vasudev, the lord of the universe. Such people don't fall again and again, in the cycles of life and death. Bhagavat Mahapurana is such a scripture in which the great sage Veda Vyasa describes the holy and pious tales of the God. For the benefit of the people, Veda Vyasa compiled this great scripture taking extracts of all the Vedas, and other ancient treatises. Reading, hearing or reflecting on which, the human being inclines to devotion and finds salvation.

Shaunk asked, " When that tale was compiled in scriptural form, that was later on related by Shukadeva. Where was it created? For what purpose and by whose inspiration, that scripture was compiled and how did Shukadeva, who was congenital wanderer, come to study this scripture, and how he came to see the king Parikshit? What discussion took place between them?"

What Suta narrated to the sages, forms the main body of the great scripture Srimad Bhagavat.-

VEDA VYASA THE PARTIAL INCARNATION

Veda Vyasa had appeared in Dwapar Yuga. He was the son of Maharshi Parashar and Satyawati then known as Matsyagandha. Vyasa was a partial incarnation of the God. Veda Vyasa effected a division of Vedas, created Puranas conceptualized history (Mahabharata-which was actually jotted down by none other than Lord Ganesha.) He also established different faculties for teaching his disciples. Yet staying in his hermitage at the banks of the river Saraswati, he was not satisfied with his performance. Something was still writhing within his heart to come out. So he was feeling upset and was unable to find a reason for his dejection. Just then, Devarshi Narada arrived there, and saw that Mahatma Vyasa was upset. As nothing was concealed from Narada, he told him the reasons for his moroseness.

Narada told him that though he had created great epics, yet all of them lack a devotional description of God. That was why his soul was still writhing. Narada also suggested him to describe the glory of Hari, or neither his voice, nor his creation would ever get pure. Devarshi Narada then narrated the tale of God and the glory of His devotees to Vyasa and said, "O great soul, look at the effect of devotion and company of the pious people that I have become Devarshi from an ordinary son of a maid"

After the departure of Narada, Vyasa sat in meditation and experienced the illusion that caught the life. He also experienced devotion. Thus, his fresh experience led Veda Vyasa to create this great scripture. The virtues of God had such a strong attraction that, lured by them, even self-indulgent Shukdevi ran back from the jungles to his father and prayed to let him read that scripture.

Because of their link with Lord Sri Krishna, Suta narrates the stories of Pandavas, their heavenly departure, coronation of Parikshit, his all round victories etc. as per their sequences in Mahabharata. He also narrates the episodes of Ashwatthama the son of Guru Drona, worship of God by Kunti etc. and migration of Lord Krishna to Dwaraka.

KING PARIKSHIT ENCOUNTERS KALI YUGA

During his regime, the king Parikshit got untoward reports that Kali Yuga had entered within the limits of his otherwise peaceful kingdom. With a huge army, Parikshit at once set out to the spot where Kali Yuga had arrived. On the way he saw the religion and the earth in the guises of a bull and a cow respectively. The cow was in death-like condition, while the bull was somehow dragging himself on one leg only as its three legs were broken. He also saw that a king-like, but impolite man was beating them ruthlessly with a stick. From a distance, the king Parikshit

shouted at the man, "You scoundrel, why are you beating such helpless creatures in my kingdom?" Saying this, the king Parikshit drew his sword to kill the evil Kali. But the clever Kali fell at the feet of the king. For Kali was now in the king's refuge, he did not kill him, but ordered that being an assistant of irreligious, he should at once leave the kingdom. Kali then asked, "O king wherever I go, I find you ready to kill me with you bow and arrow. You tell me where should I go and where should I live?" The king allowed Kali to live in five things-- gambling, drinking of wine, company of women, violence and the gold. Since then, Kali i.e. the dispute has had a continuous association with these five things. Hence, anybody disirous of self-improvement must avoid these five things which are governed by Kali.

KING PARIKSHIT DISHONORS SAGE SHAMIK

One day, king Parikshit went on a hunting excursion. Till noon, he could not find a game. He was feeling restless because of hunger, thirst and fatigue. Searching water and shelter the king reached the hermitage of the sage Shamik. Shamik was in deep meditation so he did not welcome the king. For the first time the king Parikshit grew angry with a Brahmin. As a revenge and to show his anger he hanged a dead snake around the sage's neck.

Maharshi Shamik's son Sringeri was also an effluent person. When he came to know about his father's insult by the king Parikshit, he cursed him that on the seventh day from that moment, Takshak, the Naga would bite the king for his violation of kingly glory. There in the capital, king Parikshit realized his mistake and felt sorry for his deed. But he welcomed the curse. Transferring the kingdom to his son Janamejay, king Parikshit reached the banks of the river Ganges and sat there on a fast unto death. Very soon all the great sages and kings began to throng there. King Parikshit welcomed them and begged them to recite the plays of God for him. He also asked what a creature ought to do always, and what were the duties of those who face an imminent death.

SHUKHADEVA'S ARRIVAL

At that moment the ever-wandering, indifferent-natured sage Shukadeva also arrived there. He was self indulgent and free from the bondages of ashramas (phases of life). He was then only sixteen years old but appeared quite radiant and graceful.

Shukadeva was an honorable figure even for the sages who had gathered there as gust themselves. King Parikshit formally welcomed and worshiped Shukadeva and offered him a comfortable seat. King Parikshit then prayed to him, "O sage, Lord Krishna is definitely pleased with me. That's why He has sent a great sage like you to save a wretched person like me. So, O Mahatma (the great soul), kindly remove my doubts and guide me regarding the duties of a human-being? What should one acquire and what should one drop?"

SECOND CHAPTER

Sri Shukadeva says 'O King, ordinary people literally waste their lives in petty matters like useless discussions, worry, sleep and feeding themselves. Those who wish to conquer their fears,

O Parikshit, must listen to, recite and remember the tales that depict the plays of Lord Sri Krishna. The human birth can be successful only if by any means one has a remembrance of God in his last moments. All the scriptures also dictate the same doctrine.

One should remember the huge, macro as well as micro form of the omnipresent God, and must not long for the physical objects. Shukadeva then revealed the kinds of Mukti (salvation) as told in Vedas and said: 'O King, there is no other way as beneficial as the means to achieve the affectionate devotion of Lord Vasudev. Hence, every human being must in all circumstances, use his might in listening to, reciting and remembering the name of Lord Sri Hari.

Though as per the interest, nature, and the desires of different people, and pleased by their worship, many gods oblige their devotees within their powers. But materialization of mundane desires of the innocent people has disastrous consequences. Learned people, therefore, whether they have or haven't any desire, worship Purushaottam God with fervent devotion.

CREATION OF THE WORLD

The king Parikshit felt extreme pleasure when Shukadeva satisfied his queries. He then began to feel submerged in the stream of Bhagavat Katha (tale of the God). His selfish worries regarding his own benefits existed no more. He insisted again: O Brahmin, now kindly explain how does the God create the universe out of illusions. How does He preserve the universe? How does He destroy it? At the instance of the king, Shukadeva contemplated on the God and presented the dialogue of Brahma and Narada that illustrates the Maitreya nature of the creation.

Brahma had preached Narada that because of Paramatma's (Supreme Being) desire of creation, this universe into existence from the primitive elements. Lord Brahma also told that after creating the universe God himself entered it. Hence, the whole universe is a manifestation of God's infinite appearance. His virtues can not be counted. But, to show his presence, Narayan takes various incarnations and appears on earth time and again. Merely, by listening to various beautiful and enticing plays of God, the mind, voice, thoughts and the soul of a human being become holy.

Parikshit again put forth many new queries regarding creation. Shukadeva related the events like emergence of Brahmaji on a lotus that cropped up from the navel of Lord Vishnu, sighting of Lord Vishnu's abode by Lord Brahma, preaching of Bhagavat to Lord Brahma by Lord Vishnu and Dashlakshan (ten characteristics) of Bhagavat etc.

THIRD CHAPTER

VIDURA WARNS DHRITARASHTRA

Sri Shukadeva says, "O Parikshit, Vidura deserted his homely comforts and luxuries because he had to protest against injustice." When, after losing in the game of dice, the Pandavas successfully passed the period of their exile and stay in guise, and were denied even then of their rightful share in the kingdom, Vidura was summoned for consultations. Vidura had then

suggested Dhritrashtra thus "O king, if you wish to save your family, you please abandon Duryodhan who is an embodiment of all the evils. He is jealous of none other than Lord Krishna. That is why you are getting dull day by day and losing your radiance." These words infuriated Duryodhan so much so that he began to abusively insult Vidura. But, Vidura didn't mind his words even though he felt seriously hurt at heart. Accepting his insult as a play of God, Vidura silently left Hastinapur and went on a pilgrimage.

VIDURA COMES TO KNOW ABOUT KAURAVA'S DESTRUCTION

Travelling through various pilgrimage places, Vidura reached Prabhas region where he got the news of total destruction of the Kaurvas. The news deeply moved him. In search of solace, he continued to wander from one place of pilgrimage to another place. During his wandering, when he reached the banks of the river Yamuna, Vidura met Uddhava the selfless and calm server of God. They both met affectionately and enquired about the wellbeing of each other. They were both reflecting on the plays of Lord Krishna and feeling extreme joy. Vidura had also got the news of departure of Lord Krishna to his abode and destruction of Yadavas by fierce infightings. So he was extremely depressed also. Uddhava told him that Lord Krishna himself had bestowed His grace on him and preached Bhagavat jnana, which He had once preached to Lord Brahma. By the dictate of Lord, Uddhava was going to Badrikasharma. So he suggested Vidura to see Maitreya for the metaphysical knowledge, for before departing to his abode, Lord Krishna had dictated him (Maitreya) to preach Bhagavat to Vidura. As per the suggestion, Vidura reached Haridwar and saw the sage Maitreya on the banks of the river Ganges.

The pious Vidura respectfully greeted the sage Maitreya and said, "O lord, the people in this world perform various actions with a desire to have pleasure. But neither do they get pleasure nor is their sorrow removed. Their sorrow increases instead. What is good then, in this context?"

O great among the sages, kindly preach me the way to peace, following which, one meets the God who then takes abode in the heart of his devotee and instills in him the Santan Gyan (eternal knowledge) that lets the devotee feel the direct presence of Him.

Thus asked with devotion by Vidura, Mahatma Maitreya illuminated the glory of God and other events like creation of universe by illusion and origin of colossus body, and said: No one can measure the eternal glory of God and the illusions created by Him.

In the beginning God created the primitive elements and the flaws associated with them. Then he created the colossus universe and entered it.

DESCRIPTION OF TEN WAYS CREATION BY MAITREYA

1. By the inspiration of God and because of imbalance in pious virtues, creation of Mahattatva (the soul) was the first (Mahattatva the soul).

2. From Mahattatva (the soul) originates Ahankar (the ego) which generates five primitive elements (the earth, the fire, the air, the water and the ether), sense organs and motor organs.
3. Group of Tanmatras (the subtle forms of matter) that generate the five major elements, is the third creation.
4. Creation of organs that have the power of sensing and moving is the fourth creation.
5. Creation of the mind that governs the senses and was appeared from ego, is the fifth creation.
6. Appearance of mind and the illusions that misguide it, is the sixth creation.
7. The above mentioned six creations are known as natural creations also. Creatures other than these six have no power of knowledge, they can experience the touch only. These creatures like trees and other vegetables are known as the seventh creation.
8. Eighth creation is of the birds and animals.
9. Ninth creation is of those human beings who seek pleasure in action and luxuries which are infact the cause of sorrow.
10. Tenth creation is of the great sages like Sanatkumar etc. Thus at the beginning of the Kalpa, God the creator used Rajas gunas (royal virtues) to create himself in the form of the universe.

Maitreyaji says, " This whole creation is a manifestation of the plays of God. That omnipotent God created the universe just by His wish and for the sake of His play. For the extension of the creation, Lord Brahma wished and create four sons- Sanak, Sanandan, Sanatan and Sanatkumar.

Thereafter, with a desire to create world, Lord Brahma ordered them to produce population. But Lord Brahma's sons had no interest in wordily affairs. Lord Brahma therefore cursed them to remain in children's form forever. Then from Lord Brahma's eyebrows appeared a baby, blue-red in color. The baby appeared in eleven forms and began to cry immediately after his arrival. Lord Brahma consoled him! "Don't cry my son, you will be named as Rundra." So the eleven forms of the baby came to be known as eleven Rundras. Rundranis (female Rundra) were also created. From Tamas Prakriti (malignant nature) Rundra created the ghosts, the spooks, the spectres, the devils, lamias etc. Afraid by their appearances, Lord Brahma prayed Rudra, " O Mahadeva, please stop creating such formidable organisms. They are already enough in number. Now, you please undertake penance to comfort all the creatures."

Thereafter, Lord Brahma created ten more sons- Marichi, Bhrigu, Kratu, Pulah, Pulatsya, Angira, Atri, Vashishtha, Daksha and Narada. Nine out of them took permission for the creation of their offsprings, but Narada accepted celibacy and resolved to preach Bhagavat bhakti (devotion for God.)

For the continuation of the creation, Lord himself appeared as a female from the left hand and as a male from the right hand of Lord Brahma. Those males and females forms were named Manu

and Shatarupa respectively. They were the first in the whole creation to copulate and bring about sexual reproduction. They begot two sons- Priyvrata and Uttanapada, and three daughters- Devhuti, Akuti and Prasuti. As the primitive king, Manu was the fosterer of the earth. By then a demon named Hiranyaksha abducted the earth and hid it under the abyssal depth of the ocean, causing worries for Lord Brahma. Instantly Lord appeared himself in Varaha (boar) incarnation and to do away with Lord Brahma's worries, He at once entered the depth of the ocean and rescued the earth on His long teeth. On the way the Lord had an encounter with Hiranyaksha and killed the demon with His wheel.

Maitreya: says Hiranyaksha represented anger. Those who don't want to discharge their duties, but still wish to live with all the comforts are abductors of others wealth. Such people, who continuously interfere with equal distribution of wealth, must be condemned as the demons.

On the origin of the demons, Maitreya cryptic said, once Diti, the wife Maharshi Kashyapa, expressed her desire to conceive. Maharshi Kashyapa tried to dissuade her that time was not suitable for an auspicious job like conception. But Diti kept on insisting and forced her husband shamelessly to assist her in the process. Consequently she conceived during the dusk. Kashyapa cautioned her "you will give birth to the demons." And with the arrival of the demons in Diti's womb, nature began to manifest herself adversely.

There was terror and famine all around, and darkness prevailed even during day, with stars appearing in the sky. Frightened by these manifestations, the gods asked Lord Brahma about the reason of all those disturbances. Lord Brahma informed them that two demons were to take birth from Diti. Those two demons, told Lord Brahma, were the two gatekeepers-- Jay-Vijaya, of the Lord's abode. Once, Sanakadi Kumar had gone to Vaikunthdham (God's abode) to see God but those two gatekeepers didn't let them in. Sanakadi tried thrice, but only to be stopped every time by those two gatekeepers at the gates. Hence, Sanakadi Kumar cursed them to take birth on earth as demons. Those two gatekeepers of God's abode Jay-Vijaya appeared first as Hiranyakashipu and Hiranyaksha, second time as Ravana and Kumbhakaran and third time as Dantavakra and Shishupala.

SAGE KARDAMA

Continuing the process of creation, Brahma produced Sage Kardama from his shadow and asked him to observe penance first. Thereafter, Brahma dictated Kardama to acquire physical strength and the strength of his sense and undertake the process of creating his offsprings. As per his father's dictate, Kardama observed severe penance. Pleased by his selfless penance, God asked Kardama to seek a boon. Kardama said, "Lord all the things in the world are ephemeral; only you're eternal. It will be an abuse of the intelligence to beg for some ephemeral thing from an eternal God."

Overwhelmed by Kardama's plain words, God said in benediction 'On the third day from now you will be married to Devhuti, the daughter of Manu. Nine daughters will take birth in your home. I will myself appear as your son' Saying this, God disappeared. As per the boon Kardama got married to Devhuti, the daughter of Manu. Their formal marriage was the first of its kind in the creation, adopted as a religiously accepted means for continuation of life. Donating their

daughter Devhuti to the sage Kardam, Manu and Shatarupa returned to their abode. As Mata Parvati used to serve Lord Lord Shiva, similarly Devhuti served Kardam with dedication.

Once the sage Kardam noticed that Devhuti has aged and Sriveled by harsh living. Pleased by her dedication, Kardam asked her to seek a boon. Devhuti only begged that there should never be any lethargy in any service on her part towards him. Pleased again by her pure feelings Kardam provided her with heavenly luxuries. Together they enjoyed those luxuries for many years during which nine daughters were born to them. All those daughters symbolised the Navadha Bhakti (nine kinds of devotion) and were married to nine Prajapatis like Marichi etc. Thus kala was married to Marichi, Anusuya to Atri, Shradha to Angira, Havirbhu to Pulatsya, Gati to Pulah, Shanti to Atharva, Krita to Kratu, Khyati to Bhrgu and Arundhati was married to the sage Vashishtha.

LORD KAPILA

Married life of Kardam and Devhuti is a lesson for all the civilized couples of the world. Abiding to the limits of human behaviour in married life is a guarantee for the wellbeing of the couple. Without religion and morality, a man is not more than an animal. Kardam and Devhuti followed strict rules to welcome the arrival of eternal God. Thus, in due time, God appeared as their son. With His arrival the gods showered flowers. Lord Brahma alongwith his sons welcomed the God and said 'O pious daughter of Manu, Sri Hari has arrived as your son. He will destroy the lust, and illusion and will preach his own philosophy. He will be known in the world as Kapila.

Worshiping the lord Kapila, sage Kardam said 'O lord, by your grace, I'm free now from all the three obligations and all my desires are now granted.' With these words, Kardam took to asceticism.

LORD KAPILA PREACHES METAPHYSICAL KNOWLEDGE TO DEVHUTI

Mata Devhuti prayed lord Kapila to preach the way for the benefaction of the soul, which is attached with ephimeral body. Lord said 'O mother, Adhayatma Yoga (spiritual conjugation) is the main way of benefaction for the human beings. With devotion for me, soul becomes self-knowing. Total devotion of the soul in my form and virtues and listening my tales, unmistakably show devotion. This leads to an inseparable rapport between my devotee and me. This is the greatest benefaction for the humans.

The world is like an ocean of death and I cause salvation of those who give up all their lusts and recite my name with fervent devotion. This whole nature has different forms, but it is ephimeral and constantly changing. It has twenty-four divisions-five major elements (ether, air, fire, water and earth); five souls (sound, touch, appearance, fluid and smell); five sense organs (eyes, nose, ears, tongue and skin); five motor organs (mouth, hands, legs, penis and bones) and mind, intelligence, conscience and ego.

That omnipresent Purusha (an epithet of God) voluntarily accepted Prakriti (an epithet for female force). From her various virtues, Prakriti created various creatures that corresponded exactly to the virtues that caused their creation. In the mess, the mantle that covered the knowledge also caused illusion for the Jivatma (microcosm of omnipotent spirit) which thus forgot his original appearance.

The creature then began to assume the nature as a reflection of his own appearance-- though she is different from and opposite to him-- and himself as the doer. Such an ego regarding ones duties leads to his entanglement in the cycles of life and death. Differentiating between the Prakriti and Purusha and experiencing their real appearances respectively, introspecting sages have had a sight of the Supreme Being through their conscience and achieve the unparrelled Brahma Pada.

Lord Kapila says, "Through the union of the sperm and the ovum, the human body appears as a lump in the womb. His body forms completely within six months. Sense organs develop thereafter. Twenty fifth element, the soul, then enters the human body. With that, the body begins to experience hunger and thirst. Then suffering with many kinds of desires, the microcosm prays me to save him from the tortures of staying in the womb. I present him with a sight of me in his heart.

It then takes birth because of my grace. But as soon as it appears on the earth the human being begins to forget me. Still, I present him with my sight for two to three months more, when he begins to laugh. But people aroound him think that he is laughing for his mother. Nobody reminds him of me in his childhood. Youth of a human being passes in futile activities. In old age, his organs begin to fail and a human being finds himself unable to recite my name. Thus, the whole life of a human being just passes in the illusion of 'I', 'me' and 'my' and he reaches his last stage, and begins to realize his mistake. But then it is usually too late for him to do anything for his benefaction. If he has done any good deed in life, he may meet fortune, but without a devotion for me, no one can be happy. Only when the soul comes in my refuge, he gets free from the bondages of life and death.

Maitre says, O Vidura, thereafter Devhuti concentrated her mind in the divine appearance of Sri Hari, as presented by Lord Kapila. At once, she got free from all the sufferings. She got a sight of God in her conscience and her body transformed into a holy river. The place where Mata Devhuti received salvation is still known as Siddhi Pada. It is a renowned place of pilgrimage.

FOURTH CHAPTER

DESCRIPTION OF THE CLANS OF MANU'S DAUGHTERS

Maitreya then related the description of the Manu's daughters. Manu and Shatarupa had three daughters- Akuti, Devhuti and Prasuti. Akuti was married to a Prajapati named Ruchi. They begot two children-- a son and a daughter. The son later on came to be known as Yagyavatar of Lord Narayana, while the daughter was named Dakshaina. In due course, Yagya and Dakshaina begot twelve sons- Tosh, Pratosh, Santosh, Bhadra, Shanti, Indrapati, Idhm, Kavi, Vibhu, Swanh, Sudev and Rochan.

Manu's second daughter Devhuti was married to the sage Kardam. They begot nine daughters who were married, in due course to nine Prajapatis. One of them, named Kala, was married to the sage Marichi. They begot Kashyapa and Purnima. Their offsprings comprise today's population of the entire world. Gati was the wife of Pulah. They begot three sons Karmshreshtha, Variyan and Sahishnu.

Pleased by the penance of Ansuya and Atri, the Tridevas (trinity of Brahma, Vishnu and Lord Shiva) sent their parts as the sons to the hermit couple. Among them Chandrama appeared from Brahma's part, Dattatreya from Vishnus part and sage Durvasa appeared from Lord Shiva's part.

To Shardha and Angira were born four daughters- Simivali, Kuhu, Raka and Anumati. They begot two sons also- Utathya and Brihaspati. Havirbhu was married to Pulastya. They begot two sons- Agastya and Vishrava. In later course, sage Vishrava produced Yakshraj Kubera from Ividya, while his second wife Keshini gave birth to Ravana, Kumbhakaran and Vibhishan.

Vashishtha and his wife Arundhati begot seven Brahmarishis like Chitraketu. Sage Atharva and his wife Chitti begot a son Taponishth. Geat sage Bhriгу and his wife Khyati begot two sons- Dhata and Vidhata, and a daughter- Sri.

Manu's third daughter Prasuti was married to Daksha, the son of Lord Brahma. She got sixteen daughters. Daksha married thirteen of them to Dharm. Of the remaining three daughters, one was married to Agni, one to Pitrgana and one to Lord Lord Shiva. Shradha, Maitri, Daya, Shanti, Tushti, Pushti, Kriya, Unnati, Buddhi, Medha, Titiksha, Hree and Murti are the wives of Dharm. Of these Murti begot the sages Nar-Narayan. Swaha the wife of Agni begot three sons- Pavak, Pawaman and Shuchi. Two daughters were born to Swadha the wife of Pitrganas. They were named Dharini and Vayuna. These both daughters were Brahma vadinis (expounders of vedas.) Sati, the youngest daughter of Daksha and wife of Mahadeva, however could not begot any offspring because she had committed immolation in her youth as a protest against her father's misbehaviour with her husband Mahadeva.

MISBEHAVIOUR OF DAKSHA PRAJAPATI WITH LORD SHIVA

Vidura asked Maitreya: 'Lord Shiva is an idol of peace. He has no enmity with anyone. He is self indulgent Why did then Daksha Prajapati misbehave with Him?

Maitreya said, " Once a meeting of Brahmavadis (expounders of vedas) was organized. Along with all the gods Lord Shiva and Brahma were also present in the meeting. Because of being a Prajapati, Daksha was allowed a late entry in the meeting. Moreover, when Daksha did arrive, all the gods, except Brahma and Lord Shiva, stood up to pay him regards. Honor by thousands of gods did not please Daksha as much as he felt insulted the by behaviour of Lord Shiva.

Brahma was the father of Daksha, so he didn't mind his behaviour. But seeing Lord Shiva sitting there and not paying due respect to him, Daksha got angry. He said, "He is like my disciple. I've married my daughter to him but he is uncourteous and irreligious. I committed a blunder by

marrying my daughter to him. He smears ashes of pyre and roams at the cremation sites. Only the ghosts are his companions." Thus, Daksha cursed Lord Shiva. "May this Lord Shiva not get his due share along with the Gods in oblations."

Nandi, the prominent among Lord Shiva's servers, cursed Daksha in retaliation: "May the unwise Daksha lose his mind and be like an animal always bound to a woman." Thereafter indignant Lord Shiva at once left the meeting alongwith his followers. But still Daksha didn't put the matter at rest. To humble Lord Shiva, he organised a grand yagya named Barhaspati. All the Brahmarishis, devarishis, pitars, gods etc. attended the yagya alongwith their wives.

From her abode on Kailash, Sati saw all the gods going through air to the grand occasion. She also learned about the grand yagya organised by her father Daksha. Out of curiosity, she insisted her husband Lord Lord Shiva, "O Vamdev, your father-in-law, Daksha Prajapati has organised a grand feast. If you wish, should we also go there to attend the feast. I desire to see my beloved mother, sisters, and other relatives." Lord Shiva replied! "O beautiful, though one may go without invitation to his parents' home, may visit teachers and siblings. But your father resents me. So it is not good if we go there uninvited. I will not tolerate if he humiliates you. So, you should not go there, because a humiliation by a near one may cause immediate death.'

In fact, Sati had a logical mind, while Lord Shiva gave more weightage to faith than logic.

Sati even had a doubt regarding God's incarnation as Lord Rama, that how could Parbrahma Parmatma, who is the father of all, be a son of any human being. Moreover, how could the Supreme Being be in so much sorrow because of his wife's separation. Lord Shiva and Sati, therefore, had a sight of Lord Rama in exile. Lord Shiva silently saluted Lord Rama's appearance, while Sati decided to give Rama a test. So taking a guise of Sita, Sati appeared before Rama. Lord Rama knew everything so he regarded her as Sati. He also showed her some of His glories.

Now Sati had firm belief in Lord Rama. She returned to Lord Shiva and gave her verdict that Lord Rama was indeed an incarnation of the Supreme Being. But Lord Shiva was much disturbed by Sati because of her taking the guise of Sita.

Lord Shiva had, therefore, acquired an indifferent stance towards Sati. Thus she was feeling anguished by Lord Shiva's behaviour. Hence she prayed silently: 'O Lord, may my body be destroyed soon, as this body is not able to serve Lord Shiva'

Hence, when she heard about the grand feast organised by her father, in abject violation of her husband's dictate, Sati got ready to attend the feast. Lord Shiva too sent her with a lot of gifts and servants. There at Daksha's palace Sati found that all were ignoring her because of her father's fear. Even her sisters laughed at her for coming alone. In all, Sati found nothing favourable in her father's home. Only her mother welcomed her that too in isolation. Indignant, Sati went straight to the Yagya Mandap (canopy for performing oblation) and found that no seat had been allotted there for Lord Shiva.

With anger she said; 'Even the mere name of Lord Shiva is enough to destroy all the sins of the humans. No one can violate His dictate. And you, O father, feel jealous of such an auspicious figure, holy, Lord Lord Shiva, who is soul of every living being. I am ashamed of having this body produced from an opponent of Lord Shiva, like you.' Saying these words, Sati threw herself in the flames of Yagyagni (the fire of the Yagya) Thereafter, Lord Shiva's ganas (servers) destroyed the Yagya. They beheaded Daksha and dropped his head in the altar. Other gods and the sages were also punished for showing disrespect for Lord Shiva. Ultimately, Lord Brahma, accompanied by the gods, went to Kailash and pacified Lord Shiva. Ashutosh Lord Shiva granted them a boon to carry the Yagya to completion.

In her next birth, Sati was born in the home of Himalayas. She was named as Parvati. Sober, cool, and an idol of faith, Mata Parvati dedicated herself fully to Lord Shiva. Narada gave her a talisman to get Lord Shiva as her husband. Lord Narayan himself requested Lord Shiva to accept Parvati as his wife. Lord Shiva accepted to get married with Parvati. Thus, through hard penance, Mata Parvati got Lord Shiva as her husband. In due course the auspicious marriage of Mata Parvati with Lord Shiva took place.

TALE OF DHRUVA

The self-begotten Manu had two sons- Priyvat and Uttanpad. King Uttanpad had two queens- Suniti and Suruchi. Uttanpad loved Suruchi more than he loved Suniti. So Suniti was forced to live outside the royal palace with her son Dhruva, while Suruchi and her son Uttam enjoyed all the luxuries in the palace. Once the King was playing with his soon Uttam who was sitting in his lap. Meanwhile, Dhruva too arrived there and began insisting to sit in his father's lap. But for the fear of Suruchi the king did not take Dhruva in his lap. Just then, Suruchi too arrived there. Strutting at her fortune, she ridiculed Dhruva: 'Though you are also a son of the king, but you have no right to sit on the throne because you are not borne to me. You are the son of queen Suniti who is neglected by the King, and now lives like a mistress. So your desire is hard to accomplish. Even then if you wish to have the throne, you begin to worship Lord Narayana, and take birth through me by His grace and then wait for your chance to sit in the King's lap.'

Hurt by his stepmother's harsh words, Dhruva came to his mother crying. When Suniti heard about the incidence, she felt very sorry. Still, with patience she consoled her son Dhruva, 'O my son, don't wish ill for the others. Those who cause sorrow for others, have to face the outcome themselves one day. Your stepmother is right. You have been born to me. Even then, if you wish to be enthroned like the prince Uttam, give up your jealousy and start worshipping Lord Narayan. Even you're grand father Manu and great grand- father Lord Brahma worshipped him. Only Lord Narayan can remove your sorrow.'

Mother's words shook the conscience of Dhruva. He at once set out with firm determination to please Sri Hari by penance. Leaving the town, while going in search of solitude he met devarshi Narada in the way. Dhruva respectfully greeted Narada. Narada lovingly caressed his head and tried to test his determination. Narada tried everything to convince Dhruva to send him back to his home, but he failed to shake the firm determination of the boy. Then with kindness, Narada preached Dhruva about Lord's appearance and gave him a mantra.

Thus, Narada performed his duty as Guru and blessing Dhruva, he disappeared. Dhruva arrived in Madhuvan and took a seat under a Kadamba tree on the bank of the river Yamuna. There he began to recite the mantra and meditation. During the first month he ate roots and tubers. In the second month he ate dried leaves. During the third month he managed with Yamuna's water. During the fourth month he sustained himself on the air only. Dhruva even stopped breathing. Now, standing on one leg only, he was fully concentrated in Lord Vasudev. At the moment when Dhruva stopped breathing and concentrated in Parbrahma, all the three worlds shook with fear.

All the gods ran to the refuge of Lord. Because of stopping of breath all the organisms stood still. Assuring them not to be afraid, Lord arrived in Madhuvan to see His beloved devotee Dhruva. Seeing the Lord Himself arrived before him, Dhruva's eyes filled with tears. He said, "O Lord, I don't know how to worship you." Lord touched his cheek with His conch. With that, Dhruva came to realize the glory of God. With complete devotion and folded hands, he worshiped Sri Hari: "I salute to such an omnipotent, omnipresent and all knowing Lord, whose power is present in everybody, and who entering my heart revived my speech." Pleased by his prayer Lord stroked Dhruva's head and said, "Your desire shall materialize. After enjoying your kingdom, you shall come to my abode which is far above the Saptrishis?"

Then by God's permission, Dhruva returned to his father's palace. There he was given a grand welcome. Everyone wants to be kind with the one who has God's grace, his father handed him the kingdom of the entire earth. His brother, Uttam had gone to the forest for hunting where the Yakshas killed him. Indignant by his brother's death, Dhruva at once launched an attack on the Yakshas. But his grandfather consoled him that the devotees of God don't long for revenge. Thereafter Dhruva ruled the earth for a period of thirty-six thousand years. Even death bowed before him. Indeed, the devotees of God have no fear of death. The death fears them on the contrary.

TALE OF PRITHU

In the lineage of the king Dhruva, had occurred a king named Anga. Anga's wife was Sumita, who was the daughter of Mrityadev. They had a son named Vena who was evil in nature. When he grew up and occupied the throne, he became a very cruel ruler. Day by day his atrocities increased. Then he began to openly insult the greatmen. When his atrocities became uncontrollable, sages killed him by their curse to save the people.

Thereafter, the sages churned Vena's dead body and produced a couple- a man and a woman. The man was born by the world-preserving part of Lord Vishnu. He came to be known as Prithu. He got an extremely pretty wife Archi. Prithu was the Acharya (master) of Lord Archan Bhakti. With his occupying the throne, the subjects became religious, happy and moral-abiding people. Everything was going well in his kingdom, when one day the farmers approached him and complained, "O king, the earth has grown rude. She does not give us cereals, even though we sow a lot of seeds in every season. She eats them all." King Prithu set out at once to chastise the earth who ran in the form of a cow to save herself. Scolding at her king Prithu said, "O Vasudhu (earth) I will kill you. You have violated my rule." The earth then came to his shelter and begged for pardon. "O king it is not my fault my fertility has ended because of the sins of the king Vena.

Now, I'm present before you in the form of a cow. Now, you please exploit me fully to make everybody happy."

King Prithu resolved then and there to perform a hundred Ashvmedh Yagyas. His ninety-nine Yagyas completed unabatedly. But during the hundredth Yagya, Indra kidnapped the horse deceitfully. Indra had himself performed one hundred Ashvmedh Yagyas. He could not tolerate anybody equaling him, for then the performer would have equal claim on Indrasana (the seat of Indra.)

Prithu's son was Vijitashva. He had seen Indra stealing the horse deceitfully. He even chased Indra for some distance, but Indra transformed himself into a hermit. Somehow, the oblation completed, and God appeared and asked the king to seek a boon. King Prithu begged, " O Lord, my soul remains unsatiated by your tales. So if you are pleased with me, kindly give me a hearing equal to the hearings of ten thousand ears."

Sanakadiks preached knowledge to the king Prithu. Thereafter, fostering his subjects religiously, king Prithu ruled the earth for thousand years. During the rule, king's popularity spread in leaps and bounds. At last he got the supreme position of god." Thus narrating the tale of Prithu, Maitreya says to Vidura: 'those who listen to this tale of Prithu, that shows the glory of God, get a strong affection for God and receive salvation ultimately, like Prithu.'

FABLE OF PURANAJAN

King Prithu's son was Vijitashu. In his lineage later on occurred a king named Prachin Barhi. King Prachin Barhi had many sons. All of them were known as Prachetas, they were all devotees of God and had been sunk in devotion since their childhood. Pleased by their devotion once Lord Shiva appeared before them. With simplicity, Prachetas asked, " O Lord of the lords, we have been worshipping Narayana, how did you arrive before us?"

Lord Shiva said, " Those who have devotion for Narayan, are also dear to me." Thereafter Lord Shiva gave them Rudra Geet which the Prachetas continued to sing for years immersed in the water.

King Prachinbarhi had a great interest in oblations that involved sacrifice. One-day devarshi Narada asked him, "What are you doing, O king?" Miseries don't end by action alone, nor does one get supreme joy. The animals which you have sacrificed for your oblations also feel the pain given by you. They are all waiting for you in the heaven. When you go there after death they will take revenge one by one." Frightened by these words, King Prachinbarhi took shelter at Narada and said, " Devarshi, my mind is caught in the actions. You kindly show me the way to the supreme salvation."

At the request of the king, Narada narrated him the tale of Vigyat and Avigyat. At the behest of Avigyat, Vigyat migrated to and settled in a beautiful city. There he met the queen Puranajani and got married to her. He was so much indulged in sensual pleasures with Puranajani that he became a woman in the next birth. As a woman, Vigyat got married in due course, but was widowed soon. She wanted to commit Sati (self-immolation) but people prevented her.

One-day she was travelling on an elephant, when she spotted some swans in the sky. She asked the mahout to look at them. As soon as the mahout's attention diverted, the elephant got out of control and both of them fell on the ground and died. As she was looking at the swans at her last time, she became a swan in her next birth. As a swan she reached the lake Manasarovar, where she met her old friend Avigyat who consoled the swan. "You are neither a man nor a woman. We are both swans now. You are same as me, no different from me. It means that there is no difference between the living beings and the God. There is only one soul. Its because of non-knowledge that one sees the God and the living beings differently." Thus cautioned by his friend Avigyat, Vigyat realized and accepted his incarnation as a swan.

But, the king Prachinbarhi didn't get the meaning of the spiritual tale. Narada then revealed. "God is Avigyat while microcosm is Vigyat. Avigyat has established eighty-four lakhs cities and asked Vigyat to select any one of them. After sorting lakhs of cities the microcosm selects a city like the human body. That city has a lake in the center-the belly from where the whole city is controlled. Again it has nine gates-two eyes, two nostrils, one mouth, two ears, one reproductive organ and one anus. It is such a highway, treading which no one returns. It has two courtiers-mind and ego. The living being passes his life caught between them.

Queen Puranajani is the intellect in this body. Because of this intellect or non-knowledge the living being or microcosm begins to feel in terms of 'I', 'My' and 'Me' for his body and organs. All the ten organs are his friends, through which the living being experiences the sensation and performs action. Inclinations of the organs are his friends. All the five Pranas (breaths) are the five-hooded serpent that guards the body. Old age is Kal Kanya who launches an attack on the city (human body). Shoka and Moha (sorrow and attachment) are the two brothers of Kal Kanya. Kal Kanya is married to Chandveg who is also known as Varsh (year). It has three hundred and sixty Gandharvas (days of year). Twelve months are his twelve commanders and seven days are the ministers. They all together plunder the human body like the city of Puranajan. Thus, covered by Ajnana (non-knowledge), the living being, which has a great pride on his body, virtually wastes his life suffering different kinds of pains. From this mystical preaching Prachinbarhis inclination for Vedic Karmkands (action) and temptation for mundane luxuries were removed. By the grace of Devarshi Narada, the king got a perception of God and living being. He at once abdicated his attachment for the body and concentrated his mind in God.

FIFTH CHAPTER

TALE OF PRIYVRATA

Hearing the tale of Prachetas' devotion and receiving God's grace by them, a curiosity arose in the mind of the king Parikshit about self-knowledge and Grihasth Dharma (duties of a married person). He asked Shukdev, "O Brahmin, Priyvrata was a supreme devotee and self-indulgent. Why did he then live in Grihasthi (married life)? Married life is binding from all sides. Greatmen never long for married life. Even then the king Priyurata lived a married life yet he regularly prayed to God. This is an intriguing subject for me, kindly remove my doubts.

Seeing Parikshits curiosity and doubts, Sri Shukdev said, "O king you are right that once receiving God's grace one can't leave it. No attachment, no love remains in him for life. The prince Priyurata was a great devotee of God (Bhagavat Bhakta). By the grace of Narada he had

instinctively become aware of Parmarth tatva (knowledge that leads to salvation). He had dedicated all his actions into the feet of Lord Vasudev. Thus, an intense inclination for detachment developed in Priyvrata since his childhood. So, Lord Brahma tried to admonish him. "Son, you are too young yet to be an ascetic. Since the moment you've acquired the human body, enemies like Kama (sex), Krodh (anger) Moha (affection), Lobh (greed), Mada (ego), Matsar (jealousy) etc. have been continuously chasing it. We're all bound to follow the path laid down by God. We should serve Him by our action, accepting our body, which the God has given to us and the merits associated with it. Hence, you first enjoy the luxuries given by God, thereafter you will be free to do what you wish."

Thus, as per the dictate of Lord Brahma, the king Priyvrata accepted two wives. His first wife was Prajapati Vishwkarma's daughter Barhismati. She begot ten sons- Agnidhra, Idhmjihv, Yagyabahu, Mahavir, Miranyreta, Savan, Medhatithi, Dhriprishth, Vitihotra and Kavi. Priyvrata's second wife begot three sons- Uttam, Raiwat and Tamas. Out of these ten sons, three became celibate. All the three sons from the second wife became the lords of different Manvantaras. Despite leading married life, the king remained an ascetic. In his chariot, he travelled around the land and divided it into seven parts and appointed each of his seven sons as the lord of one island. Agnidhra, the eldest son was given Jambu Dweep. He was married to an apsara Purvchitti. She had begotten nine sons who became the ruler of the nine parts of Jambu Dweep. Merudevi was the wife of Agnidhra's eldest son Nabhi. As a gift of Yagya, Lord had taken an incarnation in his home. That incarnation of Lord is known as Rishabhdev.

TALE OF BHARATA

Rishabhdev was married to Jayanti, the daughter of Indra. Jayanti gave birth to one hundred sons. Bharata was the eldest among them. The youngest nine sons became Yogeshwars. Eighty-one sons accepted Brahminism. Remaining nine brothers followed their elder brother Bharata. One day Rishabhdev called a meeting of his sons and preached them about the well being of human beings. "Sons" he said, "Never misuse this human body. You have got this human life by great luck and God's grace. He does not deserve to be called as a friend, teacher or father who does not preach his friend, disciple or son about the welfare of the self." Preaching that Rishabhdev enthroned Bharata and himself departed for his supreme abode.

The king Bharata was a great devotee. By his father's permission he had married to Panchjam, the daughter of Vishurupa. They begot five sons. Bharata dedicated his religious actions to Lord Vasudev. Thus by the purification of his actions, his conscience was also purified. So he transferred the kingdom to his son and himself took an abode in Pulahashrama (hermitage of Pulaha) on the banks of the river Gandaki. There he passed his time in the worship of God.

One fine morning, when he was performing libations in the river, a pregnant Doe arrived on the opposite bank to drink water. At that time a lion roared somewhere in the forest behind her. Frightened by the roar, the doe jumped into the river to save her life. But the doe lost her life in the action while her foetus fell in the river.

Feeling pity for the fawn, Rajarshi Bharata took it and began to foster it. Day by day Bharata's affection grew for the fawn. Slowly he became irregular in his daily routine. But Bharata loved

the fawn more than his routine. When the fawn grew into a deer, by its natural instinct it joined its mates. On his return, Bharata did not find the deer and grew so restless that he died out of depression. As his mind was fixed on the deer at death, he was born in his next birth as a deer. Bharata was a prudent man. But affection did not spare even him.

What would be the fate of common people then? They are easy targets of the feelings and are more vulnerable to fall prey to attachment and affection. When a derangement occurs in the intellect of man, he begins to conduct irreligiously, but thinks that his behaviour is religious. Realizing his mistake, Bharata as a deer, came to his hermitage and once again began his penance before God. Even in deer incarnation Bharata had a strong feeling of detachment.

When Bharata's deer incarnation ended, he took his next birth in a Brahmin's home. Sometime after the birth, his mother died. By God's grace Bharata had remembrance of his previous birth. So he always remained immersed in reflection on Hari (God). To avoid attention he posed himself as an insane stupid, blind and deaf person. Even his brothers neglected him seeing his inertia. Now he was free to wander at will. He was satisfied with what he got and doing menial jobs.

During that period, a thief, who had no son, wanted to offer a human-sacrifice to Bhadrakali in desire of a son. Searching a right person for the sacrifice, his men found and caught JadaBharata (In Brahmin incarnation, Bharata was known by this name because of his inactivity), who was guarding his farms then. Jada Bharata remained quite indifferent and did not even resist his kidnapping. The thieves took him into the temple. There as soon as the chief of the thieves raised his sword to kill Jada Bharata, Bhadrakali appeared from the idol and beheaded all the thieves. It shows that one has to bear the fruit himself of the crime committed. But Jada Bharata did not experience this and remained quite unmoved as before.

In another incidence, the king Rahugana of Sindhu was riding a palanquin to the hermitage of the sage Kapila. On the way, he fell short for one Kahar (carrier of the palanquin). His men found Jada Bharata who was wandering nearby and yoked him also in carrying the palanquin. Jada Bharata was walking cautiously so as not to tread on even little creatures. Hence, the king was getting jerks and a bumpy ride. He scolded at the Kahars. The Kahars informed him that the new recruit was causing him those jerks. The king Rahungana then scolded at Jada Bharata. "Hey, are you so frail that you can't balance the palanquin properly. Don't you know that your master is riding in it? Wait, I'll teach you a lesson."

Jada Bharata stood fearlessly. The king was stunned to see him. It was then that Jada Bharata opened his mouth to utter his first words. He felt that he had carried the king on his shoulders, and though the king was a haughty man, '...but my life will be a sheer wastage if I don't preach the king a way to salvation...' So with a desire of benefiting the king Jada Bharata said, " O king, life and death, strength and weakness are the virtues of the body. But the soul is sinless. I have put all my burden on the shoulders of the God. You too have great burden on your head. Lord of everyone is one. Even your senses are not in your control how then will you control your subjects? O king only knowledge is the form of the soul. By knowledge alone you can recognize the soul. Union with one homogenous and holy Supreme Being is the true introspection. But as long as you don't bear the dust of great men's feet on your head, you will not recognize the God.

Hearing these words, the king Rahungana fell at the feet of Jada Bharata and begged his pardon. Jada Bharata then preached the king about the metaphysical knowledge. "Listening to the tales of the God continuously is the only way to concentrate one's mind in Sri Hari. In my previous birth, I was the king of Bharatavarsh. But because of my attachment for a deer, I was deviated from the path of supreme knowledge. Hence, I had to take birth in deer form. But by the grace of Lord Krishna, memory of my previous birth persisted in a deer incarnation also. So in my present birth I prefer to stay away from the people and wander secretly. So, from now on drop your attachments and start reciting God's name. By the virtues of His tale alone you will easily get Him. O King, the body is like a merchant, who is roaming on the earth borrowing this wealth of age. It has lost its wealth in useless worldly affairs. One-day arrow of the Kal will snatch everything from it. So, the human being must utilise their invaluable moments in the training of the supreme knowledge."

DESCRIPTION OF THE EXTENT OF THE LANDMASS

Hearing the tale of the king Priyvrata's lineage, Parikshit asked Shukdev: "O great sage, what is the expanse of the landmass? I wish to hear a description of it alongwith its islands, because this world is a tangible idol of God alongwith his virtues. Hence, knowing it intangible, infinitesimal form of God can also be known.'

Shukdev said: 'O King, illusions created by God are so vast that nobody can find their end. Therefore, I will describe main features of the world with the help of name, appearance, extent and symptoms. King Priyvrata has divided the earth into seven islands. These islands are: (1)Jambudweep, (2)Plukshdweep, (3)Shalmalidweep (4)Kushdweep, (5)Kronchdweep, (6)Shakdweep and (7)Pushkardweep. All these islands are surrounded by seven seas, which comprise of saline water, sugarcane juices, and wine, ghee, milk, whay and sweet water respectively. Extent of each island is double than that of its preceding one.

Jambudweep: - Shukdev says, 'Situated in the center of the world is Jambudweep. It has an extent of one lakh Yojan. It has a round shape like a lotus leaf. It has nine zones each with an extent of nine thousand Yojan. These zones are called Varsh. Eight mountain ranges mark the boundaries of these Varsh which are arranged in circular fashion. At the center of the Varsh, is the tenth Varsh named Illavrit. In the center of Illavrit is Meru. Names of other nine Varsh are - KinPurusha, Harivarsh, Kamyak, Hiranmaya, Kuru, Bhadrashwa, Ketumal and Bharata. Such as the mount Meru is surrounded by Jamudweep, similarly Jamudweep is surrounded by a vast sea. Because of a majority of Jamun (black berry) trees, this island is named as Jambudweep.

Plukshdweep: - As there is a huge Jamun (black berry) tree that is eleven hundred Yojan high in Jambudweep, similarly there are innumerable Pluksh (Pakur-Ficus pinctoria) trees in Plukshdweep hence its name. Agni (fire) is the venerable God in this island. Priyvrata's son, King Idhmjihv was the ruler of this island. He divided it into seven parts and made his seven sons the ruler of these divisions. These seven divisions were named- Shiv, Yavas, Subhadra, Shant, Kshem, Amrit and Abhay. These divisions have seven mountains, and seven rivers. Plukshdweep has an extent of two lakh Yojans. It is surrounded by an ocean of sugarcane juice.

Shalmalidweep: - Just double in extent than Plukshddweep, is Shalmalidweep. It has a majority of Shalmali (silk cotton) trees, which comprise the abode of Garuda, the King of the birds. Priyvrata's son Yagyabahu was the ruler of this island. He too made seven divisions in the island as per his sons- Surocham, Devvarsh, Paribhadra, Ramanak, Saumanasya, Apyayan and Avigyat. This island too has seven mountains and seven rivers. Four classes of people inhabit this island. They worship Vedmay Chandrama (the moon with vedas) This island is surrounded by a sea of wine.

Kushdweep: - This island is surrounded by a sea of the Ghee. It has an extent of eight Yojans, and a majority of Kush shrubs. From the light of their tips, Kush shrubs illuminate this island. Priyvrata's son Hiranyarata was the ruler of this island. Dividing the island into seven divisions, he too appointed his seven sons as the ruler of each of these divisions. These divisions are- Vasu, Vasuddana, Drirhruchi, Nabhigupta, Stutyavrata, Vivikt and Vamaddev. People of Kushdweep worship the fire.

Kraunchdweep: - With an extent of sixteen lakh Yojan, Kraunchdweep is surrounded by the sea of milk. There is a gigantic mountain named Kraunch on the dweep. After this mountain the island is known as Kraunchdweep. Priyvrata's son, King Ghritprishtha was the ruler of this island. He too divided the island into seven divisions and distributed them between his seven sons, one to each son. The names of these seven sons are- Am, Madhuruh, Meghprishth, Sudhama, Mrajishth, Lohitarn and Vanaspati. Inhabitants of the island worship Varunadev (Neptune) the lord of water.

Shakadweep: - Surrounded by the sea of whey is Shakadweep with an extent of thirty-two lakh Yojans. It has a huge tree of Shaka, hence its name. With a sweet fragrance of this tree, the whole island emits a pleasant scent. The ruler of this island, Medhatithi was also a son of Priyvrata. He too had seven sons- Purojav, Manojav, Pawamana, Dhumranik, Chitraref, Bahurup and Vishwdhar. They were made the rulers of the seven divisions of the island. People of the island use Pranayama to weaken their Rajoguna and Tamoguna, and worship Hari (Vishnu) in Vayu (form) through meditation.

Pushkardweep: - Pushkardweep has an extent of sixty-four Yojans. It is surrounded by a sea of sweet water. There is present a huge lotus flower with a million, golden petals. This lotus is regarded as a seat of Brahma. Priyvrata's son Vitihotra was the ruler of this island. He divided the island into two divisions, and made his sons Ramanak and Dhataki the rulers of these divisions. Inhabitants of this island worship Brahma appearance of Sri Hari (Vishnu).

SIXTH CHAPTER

TALE OF AJAMIL

The king Parikshit requested Shukdev, "O preacher, so far you have related about the way how to overcome attachment for worldly things. Inadvertently, the living beings commit some kinds of sins or crimes. O great soul, now kindly tell me the way by which humans can get rid themselves of the tortures, they are supposed to be subjected to in the hells."

Shukdev said, "A sinner is sure to be tortured in hell, unless and until he had observed penance for his sins in his present birth. But even penance is no guarantee of his salvation if the person indulges again in sins thereafter. It is all because of ignorance, that desires to commit sin does not end. Spiritual ways are, thereafter necessary. Adopting spiritual ways like penance, celibacy, tranquility, self-restraint, abdications, truthfulness, holiness, restraint of passions and discipline, even the most serious sins are destroyed. Alternatively, taking refuge at the God or developing a devotion for Him, all the sins can be destroyed. O Parikshit, such a sanctification of the sinner as achieved by dedication to God, is rare even by observing penance."

Shukdev narrated the tale that was once related by Muni Agastya. In the town of Kannauj, lived a Brahmin named Ajamil. He had married to his mistress. Being with an unchaste woman his Brahminical virtues had been destroyed. Now, Ajamil earned his living not by performing holy tasks, but instead he resorted to petty tricks like plundering, deceiving and even killing people to feed his family.

Once, a group of Mahatmas (ascetics) came to the town. People greeted and offered them with edible items. But the ascetics refused to accept anything. They said that they would accept the food only from the household where holy food is cooked for the Lord. Irritated people showed the ascetics the way to Ajamil's home. From Ajamil, the ascetics accepted the alms and themselves cooked the food, and offered it to God and ate themselves. Now the heart of Ajamil and his wife were filled with expiation.

The ascetics wished to cause some benefit for Ajamil. They said to him, "If you get a son now, please name him Narayana. Ascetics words did materialize and Ajamil got one more son, the tenth one. As per ascetics advice, Ajamil named him Narayana. Being the youngest son, Narayana was very dear to Ajamil. He used to remember Narayana always. Everything was passing as usual, when the time of Ajamil's departure arrived suddenly one day. Yamadutas (agents of Yama-the God of death) began to take him for his last journey. Not seeing his youngest son Narayana before him, Ajamil began to call out loudly: 'Narayana-Narayana.'

Hearing the calls, servers of Lord Vishnu too arrived there and challenged Yamadutas. The frightened Yamadutas said, " We are the servants of Dharmraj. Why are you stopping us?" Servers of Lord Vishnu said, "If you are the servants of Dharmaraj define Dharma (religion) then." Yamadutas said, "Actions dictated by Vedas are Dharma (religion) in true sense, and the actions forbidden by Vedas are Adharma (irreligious) and Veda is Narayana Himself."

The servers said, "You're unaware of Param Dharma (Supreme religion). This sinner has called out the name of God, so his sins, from the past crores of births, have been washed away. Now he is no more a sinner. Wise men say that recitation of God's name by any means- as a name of someone else, in derision or derogation- automatically does away with all the sins. This is the bounty of God's name that a mere remembrance of it- whether wittingly or unwittingly, does destroy all sins." Hearing this dialogue, Ajamil awakened, as if from a long slumber.

Yamadutas had returned to Yamaloka by then. But, the abject sinner Ajamil had recovered from the snare of death. Without losing a moment, Ajamil went to the banks of the Ganges. There,

drinking the holy water of the Ganges he left his body and went and found a place in Vaikunth Loka-the abode of Lord Vishnu.

DIALOGUE OF YAMA AND YAMADUTS

Shukdev says, "Parikshit, when the servers of Lord Vishnu failed the attempt of Yamadutas, they returned to Yamaloka and complained Yama about the event." "O Yamadev, we had so far known that you are the sole authority of punishing the people as per their deeds. No body had dared so far to violate your rule. But today those four servers of Lord Vishnu openly caused violation of your dictate." Yamaraja silently prayed Lord Vishnu and said, " Lord Narayana is the Lord of all living things. He is the Lord of me also, and I myself keep an account of the sins and pious deeds of the living beings by His order only. All the God's, Digpals (guardian of the direction), Shiva and Brahma etc. all of them follow His dictates. The greatest duty of all the living beings is that they should achieve a dedicated devotion for the Lord. Sons just look at the bounty of Lord that even the sinner like Ajamil escaped the noose of death simply by calling out the names of the God just once. So, from now on you never go near those people who are reciting Lord's name or are his devotees. Bring only the sinners to me."

BIRTH OF DAKSHA FROM PRACHETAS

Shukdev says, "Ten sons of the King Prachinbarhi were known as Prachetas. They observed severe penance under the sea. When they re-emerged, Chandra (the moon-the ruler of the vegetation) calmed them and presented a beautiful daughter of the apsara Prabhlocha, to them as their wife. From her, Prachetas begot prachetas Daksha. In due course the subject of Daksha spread all over the world and populated far off places. Daksha created, first of all the gods, the demons and the human beings who inhabited the heaven, the earth and the waters respectively.

But Daksha was not still satisfied. He therefore went to Vinddhyachal and started a severe penance there. Pleased by his penance God appeared before him. By the permission of God, Daksha Prajapati married with Ashinki the daughter of Panchama Prajapati. From Ashinki Daksha got ten thousand sons named Haryashva. In due course Daksha asked his sons to reproduce. But instead of reproducing they all reached Narayana Sarovar on the banks of the river Sindhu (Indus) to a place of pilgrimage beguiled by the preaching of Narada about Bhagavat Dharma. Daksha again produced one thousand sons named Shavlashva and asked them to reproduce. But they too followed the footsteps of their elder brothers, and took no interest in worldly affairs. Narada preached them also about Bhagavat Dharma.

When Daksha came to realize that Narada had converted his sons into ascetics by his preaching he angrily cursed Narada to be a wanderer forever with nowhere a place to stay on. Narada accepted Daksha's curse and blessed him with a boon to have sixty daughters for the continuation of his subject. By the virtue of the boon, sixty daughters were born in the home of Daksha in due course. When they grew up, Daksha got ten of them married to Dharma. Then ten to Kashyapa, twenty-seven to Chandrama, two to Angira and Krishashva each and remaining four daughters were married to a Kashyapa named Tarkshya. The entire world came to be populated by the offsprings of these sixty daughters of Daksha.

Shukdev says, "Parikshit the names of Dharma's ten wives were Bhanu, Lamba, Kakubhi, Jami, Vishwas, Sadhya, Marutvati, Vasu, Muhurta and Sankalpa. Daksha's daughters Sarupa and Bhoota were the wives of Bhoot. Sarupa begot uncountable Rudragans, eleven of them are prominent. Bhoot's second wife Bhoota gave birth to formidable spooks and Ganas like Vinayak etc. Angira's first wife Swadha gave birth to pitragans while his second wife Sati accepted a Ved-Atharvanigra as her son. Krishashva's wife Archi begot Dhumrakesh, while Dhishana-Krishashva's second wife gave birth to four sons- Vedshira, Deval, Vayun and Manu. Kashyapa named Tarkshya had four wives- Vinata, Kadru, Patangi and Yamini. Birds were born to Patangi, while Yamini gave birth to moths. Vinata's son is Garuda who is the vehicle of Lord Vishnu. Arun was her second son who became the charioteer of surya. Nagas (snakes) were born to Kadru.

Twenty-seven daughters of Daksha were married to Chandrama (the moon). These are the twenty-seven Nakshatras like Kritika etc. But Chandrama had particular love for Rohini, so he got tuberculosis and hence could not produce a child. Names of Kashyapa's thirteen wives are Aditi, Diti, Danu, Kashtha, Ariha, Surasa, Illa, Muni, Krodh, Varsha, Tamra, Surabhi, Sarama and Timi. These are the mothers of the whole world. All the gods, demons, animals, giants etc. were born to them.

INSULT OF BRIHASPATI BY THE GODS

Shukdev says, "O Parikshit, Indra had become very haughty by the luxuries he received as the king of the gods. One day, Devraj Indra was sitting on his throne alongwith his queen Shachi. His court was full of courtiers. Forty-nine Marudganas, eight Vasus, eleven Rudras, Aditya, Ribhuganas Vishvedev, Shadhyaganas and both Ashwini Kumaras were present in the court. Groups of Siddhas, Charaus, Gandhavas, Vidyadhars, apsaras, Kinnars, Nagas etc. were singing in his praise and programs of dance and music was on. Acharya Brihaspati, the revered teacher of the gods arrived there. But, despite having seen him, Indra did not show any respect for Brihaspati. Indignant Brihaspati he at once deserted Devaloka (the abode of the gods.)

When Acharya Brihaspati had gone, Indra realized his mistake. He at once launched an extensive search for Guru Brihaspati. But no one could locate Brihaspati. Feeling of insecurity in the absence of their Guru, strongly agitated the gods. On the other hand, when the demons came to know about Brihaspati's missing, they began to intimidate the gods. By the permission of their teacher Shukracharya, the demons launched an attack on the Devaloka. Feeling sad by the pitiable state of the gods.

Indra went to the refuge of the Brahma who told the gods that they were suffering because of their wrong policies and disregarding their learned Guru. Brahma also told the gods that the demons had strengthened their position because of their loyalty to their teacher Shukracharya. Brahma advised the gods to request Vishwarup, the son of the sage Tvashta, to become their teacher. "He is a sound scholar of Vedas, great ascetic and abstentious person." "Serving him," Brahma said, "You will be free from all the crisis." Following Brahma's advice, the gods made Vishwarup their teacher by request. Ascetic Vishwarup used his Vaishnavi Vidya to annihilate the wealth and power of the demons and endowed Indra, with those powers. Vishwarup also

preached Indra about the infallible Vaishnavi Vidya. Thus securing himself under the shield of this knowledge Indra defeated all the demonic forces.

Preaching of Narayana Kavach (shield) to Indra by Vishwrupe

The king Parikshit asked, " O Lord, kindly relate to me the knowledge (Vaishnavi Vidya) by the power of which Devraj Indra easily defeated the demons."

Shukdev says, " Parikshit now I am telling you about the knowledge that was once taught to Indra by Vishwrupe. So listen to it carefully with concentration. Whenever you feel yourself haunted with fears, you must guard your body with this Narayana Kavach (shield). But before that it is necessary to purify oneself by bath, meditation, libations, Pranayama (control of breaths) and eight-lettered and twelve-lettered mantras of God. The Hymnal Kavach (shield) must be then recited facing north while reflecting on the divine appearances of God.

May the God, who rides Guruda and holds conch, wheel, mace and lotus, protect me from all sides. May all the incarnations of God protect me from all the lusts, affection and desires and in all the circumstances. Thus may I be protected in water by Matsyavatar, on land by Vamanavatar, in sky by Trivikrama, from Kamapida (sexual desire) by Sanakadit, from Kupathya (diseases) by Dhanvantri, from ignorance from Veda Vyasa, from the hells by Kachchhap avatar (tortoise incarnation), in the war by Narsinha Avatar, in the way by Varaha, on the top of the hills by Parashurama, during exile by Lord Rama along with Lakshmanaji, from Maranmohan Abhichar (death) by Lord Narayana, from ego by Nara, from obstacles by Dattatreya, from the bondage of actions by Kapila, from disregarding the God by Haygreev Mutri, from the crimes by Narada, from the imposters by Buddha and from the faults of Kali Kal may I be protected by Kalkidev.

May I be protected in the morning with mace by Keshav, with flute by govind in the day, by Narayana Shakti before the noon and may I be protected with Sudarshan chakra by Lord Vishnu in the noon time. May the all knowing omnipotent Lord protect me in every circumstances. May the name, appearance, vehicle, weapons, and all the services of Sri Hari protect my mind, intellect, organs and life from all the calamities. This Narayana Kavach (shield) saves one from all kind of calamities and fears.

Killing of Vishvarup and MAKING Vajra with DADHICHI bones

Vishrupa became the second Acharya (teacher) of the gods. He also saw over indulgence of Indra in luscious objects. Vishwarup's mother belonged to demon clan, so he had some inclination for the demons also. Stealthily, he supplied parts of offerings of the oblations to the demons. Very soon, Indra too came to learn that their teacher Vishvarup was stealthy nurturing their enemies, the demons. So, indignantly Indra severed the head of Vishvarup and to get rid of the sin of Brahmahatya (killing of Brahmin) Indra distributed his sin among the land, water, tree and the woman folk, and himself escaped the sin.

To take revenge of his son's murder, sage Tvashta organized a yagya with the purpose of having a son who could kill Indra. The Yagya finished successfully and as soon as the offering's ended, a formidable demon appeared from the altar. The demon was named Vritrasur. Very soon, Vritrasur defeated Indra and other gods and conquered all the three worlds. Terrorized by his power and gallantry, all the gods ran into the refuge of Lord Narayana. Pleased with their faith and prayers, Lord Narayana advised them to please the great sage Dadhichi and ask for his bones to build a Vajra (mace). From that Vajra Vritrasur could be killed, God assured them.

Thus, all the gods, headed by Indra, reached the hermitage of sage Dadhichi. There they very humbly and respectfully begged for his bones. For the benefit of the world, sage Dadhichi gladly accepted to donate his bones. With those bones, Vishvakarma built a massive Vajra which had thousand edges. Thus by the power of the Lord and acquiring a divine Vajra, Indra felt extremely strong. He at once launched an attack on the demon's armies and drove them away from the battlefield.

KILLINGS OF VRITRASUR BY INDRA

Sri Shukdev says, "O Parikshit, from the gallantry of the gods the demon army began to fled. Seeing his army running away in panic, Vritrasur got infuriated. Charging ahead he stopped the gods' army from advancing. He roared loudly. Many of the gods fainted from the frightening thunder of the roar. Advancing Vritrasur routed the fallen fighters. Even the earth began to shake because of his momentum. Devaraj Indra could not bear it. He made a powerful blow on Vritrasur with his mace. Vritrasur held his mace in the way and hit Airavat, Indra's elephant, with it. Feeling the pain of the blow, Airavat moved back.

Then Vritrasur scolded Indra who had killed Vishvarupa the brother of Vritasur, "O Indra, you have killed my brother Vishvarup without any reason. Now, I will gore you with my powerful trident. Or you may behead me by your vajra. Your vajra has the power of the sage Dadhichi and the glory of Sri Hari.

But, Indra with you vajra, I will get rid of the bondage's of my body and get salvation at the feet of Lord Vishnu. So kill me with your vajra." Thus, even in the battlefield, Vritrasur experienced direct existence of God. He prayed God! " O Lord, may my mind reflect constantly on your auspicious virtues, may my voice always recite your virtues, may my body always be in your service. I don't want salvation without serving you. My mind is writhing for your sight." Shukdev says, " Thus, O Parikshit, Vritrasur had wished to leave his body in the battlefield and get the God. He did not want to enjoy the luxuries of the heaven defeating Indra."

Calling out these words, Vritrasur hit Indra with trident. But Indra cut that hand of Vritrasur, which was holding the trident, by his vajra. Losing his one hand Vritrasur was very outrageous and hit Indra's chin and Airavat's forehead with his elbow. Because of the blow Indra dropped his vajra, which fell near Vritrasur's feet. Indra was now feeling too ashamed to pick up the vajra. Vritrasur said, " O Indra, pick up the vajra and kill your enemy. It is not the time to be gloomy. Indra showed his respect to Vritrasur for his truthfulness and undeceitful words, and said " O great demon you are really great. Your patience, determination and devotion for God are really remarkable. You have surmounted the illusion of God that confuses ordinary ones. You are a

great man born in demon family. Vritrasur again raised his wheel to hit, but Indra cut his second hand.

Now, having lost both his hands, Vritasur shook the earth with his heavy steps and swallowed Indra along with his elephant. Everyone was beginning to feel sorry for Indra but because of Narayana Kavach, Indra remained unhurt even in the belly of Vritrasur. Thereafter, Indra lacerated the demon's belly and came out. Then he cut Vritrasur's head also. At that moment, soul of Vritrasur annihilated in the Supreme Being. All the gods then greeted Indra for his victory.

Vritrasur was a religious king Chitraketu in his previous birth. Because of the grace of Narada and Angira, he had received detachment and supreme devotion and began to roam everywhere as a Siddha Purusha (one who achieves perfection). Once he was travelling on the aircraft gifted to him by the gods, he saw the Ardhnarishwar (half male-half female) appearance of Lord Shiva and said something in derogation. Indignant of his discourtesy, Mata Parvati cursed Chitraketu to take birth in a demon clan. Because of that curse, Chitraketu appeared as demon. But even in demon incarnation, his devotion for the Lord's feet persisted as before.

SEVENTH CHAPTER

REMOVAL OF DOUBT ABOUT GOD'S PARTIALITY

The king Parikshit asked, " O fortunate one, God is said to have an equal view for everybody. Why then does He favor the gods alone. Why does He kill the demons only? Thus I have some doubts regarding God's impartiality. Kindly remove them."

Shukdev says, " Parikshit, God's sketches are so vivid that even the great sages can't comprehend them fully. Even then just by reciting these surprising sketches of God, one receives the supreme position. Accepting the virtues of this illusion, God acquires the opposing forms of killer and killed occasionally. Virtues like Satya (chastity), Rajas (royalty) and Tamas (darkness) are of nature, and not of God and hence keep rising and falling with time. When Satguna (chastity) rises, God adopts the gods and the Sages and causes a surge in their number. A rise in Rajas (royal) virtues sees a surge in demons number. While a rise in Tama (darkness) virtues leads to a surge in the population of the Yaksh and Rakshasas (ogres and other super natural beings). But God is in fact impartial. Shukdev says, " O king once Devarshi Narada had related an incident to your grandfather Yudhisthira. I'm narrating it to you right now. Your doubts will be removed."

TALE OF JAY-VIJAY

During the Rajsuya Yagya in Yudhisthira's court, Lord Krishna had beheaded Shishupal with His wheel. Everyone, including Yudhisthira saw Shishupal's soul annihilating in Lord Krishna. Surprised Yudhisthira had asked Narada then, " O Devarshi, isn't it surprising that Shishupal who was so jealous of Lord Krishna, got merged in Him? Such fortune is even rare for the great Yogis (ascetics). How did then this rival of God get such a supreme fortune?"

Narada said, "O king criticism, praise, serving or negligence are all confined to the body only. When the soul is identified with the body, people suffer from the impact of scolding and abusing.

God has no ego like ordinary beings, because He is the supreme soul and ultimate. If He punishes someone it is for one's benefit and not for any anger or jealousy. Therefore one must concentrate his mind in God no matter what his feelings are- enmity, devotion, fear, affection.

In God's view these feelings don't make any difference." Narada said, " Yudhisthira, in my opinion it is certain that the concentration achieved through a feeling of enmity is rare to achieve otherwise, even with devotion. This is the reason why uncountable number of sinners, who had strong enmity for Lord Krishna, merged with Him. Your cousins- Shishupal and Dantavakra were fortunate. They both were the gatekeepers of the Lord. It was by curse of Brahmin, that they had to be relegated and take birth as sinful demons."

Narada said, "O king, Brahma's Manasputras (sons begotten by thoughts) Sanakadikumars were freely roaming all over the universe. Once they reached Vaikunth (the abode of Lord Vishnu). But assuming them to be ordinary boys the gatekeepers Jay-Vijay did not allow them in. Indignant by the behaviour of the Gatekeepers, Sanakadi Kumars cursed them: "Fools both of you don't deserve a presence near God. Both of you are endowed with Rajaguna and Tamoguna (royal and dark virtues), so go and take birth as the demons." When both the gatekeepers were falling from Vaikunth, the kind Sanakadi Kumars said, " O.K. the effect of our curse shall long for your three births only, thereafter you shall return to Vaikunth again."

TALE OF HIRANYAKSH AND HIRANYKASHIPU

By the curse of Brahmins, the gatekeepers of the God, Jay-Vijay took their first birth as the demons- Hiranyakashipu and Hiranyaksh. Diti was their mother. Hiranyaksh had stolen the earth and hidden it in Sutala Loka, causing worries for Brahma. To remove the worries of Brahma, Lord appeared as Varaha avatar (the boar incarnation) and killed Hiranyaksh. After the killing of Hiranyaksh his elder brother Hiraykashipu developed enmity with Lord Vishnu. He avowed to other demons: "I will kill that tricky Vishnu with my trident. Thus no one will be able to protect the gods. All of you go out and bring havoc on them." Then Hiranyakashipu cremated his younger brother Hiranyaksh, condoled mother Aditi and wife of his younger brother and himself went away to observe penance in order to acquire strength and gallantry.

In the Valley of Mandarachal Mountain, Hiranykashipu stood on one toe only and raised his hands towards sky. He continued to stand in the same position. Ultimately fire began to emerge from his head. That fire caused burning of all the three lokas (worlds.) Panicked by the fire the gods reached to Brahma and prayed to put the fire off. Brahma at once appeared before Hiranykashipu and said, "Son Hiranykashipu, your penance is over now. Now seek a boon of your wish.'

Worshipping Brahma, Hiranykashipu said: 'May I not be killed by any living being created by you, may I be killed neither in day nor in night, neither by humans nor by animals, neither by weapons nor by arms, neither on earth nor in sky. May no one match me in war. May I be an undisputed emperor of all the living beings.' Pleased by his penance, Brahma granted Hiranykashipu that rare boon.

By the virtue of Brahma's boon, Hiranyakashipu grew extremely strong. Now he had no fear of death, so his atrocities increased day by day. He defeated all the gods, human beings, demons, demigods. Everyone accepted his superiority. Now, Hiranyakashipu began to reside in heaven itself. He also made an all round declaration: 'all the people who worship or even remember Vishnu, shall be put to death in my kingdom. Nobody else is God except me.' Thus all the gods and demons began to worship Hiranyakashipu and presented him with gifts to please him. Gandharvas, Siddhas, sages, apsaras etc. all began to sing in his praise.

Narada says: 'O Yudhisthira, Hiranyakashipu had such a brilliance that he began to receive the offerings himself of the Yagyas performed by Brahmins. On all the seven islands and upto the heaven, it was his dominion. Now he was freely and lavishly enjoying all the luxuries. Maddened by the luxuries, he even began to violate the rulings of the scriptures. Perplexed by his harsh rule, all the gods went into the refuge of the Almighty. Through a celestial voice, God comforted them: 'Don't be afraid O gods. I am aware of havoc caused by this demon. I will destroy him, you wait for some more time. When he will begin to torment his calm and devotee son Prahlada, I will definitely kill him.'

The demon king Hiranyakashipu had four sons. Prahlada was youngest of them. Prahlada was the greatest lover and devotee of God. Hiranyakashipu had declared such a pious son like Prahlada a criminal of the state. Thus he tried his best to kill Prahlada.

STORY OF PRAHLADA THE GREAT DEVOTEE

Pious virtues of Prahlada: - The youngest son of the demon king Hiranyakashipu, Prahlada was very virtuous. He used to serve the sages with love. He treated all the beings equally and did never differentiate them as separate from him. He had a respect for the elders. Despite having knowledge, wealth, beauty, and nobility, Prahlada didn't have any ego. He never lost patience even in most adverse conditions. He also regarded the world as false and worthless. He had no desire for anything, but had full restraint on his mind, organ, breath, and body. Despite having born in demon family, he didn't have any demonic virtues. Narada says: 'O Yudhisthira, as the virtues of the God are endless, similarly the virtues of Prahlada had no limit. But a natural and congenital love for Lord Sri Krishna was his greatest merit.

Since his childhood, Prahlada had no inclination for childish plays. Often he used to meditate silently. During his meditation, he used to become quite motionless. More than often he felt as if God himself was fondling him taking him in His lap. At times when he experienced an absence of God, Prahlada would cry loudly, and at other times he would laugh with joy seeing God before him. He also used to sing, shout and even dance whenever he felt God nearby. Occasionally, Prahlada used to mimic God, or feeling the soft touch of God, sit peacefully without movement. Such was the trance like condition of Prahlada who had a complete submersion in devotion for God.

Shukracharya was the teacher of the demons. Sukhracharya's two sons had been appointed to teach the boys of the royal family. Staying at a place closer to the royal palace, these two brothers taught the boys in politics, economics etc. Prahlada too was sent to them for formal education. There he used to listen to his teachers carefully and recite what he had been taught.

But Prahlada did not like the education, which was based on falsehood. One day Hiranyakashipu took Prahlada in his lap and asked lovingly: 'My son, tell me, what you like the most.' Prahlada said: 'Father, in my opinion, this world is nothing but full of sorrow. Hence it is just for every being that they should give up this blind-pit like world and go to the forests and take shelter in God, to be free of miseries.' Alarmed by these words, Hiranyakashipu warned the teachers, the sons of Shukracharya, to look after Prahlada well, and to remove that mean thoughts of devotion from his mind. He also cautioned the teachers to guard Prahlada against any possible approach by a god, ascetic or Brahmin.

Guruputras (the teacher of Prahlada) tried their best and trained Prahlada in policies of Sama, Dama, Dand, Bhed (conviction, temptation, fear of punishment and partiality.) Then they trained him in Arth, Dharma and Kama (economic matters, religion and carnal knowledge.) When they felt satisfied with their efforts the Guruputras brought Prahlada again to his father, the demon king Hiranyakashipu.

Hiranyakashipu kissed Prahlada's head and took him in his lap and asked, "My son Prahlada, tell me in detail what you have learned from your teacher during your stay with them." Prahlada said, "Father there are nine kinds of devotion for Lord Vishnu. If one develops these nine kinds of devotion with dedication, I understand, it would be the best education." Infuriated by these words, Hiranyakashipu threw Prahlada on the floor and began to scoff at Guruputras.

Hearing his father scoffing at Guruputras, Prahlada said, "Father it was not taught to me by them, it is my natural inclination." These words further infuriated Hiranyakashipu. Blinded by anger he ordered his soldiers to kill Prahlada at once. Formidable demons hit Prahlada with their arms. At that time Prahlada's conscience was focused in God. All the blows of the demons yielded no result. Thereafter, Prahlada was trampled by intoxicated elephants, bitten by poisonous snakes thrown from the high cliffs into the sea and even in fire, buried under the mountain but all in vain. None of the attempts could do any harm to the sinless Prahlada.

Now, Hiranyakashipu began to feel worried because of his inability. Seeing him worried the teacher assured him, "Be free of worries, O king. Keep your son tied in Varunapash (the noose of Varuna) until our father Shukracharya returns." Then they again took Prahlada to their hermitage to teach him Grihasthdharm (duties of a married man). One day the teachers were away for some urgent work. Prahlada called his classmates and began to preach them about Lord Vishnu.

Preaching to Demon Boys by Prahlada

Prahlada preached, "Friends, human incarnation is a rare thing in this world. So taking shelter at the feet of God in this human incarnation is a success for life. Brothers, God is the friend, beloved and the soul of each and every being. Sensual pleasures are easily available in every incarnation, so it is useless to make physical efforts to achieve sensual pleasures. But this human body is a means to get God. So, as long as the body is sound and healthy and it has strength one must work for his benefits.

Half of the life of a man is simply wasted in sleeping. First twenty years pass in playing, Young age passes in satisfying the ego while during the twenty years of old age human body becomes

crippled. So friends don't waste your life running after the physical pleasures, luxuries, wealth and all that leads to a certain fall. One needs not work hard to please the God. He is soul of every living being. He is self-achieved. Only do good to every living being, be kind to them unconditionally.

God is pleased with these actions only. Impressed by the beautiful preaching of Prahlada about Bhagavat Dharma, the demon boys asked, "O prince, you have never been away from the hermitage. How then did you get such a knowledge at such a raw age? Prahlada told his fellow disciples that when his father was away on Mandarachal for penance, Indra had kidnapped his mother Kayadhu. He was taking her to Devloka when Devarshi Narada stopped him in the way and asked why he was taking such a helpless woman so forcibly. Indra had told then that he would destroy her foetus who was going to be a demon and thereafter would let her go.

Narada had said, "Devaraj there is a great devotee of God in this foetus, you cannot kill him. But you need not fear him." Thus convinced by Narada, Indra had released Kayadhu who then came to stay at Narada's hermitage to pass her time. In the pious company of Narada who, with a desire to benefit my mother and me, had preached us about Bhagavat dharma, and absolute knowledge (Vishuddha Jnana)." It is that knowledge which I have preached you just now. God is pleased with unconditional love only. So you too develop devotion for God."

CHAPTER EIGHT

DESCRIPTION OF MANVATARAS

(1) Swayambhu Manvantra- King Parikshit said to Shukdev, "Gurudev, I just heard that tale of self-begotten Manu's lineage. Now kindly describe to me about the others Manus. Also describe the plays of God's different incarnations which occurred during different Manvantaras." Shukdev said, "Parikshit, during Tamas Manvantara, Lord Narayana was born as Hari incarnation from Harini, the wife of a sage. In that incarnation He saved an elephant from the jaws of a crocodile. During the present Kalpa (period comprising the sum of all the four yugas), six Manvantaras have passed. I have described the first one. Now, listen to the description of the other Manvantaras."

(2) Swarochish Manvantara- Swarochi Manu was the son of Agni. He had sons named Dyumana, Sushena and Rochismana. During that Manvantara, Indra's post was occupied by Rochan. Scholars of Vedas like Vrajstambh etc. were among the Saptarishi (seven great sages). Lord had taken incarnation as Vibhu, the son of a sage Vedshira and his wife Tushita. Vibhu remained a loyal celibate lifelong. Following His conduct, eighty-eight thousand more sages observed celibacy life long.

(3) Uttam Manvantara- Third Manu Uttam was the son of the king Priyvrata. He had sons named Pawan, Sanjay, Yagyhotra, etc. In that Manvantar, seven sons of the sage Vashisht were Saptarishi (the seven great sages). Indra's name was Satyajit. Satya, Vedshrut and Bhadra were

the main Ganas (courtiers) of the God. God had appeared in the incarnation of Satyasen, the son of Dharma and Sunrita. He was accompanied by Dev ganas named Satyvrat. Lord had destroyed during that period the evil Yakshas, demon and poltergeists.

(4) Tamas Manvantara- Tamas, the fourth Manu was the real brother of Uttam, the third Manu. He had ten sons. Trishikh was Indra then, with Satyak, Hari, Veer etc. as his main courtiers. Sage like Jyotirdham etc. were the Saptarishi. During that Manvantara Lord had saved Gajendra from the jaws of the crocodile.

(5) Raiwat Manvantara: Raiwas was the fifth Manu. He was also the real brother of Tamas, the third Manu. He had many sons. Vibhu was the name of Indra. Sages like Hiranyroma, Vedshira, Urdhubahm were among Saptarishi. God had appeared in the incarnation of Vaikunth the son of the sage Shubh and his wife Vikuntha. At the request of Goddess Lakshmi, Lord Vaikunth created Vaikunth dham, the best among all other lokas (worlds).

(6) Chakshush Manvantara: Chakshush was the sixth Manu. He had sons named Puru, Purusha, Sadyumn etc. Mantradruma was Indra then, with Apya etc. as main courtiers. Sages like Havishmana and Veeraka etc. were among the Saptarishi. During that Manvantara, Lord had appeared in partial incarnation as Ajit, the son of Vanraj and his wife Sambhanti. It was he who caused the churning of the sea and made the God's drink nectar and supported Mandarachal Mountain on his back in Kachchhap (tortoise) from during the churning.

(7) Vaivasvata Manvantara: Sri Shukdev says, " Parikshit in the present era, the seventh Manu, Shardhdev is the son of Surya. He has ten sons- Ikshvaku, Nabhag, Drisht, Sharyati, Narishyanta, Nabhag, Disht, Karush, Prishadhra and Vasumana. Puranadar is the name of Indra. He has Aditya, Vasu, Rudra, Vishvadev, Marudgana, Ashwini, Kumar and Rishi as his main courtiers. Kashyapa, Atri, Vashishtha, Vishvamitra, Gautam, Jamadagni and Bhardwaj are the Saptarishi. During this Manvantara, God has arrived in Vamana incarnation as the son of Kashyapa and his wife Aditi.

(8) Savarni Manvantara: Savarni, the son of Surya and Chhaya would be the eighth Manu. The king Surath, who had occurred in Swarachish Manvantara, had worshiped Goddess Bhagavati intensely, and thus received a boon of having an unbroken empire on earth. In later course he will be the son of Surya and become the eighth Manu also. He would have sons like Nirmaka, Virajask etc. Vairochana Bali would be Indra, Amritprabha etc. as his main courtiers. Galava, Diptimana, Parashurama, Ashwatthama, Kripacharya, RishySring and Vyasa- these great sages would be the Saptarishi during the eight Manvantara. God would take incarnation as Sarvbhaum, the sons of Devguhya and his wife Saraswati. God as Sarvbhaum would snatch the kingdom of Swarga (heaven) from Puranadara Indra and give it to the king Bali.

(9) Ninth Manvantara: Sri Shukdev says, Varuna's son Dakshasavarni would be the ninth Manu. He would have sons like Bhutaketu, Diptketu, Dyutimana etc. God would take birth as the incarnation of Rishabh, the son of sage Ayushmana and his wife Ambudhara. A person named Adbhut would be Indra and he would have Para, Marichigarbh etc. as his main courtiers.

(10) The Tenth Manvantara: Upshloksa's son Brahma Savarni would be the tenth Manu. He would be very pious in nature and have sons like Bhurishen etc. Havishmana, Sukriti, Satya, Jay, Murti etc. would be Saptarishi. Shambhu would be Indra, with Suvasana, Viruddh etc. as his main courtiers. God would appear in the incarnation of Vishwasen as the son of Vishwasrij and his wife Vishuchi. He would be a friend of Indra.

(11) The Eleventh Manvantara: The self-restraining Dharmasavarni would be the eleventh Manu. He would have ten sons. Vaidhrita would be Indra with Vihangama, Kamagama, etc. as main courtiers. Vedic sages like Arun etc. would be the Saptarishi. God would appear as Dharmasetu, the sons of Aryak and Vaidhrita. In this incarnation he would protect Triloki (all the three worlds).

(12) Twelveth Manvantra: Rudrasavarni would be the twelfth Manu. He would have sons named Devavana, Updev and Devshreshth etc. Ritdhama would be Indra with Hari etc. as his main courtiers. As the son of Satyasahay and his wife Sunrita, the God would protect this Manvantara in the form of Swadham.

(13) Thirteenth Manvantara: Devsavarni would be the thirteenth Manvantara. He would have sons named Chitrasen, Vichitra etc. Divaspati would be Indra of the gods like Sukarm, Sutram etc. Sages like Nirmoka, Tatvadarsh etc. would be the Saptarishi. God would appear as Yogeshwar, the sons of Devhotra and his wife Brihati. He would bestow the designation of Indra to Divaspati.

(14) Fourteenth Manvantara: Indrasavarmi would be the fourteenth Manu. He would have sons like Uru, Gambhir Buddhi etc. Shuchi would be Indra and have Pavitra Chakshush etc. as his main courtiers. Agni, Bahu, Shuchi, Magadh etc. would be the Saptarishi. God would appear in the incarnation of Brihadbhahu as the son of Satrayana and his wife Vinata and cause the extension of Karmakand (actions)."

Shukdev says, "O Parikshit, these fourteen Manvantaras had continued in past, are continuing in the present and they would continue in the future also. It is by them, that a Kalpa (a period of thousand Chaturyugas) is completed. Calculation of time is also done through these Manvantaras.

Period of a Manvantra is slightly more then seventy one Chaturyugas (all the four yugas passing seventy-one times). A Chaturyugaya (period of all the four yugas taken together) lasts for about 3 million years, while a Kalpa lasts for about four thousand three hundred and twenty million years. This is equal to a day of Brahma. Brahma's night is Mahapralaya (the great deluge). When that night is over, Brahma again begins the work of new creation exactly as per the previous Kalpa. Carrying out this responsibility continuously for a century, Brahma goes back to Bhagavat dham (the abode of Lord Vishnu). His responsibilities are taken over by the next Brahma, who carries out the work of creation, by the inspiration of Lord Narayana.

TALE OF GAJENDRA THE ELEPHANT and GRAH, THE CROCODILE

King Parikshit asked, "Munivar, God had save Gajendra, in His Hari incarnation. I wish to hear this tale."

Shukdev says, " O king, in Tamas Manvantara, God had appeared as Hari and saved Gajendra from the jaws of Grah the crocodile. I am narrating the tale to you listen to it carefully. Surrounded by Kshirsagar, there was a high mountain named Trikuta. In the dense forest on the mountain there lived Gajendra along with his harem of many cows. Gajendra was the king of many big and strong elephants.

One day, Gajendra was passing his time playfully with his family in the forests. It was very hot that day. So, perplexed by the sun, Gajendra descended down the mountain with his family. At the foothills, there was a big lake with deep, cold water and many lotuses blooming in it. Gajendra entered the lake and drank water to his fill. Then he took bath and started to play in the water. His activities in the water disturbed the crocodile who lived there. With anger, the crocodile caught hold of Gajendra's leg. Startled by the sudden attack, Gajendra put all his might to get free but in vain. They only jostled against each other for long. Every moment, crocodile's strengths seemed to be gaining. At last, because of constant pulling into water, Gajendra's strength gave away. Now, he was very desperate and thought that God has sent the crocodile as a noose of Yama (death) for him. This thought horrified the elephant, so he decided to take refuge at Sri Hari.

Gajendra had the memory of his previous birth fresh. So concentrating his mind in the beautiful appearance of God, he began to pray, "I take refuge at God, who is the base of the entire world, who is the ultimate refuge for everyone. It is difficult to unfold the mysteries of His plays. He takes many guises. Not even the sages and the gods know His appearance and glory. May such a Lord protect me. O Lord, your powers are unending. You are gracious to those who take refuge in you. Illusioned by you, this humble creature does not recognize you. O Lord, I am in your refuge."

Shukdev says, "Parikshit, Gajendra had prayed God impartially and unspecifically so other gods did not come to save him. Being the soul of everyone, Lord Sri Hari appeared Himself and saw Gajendra in deep crisis. When Gajendra saw that Lord Sri Hari had arrived on his vehicle Garuda from the sky, he picked a lotus from the lake and raised it in his trunk and said, "O Jagadishwar (God of all world) Narayana, here is a salutation for you." By then Lord jumped down from the Garuda and dragged both of them out of water. Then He tore the jaws of the crocodile by his wheel and saved Gajendra. All the gods, Brahma and Lord Shiva worshiped God and showered flowers on Him.

Previous Births of Gaja and Grah

Killed by the God, the crocodile at once acquired a divine appearance. He was a good-natured Gandharva (demigod) named Huhu, in his previous birth. By the curse of Mahatma Deval, he had to take birth in crocodile form. But now, by the grace of God he was saved and went to his heavenly abode. Gajendra too received salvation by mere touch of God. He too went to the heavenly abode of God.

In his previous birth, Gajendra was a king of Pandya dynasty. His name was Indradyumna. He was a fervent devotee of God. So he had abandoned his kingdom and taken to penance on Malay Mountain. One day he was engrossed in his worship when sage Agastya arrived there with his disciples. For not getting due welcome from the king, Agastya cursed him, "You with a dull mind, who neglect his guests will be born as an elephant." But even in elephant incarnation, and by the virtues of his devotion, Gajendra retained the memory of his previous birth. God appointed him as his courtier and departed to his divine abode riding on Garuda."

CHURNING OF THE SEA

King Parikshit asked, "O great sage, how did God cause churning of the sea. What was the purpose behind it? Kindly tell me?" Shukdev says, "Parikshit, in the sixth Chakshush Manvantara, the demons king Bali had defeated the gods.

Indra had also lost his glory by insulting the garland which sage Durvasa had presented to him as a God's gift. Indra had put the garland in elephant's neck and then got it crushed under its feet. But now having lost his kingdom and struck by misfortune, Indra and other gods with Brahma prayed to the Lord. Melted by their prayers, God appeared before them. All the gods laid before Him and worshiped. The omnipotent God inspired the gods to churn the sea.

Lord asked the gods to churn the sea and produce nectar. He also advised them to take the help of demons in that great task. Drinking the nectar one becomes immortal. God asked the gods to put various medicinal plants and vegetations in Kshirsagar (sea of milk) and churn it by Mandarachal Mountain moving it with the help of Vasuki the naga. God promised them of all help from His part.

Thereafter, Indra and other gods went unarmed to the demon king Bali and told him of their intention. Demons too liked the idea. With a friendly attitude then the gods and the demons together uprooted the mount Mandarachal. But they could not carry it to the sea. Lord appeared on Garuda and carried the mountain to the sea.

The gods and demons had promised Vasuki, the Naga his due share in the nectar. So Vasuki allowed them to use him as a rope, wound around Mandarachal as a means to move it. In the incarnation of Ajit, Lord told the gods to hold the head of Vasuki. But the demons suspecting some mischief said they would hold the head and asked the gods to hold the Naga from the tail for churning. Thus the gods held the tail while the demons took hold of Vasuki's head.

Thus they began the churning. But as soon as the churning began the mountain started sinking for not having a firm base. Lord then took Kachchhap (tortoise) incarnation and supported Mandarachal on His back. On the mountain also Lord appeared in Sahastrabahu form, and held it. The gods and the demons churned the sea for long but nothing emerged. So, Lord Ajit himself began to churn the sea. First of all, it was Halahal, the deadly poison to emerge. The intensity of the poison began to torment every being. To save their subjects from it, Prajapatis prayed Lord Lord Shiva. The life-giver, Lord Bholenath (an epithet of Lord Shiva) drank all the poison. By the impact of the poison, Lord Lord Shiva's throat turned blue in color. Hence Lord Shiva got the name Nilakantha.

Emergence of Gems and Nectar: After Lord Shiva drank the poison, the gods and the demons began to churn the sea again with greater enthusiasm. Now, Kamadhenu, the divine cow emerged. She was useful for Yagya etc. so the sages received it. Then a horse named Uchchaishrava, emerged and taken up by Bali the king of demons. The horse was followed by Airavat the elephant. Indra took it. The divine gem, Kaustubh Mani, emerged then. Lord Ajit took it on His chest. Then emerged the Kalpavriksha, the divine tree that reached the heavens. Then the apsaras emerged. They all accepted to serve Indra in Heaven.

Goddess Lakshmi emerged after the apsaras. All the azimuths were lighted because of her brilliance. Everyone was attracted towards her beauty, generosity, youthfulness, appearance and glory. Devaraj Indra presented a throne for her to sit. Rivers brought water for her ceremonial bath. The earth presented medicinal bath. Cows gave Panchganyas and Vasant (spring) presented many kinds of fruits and flowers. The sages welcomed Lakshmi with Rigsuktas (hymns of Rigveda). Gandharvas sang in her praise. Then taking the lotus in her hand, Lakshmi took a seat on the throne. Sea donned her with a beautiful silk saree. Varuna presented a garland. Saraswati gifted her with a necklace of pearls. Brahma presented lotus while Nagas presented two earrings.

After the singing by Brahmins in her praise, Lakshmi took lotus garland in her hand and put it around Lord Vishnu's neck in a gesture of accepting Him as her husband. Jagatpita, Lord Vishnu too gave Lakshmi a supreme position in His heart. Lakshmi was followed by Varunai who was taken up by the demons.

The gods and the demons began to churn the sea again. At last lord Dhanvantari emerged with an urn of nectar. It was Dhanvantari who developed Ayurved, the ancient Indian system of medicine. As soon as the demons saw the urn, they snatched it and ran away. A row then began among the demons over the drinking of nectar. Consoling the gods, Lord appeared among the demons in the guise of an extremely pretty woman, Mohini.

Distribution of Nectar by Lord as Mohini: The demons who were fighting over the potions of nectar forgot everything when they saw Mohini, who was actually a guise of Lord Vishnu. Lured by her prettiness the demons came to Mohini and requested her to solve the dispute for them. Illusioned by God, the demons even gave the nectar to Mohini and sat peacefully showing their confidence in her. In Mohini's guise, Lord thought that the demons were congenitally cruel and giving nectar to them would be akin to feeding sakes with milk. Their evils would increase.

So, Mohini offered the nectar to the gods only while offered wine to the demons. When the nectar was being distributed, a demon named Rahu took the guise of a god and sitting among them drank the nectar. Suurya and Chandra spotted him and revealed his identity to God, who at once beheaded him. But, by then Rahu had drunk enough nectar.

CONQUERING OF HEAVEN BY KING BALI

Shukdev says, "Parikshit by the virtues of the ambrosia, the gods had become invincible. They began to take revenge and the demon king Bali met his death in the battle. When Brahma saw the imminent extermination of the demons, he sent Devarshi Narada in the battlefield to make the gods abstain from the war. The surviving demons carried the dead Bali towards Astachal. There,

Shukracharya, the teacher of the demons, resurrected all the demons with his Sanjivani Vidya (knowledge that resurrects the dead). Thus obligated the demon-king Bali dedicated all his wealth to Shukracharya and began to serve him and other Brahmins of Bhrigu clan.

By the service of the Demons the Brahmins of Bhrigu clan got very much pleased. King Bali had a long cherished desire of conquering the heaven. So the Brahmins organized a Vishvjit Yagya for Bali. At the completion of Yagya, first emerged a beautiful chariot, all covered with gold. Then green coloured horses, inexhaustible quiver and a divine shield emerged in sequence from the altar. Bali's grandfather Prahlada presented him a garland while Shukracharya gave a conch. Thus receiving all the weaponaries, king Bali took oath and circumambulated Brahmins. Thereafter, greeting them he boarded the chariot followed by powerful demons and their huge armies. Thus fully prepared Bali launched a massive attack on the heaven.

When Indra saw that Bali had come with full preparation and that his armies had surrounded Amaravati, he went to his teacher Brihaspati and asked about the reason for the demons' sudden uprising. Devguru said, "Indra, blessing of Bhrigu Brahmins is the main reason of the demons' uprising. You can't face the demon armies yet, because Kal himself is in their favor. So you all abandon the heaven and hide somewhere." After the abdication of the heaven by the gods Bali captured it. Then he conquered all the three worlds. With advice of his priests, Bali organized one hundred Ashvmegh Yagyas. Thus by the grace of Shukracharya and other Brahmins of Bhrigu clan, king Bali got the domain of the heaven and began to rule it generously.

Preaching of Payovrata to Aditi by Kashyapa: Sri Shukdev says, "O Parikshit, Aditi (mother of the gods) felt very sorry for the gods and capture of the heaven by the demons. When Sage Kashyapa visited Aditi's hermitage, he saw his wife in desperate mood. On enquiring about the reason, Aditi said, " Lord by your grace my married life is running well. But I am sorry for the pitiable condition of my sons, the gods. Strong demons have snatched their abode. So kindly tell me the remedy." At her request Kashyapa preached Aditi about a worship named "Payovrat" to seek the blessing God.

This worship, Payovrat is carried out during the waxing phase of the month Phalgun (that correspond to February-March months in Gregorian calendar) for twelve days continuously. One must drink milk only during the worship. One-day before starting the Vrat, that is on the day of Amavasya (moonless night) one must smear his body with the earth dug out by the boars and take bath in the river. Then, one must worship God with Shodushopchar (sixteen treatments) while following the rules prescribed for daily routine. He must recite Dwadashakshari Mantra (hymn containing twelve letters), perform Havan with Kheer (rice cooked in milk) and distribute Naivadya (remaining food from Havan) among the devotees. Reciting the twelve-lettered hymn, one must tell the rosary-string at least once about the wish. Thus, the same worship must be performed for twelve days continuously. If one feeds a Brahmin daily during the Vrat, he can be sure of God's grace.

Mother of the gods, Aditi performed Payovrat as per the advice of her husband Kashyapa. Pleased by her Vrat, the Lord appeared before her in Chaturbhuj (four-armed) form. Mother Aditi laid flat on the ground to greet the God. She prayed, "O Lord you are the God of Yagya, and Yagya yourself. Those, who take refuge at your feet are saved when you are pleased, nothing

remains ungettable." Lord said, " O mother of the gods, I know about your desire. You have worshipped me for your sons, But it is difficult yet to defeat the demons. But because of your worship, I will protect your sons by becoming your child."

Vamana incarnation of God

When the Lord arrived in Aditi's womb, Brahma prayed to Him. By Brahma's prayers, the unborn God appeared before Aditi. Shukdev says, " O Parikshit, on the twelfth day of the waxing phase of Bhadrapada month (corresponding to September) Lord took birth in Abhijit Muhurta. Everywhere, everybody celebrated the arrival of God with joy. The gods showered flowers on Him. The God had arrived in Vamana (dwarf) form. His contenance appearance caused tremendous joy for the sages. During Upnayan consecration of Lord, the ruling deity of the Gayatri mantra, Savitri (an epithet for Surya) preached Him the hymn. Guru gave him Yagyopavit, Kashyapa gave neck-kerchief, the earth gave black buck skin, Chandra gave scepter, Mother gave loin cloth, the sky gave umbrella, Brahma gave Kamandalu (coconut shell bowl) Saptrishi gave kush (sacred grass) while Goddess Saraswati presented God with a string of Rosaries. Yakshraj (king of Yakshas) Kubera gave him the alms bowl and mother Annapurna gave him alms. Thus everyone payed due respect to God in Vamana (dwarf) incarnation who was radiating with divine glory.

Lord Vamana was intimated that the king Bali was performing many Ashvamegha Yagyas with Bhrigu Brahmins. He at once left for the Yagya site, at a place named Bhrigu Kachch on the banks of the river Narmada. As soon as Lord Vamana reached the site, all the sages, hosts and others present there became dull before the radiance of God. They felt as if Surya himself had arisen there. Everyone stood up to welcome God. Host Bali offered Him the best seat and washed His feet with affection. Then Bali requested God for his service.

Demanding three steps of land by Vamana: King Bali requested, "O Brahmin, now tell me how I can serve you. You are the tangible representation of the penance of Brahmarishis. By your arrival, all my ancestors are saved, my clan is blessed, my Yagya has succeeded. Ask me whatever you wish. I am ready to give you your desired object."

Hearing the pious talk of the king Bali, Lord Vamana blessed him and said, "O king, no one have been impatient and frugal in your clan. Reputation of your grandfather Prahlada is still alive. You great grandfather Hiranyakashipu had chased the illusionary Vishnu who had hid in your great grandfather's heart itself. When the infuriated Hiranyakashipu could not find Vishnu anywhere in all the three worlds, he presumed that Vishnu had died because of his fear alone."

"O king" continued Lord Vamana, " You are excellent among the religious people. O demon king, you can fulfill any great desire. But I demand only as much land as could be covered in three steps of mine. I need nothing else." King Bali said, " O Batu, (dwarf Brahmin) you talk like aged persons but your mind is childish. I am the ruler of all the three worlds, and you are asking for three steps of land only, you can still ask for anything else. Lord Vamana replied," O king, greedy ones are not sated even if they get whole of the earth. But I don't want more than my requirement." King Bali agreed to donate Vamana the Land as per his demands and picked up the water pot to make resolution.

When Guru Shukracharya, saw that Bali had agreed to donate land, he tried to persuade him, "O Bali, this Vamana is none other than indestructible Lord Vishnu. He has taken incarnation of Vamana as a son of Aditi, Kashyapa's wife, in the interest of the gods. Unknowingly you have made a promise to fulfil His desire. But He will snatch everything from you and hand it over to Indra. This illusionary Batu will measure whole of your empire in all the three worlds with his two steps, so you will not be able to keep your promise also. Hence, show your inability to make donation as per His demand, send Him back."

Measuring of Earth's heaven by Vamana: Shukdev says, "Parikshit with, politeness king Bali asserted to his teacher, " Gurudev, your words are true. But I am the grandson of great Prahlada. Now I cannot reverse my promise. No religion is greater than truth. I'm not afraid of any calamity except of deceiving a Brahmin." When, Shukracharya saw that his disciple Bali was determined to violate his dictate, he cursed, " O king, soon you will be devoid of the wealth you have been enjoying."

But despite having been cursed by his teacher, Bali stayed firm to his promise. Worshipping Vamana formally, he took some water on his palm and made the promise to donate land. As soon as Bali made the promise, Lord Vamana assumed a gigantic appearance and measured Bali's entire empire in his steps. In first He measured the whole of the earth. In the next He measured the heaven. The second step itself reached Satyaloka, where Brahma had once washed Lord's feet and kept the water, in a Kamandalu (a bowl of coconut shell) that came on earth later as the river Ganges. Now there was no room for God to put His third step. Lord ridiculed Bali for not keeping his promise fully, "Your everything is mine now, but your promise is still incomplete.

Shukdev says Lord ridiculed Bali but he remained unmoved with patience. He said: 'O Lord, I keep my promise fully, you put your third step on my head. I don't want a blemish on my reputation.' Lord said: 'I snatch all the wealth from people who are bestowed with my grace. They then become an inseparable devotee of me, free from every blemish.' Thus Lord Vishnu gave Bali the empire of Satal Loka (hades) that was even richer than the heaven and said: 'I will protect you there from all the obstacles.' Your hundredth Ashvamudh Yagya shall be completed. In due course of time you shall be the king of the heaven.' This way, without fighting a battle, Lord took the empire of heaven from the demons and gave it to His brother Indra.

TALE OF MATSYAVATAR

King Parikshit asked: 'O Gurudev, Lord is omnipotent. Why did He then take Matsyavatar like an ordinary being bound by karma? I want to hear the tale of God's Matsyavatar.' Shukdev said: 'O Parikshit, God is one. Still for the preservation of His devotees, He takes various incarnations. He also shows His plays by being present in all the creatures. But He remains unaffected by the merits and demerits of those living beings.'

'Parikshit, at the end of last Kalpa, Brahma had fallen asleep, causing a Pralaya. All the worlds had been inundated then. When Brahma had fallen asleep, Vedas fell out from his open mouth. A demon Hayagreeev abducted the Vedas by his illusionary powers. Omnipotent God had known the action of the demon. So he had to take Matsyavatar (fish-incarnation).'

There was a King named Satyavrat during that time. He was very generous and great devotee of God. Sustaining himself on water only, the King was observing severe penance. The same King Satyavrat has come to be known as Shradhadev, the son of Surya (Vaivashvat) in the present Kalpa. One day, Satyavrat was taking a bath in the river, when a small fish came in his folded palms. The fish requested the King to save her. So the King put the fish in Kamandalu (coconut shell bowl). But in no time the fish grew too big to be accommodated in the Kamandalu. So the King transferred the fish into another, bigger pot, but again it grew too big to be accommodated in the pot. The sequence continued till the fish outgrew even the big lake. So the King decided to put the fish in the sea.

The fish, which was actually an incarnation of God, requested the King not to put it in a sea inhabited by fierce monsters. King Satyavrat grew suspicious. So with folded hands, the King requested the fish to appear in its real form. Instantaneously, Lord Narayana appeared and told the King: 'Exactly on the seventh day from now, Pralaya will inundate all the three lokas. But I will send a boat for you. You will board the boat and tether it to my horns with Vasuki, the Naga.' Having received the information of deluge, the King began to wait for its arrival while reflecting on God's virtues. On the seventh day, dense clouds gathered in the sky and began to rain torrentially. Soon whole of the earth was inundated. The King Satyavrat found the boat sent by Lord. Boarding the boat, Satyavrat began to pray to God. At his prayers, Lord preached him the knowledge of metaphysical. Thereafter, the God killed the demon Hayagreev and recovered the Vedas. When Brahma awoke from his sleep, Lord handed the Vedas to him.'

CHAPTER NINE

DESCRIPTION OF THE DYNASTY OF VAIVASVAT MANU

King Parikshit requested Shukdev to describe about the dynasty of his contemporary Manu, Shradhadev. Shukdev said: 'Parikshit, I describe about the dynasty of Manu in short because if I go in detail, it will not be completed in hundreds of years.' Manu Shradhadev was the son of Surya and Sandhya. Name of Manu's wife was Shradha. They did not have any child initially, so they organised a Putrayeshti Yagya under the auspices of their family teacher Vashishtha. But right amidst the proceedings, the queen Shradha prayed the Brahmins to bless her for a female child. The Brahmins made offerings as per her wish. Consequently a girl, instead of a boy, was born to them. She was named Ila. But the King requested Vashishtha to transform her into a boy. Vashishtha did the same, and the boy thus obtained was named as Sudyumn.

TALE OF SUDYUMN

One day Sudyumn had gone on a hunting excursion. Riding the horse with his ministers, Sudyumn reached a forest at the foothills of Meru Mountain. The forest was the nuptial abode of Lord Shiva and Mata Parvati. As soon as Sudyumn and his companions entered the forests, they all, even horses, got converted into females. Relating its reason Sukhdev said: 'Once, Mata Parvati was sitting naked in the lap of Lord Shiva when suddenly some great sages arrived there to have a sight of Lord. Mata Parvati sank with shyness and ran to don some cloth. When the sages saw that Gauri and Lord Shiva were enjoying intimacy, they moved at once to the hermitage of Nar-Narayana. Right at that moment, in order to please Mata Parvati, Lord Shiv said: 'Except me, any man who enters here, shall become a women.' It was because of these

words of Lord Lord Shiva, that Sudyumn and his companions were transformed into females. While Sudyumn was roaming as woman, Budh, the son of Chandra, fell in love with her and they agreed to get married. From their marriage, a son, Pururawa was born, who founded the town named Pratihthanpur.

Sudyumn, in female form, prayed Lord Shiva to free him from woman incarnation. Lord Shiva blessed Sudyumn that he would be a man for a month and a woman for another. Thus this cycle would continue life long. Thereafter Sudyumn returned to the kingdom and began to rule it religiously. He got three sons in due course- Utkal, Gaya and Vimal. In the twilight of his life, Sudyumn gave his kingdom to Pururava and he took exile.

TALE OF PARISHADHRU

After the exile of Sudyumn, Manu took to penance with a desire to have son. Pleased by his penance Sri Hari blessed him to have ten sons. Parishadhru was the eldest of them. He was appointed in the service of the cows. One night in darkness, a tiger broke into the cowshed causing a panic among the cows. Hearing the panicky noise of the cows, Prishadhru ran to the cowshed. There he saw that the tiger had caught a cow, and she was bellowing in pain and fear. Prishadhru at once ran to help and with a powerful blow of the sword he beheaded the tiger. It was pitch dark in the cattleshed, so Prishadhru could not see whom he had killed. In the morning he realized that he had killed the cow and not the tiger. He felt extremely sorry. Their family teacher cursed him to lead a life of a shudra. Prishadhru, thereafter passed his life as a celibate and mingled with the Supreme Soul at last.

TALE OF SHARYATI

Sharyati was the second son of Vaivasvat Manu. He was a great scholar of Vedas. He had an extremely beautiful daughter named Sukanya. One day, king Sharyati was in the forests with his family. Thus roaming, they reached the hermitage of the sage Chyavan. Chyavan was immersed in deep meditation. His whole body was covered with termite's nests; only eyes were shining like fireflies. Out of curiosity, the princess Sukanya pricked those shining eyes of the sage with thorns. All the king's army fell in crises by this incidence. When the king learned about the princess' crime, he begged pardon of the sage Chyavan and gave the princess in his service and himself returned to his palace.

In the forest Sukanya served Chyavan with dedication. Chyavan received youth and vigor by the grace of Ashwini Kumar. Pleased by Shukanya's dedication, sage Chyavan provided her with all queenly luxuries. After many days, king Sharyati again visited the forests. There he saw Sukanya talking to a beautiful young prince. At first Sharyati scolded at Sukanya for violating the norms of a chaste woman. But Sukanya told him about the transformation of the sage Chyavan by the grace of Ashwini Kumar. Learning the reality the king felt overjoyed to see his son-in-law Chyavan in youthful state.

TALE OF AMBRISH

Shukdev says, " Parikshit, Sharyati was the king Nabhag. His son was Nabhag. He was a great devotee of his parents. As a result of his service for his parents, Nabhag was very much comfortable. He had a son Ambarish who was a great devotee of Vishnu. Even the great wealth on earth had no value for Ambarish. The king Ambarish served the God with his own hands and remained immersed in His love. Once, Ambarish followed Nirjala Ekadashi Vrat (waterless fast observed on the eleventh day of each phase of lunar month) for a year. During one such fast, on the twelfth day, king Ambarish was about to break his fast, when sage Durvasa arrived there along with his ten thousands disciples. Welcoming him, the king requested Durvasa to accept food. But the sage turned down the request saying that it was prayer time for him, so he would first go to take bath, then worship and take alms (food) ultimately. But the sage Durvasa did not return for long. Thus by the dictate of Brahmins, king Ambarish broke his fast with basil leaves and water.

Just then sage Durvasa returned and saw Ambarish breaking his fast. So taking it as an insult, the infuriated Durvasa invoked Kritya in order to kill the king. King Ambarish stood unmoved, and begged pardon with folded hands. Lord Narayana saw His devotee in trouble and inspired His Sudarshan Chakra (wheel) to save the king.

Sudarshan Chakra first incinerated Kritya, then aimed at sage Durvasa. When Durvasa saw Sudarshan aimed at him, he ran for his life. First he reached Brahma. But Brahma told him that he was not able to protect the person who had done harm to a devotee of God. Then Durvasa reached to Rudra. Lord Shiva also said, " Durvasa, by the wish of Lord, Rudras are engaged in the service of the universe. This Chakra is unstoppable by me. So you go to His refuge, only He can save you."

From Lord Shiva's abode Durvasa reached Vaikunthdham, the supreme abode of Lord Vishnu. He was feeling intense heat of the wheel. So, shivering with fear, he fell at the Lord's feet and said, "O endless, you are the only venerable of all the saints. O Lord, I have committed a great crime against your devotee. O Lord please save me". Seeing sage Durvasa in his refuge, Lord Vishnu said, " Durvasa. I am bound to my devotee. I am not independent. As the devotees abdicate their everything to receive me. Similarly I am also devoted to my devotee. So I too can't protect you. Go to the person who you wanted to hurt, and pray him. Only he can save you from the Chakra.

Thus, by the dictate of God, aggrieved Durvasa returned to the king Ambarish and fell at his feet. Ashamed of the sage act, king Ambarish prayed God, "O Lord if I had done any pious deed, may it be enough to calm you and may the heat that torments this Brahmarishi quenched." Thus by the prayers of king Ambarish, Sudarshan was quietened and returned to its position on Lords finger and sage Durvasa recovered from his sufferings. He blessed the king and left.

DESCRIPTION OF IKSHVAKU DYNASTY

Shukdev says, " Once Shradhadev Manu sneezed violently. From his nostrils, a son was born. He was named Ikshvaku. Ikshvaku had one hundred sons. Vikukshi, Nimi and Dandak were the eldest three of them.

1.)Vikukshi :- Once, Ikshvaku sent his eldest son Vikukshi to collect tubers for the offerings to be made to their ancestors. Vikukshi collected sacred Shash tubers. But, he himself was feeling tired and hungry, so he ate one of them. He gave the remaining tubers to his father. King Ikshvaku gave those tubers to Guru Vashishtha for offering to the ancestors. Vashishtha informed the king that the tubers were defiled and not fit for offerings. Thus told by Vashishtha, Ikshvaku learned the deed of his son and expelled him out of his kingdom in anger. Vikukshi passed his life in exile and returned home only after the death of his father. He became famous as Shashad.

2.)Puranajay :- Puranajay was the son of Vikukshi. He is also famous as 'Indravah' and 'Kakutsth.' A fierce battle had taken place between the gods and the demons. In the battle, the gods had sought the help from Puranajay. But Puranajay stipulated that he would fight only when Indra agreed to become his vehicle. From God's inspiration, Indra took the guise of a big and heavy ox and bore Puranajay on his back. When Puranajay rode on the ox and trained his divine bow and arrows, all the gods prayed to him. Since, Puranajay had taken seat near ox's hump, he came to be known as Kakutsth. Puranajay fought a fierce battle with the demons. Thus in no time Puranajay defeated the demons and captured their towns, wealth, luxuries and every other thing and gave them to Indra. Since, Indra had acted as his vehicle, hence Puranajay is also known as Indravah.

3.)Yuvnashva :- In the lineage of Puranajay, had occurred a king named Yuvnashva. He had no son, so in desperation he gave up his kingdom and, accompanied by his queens, came to stay in the forest. There he organized a grand Yagya, Indrayag with a desire of a son and in the auspices of the great sages. The Yagya lasted day and night. But during the Yagya, Yuvnashva felt extremely thirsty and without giving a thought he drank some of the water from urn that had been sanctified with mantras. Since, the water was meant to produce a child, Yuvnashva begot a child with auspicious signs. Immediately after birth the child began to cry for milk. So to quieten him Indra put his index finger in the child's mouth. Since then, the child got the name Mandhata. Mandhata became a great emperor. He was also known as Trasdasyu because big robbers like Ravana had an inherent fear of him. Mandhata had deep self-learnings, still he organized many grand Yagyas. Mandhata had three sons- Purykuts, Ambarish (second) and Muchkund. He had fifty daughters also. All of them were married to the sage Saurabhi.

4.)Trishanku :- In this lineage of Mandhata there occurred a king named Satyvrat. He was renamed as Trishanku. Though by the curse of his father and the teacher, he had become a Chandal (an untouchable person) yet by the power of his penance, sage Vishvmitra helped him reach heaven with the body. But the jealous gods pushed down poor Satyvrat from the heaven. He was falling headlong while Maharishi Vishvmitra supported and fixed him in mid sky, hence he got the name Trishanku.

5.)Harishchandra :- He was the son of Trishanku. For him, two great sages Vishvmitra and Vashishtha had cursed each other and acquired bird forms and kept on fighting for many years. Harishchandra had no son. With a desire to have a son, Harishchandra worshiped Varunadev. By the grace of Varuna, he got a son named Rohit. Caught in the love for his son, Harishchandra forgot to organize Yagya to pay his thanks to Varuna. Rohit too had fled to the forest to save his life when he learned that his father wished to sacrifice him. He stayed there for long. Back there

in the kingdom Harishchandra acquired a deadly disease of Dropsy as a result of Varuna's anger. Having learnt about his father's illness, Rohit tried five times to return to the kingdom, but every time Indra forebode him. Thus he stayed in the forest for six years. But in the seventh year he bought the middle son of Ajigart and took him to the kingdom to be used as a votive animal. There he handed the boy over to his father. Thereafter, king Harishchandra organized a grand Yagya and pleased Varuna. Pleased by their unshakable faith in truthfulness sage Vishvamitra blessed Harishchandra and his wife and preached them about metaphysical knowledge.

6.)Sagar :- In the lineage of Rohit later on, had occurred a King Bahuk. Unfortunately, he met an untimely death. One of his widowed wife got ready to be immolated with her husband's pyre. She was pregnant then, so the sage Aurv prevented her from getting Sati. When her fellow queens learnt about her pregnancy, they fed her with poisoned food. But the poison proved ineffective on the unborn baby. The baby was born in due course with poison, so he came to be known as Sagar. Sagar had a great reputation as the King. He had sixty thousand sons. He had also resolved to organize one hundred Ashvmamegh Yagyas. His ninety-nine Yagyas completed without hassles, but during the hundredth Yagya, Indra stole the horse and tethered it in the hermitage of the sage Kapila. Sagar's sixty thousand sons set out in search of the horse, but could not find it anywhere on earth.

At last, they reached the hermitage of the sage Kapila. Before that, with their enormous power, they had dug out huge pits, which filled with water and formed the sea. The sea derived its Hindi Synonym Sagar from Sagar. When those sixty thousand princes saw that the Yagya horse was Tethered in Kapila's hermitage, they began to abuse the sage. Disturbed by the noise, the sage Kapila opened his eyes, and instantaneously all the sixty thousand princes got incinerated. It was Anshumana, the grandson of Sagar, who pacified sage Kapila with his politeness and brought back the horse. He also discovered the ashes of his ancestors. Sage Kapila told Anshumana that the salvation of his ancestors would be possible only if touched by Gangaji, (the sacred Ganges). Since then, all the kings in Sagar's lineage observed severe penance to bring the Ganges on earth for the salvation of their ancestors.

7.)Bhagirath :- First of all, king Anshumana observed hard penance. But even after many years of penance he could not succeed in his efforts. His son Dileep also observed sever penance, but his efforts too, could not succeed. Bhagirath was the son of Dileep. After Dileep, Bhagirath started severe penance. After many years of penance, Bhagirath succeeded in pleasing the Ganges. She appeared before him and asked him to seek a boon. Bhagiratha requested the Ganges to arrive on earth. The Ganges accepted his wish, but put a question as to who would support her when she fell on earth from the heaven. Bhagiratha then began his penance again to please Lord Shiva so that He could support the Ganges on earth. Lord Shiva accepted Bhagirath's prays and supported the Ganges on his head. Thereafter He moved on the path shown by Bhagirath with sacred Ganges following. Thus, the sacred Ganges reached at the place where ashes of Bhagirath's ancestors were lying. The holy waters of the Ganges washed the ashes to the confluence at Ganga Sagar. By the mere touch of Ganges' holy water, Bhagirath ancestors received salvation.

After Bhagirath many great kings like Michsah, Khatvang, Dhirghbahu, Raghu etc. occurred in the Ikshvaku dynasty. Raghu's son was Aja and his son was Dashrath. It was in the home of King Dashrath, and by the prayer of the gods, that Lord Sri Hari took birth as four sons of Dashrath.

8.)Description of Lord Rama's Plays :- Shukdev says, " Parikshit, to keep the words of his father, Lord Rama abdicated the entire kingdom and took exile in the forest. Staying in the forest Lord Rama protected many sages, and helped them complete their religious rituals successfully. He slayed many formidable demons there. But, for cutting the nose and ears of Shupanakha, the sister of demon king Ravana, He had to bear the separation of his wife sita.

Rama had won Sita as his wife in a swayamvar in Janakapur. In his teenage, sage Vishmatria had taken Rama and Lakshmana with him to his hermitage to guard his religious proceedings against the demons. Rama and Lakshmana had killed many demons then. It was during this period that the swayamvar was organized in Janakapur. Lakshmi, the better half of Lord Vishnu, had herself appeared as Sita in Janakapur. Sage Vishvamitra himself taken Rama and Lakshmana to the swayamvar. Many more brave and strong kings and princes had gathered there. But no one could train the Bow of Lord Shiva as per the condition of the swyamvar. It was only Rama, who not only lifted the bow but trained it also. In the process of training, the bow broke with a loud noise. Thus Lord Rama won Sita as His wife.

But during the exile the demon king Ravana deceitfully abducted Sita to avenge the insult of his sister Shurpanakha. Thereafter, the circumstances favored Lord Rama and He soon found out the whereabouts of Sita. With a huge army of monkeys and bears, Lord Rama reached the seashore there He prayed to the sea to make way for Him. But the sea did not pay heed to his prayers, so angrily He got ready to evaporate the sea. Thus frightened, the sea revealed to Him the way to make a bridge over it. Lord Rama then built a bridge over the sea and landed in Lanka. A fierce battle followed in which Lord Rama and Lakshman together slayed the demon king Ravana, his brother Kumbhkarn and Megnad, the son of Ravana.

Thus, they got Sita free from Ravana's captivity. Crowning Vibhishan, the brother of Ravana as the King of Lanka, they returned to Ayodha on Pushpak Vimana. Brahmris his crowned Rama as the king of Ayodhya. All the three worlds became happier, healthier and wealthier. Bharata, Lakshmana, Shatrughn and Hanumanji stayed forever in the service of Lord Rama always following the moral dictates and put an example for the world of high morals. As a king, Lord Rama also organized Ashvmegh Yagya.

CHANDRA DYNASTY

Shukdev says, "Parikshit, now I narrate about Chandra dynasty. Many great and pious kings like Pururava had occurred in this dynasty. Chandrama was the son of Atri, the son of Brahma. Budh was the son of Chandrama while Pururava was the son of Budh. Ila was the mother of Pururava. He was very virtuous. Attracted by his virtues, the apsara Urvashi had approached Pururava with a sensual desire. Pururava welcomed Urvashi, and together they begot six sons- Ayu, Shrutayu, Satyayu, Ray, Vijay and Jay.

In the lineage of Vijay the son of Pururava, there had occurred a king Gadhi. Gadhi had a daughter Satyvati. Satyvati was married to the sage Richik. Richik and Satyvati begot Jamadagni who married Renuka, the daughter of sage Renu. Jamadagni and Renuka begot Parashurama. In the same lineage, later on, occurred great kings like Rantidev, Shibi, Yadu, Kuru, Puru, Dushyant and Bharata. In this lineage of Kuru, king Shantanu had married Ganga, who gave birth to Bhisma. Satyvati, the daughter of Nishad was the second wife of Shantanu. She begot Chitrangad and Vichitravirya. Chitrangad had died in an encounter with a demigod of his own name, while Vichitravirya was married to Ambika and Ambalika the princesses of Kashi. But, having too much carnal indulgence with his wives, Vichitravirya soon developed tuberculosis and died without producing a child.

Since, Bhisma had vowed to abide by celibacy till death, so Vyasa was summoned to produce children from Ambika and Ambalika. From Vyasa the two queens and a maid gave birth to Dhritrashtra, Pandu and Vidura respectively. Dhritrashtra had one hundred sons. The Kuaravas, while Pandu's wife Kunti begot Karan, Ydhishtir, Bhima and Arjuna. Pandu's second wife Madri begot Nakul and Sahdev. Arjuna had married Subhadra, the sister of Lord Krishna also. Subhadra had begot Abhimanyu who was married to Utra, the daughter of Viratraja, and you were born to Uttara, O Parikshit.

In Yaduvansh, lineage of Yadu a king Shursen had occurred. He had a son Vasudev. Vasudev had eight wives. Devaki was the prominent among them. Nine children were born to them. Kansa, the brother of Devki, killed six of them. Seventh was Balarama, eighth Krishna, and at ninth place was her daughter Subhadra.

Shukdev says, "O Parikshit, Lord Himself had appeared as the son of Vasudev and Devaki. Whenever the religion and religious virtues fall in the world and sins rises, the omnipotent, Lord Sri Hari takes incarnation to destroy the evils, and protect the pious ones and establish the religion again.

When the evil demons took the guise of the kings and began to route the earth, Lord Vishnu then took the incarnation as Lord Krishna. Along with Him, Sheshnaga, His bed, also took incarnation as Balarama, in Yadu Vansh. Together they presented such divine plays that even the gods could not guess them.

At the same time, to benefit the devotees, who would be born in Kali Yuga, Lord Krishna expounded His pious life into uncountable incidents. Merely by reciting and hearing the tales of Lord's life, all the sorrows, melancholis and ignorance of the devotees are removed. Through the battle of Mahabharata between Kauravas and Pandavas, Lord Krishna relieved the earth of most of her burdens. He Himself slayed many demons, while got many slain by Balarana. Ultimately, preaching Uddhava about metaphysical knowledge, Lord Krishna departed to His divine abode.

CHAPTER TEN

Hearing the tales of Royal dynasties from Shukdev, king Parikshit requested "Guruvar, you have just narrated the surprising tale of Suryvansh and Chandravanash (dynasties). Now I wish to hear the tales of Lord Krishna's life in detail. It was because of God's grace that my ancestors could

successfully win the Mahabharata. I too had experienced Lord's grace while I was an unborn child and Ashvathama had triggered Brahmastra to destroy me. It was the Lord himself who saved me from the heat of Brahmastra with his wheel. O sage, therefore, kindly narrate the tale of Krishna's life who is the soul of every living being. I do not feel thirsty or hungry while hearing the pious tale of God's life from you."

Pleased by the pure devotion of Parikshit for God, Shukdev says, "When the atrocities of evil demons increased on earth beyond a certain limit, the perplexed earth reached to Brahma in the guise of a cow, and vented her sorrows. Brahma took her and Lord Shiva to Lord Vishnu and prayed Him through Purushasukta. Lord heard their prayers and said, "I know about the sufferings of poor earth. Very soon, I'll take incarnation in Yaduvansh to elevate her burden. All the gods, should take birth in Yadukul to assist me during my human incarnation. And to serve my beloved Radha, all the apsaras should appear as the womenfolk of Yudu community."

Brahma dictated the gods and said that even Yoga Maya (personification of illusions) of Lord Vishnu would take a partial incarnation to assist the Lord in His plays. Thus consoling the earth Brahma returned to his abode.

MARRIAGE OF VASUDEV AND DEVAKI

Shursen's son Vasudev was married to Devaki, the daughter of Devak. After the marriage ceremony, Ugrasen's son and Devaki's cousin Kansa was driving the chariot of newly wedded couple. On the way a celestial voice proclaimed " O Fool Kansa, the eighth son of your beloved sister, whose chariot you are driving so affectionately, shall be the cause of your death.." Hearing the voice Kansa drew out his sword to kill Devaki. But Vasudev prayed to him politely, "Prince Kansa, you are the descendent of Bhoj dynasty, you are a brave man. It does not fit you bravery that you are yourself ready to kill your sister. She is a woman and has just got married. She has not done any harm to you, she deserves pity. If you fear her children, I promise that I will give all her children to you." Thus assured by truth abiding Vasudev's words, Kansa dropped the idea of killing Devaki.

As per his promise, Vasudev gave his first newborn child to Kansa. Pleased by Vasudev's abidance to truth, Kansa said, "You eighth son will be my enemy, so I will kill only your eighth son. Take the child back." At the same time, singing in Lord's praise, Devarishi Narada appeared there and said, "O Kansa in view of rising atrocities of demons, Lord Narayana himself will take birth in Yaduvansh. Besides Him, all the cowboys and all others who belonged to Yadav clan are none other than the gods in Human guise. The gods are making massive preparations to exterminate evil kings and as a lotus has only eight petals and no one can mark out its eighth petal, similarly, Devaki will have eight children and no one would be able to find out who is the eighth." Saying this, Devarishi Narada disappeared,

Kansa got firm belief that all the Yaduvanshis were gods and that Lord Vishnu Himself would take birth as Vasudev and Devaki's son to kill him. He, therefore, put Vasudev and Devaki in the prison. Since then Kansa killed the children one by one soon after their birth,

Shesh Narayana Himself appeared as the seventh son. While he was still unborn, Lord Vishnu through His Yogmaya (personified illusion), transferred the embryo in Rohini's womb. Lord dictated Yogama that she herself should take birth from Yashoda, the wife of Nand, in Gokul. He also blessed her that in future, people would worship her as Durga, Chandika, Bhadrakali, Narayani, Vaishnavi etc. When the seventh fetus was transferred, Kansa got worried how was it destroyed. His fears and melancholy increased since then. A fear gripped him that his death was very near now.

ARRIVAL OF GOD IN UNBORN BABY

Kansa had known that during the battle between the gods and demons he was the demon Kalnemi, and he was killed by Lord Vishnu. So fearing Lord Vishnu rallying with Yaduvanshis, Kansa cultivated high degree of hostility towards them. He captured even his father Ugrasen and put him in the prison. Now the reign of the kingdom was entirely in his hands. Kansa was himself very strong and also had the assistance of his father-in-law, Jarasandh. Formidable demon like Pralamb, Baka, Chanur, Trinavart, Aghasur, Mushtik, Arisht, Dvidid, Pootana, Kashi and Dhenuk were his courtiers. As a result of Kansa atrocities en mass exodus of Yaduvanshis from Mathura followed. These Yaduvanshis left Mathura and settled in regions like Kuru, Panchal etc. Still some of them accepted to serve Kansa, but only superficially.

When all pervasive Lord saw that Yaduvanshis were being tortured without reason, He transferred his glory in Vasudev. Through Vasudev, Devaki received that brilliant part of the lord. On the other hand, Kansa also came to know about Devaki's eighth issue. Since, then his hostility surged unprecidently and he began to wait for the birth of Devaki's eight son very anxiously. All it means to say that Kansa mind reflected on God every moment day in and day out.

BIRTH OF LORD KRISHNA

The long awaited day also arrived at last. It was the eighth day in the waning (darker) phase of the lunar month of Bhadrapada (corresponding to August/September). Rohini, the brightest star was rising while dense clouds had gathered in the sky.

Before actual arrival, Lord manifested Himself before Vasudev and Devaki. They felt as if a full moon had risen in the east. Vasudev saw that an extraordinarily marvellous baby boy was standing before them. His eyes were as soft as lotus; He had four arms and held a conch, mace, wheel and lotus. He bore Kaustubh Mani in the neck and wore yellow clothes. Valuable ornaments adorned all parts of his body. Thus, seeing God himself arrived as his son, Vasudev was overwhelmed. Devaki too was overjoyed but feared Kansa first. Then she joyfully prayed to God. God said then, "During Swayambhu Manvantar, both of you had worshipped me with a desire of son. Vasudev was a Prajapati Sutapa while you were his wife Prishni. You had worshipped me with pure hearts. Pleased by your penance I had asked you to seek a boon, so you had sought a son like me in virtues. I had arrived then as your son Prishnigarbh. In the next birth you were Kashyapa and Aditi and I was Upendra. Now, in the third birth also. I have arrived as your son."

Saying this, the Lord transformed Himself into an ordinary baby. From the inspiration of God, Vasudev wished to move the baby out of the prison. Instantaneously, all the locks of the jail opened automatically and the guards fell asleep. Carrying the baby in a winnow, Vasudev set out for Gokul across the river Yamuna.

It was raining heavily, so Sheshnaga followed them shading the baby with his hoods. Vasudev entered the river Yamuna. Yamuna too felt overjoyed that her most beloved lord has come to her. Hence, she began to rise in order to touch His feet. Dangling his feet behind Vasudev, God let Yamuna touch them. Touching the feet, the swelling river receded at once and gave Vasudev a safe passage. Crossing the river, Vasudev reached Gokul. There, he entered the home of Nand and kept the baby beside Yashoda and took her new born baby girl and brought her to the prison. As soon as Vasudev kept the baby girl in Devaki's lap, the gates locked up again and the guards awakened.

The baby who was actually Yogamaya (personification of illusion) began to cry. The guards at once ran to inform Kansa about the birth. Kansa came running and snatched the baby from Devaki and proceeded to throw her on the stone. But before he could throw her, the baby escaped from his hands and assumed Ashtbhuj (eight-armed) Durga appearance in the sky and reprimanded him: "O fool, why are you trying to kill me, when you can't even harm me, the one who will kill you, has already appeared. Now stop killing the innocent children." Kansa stood stunned by the talks and appearance of the goddess. Goddess Bhagavati disappeared and became omnipresent. She is now venerable with different names in different locations.

After the disappearance of Goddess (Yogamaya) Kansa felt remorse. He at once fell at the feet of his sister Devaki and brother-in-law Vasudev and began to beg their pardon. Thereafter, Kansa released both of them. In the morning, Kansa held a discussion with his ministers. The ministers, who were formidable demons themselves, assured Kansa that they would kill all the babies born within ten days and destroy the Brahmins, cows, gods, ascetics and all those who could pose potential danger to him.

Shukdev says: "O Parikshit, the demons were Rajoguni (having royal virtues) and Tamoguni (Virtues of darkness) and hence were unable to differentiate good from evils. Their extermination was imminent. That was why they cultivated hostility towards saints and saintly people. O King, those, who disregard saintly people, lose their life, wealth, reputation, religion and everything.

FESTIVITIES IN GOKUL OVER LORD'S BIRTH

Devaki's seventh baby was transferred before birth into the womb of Rohini. The baby was born as Baldevji. At his birth, Brahmins blessed Nand. But laughingly Nand said: "O holy Brahmins, this baby is not mine. It is born to my friend's wife." Brahmins said then: "Okay Baba, we will return only when your wife bears a child. The Brahmins thereafter organised grand worships. By their blessings Yashoda conceived.

It was Wednesday, the eighth day in the darker phase of the lunar month Bhadrapada (August/September), when Yashoda said to her sister-in-law Sunanda: "Sister, kindly wake me

up, when the baby takes birth," Sunanda laughed at that. It was in fact the influence of Yogamaya. When Yogamaya took birth, all the people around her were fast asleep and continued to sleep until Vasudev came there and replaced the baby girl with baby boy. Soon after Vasudev left, Yashoda awakened from slumber and saw an extremely beautiful baby boy beside her. Nand was meditating then in the cowshed. He was informed at once. His heart too filled with supernatural joy. He took his bath, and donned new clothes. Then he summoned the Brahmins and got necessary rituals performed. Served the gods and his ancestors and donated cows, clothes, ornaments and cereals to the Brahmins.

As Nand was the chief of Vraj region, so all the people decided to celebrate baby's birth. All the houses, streets and lanes were cleaned and sprinkled with scented waters. All the gateways were embellished with flags, pylons and festoons. All the villagers began to gather in and around Nand's home. Ladiesfolk also felt overjoyed by the news of the birth of Yashoda's son. Even the cows, oxen and calves also were adorned beautifully. Brahma, Narada, Sanakadi etc. were all having the sight of lord from heaven. Even Lakshmi appeared in Gokul, illuminating all the azimuths. Gopis (ladiesfolk) decorated their palms with henna, anointed themselves with ubatan (a paste composed of gram flour and many herbs, supposed to enhance beauty) and took bath. Then they adorned themselves from tip to toes and set out for Nand's homes with various gifts. At Nand's home they sprinkled the baby with water containing turmeric and oil and sang auspicious songs loudly.

Thus, when lord appeared in Braj, grand celebration was organised in His welcome, auspicious music was played. The menfolk celebrated the joy spraying one another with milk, curd, butter etc. Nand presented the people generously with clothes, ornaments and cows. Prisoners, ascetics and beggars were given alms. At the request of Nand, Rohini herself welcomed the womenfolk. Since the arrival of lord, prosperity too came to stay in Vraj.

SALVATION OF POOTANA

Shukdev says: 'Parikshit, after many days, entrusting other Gopals with the onus of guarding Gokul, Nand went to Mathura to pay annual taxes in Kansa's court. Vasudev too learned about his arrival and went to see him. Nand felt overjoyed to see Vasudev and embraced him affectionately. Vasudev asked Nand: "Your age is declining now. It is very fortunate now that you have also got a son. My Son Balarama and wife Rohini are staying with you. He would be regarding you as his parents." Nand said: The evil Kansa killed many of your children. He did not even spare your daughter, No doubt, happiness and sorrow are bound to ones fate."

Vasudev said: "Brother, now your duties here are over. You should not stay here for long, because I fear some disturbances in Gokul in your absence. Hearing this, Nand at once set out for Gokul. In the way, he reflected over the words of Vasudev and prayed God: "May God, everything thing be well in Gokul. There in Gokul however a curious incidence took place. After his discussion with evil ministers,

Kansa had sent a cruel ogress Pootana to kill all the newly born babies in his kingdom. In the guise of an extremely pretty woman, Pootana entered Gokul. She hypnotized the menfolk with her sweet smile and flirting glances. She searched new-born babies here and there and entered

Nand's home eventually. Baby Lord Krishna was sleeping in the cradle. He had known about her arrival; but posed as if He were asleep. Pootana is a form of non-knowledge with an alluring outward appearance. Lord Krishna was only six days old then.

Pootana's breasts were filled with poison. Such as someone lifts a sleeping snake mistaking it for a rope. Similarly Pootana lifted the baby who proved her death. Pootana took the baby to secluded place and began to breast feed him. Lord prayed to Lord Shiva who came to stay in His throat and drank all the poison from the milk. Thereafter the Lord began to suck Pootana's life. Perplexed Pootana began to cry loudly and writhe nervously. As her death approached she regained her real, ogress appearance. All the men and women were frightened when they saw the huge, formidable body of Pootana. But when they saw Krishna playing nearby, their fear gone and with joy they lifted the baby and soothed him.

Meanwhile, Nand and his fellow Gopas too arrived from Mathura. Pootana's body testified the truth of Vasudev's words. Gopas cut Pootana's body into many pieces and burnt them outside Gokul. When her body was burning, a sweet smell of Agar (a kind of scented wood used in incense making) spread all around. Because Lord himself had fed on her milk, So all her sins were destroyed. Lord regarded her as his mother and hence saved her.

KILLING OF SHAKAT

When lord Krishna was twenty-seven days old, a festival was organised in Gokul. Mata Yashoda bathed the baby while the Brahmins recited hymns. Yashoda saw that baby was feeling sleepy, so putting him in a cradle, she left it under a cart. The cart was loaded with pitchers of milk, curd and butter. After sometime, lord Krishna awoke and began to cry for a feed. But amidst festivities, Yashoda could not hear his cries.

Meanwhile a demon Shakatasur rode the cart wishing to press the cart and thereby kill the Lord. But before he could act, the Lord touched the cart with His feet and lo and behold! The cart turned over and all the utensils kept on it came crashing down. Even the demon was crushed to death under the cart. Other boys, who were playing nearby, informed the Gopis (ladiesfolk) that the little Kanhaiya had turned over the loaded cart, but they did not believe the kids. Yashoda ran in horror and lifted the baby in her lap. The Brahmins recited pacifying hymns then. Thereafter the baby was bathed again with sanctified water. A feast of Brahmins followed then. Ultimately they were seen off with many gifts.

SALVATION OF TRINAVART

Once Mata Yashoda was playing with the baby lord in her home. All of a sudden she felt as if the baby was getting disproportionately heavy. Soon, she felt herself unable to bear the child anymore. So she left the child on the ground and began to pray Purushaottama Lord Rama. Soon afterwards she forgot about the event, but all was not over yet. Trinavart, a demon minister of Kansa, had arrived in Gokul as a fierce cyclone. He covered entire Gokul with dust and blinded the people temporarily. For a moment people could not see anything and during that moment Trinavart blew the baby in air with him. When the dust settled, Yashoda did not find the baby

Krishna where she had left him. She felt extremely sorry and fell on ground in depression. Other womenfolk also gathered round her. They too began to cry not seeing baby Krishna there.

In the form of cyclone, the demon Trinavart had blown baby Krishna with him; but he too could not bear his heavy burden. So he began to lose his velocity. Lord Krishna caught him by neck. The demon died in a few moments and his dead body fell in Vraj. And Yashoda got a new lease of life when she saw baby Krishna safe and sound. Nand and other Gopas too were overjoyed.

NAMING OF LORD KRISHNA

Once, the supreme ascetic Gargacharya arrived in Gokul. He was the ancestral teacher of Yaduvanshis. Nand joyfully welcomed and treated the hermit. Then he requested him to carry out the ritual of naming and suggest suitable names for both of his sons. Acharya Garg said, "O Nand, everyone knows that I am the ancestral teacher of the Yadavs. If I carry out the naming ritual for these boys, people will understand that they are Devaki's sons." So Nand requested Gargacharya to name his sons secretly. Gargacharya accepted his request and carried out the naming rituals secretly in Nand's cattle shed.

Garg said: "This son of Rohini will cause by his virtue, great pleasures for his near and dear ones. So his second name will be Rama. And because of excessive strength, people will call him as Bala also. Since he will unite the people also, so one of his names would be Sankarshana."

Thereafter, Garg said pointing to Yashodanandan. He has taken incarnation in every age. In the past ages, he had taken white, red and yellow complexions respectively. This time he has taken dark complexion, so he will be known as Krishna. Once he has been the son of Vasudev, so people will call him as Vasudev also. He will cause salvation of all of you, and great joy for the fellow Gopas and cows. With his help, you will overcome even the severe crises. O Nand, This boy will be equal to Narayana in virtues, wealth, beauty, fame and influence. Foster this child with care and earnestness." Thus naming the boys as per their virtues, Garg returned to his hermitage.

CHILDHOOD OF LORD KRISHNA

Shukdev says: "O Parikshit, time passed in Gokul as usual. Balarama and Krishna too grew normally. Soon they began to walk on knees and palms. With their childish plays they both amused men and women folk of Gokul. Everyone took special care of them and looked after them to save them from any possible danger. Ladiesfolk were specially careful about them.

Soon afterwards, both the kids began to walk trottingly. Now their movement no longer confined within the boundary of their home. Because of his special virtues, Krishna began to lead other kids of his age group whereas his elder brother Balarama was somewhat serious in nature. Krishna specially enjoyed teasing the girls and milkmaids of Gokul. Often he would eat stealing their milk, curd and butter. At other times, He did not hesitate even to break their pitchers. In such situations the ladiesfolk used to gather in Nand's home to complain against Krishna. And

every time Yashoda promised them to punish Krishna. But every time, when she proceeded to punish him, she forgot everything before his sweet, innocent smile.

One day, Balarama complained against Krishna, "Ma, the little Kanhaiya has eaten mud. Worried about Krishna's health, Yashoda scolded at him: "Tell me, O mischievous Krishna, why did you eat mud". At that moment, little Krishna's eyes were moving with fear. He made an excuse: "No Ma, I have not eaten any mud. They are telling you a lie. If you don't believe, me see yourself." Saying this, Krishna opened his little mouth. Yashoda peeped into his mouth and what she saw there amazed her. She could not believe it. The entire universe was visible in his little mouth. Yashoda saw strange places, entire Vraj and even herself in the little mouth of Krishna. She felt dizzy. With his illusionary powers, Lord wiped out the memory of this incidence from the mind of Yashoda, and she again immersed in love with her child.

UKHAL BANDHAN AND SALVATION OF YAMALARJUNA

Once, wishing to feed Krishna with butter, Yashoda began to churn milk in the morning . Very soon, Krishna too awakened and not finding the mother on her bed, He set out to search her. Soon He found her in the courtyard where she was churning the milk. He began to insist for breast feeding at once. So Yashoda stopped churning and began to breast feed Krishna. Affection played on her face. Suddenly the milk kept on the fire pot began to boil. Yashoda left Krishna in order to attend the boiling milk. But the unstarved Krishna filled with anger and broke the pitcher of curd. Then he went inside and began to eat butter, when Yashoda came back, she understood the matter and began to search him with a stick in her hand. After eating butter himself, Krishna was now feeding the monkeys with it. Seeing the mother come in hot pursuit, Krishna jumped over the mortar and ran away. Yashoda chased him, but soon felt tired because of her bulky body.

Thereafter, Yashoda proceeded to tie Krishna as a punishment. She got a rope and tried to tie Krishna. But the rope fell short by two fingers. She joined many ropes together but the result was same. Every time the ropes fell short by two fingers. Soon, Yashoda was bathing in sweat. When Krishna saw his mother in depression, he himself tied in the ropes. Tethering little Krishna to a heavy mortar, Yashoda engaged in usual household tasks. Tethered to the mortar, Krishna glanced at the two Arjuna trees, which were standing on the gate like two sentries. He resolved to save them.

King Parikshit asked Shukdev about the trees. Shukdev said: "Parikshit, the lord of wealth Kubera had two sons Nalkubar and Manigreev. One day they were enjoying the sweet company of pretty women on the bank of Mandakini river. Just by coincidence, Devarshi Narada arrived there. Out of Shyness, the women folk at once covered themselves, but both the sons of Kubera stood boldly without feeling any shame. Indignant Narada cursed them to become trees and stay in that form for one hundred years. Narada showed kindness as well that despite being in tree forms, they would have the memory of God alive and would be saved by Lord Sri Krishna. Thus, to keep the words of his supreme devotee Narada, Lord dragged the mortar to the two Arjuna trees. He walked in such a way that the mortar got stuck between the trees. Krishna then pulled

the mortar and in no time the trees were uprooted. Two divine men appeared from the uprooted trees and bowed at the feet of Krishna and prayed him with pure hearts. Then they departed to their heavenly abode.

MIGRATION TO VRINDAVANA

The uprooted Arjuna trees fell with thundering sound. All the people shivered with fear and felt as if lightning had struck somewhere. All the elders including Nand met together and discussed the matter. Unanimously they concluded that, of late disturbance had increased in Gokul and the circumstances were no longer conducive to raise the kids like Balarama and Krishna there. So they unanimously decided to leave Gokul and migrate to a verdant place named Vrindavana. In their opinion, Vrindavana had ample vegetation and fertility to support them and their cattles.

Thus, on an auspicious day, the entire population of Gokul set out for Vrindavana. They packed their households on bullock carts and drove their cattles in herds and started in convoy. In Vrindavana they built their houses and started their life once again.

Shukdev says: "O Parikshit, verdant environment of Vrindavana, Govardhan mountain and crystal clear waters and sandy banks of Yamuna river together filled the hearts of Balarama and Krishna with joy. Along with the fellow cowherds, they began diverse kinds of plays there.

SALVATION OF VATSASUR

One day, Balarama and Krishna were grazing their cattles on the bank of Yamuna River. A demon, meanwhile, took the guise of a calf and mixed with the herd. Obviously, he had malicious intentions. Lord Krishna had already seen the demon taking calf's guise and mixing up with the herd. He signaled Balarama and they together reached near the calf. The calf appeared particularly healthy, so Krishna and Balarama mockingly saw it with admiring eyes. Suddenly they held the calf with its hind legs and tail twirling it in air they threw it in the sky. When the demon died, they threw him on a Kath (wood-apple) tree.

SALVATION OF BAKASUR

One day, all the cowherds took their cattles to a large pond to let them drink water. There they saw a huge creature sitting like a hillock on the bank. They were frightened by its appearance. The creature was in fact a demon named Bakasur who had arrived there in the guise of a storke. He was himself very strong and had a long pointed bill. As soon as the cowherds drew near him, The storke hastily picked up Krishna and swallowed him. Other cowherds including Balarama were stupefied. They could not believe their eyes. But inside the beak, Lord Krishna made himself extremely hot and caused severe burning in demon's throat. So the demon could not swallow Krishna and regurgitated him, and began to hit him with his strong beak. But Lord held his beak with both his hands and tore the demon's mouth apart. And as soon as the demon died, a ripple of joy surged among the cowherds.

SALVATION OF AGHASUR

One day, Krishna planned a picnic near Nandanvan. So rising early in the morning, He awakened his fellow cowherds sounding a horn. Together, all the cowherds, and their cattles went to the forest. There, on the bank of Yamuna river they began to play joyfully.

Nandanvana was in fact an abode of the demon Aghasur. He was sent there by Kansa. Seeing the boys playing, he felt extremely jealous. Knowing that Krishna had killed his brothers Bakasur and sister Pootana. It seemed an ideal moment for the demon to avenge the death of his siblings. Thinking thus, the demon took guise of python and lay in the way and opening his mouth like an opening of a cave. The cowherds too fell in his trap. Thus driven by curiosity, all the cowherds entered the demon mouth one by one. When Lord Krishna saw that his friends had entered demon's mouth. He too entered it to protect them. Aghasur wanted to masticate the cowherds including lord Krishna; but the lord increased his body and choked demon throat. Now the breath of demon stopped. His eyes rolled over and at last his life left his body through Brahmrandhra (cosmic pore). With his ambrosial eye, Lord resurrected these dead fellows and their cattles and together they came out of the demon's mouth. As soon as the demon died, a divine flame emerged from the python's mouth. It waited there sometime for God. And when lord Krishna came out, the flame mingled with him.

ATTACHMENT OF BRAHMA, STEALING OF CATTLE and COWHERDS

Shukdev says: Parikshit, the cowherds told the tale of Aghasur's salvation to their parents only after a year of the incidence. During that period of one year, Lord Krishna multiplied himself and took the guise of his fellow cowherd and their stock of cattles to remove the Illusion of Brahma, who was the cause of the following incidence.

After Aghasur's life mingled with God, Lord Krishna came with this fellow cowherd on the bank of Yamuna. They left their cattles to graze freely and they sat together to take their lunch. All of the cowherds tasted one-another's food, as they wanted to feed Krishna with the tasty food. Meanwhile surprised by Aghasur's salvation, Brahma too had arrived their and saw Krishna eating food defiled by the cowherds. With that sight, Brahma grew suspicious if Krishna was indeed an incarnation of lord. Thus driven by the illusion and to test the authenticity of lord's incarnation, Brahma kidnapped all the cattles first and when Krishna went out to search the cattles Brahma kidnapped and concealed the cowherds also. Soon lord Krishna understood the craftiness of Brahma, so he multiplied himself into his fellow cowherds and cattles. Replicas resembled truly to the cowherds in appearance, complexion, nature, activities, voice, sticks and even in costumes. The replicas remain in existence for complete one year.

Back there, when Brahma returned after hiding the cowherds and the cattles, he was stunned to see the cowherds and cattles as usual. Brahma was feeling dizzy when lord bestowed his grace on him. Brahma saw Narayana in every dust particle. Brahma therefore bowed his head at the feet of lord and said: "O lord, I submit before you. You can be won only with devotion and not by ego. No one can know your omnipresent appearance. Thus praying and worshipping lord

Narayana, Brahma returned to his abode. Shukdev says: The cowherds remained separated from God for one year. But they felt as if only half a second had passed because of the illusionary influence of God. That is why they related the incidence of Aghasurs killing to their parents only after a year it took place.

SALVATION OF DHENUKASUR

When Krishna and Balarama entered sixth year of their ages, they got the permission to take the cattles out for grazing. Along with their fellow cowherds the two brothers too began to take their cattle to Vrindavana. Thus they sanctified the earth of Vrindavana with their pious feet. Seeing the beauty of Vrindavana, with beautiful, colourful flowers and sweet fruits, Lord Krishna felt overjoyed. He then used to graze his cattles at the foothills of Govardhan and on the banks of Yamuna River. Playing flute was his favourite pass time. One day Krishna's beloved friend Sudama said: Kanhaiya, there is a beautiful forest name Talvana. It has uncountable numbers of trees laden with ripe fruits. But a formidable demon Dhenukasur guards that forest, He is very strong. So no one, even animals and birds, doesn't go there. But we are tempted to eat those sweet delicious fruits. If you and Dau (Balarama) wish, we may go there and eat those delicious fruits."

Thus hearing this, Krishna and Balarama guided all of them to Talvana. There they shook the trees and in no time a heap of ripe, delicious fruits gathered under the trees. All the cowherds began to eat fruits. While eating, they were also making lot of noises. Disturbed by the sound of fruits falling and noise of the cowherds, the demon Dhenukasur arrived there as a donkey. He was braying loudly and tried to hit Balarama, but Balarama caught him by his hind legs and threw him in the air. The demon died in an instance. Since that day, everyone visited Talvana fearlessly and the cattles grazed there freely.

GRACE ON KALIYA THE NAGA

One day, Bala-Krishna arrived on the banks of Yamuna with their friends. Balarama was not with them that day. The water of the river Yamuna was toxicated by the poison of Kaliya- The Naga. It was exceptionally hot that day and all the cowherds and cattles were very thirsty. So without giving any thought, they all drank the water from Yamuna and died. But Lord Krishna resurrected them by his ambrosial sight.

Then lord Krishna decided to purify the waters of Yamuna. Thus tying a cloth round his waist, Krishna climbed a Cadamb tree and jumped into the river. In the water the lord started playing and splashing water. Soon the waves began to rise high. When Kaliya- the Naga heard the noise. He got extremely angry and appeared before Krishna. He saw a beautiful, tender, dark complexioned boy playing joyfully in the waters. He stung him and tied him in his spirals. Tied in the spirals of Kaliya, lord became absolutely motionless. Seeing Krishna in death like situation, all the cowherds and even the cows felt very sorry. Just then lord freed himself from the hold of Kaliya. Then a game of hide and seek began between them. Lord dodged the Naga for a long time. Thereafter he rode on Kaliya's hood and began to dance there.

The followers of God, like Gandharvas etc. began to play Mridang, Dhol etc. to give him a company. Tired from the blows of lord's feet, Kaliya soon began to vomit blood. Naga's wives began to pray God, "O lord, your incarnation is to punish the evil ones for their sins. You have shown your grace on us also. We are fortunate to have a sight and touch of your feet. Pity O lord. This Naga can no longer bear your momentum. He will die. We are all your slaves. Kaliya is our lord. Kindly forgive him." With kindness, lord released Kaliya, who prayed thus: O lord in your creation we snakes represent Tamoguna (dark virtues). We are confused by your illusions." Lord dictated Kaliya to migrate with his family to Ramnakdweep. Since then water of Yamuna became pure for humans and animals.

DRINKING OF DAVANAL (FOREST FIRE)

After defeating Kaliya, Lord Krishna and all other people of Vraj felt extremely tired. They were very hungry and thirsty also. So they did not go back to Vrindavana, but stayed on the bank of Yamuna in the night. Because of intense heat of summer, surrounding forests had been Srivelled. At midnight those Srivelled forests caught fire and the sleeping people were engulfed by it. They awakened startled and took shelter at Krishna. Seeing their horrified appearance, Lord Krishna drank the infernal forest fire and thus saved the lives of innocent people who had rested their lives at him with faith.

SALVATION OF PRALAMBASUR

One day, Balarama and Krishna were playfully grazing their cattles along with other cowherds in the forests. When a demon Pralamb arrived there with an intention of kidnapping Krishna and Balarama. The demon had come in the guise of a cowherd, but the God easily recognised him. They accepted his proposal of friendship, but were thinking about the way for his salvation. God thereafter summoned all his friends and said: "Pals, today we shall divide ourselves in to two teams and play joyfully. Thus the teams were divided and each team chose Krishna and Balarama as its captain respectively. It was stipulated that the members of defeated team would carry the members of winner team on their back up to the place pointed by them. Thus the game began and soon both the teams reached a secluded place.

At one time, the team headed by Balarama won. So the members of Krishna's team were to carry them on their back. Demon Pralambasur offered Balarama a ride on his back. Balarama agreed to ride on the demon's back; but as soon as he rode on the demon's back, the demon galloped. But he could not go far for not being able to bear Balarama's weight. Then the demon regained his huge formidable size and tried to escape by flying. First Balarama felt terrorized but soon he realised his real powers and hit on the demon's head with a powerful fist. The blow shattered demon's head and he fell on earth dead like a huge mountain.

VENU GEET

Sri Shukadeva says: "O king, most of the time of Lord Krishna's boyhood passed in Vrindavana. There he grazed cattles and played flute. His flute had a divine, enchanting sound. The Gopis (girls) gathered around him under the influence of enchanting tunes."

They also heard the enchanting Venu geet that fills one hearts with the memory of Bhagavat. One of the girl said to her friend: "O dear friend, Having the privilege of seeing Lords beauty and receving his kindness is the real salvation. Another girl said: "O friend, what penance this flute had observed that it has got a closer contact with lips of Nandnandan (an epithet for Krishna). Even the siblings of this flute, trees and other vegetation's are pleased with its fortune and are hence showering their leaves and flowers on him." One more said: "O friend, look, even Bhagavati Lakshmi has left her luxurious abode in Vaikunth and arrived in Vrindavana to have a look of lord Devakinandan." A Gopi expressed her jealousy: "Even this doe is better than us, O friends, look how engrossed is she looking at God, that her eyes are not blinking."

Hearing the sweet enchanting tunes of flute even the heavenly elves gather in the sky over Vrindavana. They also see the beauty of lord Krishna and showered the flowers of their braids on him. Even the cows forgot grazing when then heard the enchanting music of flute. The calves too forgot drinking milk and began to look at lord Krishna with joy. This is the real devotion for lord Krishna. You have to forget yourself in order to find him. Condition of girls of Vrindavana was exactly the same. After having the sight of lord Krishna they remembered nothing; not even the way back to home. They stood in the forests in a trance, completely tired, unaware of their self.

A girl said pointing to the fauna: "Look O friends, look at these birds. Do you know that these birds were the saints and sages in their previous births. In this birth also they are sitting in a state of trance. Look they have forgotten their knowledge hearing the sweet enchanting music of the flute. And look at Yamunaji. She is also ale to contain her exhilaration. She is eagerly spalshing her waves to wash lords feet. Yet another girl said: "Look friends the clouds cannot see their lord scorching in the sun. So they have covered the sun and shaded Lord Krishna. Now they are drizzling as if showering petals." A girl said: "Friends, look, these Bheelanis are better than us. They have such a strong urge of Krishna's sight that when Govind returns home, they smear their body with dusts of his feet. Blessed is this mountain which has dedicated its entire self in the feet of Brajnandan and feels overjoyed. It is his supreme devotee. Kanhaiya has infused even non-living things with life by his sweet tunes of flute.

STEALING OF CLOTHES

The unmarried girls of Vrindavana felt as if their lives were dedicated to Lord Krishna. Each of them wished heartly to have lord Krishna as her husband. So in order to get their desire fulfilled, all of the spinster girls of Vraj began to take bath in Yamuna early in morning of Hemant season and worshipped goddess Katyayani. When MadanMohan learned that the spinsters girls wished to marry him. He went to see them at dawn. The girls were bathing naked in the river; Their clothes were kept on the bank. Lord Krishna stealthy took those clothes and climbed on a Cadamb tree. Lord had not stolen their clothes with malicious intentions. He had stolen them to remove their flaws and make them realize their real appearance that they were not mere girls, but pure souls. Without realization of the real self, one can not experience the God.

The girl were in fact the hymns of Vedas, Sadhana, Siddhis, Sages and Brahmvidyas (Vedas) themselves, that took the guise of girls to enjoy the vicinity of God. God removed their clothes that symbolized lust. Because of the lords grace they all were able to enjoy God's company. Shukadeva says: "O Parikshit, Thus Lord Krishna removed the shyness of the girls of Vraj

through his sweet talks. He derided at them, made them dance like puppets and even stole their clothes when they were bathing naked, but they did not deter his actions. Instead they felt overjoyed by the close presence of their beloved Kanha.

LIFTING OF GOVARDHAN

Shukhdevji says: "O Parikshit one day, Balarama and Krishna saw that many delicious kind of sweetmeats were being cooked at home. With curiosity and politeness, they asked Nand and other elders: "Father, which festival are you preparing for? Which god will be worshipped? What purpose will such worship serve? Nand Baba explained: "Sons Devaraj Indra is the god of clouds. It is because of Indra's grace we get rain. So these materials are being prepared to worship Indra."

Krishna said: Father every creature in the world enjoys comforts or suffers as per his fate. None of the gods can change the results. Action is prime in the world. One gets the results as per his actions. Even Indra is God as a result of his action. Any one who performs one hundred Ashvamegh Yagyas, becomes Indra. But even after performing crores of Ashvmegh Yagyas one can not get a stay in Vraj. It is the duty of Indra to cause rain. So it will rain even if you don't worship Indra. But to feed the poors and satisfy them with clothes and other gifts is real worship. By their blessing, we shall be more happier. I desire that with all these materials we should worship Giriraj Govardhan and distribute the prasad among the poors. With which their souls will be sated and will have the grace of God.

Thus Lord Krishna told his father that all the people should worship unitedly and unitedly they should receive prasad. If you are ready to do as per my desire, its all right, otherwise I will not worship your haughty god, nor receive his prasad.

Thus convinced by Kanhaiya's wise reasoning, all the gopas agreed to him. Nand Baba said, "O Krishna, we are making all these preparation for you only and we will do as you say. We will worship Govardhan. For us Govardhan is also like a god. It gives us grass, water, and fuel etc., which are necessary for our lives. Thus with lords, consent, they dropped their plan to worship Indra and resolved to worship Govardhan faithfully.

WORSHIP OF GOVARDHAN

On the Purnima (full moon) day in the month of Kartik (November) all the Gopas (people of Vraj region) gathered near mount Govardhan. During the night all of them circumambulated the mountain. Lord invoked the Ganges by his wish and bathed Govardhan with her water. Then they put vermilion on it, offered basil-leaves, flowers etc and worshipped it. Brahmins recited hymns in its praise. To make the people believe in their rituals, Lord Krishna himself appeared on the mountain in huge form and exclaimed: "I am Giriraj (the king of the mountain) and began to eat the offerings. But he as a child was still among the villagers who faithfully bowed before the mountain. Among them, the child Krishna said: "look, what a surprise Giriraj has appeared himself and bestowed his grace on us. He has accepted our worship." There after all the Gopas distributed Prasad among themselves and felt supremely satisfied.

ANGRY RETALIATION OF INDRA

Shukadeva said: Parikshit, when Indra learned that the Gopas had stopped worshipping him, he grew outrageous. In anger, he ordered the clouds to rain torrentially over Vraj and cause heavy flood in Vraj region. In no time dense clouds gathered over Vraj. Soon there was lighting thunder, darkness and storm all around. Then it rained torrentially. All the people took refuge at Lord Krishna and prayed him to save them from the anger of Indra. Lord Krishna said: "Those who regard me as there, are mine and I am theirs, So there is no need to worry for you."

Saying this, Lord lifted Giriraj on his little finger and called all the people of Vraj along with their cattles under the lee of Govardhan. Then he ordered his wheel Sudarshan to absorb the water of the clouds so that not even a single drop could fall on earth. Thus for seven days continuously Lord balanced Govardhan on the little finger. Thus Lord Krishna also came to be known as Giridhari. People who had gathered around him, just kept on seeing Lords moon-like face and hence did not feel thirsty or hungry. In fact the comforts those people got during those seven days are beyond verbal description. Lord held Govardhan on one hand, and conch in the other, while with the remaining two hands He began to play this flute. Hearing the tunes of his flute, all the people of Vraj began to dance with joy. After the rains stopped, all of them returned to their homes.

When Indra learned about the happenings in Vraj, he soon realised his mistake. Indra himself reached Vraj and begged lord for his pardon. Then he gave lord a ceremonial bath with the milk of Surabhi. For protecting the cows, thus the Lord also got one more name "Govind".

RAS LEELA

Shukadeva related to Parikshit the tale of Kamadev's humiliation. Sridhar Swami calls Rasleela as Kama-vijay leela (defeating of Kamadeva- Hindu equivalent of cupid). Jagad guru Ballabhacharyaji describes it as Lords Divy Vihar (divine enjoyment). The purpose of describing this tale is just that common people should reflect on the selfless love of Gopis for Lord Krishna and experience the love of God for them as well.

Lord is an embodiment of Rasa (Pleasure):

After conquering Brahma and other gods, ego of Kamadev had surged to great heights. He, therefore, requested God to quench his thirst for war. God invited Kamadev to visit Vrindavana on the night of Sharad Purnima (Full moon night) in season preceding winter), and told him that on that divine night. He would enjoy the company of crores of Gopis. "If I have slightest passion for any of them, you will win, otherwise you will lose."

That night Lord Krishna added more divinity, more brilliance to it with a resolution of Ras with the help of Yogmaya (personified illusion). It was a perfect night for the purpose - flowers bloomed in Vrindavana, full moon shone, and gentle, cool breeze blew from the banks of river Yamuna. Amidst this stimulating ambience Lord Krishna began to play an enchanting tune on his flute. The tune attracted Gopis, their passion surged to its zenith and under the influence of

love for lord Krishna and as if in trance, all of them ran to meet their beloved Kanhaiya leaving all their fear, Bondages, patience and shyness behind. Some of them were intercepted by their husbands and dragged back to home. But only their physical bodies stayed put, their souls reached Vrindavana.

In Vrindavana on the bank of Yamuna, Gopis saw Vrindavana Vihari (epithet for Krishna) near their familiar cadamb tree. Yogmaya adorned all the Gopis from tip to toe. In fact those Gopis were not ordinary women.

Parikshit asked: "Gopis had not regarded Krishna as Parbrahma. What was the basis for their passion then? Shukadeva said: "When a wretched person like Shishupal, who always abused lord Krishna could find supreme position, there should be no doubt for Gopis who had such a profound passion for Lord." So Gopis arrived and gathered around Lord Krishna.

To test their devotion and to enhance the honor of Kamadev, Krishna said to them: "O Gopis, the pure ones, it is not fit for you to stay here at this hour of night. Go and serve your husbands. Your duties must be first to your husband's children and cows. They will be waiting for you eagerly. Go and console them. You can gain me by hearing, reciting, seeing etc. You need not sit here. Go to your homes."

Gopis, however said: "Govind, we have come to you leaving all the mundane lusts behind. Now going back is like ruining over lives. It is the greatest misfortune if someone returns to mundane affairs even after being at your feet." These words that reflected divine feelings of Gopis pleased Lord. He began to enjoy their company. But a feeling of ego began to creep in the minds of Gopis because of lord's closeness. They began to assume themselves as highly fortunate. To remove their ego, Lord disappeared right among them.

PITIABLE CONDITION OF GOPIS IN GOD'S ABSENCE

After the disappearance of God, Gopis were perplexed. Their hearts burned with desire. They had dedicated their entire selves in the feet of Lord. They were entirely merged in the love of Krishna. Thus driven by passion, Gopis began to search Lord Krishna. They asked trees, creepers, vegetations for the whereabouts of their beloved. They then spotted His footprints at one place. Footprints of Radha were also there. 'Indeed He would have carried her, that great fortunate one, on His shoulders.' They thought.

Lord had indeed, after disappearing from amidst Gopis, taken Radha to an isolated place. She had then began to think herself superior to other Gopis. So at one place, she said: "O Lord, I can't walk now. My tender feet are tired. Kindly carry me on your shoulders to wherever you wish." At her request, Lord Krishna agreed to carry her on his shoulder. But as soon as she proceeded to ride, Lord disappeared from there also. Now, Radha began to cry and wail and fainted. At the same time, other Gopis also reached there and found Radha lying unconscious on the ground. All of them including Radha then returned to the bank of Yamuna and began to wait for Krishna's appearance.

GOPIKA GEET

O Lord, your incarnation has increased the glory of Vrajbhumi. Even the glory of Vaikunth, goddess Lakshmi herself came to stay in Vraj. Govind we have dedicated our lives at your feet. Now we are searching you everywhere. O MadanMohan, kindly show your beautiful, face once. Prananath, your eyes, that are even more beautiful than the lotus that bloom in ponds, is pricking our hearts. We are all your slaves. If you kill us by your separation, will not you be criticised. O Purushaottam, you have protected us on many occasions. You are the remover of miseries of Vraj people. O Lord, you are not the son of Yashoda only, but you are the soul of all the living beings. At the request of Brahma, you have arrived on earth to remove her burden. Why don't you protect us, our lives are in danger because of your separation.

O Lord, your tales are like ambrosia. Your ambrosial tales pacify those who are inflicted with mundane obstacles, and sorrows. They are indeed great and fortunate who recite your tales. O Purushaottam, for the musics of your flute we gave up everything - our husbands, children, social bindings everything. We even dedicated our lives for the sake of your love. Now nothing amuses us except you. We are living, only to have a sight of you; now you are wandering from forest to forest with your tender feet, which even we did not bear in our hearts for the fears of hurting them. How much would they be suffering? We are fainting in your worry. O the dearest one, we were yours, we are yours and we shall be yours forever." Saying these words Gopis burst into tears.

Shukdev says: Parikshit, when the beloved Gopis burst into tears, Krishna's patience gave away. His heart melted at their condition and He appeared amidst them. A sweet smile played on his beautiful face. He wore a garland of fresh Vijayanti flowers and yellow clothes. His beauty could have moved even Kamadev. Seeing their beloved Kanha once again amidst them, Gopis got a new lease of life. All of them began to embrace Lord and thus quench the fire of separation that was burning their bodies.

Thereafter, along with the beauties of Vraj, Lord came to the bank of Yamuna. Gopis put their queries before him for solution. Lord said: "O beloved Gopis, I do not reciprocate to the desire of my beloved ones for physical love. Because of it their conscience remains always engrossed in me. Hence, I take to hiding even after meeting so that you could feel complete imbibement in me.

MAHARAS

From the words of the Lord, Gopis forgot the pains of separation. From the closeness of their beloved, their lives were successful now. With those Gopis, Lord Krishna started Maharas on the pious banks of river Yamuna. All the gods gathered in sky to witness that divine festival. Gopis were even more fortunate than Lakshmi. But even amidst crores of Gopis, who were eager to devote their everything to Him, Lord completely refrained from desires, feelings and even actions. Thus Lord defeated even Kamadev and removed his ego.

SALVATION OF SUDARSHAN AND SHANKHCUR

Shukdev says: O Parikshit, once on the occasion of Lord Shivaratri, Nand Baba and all other Gopas drove their carts with families and reached Ambikavana on a pilgrimage tour. There they took bath in the river Saraswati and with devotion worshiped Lord Shiva and Parvati. They also observed day long fast and decided to pass their night on the bank of Saraswati. But that place was inhabited by a huge python. During the night: the python emerged and caught hold of Nand's leg. Nandbaba cried loudly. All the Gopas gathered around him. He cried again: "Kanhaiya, This snake is all set to strangulate me. Save me." Lord touched the python with his feet and instaneously, the python vanished. In its place appeared a divine-looking human. He said: "O Lord, I was a Vidyadhar named Sudarshan. I was so much obsessed with my beauty, youth, luxury and comforts that I used to insult others. One day I had derided at the ugly appearance of the sage Angira. So indignantly he cursed me to become a python. But, pleased by my realization of mistake, he had told that when God himself would touch me, I would regain my original appearance." Thereafter, Sudarshan went round the God, worshiped Him and with his permission, departed to his abode.

On another occasion, Lord arrived in Vrindavana during Vasant Ritu (spring Season). There He took part in Vasantik Ras (Ras of spring season) with the Gopis. During Ras itself, a demon Shankhchur tried to escape away kidnapping some of the Gopis. A stampede resulted among Gopis. Hearing their noise, Lord ran after the demon, carrying a huge Sal (shorea) tree in his hands. In no time He overtook the demon and killed him by just one blow. He picked up the gem from demon's head and handed it to Balarama.

SALVATION OF ARISHTASUR

Once, Kansa sent a demon Arishtasur to Vrindavana. The demon arrived there in a bull's guise. That huge bull came to Vrindavana and began to terrorize the people with his loud sound. Seeing the bull, Balarama said to Krishna: "Kanhaiya, I have never seen such a huge bull before." All the people began to cry for help. Lord consoled them and challenged the bull demon: O fool, why are you terrorizing these cows and cowherds? I am going to shatter your ego." The challenge from God pinched the demon. Tapping his hooves angrily, the demon attacked God. He wished to gore Him, but God held his horns and pushed him back. Then kicking the demon God killed him in no time.

KANSA SENDS AKRURA

After the killing of Arishtasur, Devarishi Narada visited Kansa and asked: "O Kansa, the girl who had slipped from your hand was in fact the daughter of Yashoda. Krishna and Balarama, who are staying in Vrindavana, are in fact the sons of Devaki and Rohini respectively. Because of your fear, Vasudev has kept them under the supervision of his friend Nand. Those two boys have killed the demons sent by you." Hearing these words, Kansa shook with anger and put Vasudev and Devaki in prison again.

Thereafter he called his minister Akrura and asked him to set out at once for Gokul. He said to Akrura: "Akruraji, you are an old friend and well-wisher of mine, Go to Gokul and bring the sons of Vasudev, who are staying at Nand's home. Invite them to visit Mathura, to witness the festivities of Dhannsh-yagya." Akrura understood Kansa's intentions, but feared that if he refused, that demon would kill him. So he decided to visit Gokul, and also have the opportunity of seeing God. He was feeling overwhelmed by the mere thought of it. Next day, he set out on a grand chariot to meet his supreme Lord in Gokul.

Meditating in the feet of Lord, Akrura was heading towards Vrindavana. He was feeling himself as the most fortunate one for he was sure to have a sight of Lord. Thus obsessed with many kinds of devotional feelings, Akrura alighted from the chariot at the border of Vrindavana and started walking. He found it unjust to ride a chariot on the land of Vrindavana where Lord Krishna treaded. By the time, he reached Vrindavana, Lord Krishna and Balarama had returned home after grazing their cattles. Seeing them, Akrura fell at their feet. Both the brothers raised Akrura and addressed him as "Chacha" (uncle), and escorted him into the house.

Akrura was given a warm welcome and treatment there. After the dinner, they assembled in Nand's drawing room. Nand inquired about the reason of his sudden arrival. Akrura said: "Kansa is organizing a wrestling competition in Mathura. He has invited all the big and small kings to the competitions. He has invited you with Krishna and Balarama as well. Beautiful Mathura is worth seeing. Gullible Nand felt pleased by Akrura's talking and said: "King Kansa has shown a great honor to me. He has sent invitation only to other kings, but has sent his minister to call me and a golden chariot for my kids." So it was announced in Gokul that all the people would go to Mathura the next day and witness the festivities there.

DEPARTURE OF KRISHNA AND BALARAMA FOR MATHURA

When the Gopis heard about Krishna leaving Gokul to visit Mathura, they began to wail and cry. They were getting so much restless by the news that, they felt, their lives would end before the sunrise. They started imprecating fate that it had no kindness. First it provided them with a closer contact with their beloved Kanha, now it was causing a long separation from him. Some of Gopis even begged for death, they felt it better than living without Kanha. All the Gopis kept on crying and wailing nightlong.

Mother Yashoda awoke early in the morning next day. She churned out butter and adding MiSri (sugar candies), she took it to Krishna to feed him. But there she found that both Krishna and Balarama were getting ready to set out for Mathura. They held mother's feet and said: "Pardon us, O mother, we are going to Mathura." These words disturbed Yashoda. She ran and fell at Akrura's feet and said: "I am your slave. O Akrura, please do not take my beloved sons to Mathura. They are inseparable from my heart. Why Kansa has summoned them to Mathura. O Akrura, go and tell him to take everything from us, but spare our sons. We are also ready to live in jail, but can't lose our beloved sons." Akrura consoled Yashoda. "Bhabhi (sister-in-law), don't worry. These two brothers are going to Mathura to witness the festivities there and will return soon to comfort your heart." Yashoda said: "Akruraji, Mathura is a town of gold and both of my sons are too young yet to be needed there for any reason."

Touching the feet of Nand and Yashoda, both the brothers said: "Father, mother, we will definitely return. Presently we wish to see the grandeur of Mathura." Meanwhile all the Gopis and Gopas had gathered there. Crying and wailing, the Gopis said: "You are very Cruel, O Akrura, who named you as Akrura. You have come here to lacerate our hearts." Second Gopi said: "No friend, it is not a fault of Akrura. Our complaints are with Shyamsundar. We left everything, our husbands, children, our homes and dedicated our entire selves in your service.

And now you are deserting us so ruthlessly. We have no support for our life except you, O Madhusadan." Saying this, all the Gopis burst into tears again.

All the Gopas, including Sridama surrounded the chariot and said: "O Krishna we had not even dreamt that you would desert us so ruthlessly. O Kanhaiya we have seen with our eyes that even Indra, Varuna, Sanakadi and Brahma bow before you. But we have never regarded you as God. We regarded you as our friend. Are you angry with us? O my childhood friend Kanhaiya, we request you, we will never abuse you in future. If you were intending to go, why did you, then save us from the infernal forest fire. Why did you save from the deluging rains? We cannot live without you. Tell us O benevolent friend, When will you return." Lord Krishna consoled them all and took many of them with Him. The chariot began to move. As long as the flag of the chariot remained visible, people kept on crying and wailing. Even the eyes of Akrura filled with tears. Lord asked him: "Kaka, why are you weeping?" Akrura replied: "O Lord, Kansa is the great sinner. I feel he will try to torment you by all means. So, my heart says, that I should take you back to Vrindavana, because if Kansa did any harm to you, their spirits will curse me for ever."

AKRURA HAS A SIGHT OF LORD IN FOUR-ARMED FORM

Hearing Akrura's words, Lord understood that when he had arrived in Vraj, he was afflicted with a feeling of majesty. But now, it has been replaced by affection now. He, therefore decided to remove his dilemma. Thus, Lord said to him: "Kaka, Mathura is still some distance away. So you take a bath in Yamuna. We brothers are waiting for you in the chariot."

As soon as Akrura took a dip in Yamuna, Lord showed him a sight of His abode Vaikunth and his Narayana's appearance in which, he was holding conch, wheel, mace and lotus in each of his four hands and was lying on the bed of Sheshnaga. With folded hands, Akrura prayed to lord: "O lord, you are the reason for the existence of Brahma and the Universe. O Lord, I pray at your feet again and again. Now I recognise you. You are the one who took the incarnations of Matsya, Kachchap, Varaha, Narsinh, Vamana, Rama etc. Thus after bath and worship, Akrura returned to the chariot. Lord Krishna understood that now a devotional feeling had arisen in the mind of Akrura for Narayana. Lord asked: "Your condition seems miserable. Did you see anything extraordinary under water?" Akrura said: "O Lord, now bestow your grace on me. Kindly come to my home and accept my hospitality."

ARRIVAL IN MATHURA AND GRACE ON KUBJA

After the departure of Akrura, Nandbaba too set out for Mathura along with the Gopas. On the way itself, they caught up with Krishna and Balarama. All of them then reached Mathura together. There they stayed in a garden. After sometime, with Nand's permission, both the brothers set out to see the city of Mathura. Mathura was indeed a beautiful town. All the residents of Mathura thronged on roads, roofs and attices to have a sight of Krishna and Balarama.

On the way, they met a pretty but hunched woman. She introduced herself as Kubja, the maid of Kansa. Her duty was to smear the members of the royal family with sandal-wood paste. God asked her if she would smear him with sandal paste. Kubja said: "O Manmohan, I see no one more fitting than you for the sandal paste." Thus she smeared Lord's forehead with saffron. On Balaram's forehead she smeared musk containing sandal paste, other Gopas smeared all the remaining sandal paste on their heads.

Lord then, put His feet on Kubja's and holding her chin gave her head a slight jerk. And in no time, Kubja's hunch was gone and she turned into a pretty woman. She begged Lord for His love. The Lord promised her a meeting in future, and proceeded ahead.

After saving Kubja, Lord Krishna and other Gopas moved ahead. At a place they saw a huge bow kept on a high stage. Many strong men were guarding it. Lord entered the canopy and easily lifted the bow and broke it into pieces. There was a big applause from all around. Dau said: "Krishna, now the crowd will increase here, so let us escape in time. Thus, both the brothers and their friends beat a retreat to their camp. There they rested for night. There in Mathura, breaking of the bow had frightened Kansa. He could not sleep during the night. Even in his dreams, he saw nothing, but Krishna everywhere around him.

KILLING OF ELEPHANT

Early in the morning, Kansa summoned his minister and ordered him to make Kuyalayaped, the elephant to stand in the center of the main gate. He thought that the elephant would kill both the boys if they dared to enter the fort through main gate. Back there in the garden, Krishna and Balarama set out in wrestlers' guise for the fort. At the gate, seeing an elephant blocking the passage, they asked mahout loudly: "O Mahout, why have you made the elephant stand in the center of the gate. Move it either ahead or back." But instead of moving the elephant out of the passage, the mahout steered it right on them. But before elephant could attack them, Balarama caught its trunk, while Krishna caught its tail. Both the brothers then dragged the elephant out of the gate and lofted it in the air. The elephant fell on the ground with a loud thud and died on the spot.

SALVATION OF WRESTLERS

Kansa felt very nervous by the news of elephant's killing. Before he could take stock of the situation, Lord Krishna and Balarama arrived in the amphitheatre. The spectators present in the amphitheatre saw Lord as per their feelings. The menfolk saw Lord as a Jewel among the men. Womenfolk saw him as an incarnation of Kamadev. Cowherds saw their natural friend in Lord, while to Kansa He appeared as his death. But to his mother and father, Devaki and Vasudev and to Nand, Krishna and Balarama appeared as small kids. Sages and ascetics saw nothing but metaphysical coming in boys' guise. Learned ones sighted His cosmic form while to Yadavas He appeared as their tutelary God.

As soon as the Lord and Balarama arrived in the ring, the wrestlers, who were already present there, stood up like springs. A wrestler Chanur dragged Krishna and one named Mushtik dragged

Balarama into the ring. They said to them: "Both of you and we are the subjects of the great king Kansa. It is our duty to please our king with our art and skill. More over we will receive many rewards also."

Krishna said: "O wrestlers, you please fight among yourselves. We are boys yet, so we shall witness your fight from a distance." Chanur said: "No you are neither boy nor teenagers. You are stronger than the strongest. You have just killed an elephant which was stronger than thousand elephants." Thus, both the brothers were compelled to wrestle with the royal wrestlers. Mushtik was beaten on the ground by Balarama so hard that he died at once on the spot. Krishna similarly killed second wrestler Chanur. All the remaining wrestlers met similar fate one by one. The massive crowd present there applauded them joyfully.

SALVATION OF KANSA

Seeing the shameful defeat of his wrestlers, Kansa infuriated with anger and proclaimed: "Tie all the opponents; tie Ugarsen, Devaki, Vasudev, Nand in ropes and bring them before me." Lord Krishna could not tolerate this and in a single jump, He reached on the stage where Kansa was present. Lord Krishna caught him by hair and said: "O Kansa, once you have caught a helpless woman by hair, I have avenged that insult. Now you will receive the fruits for your atrocities." Saying this, Lord began to twirl Kansa catching him by hair, and threw him down from the stage. Then Lord jumped once again and landed on the chest of Kansa. Kansa died instantaneously. Thus, Kansa who was an incarnation of the demon Kalnemi received salvation. Lord Krishna then, released his parents from the prison and crowned his maternal grand father Ugrasen as the king of Mathura.

YAGYOPAVIT OF KRISHNA AND BALARAMA

After the successful completion of all the royal ceremonies, the consecration of Krishna and Balarama was carried out. Thereafter, they came to stay at the hermitage of sage Sandipani for formal education. Extraordinarily brilliant Krishna successfully learned all the knowledge in short period of time. Then, as Guru Dakshina (paying respect to the teacher) Krishna brought back his dead sons from the abode of Yamaraj. Taking his convocational bath, thereafter, Lord Krishna returned to Mathura. There, though living among royal luxuries and grandeur Lord Krishna remained indifferent. Memory of his sentimental, beloved devotees friend and other people of Vraj kept on pricking him.

SENDING UDDHAVA AS MESSENGER

Savant Uddhava, the son of Yadava's minister Brihaspati was an intimate friend of Lord Krishna. Only he had the permission to enter Lord's sanctum. Seeing his friend Krishna in remorse, Uddhava asked: "Mathuranath, you seem to be upset. What is troubling you?" Lord Krishna replied: "Uddhava, I feel perplexed. I remember my days in Vrindavana. Please go to Vrindavana and get the news regarding Gopis there. Also give them my message." Thus Lord Krishna donned Uddhava in his attire and sent him to Vraj in his chariot.

There he stayed at Nand's home. At night, Uddhava enquired about Nand and Yashoda's well being and about Vraj in general. That whole night passed in chatting.

BHRAMAR GEET

Next day, when the Gopis got the news of Uddhava's arrival, they thronged in and around Nand's residence. They recognized the chariot parked in front of the gate. It was the same chariot on which Krishna and Balarama had departed for Mathura. First they thought that their beloved Krishna had returned. But their belief did not last long. Some of them opined that Akrura might have come again. But what for?

But then someone informed that it was Uddhava, Krishna's Savant friend, who had come to preach them about metaphysical knowledge. Soon afterwards, Uddhava came out and spoke out loud: "O Gopis, listen to the preaching of Uddhava." But instead of listening to him, Gopis covered their ears. Feeling insulted, Uddhava expressed his dissatisfaction over their behaviour. Gopis said to him: O gentleman, firstly we are not familiar with you, secondly we have no capacity to hear your preaching. Yes if you wish to give us a message of our most beloved; thousand of ears are eager to hear that." Uddhava then introduced himself as the intimate friend of Lord Krishna.

Knowing his identity Gopis welcome and treated Uddhava warmly. Uddhava then began to say again: "O Gopis, the person, whom you are declaring as your beloved friend, in fact has no mother, no father. He has no form, no colour and no body. He is above all, non-existing all pervasive and the giver of joy. He is never separate from his devotee and beloved ones. All of you, too, feel the presence of that Supreme Being and be happy forever." Gopis said: "Uddhava, as long as Ghanashyam stayed with us, we saw endless virtues in him. But only within six months of his stay in Mathura, you wiped out all of his virtues and turned him virtueless.

Tell us with which mouth did he eat butter, with which hand did he break our pitchers, with which feet did he pasture cows in the forests and with which feet did he dance on the hood of Kaliya. Was he another Krishna?"

Harsh reaction of the Gopis startled Uddhava. He began to think where he had been caught. His knowledge of Vedant was proving ineffective on the Gopis. Who are sunk in so much love. On the other hand, Gopis too were feeling embarrassed for treating the guest bitterly. But they were also not prepared to listen to such preaching that condemned love. Moreover, they had let out their long accumulating feeling.

Meanwhile a bumblebee perched at Radha's feet mistaking them for lotus. Pointing to it, all the Gopis said: "Beware O bumblebee, beware if you dare to touch the feet of our Radha. It appears that you are a disciple of Krishna. There is now no secret regarding the virtues and actions of your friend. But it is good that he and you tied in friendship. You are black and your friend has a black heart. Virtues of both of you are same.

First He imbibed us in His love; then left us ruthlessly forever. He is not sorry for us. But why does Lakshmi serve in those feet? She must be careful, lest she should be deceived like us. O

bumblebee you also appear to be a polymath who has come here to preach us. But you won't get an audience in Braj. You should better go to Mathura.

There is one Kubja go and relate your tale to her. You will receive ample donations from her. What will you get from the Gopis here? They have already lost their mental balance, because of their separation from the beloved Krishna. If you have come to ask, why we loved Krishna. O bumblebee, we have no knowledge. But we know that our love for Krishna was not a mistake. Even the goddess Lakshmi does not leave His feet for a moment. Why should we leave his feet then? But O bumblebee, have you really come to convince us. When He could not come out of shame, He sent you to console us - the deaf and dumb Gopis, But be careful if you put your head at the feet of Radha.

Get away, we have already seen enough of flattery and flirtation of your friend. Deserting our affection for ephemeral things, we loved that eternal one. but He too abandoned us. Can you guess about our condition? Tell us, O Uddhava, shall we ever get the sight of Sri Krishna again?

Hearing the tragic tale of the Gopis, Uddhava too felt very sorry for them. He felt as if Mathuranath, lord Krishna was indeed neglecting those Gopis. Uddhava stayed in Vrindavana for six months. There he saw every place, every spot where lord Krishna had played once. When he was returning to Mathura, mother Yashoda presented him with butter, Radha gave him the flute. Thus immersed in the love and overwhelmed by its feelings, Uddhava reached Mathura. He said to Krishna: "Lord, the real appearance of love, that I saw in Vrindavana is the only truth." Sri Krishna said: "Uddhava, You are weeping. Just look at me." Uddhava looked at him with wide, opened eyes. In every single hair of Lord, there existed Gopis. Uddhava was indeed a Savant. But Lord had sent him to Braj only to be taught a lesson of love.

BATTLES WITH JARASANDH AND CONSTRUCTION OF DWARIKAPURI

After the death of Kansa his widowed queens Asti and Prapti returned to their father Jarasandh's home and informed him that Krishna and Balarama had killed their husband Kansa. Infuriated by the news, Jarasandh at once launched a massive attack on Mathura. The people of Mathura were frightened by the strength of Jarasandh's army. Lord Krishna too fell in deep thought. Just then, divine weapons and chariots appeared from the heaven. Both the brothers took the weapons and boarded their chariots. Then they fought a fierce battle and slayed all the army of Jarasandh.

Balarama furiously caught Jarasandh and was about to kill him. But Lord Krishna stopped him. They then released Jarasandh and let him go unhurt. Jarasandh felt ashamed that Krishna released him because of his helpless condition.

Shukdev says: O Parikshit, despite his shameful defeat, Jarasandh attacked Mathura seventeen times with huge armies. But every time, the Lord defeated him and released him in kindness. And every time Jarasandh felt more humiliated."

At last, instead of attacking Mathura himself, Jarasandh sent Kalyavan to defeat Sri Krishna. Kalyavan launched an attack on Mathura with one crore strong Malechchh army. This time Lord Krishna decided to vacate Mathura instead of countering the attack.

He got Dwarikapuri constructed by Vishvakarma and settled all the people of Mathura there. Then, unarmed, Lord Krishna walked past Kalyavan. Pointed by Narada, Kalyavan at once recognised Krishna and gave Him a chase. He also challenged Him, but the Lord did not listen to his challenges and kept moving with face turned away. Kalyavan chased Him for long, but could not catch up.

Ultimately the Lord entered a cave. Kalyavan too followed Him into the cave. In the cave the Lord saw that someone was sleeping there. So He covered the man with his yellow length of cloth and himself hid inside the cave. Kalyavan too arrived there and saw the sleeping man. He mistook him for God and said: "Krishna, you might have thought that braves do not attack on sleeping people. So I will first wake you up and then kill you." Saying thus Kalyavan kicked the sleeping man hard. However, as soon as the man awakened and glanced at Kalyavan, Kalyavan got incinerated at once.

TALE OF MUCHKUND

Parikshit asked: "Gurudev, who was that sleeping man?"

Shukdev says: "O king, that sleeping man was Muchkund, the son of the king Mandhata. The gods had sought his assistance in their war against the demon during the Satya Yuga. With Muchkund's help, the gods had defeated the demons and thus pleased had asked him to seek a boon. Muchkund then had sought a boon of seeing God in tangible form. The gods had assured him that he would have a sight of God in Dwapar Yuga. Since Dwapar Yuga was still far away, so Muchkund had asked: "What should I do till then?" The gods asked him to sleep somewhere and blessed him with a boon that whoever waked him up would be incinerated at once, by his glance. Thus, in order to get Kalyavan incinerated and show Muchkund with his Divine form, Lord had gone to that spot where Muchkund was sleeping.

Muchkund got the sight of God in Chaturbhuj form; and sought a boon of continuous devotion for three births. Thus, Lord defeated Malechchh army and captured all their wealth. He also defeated Jarasandha and caused great joy for the people of Dwaraka.

The king of Anart, Raiwat got his daughter Rewati married to Balarama with the blessing of Brahma.

MESSAGE OF RUKMANI FOR LORD KRISHNA

Shukdev said: "O Parikshit, Bhisma was the king of Vidarbh. He had five sons and a daughter Rukmani. Rukmi, the eldest son of Bhisma, had fixed his sister's engagement with Shishupal, the prince of Chaidi. Narada did not like this development. He went to Kundanpur, the capital of Vidarbh and said in the court of Bhisma: O King, I am coming from Dwaraka." Bhisma said!

"O great Sage, I have never heard about any city named Dwaraka". Thus, in the court of Bhismak, Narada narrated about the life of Lord Krishna and the grandeur of Dwaraka. Bhismak heard the tale with full attention. His daughter Rukmani too enjoyed the tale.

But Rukmi had a strong opposition against lord Krishna. Ignoring the wish of his father, he was not ready to get his sister married to Lord Krishna. On the appointed day, Shishupal appeared there, in a procession, to get married with Rukmani.

But Rukmani was determined to marry Lord Krishna. She sent a love letter to Krishna through a loyal Brahmin and declared a fast unto death. Lord Krishna read her letter, which said: "O Trilokkinath, since the moment, these ears have heard about your virtues, actions, character and plays, my soul experiences divine peace. O Achyut, my mind is dedicated in your feet. O great among the men, this Rukmani has dedicated herself in your feet. Now it is upto you to see that no jackal could take away the lion's share." The Brahmin, the carrier of the letter, returned to Kundanpur with an assurance from the Lord. Lord too called the charioteer and set out at once for Kundanpur. There in Kundanpur, Rukmani after getting the assurance from the Brahmin, was thus waiting for Lord's arrival.

Preparations for Rukmani's marriage with Shisupal were on with full swing in Kundanpur. All the houses, streets and lanes were cleaned and sprinkled with scented water. All the men and women folk donned new clothes and ornaments. King Bhismak worshipped his ancestors and gods and welcomed the Brahmins liberally. Extremely beautiful princess Rukmani was given ceremonial bath and donned with auspicious clothes and bracelets.

The king of Chedi, Damaghosh got the auspicious rites for the marriage of his son Shishupal, performed by Brahmins. All the Baratis (people in marriage procession) were given grand reception. Many great kings like Shalv, Jarasandh, Dantvaktra, Vidurath and Paundruk were present in the marriage procession. They had come with their armies with an intention of fighting Krishna and Balarama. After Krishna's departure, Balarama too set out for Kundanpur with chaturangini (with four wings) army, for he had known about their opponents' preparedness.

Rukmani was eagerly awaiting Lord's arrival. She had received the news that Dwarakanath (Krishna) had resolved to take her away. She was feeling overwhelmed in her heart.

Seeing Lord Krishna arrived intently in the marriage ceremonies of his daughter, king Bhismak welcomed him. Seeing him, even the common people of Vidarbha prayed "May our princess Rukmani get Sri Krishna as her husband. At the same time, Rukmani emerged from her palace to go to the temple of Ambikadevi, soldiers were guarding her. In the temple, Rukmani prayed peacefully: "O Mother Ambika I greet you and Ganapati, who is sitting in your lap. I seek your blessing that may my wish be fulfilled and may I receive Sri Krishna as my husband."

On her way back, Rukmani was walking very slowly for she was awaiting Lord's arrival, which was due in any moment. Just then, Lord Krishna appeared before her. Before she could ride her chariot Lord lifted her from amidst the crowd. And in the presence of hundreds of kings, Krishna and Balarama eloped away with Rukmani.

KRISHNA DEFEATS RUKMI AND MARRIES RUKMANI

Hearing the news that Krishna has eloped with Rukmani, Rukmi and all other kings present there boiled with anger. Accompanied by their huge armies, they decided to give them a chase. Thus chased my them, Yadnvanishis stopped and encountered the kings boldly. With a true ambition to win, brave Yadav soldiers defeated the enemeies. All the kings like Jarasandh fled for their lives. Rukmi had resolved that without getting Rukmani released from Krishna's captivity, he would not show his face in Kundanpur. He chased Lord Krishna for long. But Dwarakanath defeated him and got his head shaved.

Thus defeating all the kings, Lord Krishna brought Rukmani to Dwaraka. There they got married formally. All the people of Dwaraka celebrated festivities for many days. People presented them with lot of precious gifts. All the people were in great joy to see Lakshmi as Rukmani with her husband Lord Krishna.

BIRTH OF PRADYUMN, KILLING OF SHABARASUR

Shukdev says: O Parikshit, Kamadev was a part of lord himself. After getting incinerated by Rudra, Kamadev took refuge in the supreme lord to get an incarnation once more. Thus, Kamadev was born as Rukmani,s first son Pradyumn.

But just after his birth, Pradyumn was kidnapped by a demon Shambarasur. The demon dropped the baby into the sea, where a huge fish swallowed him in whole. Coincidentally the fish was caught by the fishers and presented to the kitchen of Shambarasur. When the cooks cut the fish open, an extremely beautiful baby emerged. Mayawati, the governess of the kitchen, felt overjoyed to see the baby. She began to rear the baby with love and affection.

Once Narada arrived in the kitchen and said: "Mayawati, do you know who is in your lap? " "No, O Devarishi, I found him from the belly of a fish" said Mayawati. Devarishi Narada said: "He is your husband Kamadev and you are his wife Rati. In this birth, he has appeared as Pradyumn the son of Krishna. Hearing this, Mayawati saluted Narada with respect. Since then she regarded Pradyumn as her husband and served him accordingly. When Pradyumn matured. Mayawati reminded him about his real appearance. Pradyumn, thereafter, killed Shambarasur and got married with Mayawati. Then the couple arrived in Dwaraka.

TALE OF SYAMANTAK THE GEM AND ITS THEFT

A person named Satrajit was a great devotee of Lord Suryanarayana. Pleased by his devotion, Suryadev presented him a gem called Syamantak. The gem had a radiance equal to the sun. Bearing that gem, Satrajit arrived in Lord's court. By the radiance of his gem, all the people and the courtiers mistook him for Suryadeva and stood in his regard. But the Lord recognised him and asked his coutiers to be calm. Then to Satrajit, Lord Said: "Satrajit, your gem is really very beautiful. Nana (maternal grandfather) Ugrasen is the king of this region. If you present this gem to him, it will be very good. But Satrajit refused to present that gem.

One day, later on, Satrajits brother Prasenjit went hunting, wearing the gem in his neck. In the forest a lion killed him and snatched the gem. The lion was in turn killed by the Ursine king Jambvan. Jambvan took the gem to his cave and gave it to his children to play with. When Prasenjit did not return from hunting, Satrajit felt sorry and accused Krishna that He had killed his brother for the gem.

When lord Krishna heard that he was being blamed for the mishap, He himself went to the forests. There he found the dead body of Prasenjit, but there was no sign of gem around the cadaver. He found only footprints of a lion leaving from there. Following the footprints, He discovered the dead lion and the foot prints of a great bear. Following the footprints, He reached in the cave where Jambvan's daughter Jambvati was playing with the gem.

As soon as lord Krishna proceeded to take the gem, Jambvan arrived. A fierce duel resulted between them. They continued to fight for twenty-six days without truce. On the twenty-seventh day Jambvan requested Lord! "Please wait O Lord." Lord said: "Do you want to take rest?" "No", said Jambvan, "I have recognised you. You are non other than Lord Narayana Himself. Nobody else has the power to defeat me." Lord appeared before Jambvan as Sri Rama. Jambvan prayed and worshipped Him. He was feeling guilty that he dared to fight Lord. Lord said that He had arrived there for the gem only. Jambvan gave him the gem and also his daughter Jambvati. Lord returned the gem to Satrajit and married Jambvati formally.

Lord summoned Satrajit to his court and in the presence of the king Ugrasen, related the sequence of incidents that took place in the jungle. Satrajit felt ashamed. With a feeling of repentance he took the gem. He was getting afraid also that he made enmity with lord Krishna without reason. Hence to expiate his crime, Satrajit thought of presenting the gem Syamantak and his daughter Satyabhama to Lord Krishna. Lord Krishna accepted Satybhama as his wife but returned the gem to Satrajit saying: "It is a gift of lord Suryadev. Keep it with you. You are required to deposit the gold that you get from it, in the royal treasure."

Akrura and Kritvarma were not pleased with the marriage of Satyabhama. So they got Satrajit killed by Shatdanva. Shatdanva killed Satrajit in his sleep and absconded with the gem. Lord Krishna was then away in Hastinapur. Satyabhama too reached there and informed Krishna about her father's assassination. With Balarama, Lord Krishna chased Shatdhanva. But even after killing him, they could not trace the gem. Shatdhanva had given the gem to Akura to keep till his return. But after the death of Shatdhanva, frightened Akura came to stay in Kashi. From the effect of the gem Akura performed many grand Yagyas there. Lord summoned Akura from Kashi. After welcoming and treating him in the court, Lord asked him about the gem. Akura showed the gem in the court. But Lord returned the gem to Akura.

KRISHNA'S OTHER MARRIAGES

1.) Once Lord Krishna visited Indraprasth to see Pandavas there. There riding a chariot with Arjuna, He came to the forests. On the bank of river Yamuna a pretty woman was observing penance. By the instinct of God, Arjuna drew near her and asked for her identity. She said: "I am Kalindi, the daughter of Suryadev. I am penancing here in order to get married with Lord Krishna." Lord got Kalindi boarded on the chariot and got married to her formally.

2.) Mitrvinda was the sister of Vind Anuvind the king of Ujjain. She had a desire to get Lord as her husband. But her brother, Vind Anuvind was a follower of Duryodhan. So he stopped his sister Mitrvinda from getting married to Krishna. But Krishna eloped with Mitrvinda from the his court and got married to her formally later on.

3.) Satya was the daughter of Nagnjit, the king of Kaushal. She was extremely beautiful lady. The king had resolved that he would marry his daughter only to him who would defeat his seven most formidable oxen. Many princes has tried their luck since then but failed. When Lord Krishna heard about that, He reached Kaushal with his army. The king of Kaushal welcomed and treated him well, and told him about his resolution. Lord then took seven guises and in no time defeated his seven formidable oxen. Gladly the king married his daughter Satya to Lord Krishna.

4.) Shukdev said: "Parikshit, Lord's aunt (father's sister) Shrutkirti was married in the kingdom of Kaikauja. Bhadra was the daughter of Shrutkirti. Bhadra's brothers like Santardan etc. themselves had got their sister married to Lord Krishna.

5.) Lakshmana was the daughter of the king of Madra. She was very beautiful and meritorius. Lord abducted her all alone from the Swayamvar organised for her marriage. Later, Lord married to her formally.

SALVATION OF BHAUMASUR

Shukdev said: Parikshit, Prayjyotishpur was the capital of the demon Bhaumasur. He was very strong and powerful. He had snatched the canopy of Varuna, ear-rings of Aditi the mother of the gods, and Maniparvat of the gods on Meru. Apart from these, he had also captured sixteen thousand and one hundred princesses as well.

Devraj Indra himself visited Dwaraka and prayed Lord to get them rid of Bhaumasur's atrocities. With the dear wife Satyabhama and riding his vehicle Garuda. Lord Krishna arrived in the capital of Bhaumasur. But to enter Pragjyotishpur was a impossible task. But with the blows of his mace and arrows, Lord easily broke the hills, destroyed strategic positions and cut the snares with sword. By his wheel he destroyed the walls of fire, water and air. With the loud sound of conch, lord rendered the machines, installed there, useless.

Ultimately, God destroyed the rampart of the citadel. Disturbed by the noise, the five-headed demon Mur ran with a trident to kill God. But with a single shot of his arrow, Lord broke his trident and cut his head with his wheel. Soldiers and commanders of Bhaumasur were also killed. Bhaumasur then came himself to fight. He had donned a shinning crown and was wearing big earrings. With his wheel, Lord cut the demon's head. As soon as He beheaded the demon, the gods showered flowers on the Lord and worshipped Him. Even the mother earth came and put a garland of five colours around lords neck. She also presented to him the earrings of Aditi, canopy of Varuna, and a great gem. At the request of earth, Lord assured Bhaumasur's son Bhagdatt freedom from his fears.

After slaying Bhaumasur, Lord entered his palace. There he released the sixteen-thousand one-hundred captive princesses. The princesses were very much impressed by the Lord. They had all

accepted in their mind, Lord Krishna as their husband. Lord too bowed before their love and accepted them as his wives and arranged to send them to Dwaraka.

Shukdev says: Parikshit, Rukmvati was the daughter of Rukmi, the brother of Rukmani. When a Swayamvar was organised for her, she saw Pradyumn. She was so impressed by him that she chose him as her husband. But it was not acceptable to other princes. They tried to stop their marriage. But defeating them all, Pradyumn abducted Rukmvati and married her formally. Then to please his sister Rukmani, Rukmi got his grand-daughter Rochana married to Rukmani's grandsons Anirudh.

MARRIAGE OF USHA-ANIRUDH

The son of the demon king Bali, Banasur was a great devotee of Lord Lord Shiva. Banasur ruled over the kingdom Shonitpur. By the grace of Lord Lord Shiva, he had received thousand arms. Even all the gods including Indra used to serve him. Thus blinded by his physical strength, Banasur sought a boon from Lord to meet a match for his strength. Lord Shiva said: "O fool, your thirst for war shall be quenched when your flag is broken."

Banasur had a daughter named Usha. Once she had a dream in which Anirudh was making love with her. She was very much perplexed by the dream. After a few days with the help of her friend Chitrlekha, Anirudh sneaked into her palace. He stay there and enjoyed the company of Usha for long. But Anirudh's clandestine stay could not remain hidden from the eyes of Banasura. So he put Anirudh in prison. There in Dwaraka, everyone was worried by Anirudh's long absence.

It was Narada, who ultimately revealed the fact that Anirudh was in the prison of Banasur. Hearing the news, Lord Krishna launched an attack on Banasur. His armies surrounded Shonitpur. During Ghurabandi the flag of Banasur's palace fell. Lord Shanker arrived to assist Banasur. Lord Krishna cut all the arms of Banasur. At the request of Lord Shiva, he left only four of his arms intact. Banasur bowed his head before Lord Krishna and brought Anirudh and Usha respectfully before Him. With them Lord Krishna returned to Dwaraka where formal marriage of Usha and Anirudh took place.

TALE OF THE KING NRIG

Once, Lord Krishna's sons visited the forests. There they saw a huge Chameleon fallen in a large, deep well. They tried to pull it out but in vain. The princes, therefore, returned to the palace and related this strange episode to Lord Krishna. Lord too came to the well and with His left hand, easily pulled the Chamelon out.

As soon as the chameleon came out, it turned into a divine god and began to worship God. He said: "O Lord, I am Nrig. The king Ikshvaku was my father. In my life, I had donated uncountable numbers of cows to the Brahmins. But once a cow, donated by me, returned to my cowshed. By mistake I made a resolution to donate it to another Brahmin. My action led to a dispute between the two Brahmins, and my wisdom failed to settle their dispute. Both the

Brahmins went away unsatisfied, but I met this fate after death. Since then, I had been in this well in the form of a chameleon. Now, by the graceful touch of your hands, O Lord, I have received salvation." King Nrig then went around the Lord and returned to his heavenly abode.

SALVATION OF PAUNDRAK

Once Balarama and Krishna had gone to Braj to see Nandbaba there. Meanwhile the king Paundrak of Karush sent an envoy to lord Krishna with a message that said: 'I am Lord Vasudev.' Paundrak's envoy arrived in the court and read out the message: "To bestow my grace on the people, I have taken an incarnation. You have falsely named yourself as Vasudev and bore my insignia. Take my refuge or face the battle."

Shukdev said: Parikshit, hearing the message of Paundrak, Ugrasen and other courtiers began to laugh. Lord asked the envoy to inform Paundrak that He would launch His wheel on him and his army.

Receiving the message Paundrak launched an attack on Dwaraka with two Akshauhini army. The king of Kashi was a friend of Paundrak. He too came to his assistance with three Akshauhini armies. Paundrak had disguised as Vasudev and was bearing artificial conch, wheel, mace and lotus and. He had also adorned Swastik, Kaustubh etc. All the people began to laugh at Paundrak's clown like attire.

In no time, the Lord stripped him of all his adornments. His wheel cut his head. Then with an arrow the Lord cut the head of the king of Kashi. His head fell in front of his palace's gate. SuDakshain, the son of the Kashi king, organised a grand Yagya to avenge his father's killing. An ogress, Kritya emerged from the Yagya and began to burn Dwaraka. All the people prayed Krishna to protect them. Lord assured them to be fearless and ordered His wheel Sudarshan to kill Kritya. Sudarshan extinguished the fire, killed Kritya and destroyed Kashi. Then it returned to the Lord's finger.

SALVATION OF DWIVID

The king Parikshit expressed his desire to hear about the life of Balarama. Shukdev said:, "O king, there was once a monkey named Dwivid. He was the friend of Bhaumasur. When Dwivid heard about Bhaumasur's killing by Sri Krishna, he began to cause large scale destruction in the kingdom. His disruptive activities in the country began to terrorize the subjects of Lord Krishna. Once hearing sweet music, the monkey was drawn towards the Raivtak mountain. There he saw Balarama amidst beautiful young women. The monkey began to behave indecently. Angered by his indecency, Balarama hit him with his pestel, named Sunand, and killed the monkey.

MARRIAGE OF SAMB

Samb was the son of lord Krishna and born to Jambvati. He had kidnapped Lakshmana, the daughter of Duryodhana from her Swayamvar. Infuriated Kauravas chased them and, with difficulty, they caught Samb and tied him. When the Yaduvanshis got the news, they began

preparations to launch an attack on Kauravas. Balarama pacified them and reached Hastinapur alone. There he received a warm welcome from the Kauravas. Balarama said to them: "It is an order of the king Ugrasen that you should see Samb off with his newly wedded wife." Hearing Balarama's words Kauravas got angry and began to deride Yaduvanshis. Infuriated by Kauravas derisions, Balarama trained his pestle and plough. He intended to turn over the town of Hastinapur into the river Yamuna. When the city began to shake, Kauravas felt perplexed and begged Balarama for his pardon. Balarama assured them to be fearless and returned to Dwaraka with Samb and his newly wedded wife Lakshmana.

THE KINGS IN CAPTIVITY SEEK LORD'S HELP

Shukdev says: "Parikshit, once Lord Krishna was holding His court when an emissary arrived in the court. The kings who were held captive forcibly by Jarasandh had sent him. The emissary related the miseries of those kings to Lord Krishna. Through the emissary, the kings had requested: "O Lord of the world, Kindly get us free from our miseries. We are in your refuge. We desire your sight. Kindly bestow us with your grace." Lord Krishna sent the emissary off with assurance of timely action.

Meanwhile, Devarishi Narada arrived in the court and informed the Lord of Yudhisthira's intention to organise a grand Rajsuy Yagya and his cordial invitation for the Lord to attend the ceremony. Lord asked his friend Uddhava for an advice as to where He ought to go first - to Indraprastha in Rajsuy Yagya or to liberate the king from the captivity of Jarasandh. Uddhava advised Lord to go to Indraprastha first. There He would be able to serve both the purposes.

Uddhava's advise was in the interest of all. Everyone supported it. Taking permission from His priest and teachers, Lord set out on a chariot with the whole family to reach Indraprastha. In Indraprastha, Pandavas accorded the Lord with warm-hearted felicitations. By the dictate of Lord, Mayasur built a divine looking court for Yudhisthira. The courtroom was a marvellous piece of architecture. The shinning, smooth, floor of it appeared like water, while water bodies presented a look like marble floors.

KILLING OF JARASANDH

During Yudhisthira's Rajsuy Yagya, all the Pandavas set out in all the directions to conquer the kings and expand the boundaries of their kingdom. Warriors like Bheem, Arjuna defeated great kings all around and extended the boundaries of Yudhisthira's empire. But to defeat Jarasandh, - Bhima, Arjuna and Lord Krishna went in the guise Brahmins. They reached Jarasandh capital Girivraj and prayed him for donations. Jarasandh promised to give them the things of their desires. Lord Krishna then introduced themselves and begged Jarasandh for a duel with any of them. Jarasandh accepted to fight a duel with Bhima. He gave Bhima a mace and both of them came out to the outskirts of the town, where they began their duel. Both of them were equally strong and equally brave and well pitted.

Twenty-seven days passed, but their duel remained inconclusive. On the twenty-eighth day, during the fight, Lord signaled Bhima a way to kill Jarasandh. He took a small twig in his hands

and tore it apart into two. Bhima understood the signal and beating Jarasandh on ground, he tore him apart in two pieces and threw them in opposite directions. Thus came the end of evil Jarasandh. Lord Krishna and Arjuna heartily greeted Bhima for his success. They then enthroned Jarasandh's son Sahdev and also got the captive kings released.

SALVATION OF SHISHUPAL

King Yudhisthira had invited great vedic Brahmins and Acharayas on the occasion. Those great Sages included Ved Vyasa, Bhardwaj, Sumantu, Gautam, Asit, Vashishtha, Chyvan, Kanv, Maitreya, Kavash, Chit, Vishvamitra, Vamdev, Sumati, Jemini, Kratu, Pail, Parashurama, Shukracharya, Asuri, Vitihotra, Madhuchchanda, Veersen and Akritvarn etc. Persons from Kauravas side like Drona, Bhisma, Kripacharya, Dhritrashtra, Vidhur and Duryodhan etc. were too invited to witness the celebrations. Even Brahma, Shiv, Indra, Gandharvas, Vidyadhars had too arrived. But before the Yagya could start a dispute cropped up among the great sages as to who ought to be worshipped first in the Yagya.

In the opinion of Sahdeva (youngest of the Pandava brothers, not the son of Jarasandh), Lord Krishna deserved the first worship. Every one supported him. Only Shishupal could not tolerate the decision. He stood up and said: "In the presence of such great ascetics, savants, polymaths and sages, how can this cowherd deserve the first worship." Despite Shishupal bitter remarks Lord Krishna kept quiet. But Shishupal did not. Encouraged by Lord's silence he began to attack the kings, who stood by Lord's side, with sword. He was simultaneously abusing Lord Krishna also. Lord had assured Shishupal of this forgiveness for up to one hundred sins. But now Shishupal's sins have crossed that permitted number. So, quieting all, Lord cut his head with His wheel. As soon as the dead body of Shishupal fell on the ground, a flame emerged from it and merged with Lord Krishna. Shukdev says: "O Parikshit, feelings of hostility had been accumulating in the heart of Shishupal for his past three births against Lord Krishna. It was because of these intense hostile feelings that Shishupal met salvation eventually.

After the salvation of Shishupal, ceremonies and rituals of Yagya proceeded unabated. At the end king Yudhisthira presented all those present there with fitting gifts and took ceremonial bath. At the request of Pandavas, lord Krishna stayed in Indraprastha for many months.

SALVATION OF SHALV

Shukdev says: "Parikshit, now listen to the tale of how Lord caused salvation for Shalv. Shalv was the childhood friend of Shishupal and had attended the marriage of Rukmani as a member of Shishupal's wedding party. At that time, Yaduvanshis had defeated them all including Jarasandh and Shalv. Right at that moment, Shalv had resolved to destroy Yaduvanshis and began worshipping Gods of the gods Pashupati (Shiva). Lord Ashutosh Lord Shiva was pleased with him. As a boon, Shalv had got an aeroplane that was invincible even for the gods, demons, humans, nagas, etc and was particularly formidable for Yaduvanshis. By the dictate of Lord Lord Shiva, the demon Maya constructed such an aeroplane of iron. The aeroplane named Saubh was as big as a city and was difficult to be spotted or caught. It could move as fast as one's wishes. Soon after getting the aeroplane, Shalv launched an attack of Dwaraka.

Surrounding Dwaraka, Shalv began to destroy buildings and houses there. Seeing the people terrorized, Pradyumn consoled them to be fearless and himself set out on a chariot to counter Shalv. He pierced Shalv with arrows. But Shalv's minister Dyumana attacked Pradyumn with a mace. By the blow of the mace, Pradyumn lost his consciousness. But soon he came around and began to slay Shalv's forces. The fierce battle continued for twenty-seven days. Lord was away then in Indraprastha Yagya. But He was sure that in his absence Kshatriya kings of Shishupal side would be attacking on Dwaraka.

Lord reached Dwaraka and saw a fierce battle between Pradyumn and Shalv. Seeing Lord arrive, Shalv began to attack Him with sharp arrows. Lord hit Shalv with a powerful blow of mace and he began to spit blood from his mouth. He then tried to show many illusions and showered Lord with weapons. But Lord wounded Shalv with his arrows, broke his aeroplane with his mace. Very soon thereafter the aeroplane plunged in to the sea. Shalv then attacked Lord with mace but Lord cut his head with Sudarshan wheel. Seeing his end, all the gods showered flowers on Lord.

SALVATION OF DANTVAKTRA AND VIDURATH

After the killing of Shishupal, Shalv etc. Dantvaktra arrived in the battlefield carrying a mace. When Lord saw him coming, He too jumped down from the chariot and baulked his movement with a mace. Dantvaktra tried to humiliate God with his abuses and hit him on head with his mace. Lord easily bore the blow of mace and hit Dantvaktra's chest with his mace named Kaumodaki. Dantvaktra's heart tore apart by the blow and he fell dead.

Vidurath was the brother of Dantvaktra. He came in the field with sword and shield to avenge his brother's death. Seeing him ready to launch an attack, Lord cut Vidurath's head with his wheel. Thus, Lord Krishna entered Dwaraka only after killing Shalv, Dantvaktra and Vidurath. All the gods and other inhabitants of heaven showered flowers on Him.

SUDAMA: THE LORD'S FRIEND

During his stay as a disciple at the hermitage of sage Sandipani, Lord Krishna had a Brahmin friend named Sudama. He was very indifferent in nature with no desires for the material things. After their education, Lord Krishna came to Dwaraka while Sudama, who had no any inclination for accumulating material wealth, got married and began to pass his life with his wife Susheela abject poverty.

One day his wife Susheela said: "O lord, your friend Krishna is the king of Dwaraka. He is very benevolent to Brahmins and his devotees. If you go to see him, he will understand your miseries and grant you a lot of wealth." But Sudama plainly refused saying: "Devi, I have chosen the path of devotion for self upliftment and not for the wealth." Susheela, however, kept of insisting: "All right, don't go for the wealth. But at least you can go to see your old friend. Sudama accepted this proposition, thinking that only the sight of Lord yields supreme benefit to the devotee. But he wanted something as a gift to present to his old friend. At this, his wife tied four handfuls of raw rice in a bundle.

With that humble gift, Sudama set out for Dwaraka. His poverty was at its helm. But he kept on reciting Lord's name all along the way. After walking for some distance, Sudama felt thirsty. He drank water, quenched his thirst and thanked God that He at least does give water to drink. Sudama kept on walking the whole day. In the evening, he kept the bundle of rice under his head as a pillow and slept.

Now it was God's turn to show His gratitude for the devotee. When Sudama awoke in the morning, he found himself right in front of Lord Krishna's palace. At first he could not believe his eyes; but the people told him that he was in Dwaraka and standing right before the lord's palace. Sudama requested the gatekeeper to inform Lord Krishna that his childhood friend Sudama had come. Lord Krishna was sitting in the company of Rukmani when the gatekeeper delivered the message. As soon as Lord Krishna learned about Sudama's arrival, He stood up and ran helter-skelter to welcome his childhood friend. At the gate He cordially embraced Sudama and escorted him into his private chamber and made him sit on the throne.

Krishna and queen Rukmani both washed Sudama's feet one by one. By the mere touch of his friend, Krishna was feeling overjoyed. His eyes filled with tears. He and Sudama were holding each other's hands. Their hearts were beating with the memories of their period as disciples at the hermitage of Sandipani. For long, none of them could utter a word. At last Sudama said: "O Jagadguru Krishna, I have the fortune of being your friend. What remains for me to do?"

Lord Krishna said: "Brother, have you brought for me something sent by my sister-in-law? I love to accept even the pettiest thing presented with affection."

Shukdev says: 'O Parikshit, at the Lord's words, Sudama felt ashamed and he did not reveal the four handfuls of raw rice that he had brought as gift. With shame, Sudama began to look at the ground. Lord knew everything that his dear friend Sudama had never remembered him with a desire for wealth. This time too he has come at the insistence of his wife.

'Hence, I will give him the wealth that is rare even for the gods...' thought Lord Krishna and snatched the bundle of raw rice and opened it with great respect. He put one handful of it in his mouth. When Lord proceeded to take next handful, queen Rukmani held his hand and prayed: "O Vishvambhar (fosterer of the world) for the prosperity of entire world this one handful is sufficient."

Sudama stayed that night in the palace of Sri Krishna. There he experienced the comfort of Vaikunth (abode of God). Staying there for many days, Sudama at last, took leave of Sri Krishna and set out for his home. Lord did not give Sudama anything apparently nor did Sudama asked for His favour. He was travelling overwhelmed by a divine sense of devotion and felt that Krishna might have not given him wealth lest he should forget Him.

Thus, sunk in myriad kinds of thoughts, Sudama reached his home. But at the place, where his dilapidated hut stood once there was now a divine palace surrounded by verdant gardens. The floors of the palace were embedded with precious gems and stones. Standing at the gate, Sudama felt confused, when his wife Susheela came out with scented water to welcome him. Tears were rolling on her cheeks. With love she greeted Sudama and escorted him inside the palace. Sudama

was still reflecting over the God's grace and praying: "May I have the friendship of lord in every birth, may my affection increase for Lord's feet. I don't want wealth.' Since then, Sudama enjoyed the comforts of the palace as the bounty of Lord bestowed upon him by non other than the Lord Krishna himself. His devotion increased day by day.

MEETING OF LORD WITH GOPAS-GOPIS

Shukdev says: "O Parikshit, Lord Krishna was passing his time with pleasure in Dwaraka. A total solar eclipse happened to fall during that period. People from all over India thronged in Kurukshetra to take a dip in sacred Ganges on that great occasion. All the Yaduvanshis too arrived there. When Vrajvasis (Inhabitants of Vraj) learned about Krishna and Balarama's arrival in Kurukshetra, they too assembled there.

During the festival, Lord Krishna met His foster-father Nand and other cowherds who were his childhood friends. Lord Krishna met the Gopis also who had been pining for his sight since long. They enjoyed the meeting and kept on chatting for long. Overwhelmed by love and joy, Vasudev embraced Nand. Lord Krishna and Balarama respectfully greeted mother Yashoda and father Nand. They too embraced Krishna and Balarama cordially.

Gopis were specially overwhelmed by Lord's sight. They had no other desire but to have a sight of Lord. That day their long cherished dream had come true. Gopis imbued the captivating appearance of Lord and experienced the joy of embracing Him. Lord met all the Gopis and embraced them. Inquired about their well being and preached them with spiritual knowledge. By the virtue of that knowledge, feeling of living disappeared among the Gopis and they merged with God forever.

ORGANISATION OF YAGYA BY VASUDEV

Devarishi Narada, Vyasa and many other great sages arrived in Kurukshetra to have a sight of Lord. Lord welcomed them all. Then Vasudev greeted them and enquired about way for his self up liftment. Laughingly, Narada said: "Vasudev, a person, already living at the bank of the Ganges, discards her holy water and goes to other places of pilgrimage for his purification.

In the presence of Krishna and Balarama, the sages said: "You regard the indescribable, eternal, Sachchidanand Sri Krishna as your son, and seek the way of your self upliftment from us. O Vasudev, recognise Him. Take to His refuge, only He can save you." Vasudev got the meaning of sage's words and began to develop feelings of devotion for his son. Every human being has obligation for the gods, sages and his ancestors. The sages got a Yagya performed in Kurukshetra by Vasudev to free him from the obligation for gods.

REVISTING OF DEVAKI'S SIX SONS

In Dwaraka, Krishna and Balarama used to greet their parent's first daily in the morning. Now Vasudev had recognised His identity. So after their return from Kurukshetra, when Krishna and Balarama went as usual to greet their parents, Vasudev greeted them first. Lord Krishna then

preached his father about the metaphysical knowledge. With that knowledge, Vasudev began to see Krishna everywhere.

Mother Devaki was also present there. Memory of her six children, who were killed by Kansa, was still afresh in her mind. She had heard that Krishna had fetched the dead son of Sandipani from Yamloka. So she prayed to them " You both are venerable even to the gods. Kindly grant me my desire. Show me my six sons who were killed by Kansa. By their mother's dictate and helped by Yogmaya, both the brothers reached Satal Loka.

The demon king Bali welcomed them there and offered them a seat, and washed their feet. King Bali then asked God what could he do for Him. Lord said: O demon king, in Swayambhuv Manvantara, six sons were born to Urna the wife of Prajapati Marichi. They were all gods. They had once seen Brahma trying to copulate with his own daughter and hence derided at him. Indignant Brahma had then curse them to take birth in demon incarnation. They therefore were born as the sons of Hiranykashipu.

In the present era, Yogmaya had made them born as Devaki's sons who were killed by Kansa. They are all now in your Loka. Mother Devaki is mourning for them, so we shall take them with us. They will thus be freed from the curse and go to their heavenly abode." Thus Lord Krishna and Balarama brought those six babies to Dwaraka and handed them to mother Devaki. Seeing her babies again, Devaki's heart filled with love for her sons. Milk began to flood her breast. She breast-fed them. Drinking the milk, all the babies received salvation. They then departed to their heavenly abode.

LOVE AND MARRIAGE OF SUBHADRA AND ARJUNA

King Parikshit asked: "Gurudev, how did my grandfather Arjuna and grandmother Subhadra got married? I want to hear this tale. Kindly narrate it to me."

Shukdev said: Parikshit once travelling on a pilgrimage tour, Arjuna reached in Prabhas region. There he learned that Balarama was desirous of marrying his sister Subhadra to Duryodhan. But Vasudev and Krishna were not in the favour of this marriage. So, a strong urge took hold in his mind to get Subhadra as his wife. Acting as per the urge, Arjuna reached Dwaraka in the guise of Vaishnava sage. It was rainy season then, so with an excuse of Chaturmasya Vrat (four months long fast), Arjuna stayed in Dwaraka. During his stay, Balarama served and looked after him very well. But neither Balarama nor any other inmates of the palace could recognise Arjuna.

Once Balarama invited Arjuna to his home. There he offered good, delicious food to Arjuna. Subhadra too served him well. There, they fell in love with each other. Later on, boarding a chariot, Subhadra went out of the palace for a joy ride. At the outskirts of the town, Arjuna was awaiting for her. He had already taken permission of Devaki, Vasudev and Krishna. Subhadra too had silently nodded her acceptance.

So that evening Arjuna and Subhadra eloped from Dwaraka. The news of Subhadra eloping with Arjuna first outraged Balarama. But Lord Krishna and other near and dear ones convinced and pacified him.

PRAYERS OF VEDAS

King Parikshit asked: "Brahmin, Brahma is beyond the limit of do's and why's. He is free from the virtues like Sat, Raja and Tama. He cannot be seen by mind. On the other hand Guna (Virtues) is the subject of all the Shrutis (Vedas). How do Vedas then depict Brahma?"

Shukdev says: "Parikshit, Lord is omnipotent and a treasure of all the virtues. Shrutis (Vedas) do depict Saguna (with virtues) clearly. But reflect on them deeply and you get virtuesless meaning from them. Once, Lord Badrinarayana had arrived among the inhabitant sages of Kalaygram. Devarishi Narada had asked him the same question. In the assembly of the great sages, Lord then narrated the same tale, which the inhabitants of Janloka had asked.

The supreme sages like Sanakadi and his brothers were equal in knowledge, penance etc. Yet they chose Sanandan as the narrator, and rest three became the audience. Sanandan had said: "Such as the savants and balladiers sing in praise their king to wake him up in the morning, similarly annihilating the entire universe in Him, Paramatma (supreme soul) lies asleep with all His powers. At the end of Pralaya, Vedas (Shurtis) wake Him up through the words that demonstrate Him."

Shrutis (Vedas) says: "O Ajit (invincible one), you are supreme, no one can conquer you; may you win everywhere. O Lord, you are complete with all the luxuries, hence destroy the illusion that allures all the living beings. We are unable to describe your appearance. But when your powers manifest in creation. We get some ability to describe you.

Description of Brahma, Indra, Agni, Surya and other gods, by us (Vedas) appears as separate, The complete universe is not different from you. It is a description of your various forms. You are unborn, even in those idols. You do not take birth.

All the Vedas describe your merits. All the savants love none but you through hearing and remembering of your auspicious, benevolent virtues.

O, endless, if anybody in human incarnations does not recite or remember your name he is breathing in vain.

Dharma (duty), Artha (wealth), Kama (sensual pleasure) and Moksha (salvation) have no meaning for those who remember you with pure heart.

O endless, glorious Lord, common people are wandering in abject darkness of unnecessary disputes. Your realization is impossible. When will that moment arrive in my life. When I shall recite your names like Madhav, Vamana, Trilochan, Govind etc. with joy and get free from all the miseries.

O Lord, this entire universe is false. But still appears as real. We pray to that God who is present as an illuminating truth in this false creation.

O Lord of all, people can not sail across this ocean of death without you, no matter what they do to achieve salvation. Their all efforts are futile.

O Lord, all the living beings are wandering in your illusion. But the learned ones don't regard themselves separate from the cycle of life and death. In your shelter, they have nothing to fear.

Shukdev says: "Parikshit as per your query, I told you how Vedas describe Parabrahma Paramatma who is free from natural virtues and invisible. O king, it is the lord who conceptualizes the universe and is present in the beginning, mid and the end of it. He is the Lord of nature and creatures. It is He who created the universe and entered it with the creatures. He created the bodies and controls them. Such as a human being, who is immersed in deep sleep, is not aware of his body. Similarly, on receiving God, the creature is freed from illusion. So one must continuously reflect on the virtues of Lord Sri Krishna."

RELEASE OF LORD SHIVA FROM CRISIS

Parikshit asked: "Gurudev, those among the gods, human beings and the demons, who worship Lord Lord Shiva, get wealth very soon. But those, who worship Lord Narayana, remain afflicted with scarcity. What is the reason for that?"

Shukdev said : "Parikshit, your grandfather Yudhisthira had put the same question before Lord Krishna."

In reply, Lord Krishna had said: "O Yudhisthira, I take away all the wealth from those whom I bestow my grace. When they are poor, their relatives desert them. I even render their efforts useless when they try to earn money. Thus being unsuccessful repeatedly, the people develop an attitude of indifference for wealth. Then they begin to take shelter as my devotee and mingle with me. Only then, I bestow my full grace on them and they receive me as Sachchidanand Parbrahma. Thus, pleasing me through my worship is extremely difficult. Hence, ordinary people give me up and worship other deities, which are in fact different forms of me.

Lord Shiva is Ashutosh and bestows his devotees quickly with grace. He gives wealth and other riches to his devotees. But once they get wealth, the devotees become despotic and even forget the God who had blessed them." In this context Shukdev narrated one ancient tale to Parikshit.

Once upon a time, there was a demon Vrikasur. He had pleased Lord Shiva and sought a boon that the person, upon whose head the demon put his hand, should be incinerated at once. Lord Shiva granted the boon without considering the consequences. But as soon as the demon got this supernatural power, he ran to incinerate Lord Shiva first. The demon was eyeing Gauri Parvati, so he was determined to eliminate Lord Shiva. Now afraid of his own boon, Lord Shiva ran for his life, with the demon following him in hot pursuit. At last Lord Shiva reached in Vaikunth and told Lord Vishnu about his crisis. Lord at once illusioned the demon and made him put his hand, on his own head. By the virtue of the boon, the demon was incinerated in no time and thus Lord Shiva could be saved.

TESTING OF TRINITY

Once upon a time, all the sages assembled on the bank of Saraswati river. A dispute erupted among them as to who among the trinity was the greatest. By consensus they appointed sage Bhrigu to test the trinity of Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesh. Bhrigu reached to Brahma, but did not greet him. Brahma got infuriated but since the sage Bhrigu was his own son, He did not curse him. Then Bhrigu visited Lord Shiva. Lord Shiva proceeded to embrace the sage. But instead of accepting Lord Shiva's welcome, the sage began to abuse Him, saying: "You violate the dignity of Vedas, so I will not meet with you." Angry Lord Shiva raised his trident to kill him, but Bhagavati stopped Him. At last Bhrigu reached Vaikunth to see Lord Vishnu.

Lord was lying with head in the lap of Lakshmi. Bhrigu kicked hard at His chest. But instead of getting angry, Lord got up, bowed his head before the sage and begged pardon: "O Sage, pardon me, I could not welcome you at once, at your arrival. Your feet are soft, I hope they are not hurt. All my sins have been washed by the touch of your feet." Bhrigu felt very pleased by the serious talks of Lord. His heart felt overwhelmed with excess of devotion. He returned to the assembly of the sages and narrated his experience. Since then Lord Vishnu is regarded as the Supreme and giver of peace and fearlessness.

REVIVAL OF BRAHMIN'S DEAD CHILDREN

There in Dwaraka lived a Brahmin. When the first son was born to his wife, it died immediately after birth. The Brahmin took his dead son to the royal court and complained: "My Son has died because of anti-Brahmin and licentious actions of the king." One by one, thus, eight sons were born to the Brahmin couple; but they all died immediately after birth. And the Brahmin kept on dumping his dead sons at the gate of the royal palace.

When his ninth son was born, and died, Arjuna was also there in Dwaraka. He made a promise to the Brahmins: I shall guard your son or commit self immolation. At the time of next delivery, the agitated Brahmin came to Arjuna. Training his bow and arrows, Arjuna made all arrangements to protect Brahmin's tenth son. Sanctified by many mantras, Arjuna's arrows constructed a fence around the labour room. A child took birth; but it too died after some time. Brahmin, then, cursed Arjuna. Arjuna scouted through all the three worlds and even the netherworlds in search of the Brahmin's dead son, but he could not find him anywhere. Ultimately accepting his failure and as per his promise, Arjuna proceeded to immolate himself.

Meanwhile, Lord Krishna too learned about Arjuna's vow and stopped him from self-immolation. Thereafter, riding a divine chariot, Lord set out with Arjuna, towards west. Beyond the limits of cosmos. They reached the abode of Lord Vasudev in Tripadvibhuti. There Arjuna saw that Lord was present in Purushaottams appearance. Sri Krishna and Arjuna greeted Him.

Lord Purushaottam said in a serious voice: "O Krishna and Arjuna, only to have a sight of both of you, I brought the Brahmin's sons to me. Both of you had taken incarnation on earth from my part to protect the religion. All the demons have been slain by now. Now you too return to me.

Sri Krishna and Arjuna again greeted Lord and returned on earth with all the sons of the Brahmin.

Arjuna was greatly surprised to see the supreme abode of Lord. He felt that whatever strength a living being had, it was all by Sri Krishna's grace. Like common, ordinary people, the Lord stayed on earth enjoying mundane comforts, performed Yagyas like kings, behaved like idealistic people; deterred His subjects and slayed evil kings to re-establish religion on earth.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

THE SAGES CURSE YADUVANSHIS

Shukdev said: "O Parikshit, as the time passed, Yaduvanshis grew stronger and more influential. Now no longer did they like the welcoming and treating of the great sages like Kanu, Dhruvasa, Maitreya, Dhannmy etc. by the Lord. Lord Krishna knew about their disliking, but secretly He was pleased by this change in Yaduvanshi's behaviour, for He knew that by disregarding the saints and the scriptures, they would meet their end sooner.

Once the Yaduvanshis clothed Jambvati's son Samb in a woman's attire and, showing him to the sages asked mockingly: "Maharaj, this is our sister-in-law. She is an expecting mother. She feels shy to ask but tell us what will be born to her?"

Through their unfailing vision, the Sages knew the reality and said: "Fools, a pestle shall be born to her and that pestle shall exterminate the entire Yaduvansh. Now all the Yaduvanshis were perplexed by sages' prediction, and approached their king Ugrasen. But, even the king was helpless now because he could not change the words the pious sages.

In due course, a pestle was born to Samb. Frightened of an imminent fate, Yaduvanshis crushed the pestle into a fine powder and threw it into the sea. Only a nail remained, that also was thrown into the sea where a fish swallowed it. A fisher caught the fish and cut it open and found the nail. He gave it to a hunter. The hunter fixed the nail in the head of his arrow. On the other hand, the sea waves washed the powder of the pestle ashore where it germinated and grew as luxuriant grasses. Later on, once all the Yaduvanshis assembled at the sea-shore for a picnic where they drank wine and began to fight with one another under intoxication. Soon their quarrel grew so high that they pulled out the grasses, which were growing there, to use as the arms. With the grasses the Yaduvanshis beat one another to death.

NARADA PREACHES VASUDEV ABOUT BHAGAVAT

Once Narada arrived in Dwaraka. Vasudev prayed him and requested to provide him with pious company of Bhagavat dharma. Narada said: "O king, once upon a time, nine great sages arrived in the court of the king Janaka. King Janaka had put the same curiosity before them also. I will narrate the conversation that followed there between the sages and the king."

First of all, the first Yogishwar Kavi said: "O king Janaka, dedication is the first duty (dharma) of a Vaishnav. He should devote everything - his actions, fruits of actions and even himself, at the feet of Lord. He ought to hear about Lord's virtues. Such a devotee shall be indifferent to the worldly affairs and shall laugh, dance or sing occasionally and sanctified all the three worlds."

The king then asked about the characteristics of the Lord's devotees. Another Yogeshwar Hari said: "A true devotee of the Lord remains unaffected by feelings like hunger, thirst, life, death, labour, pain, fear and desire. Such a devotee is the excellent kind of Bhagavat. Even the wealth of all the three worlds cannot shake the faith of such a devotee, because Lord Sri Hari himself stays in his heart."

"What is illusion?" A Yogeshwar Antariksh replied: "King, an illusion is also God's play. Having a possessive feeling about mundane is illusion. Thinking in terms of 'I', 'Me', 'Mine', 'My', 'You', 'Your' is also illusion. If one can have such an affection for God as he has for worldly things, one can easily surmount the illusion."

King Janaka then asked about the method of worshipping Lord. A yogeshwar, Karbhajan said: "O king, the Lord had a fair complexion in Satya Yuga. People used to receive Him through methods like meditation, reconciliation, etc. In Treta Yuga, the Lord had reddish complexion and Yagyas were the main means to achieve Him. In Dwapar Yuga, the Lord had yellowish complexion and He could be pleased through worships. In the present Kali Yuga, Lord has dark complexion and one can receive Him through means like recitation, narration and hearing of His name and plays.

Thus, Narada preached Vasudev about Bhagavat dharma. Now the heart and mind of Vasudev were thoroughly clean and pure.

LORD DEPARTS TO HIS ABODE AND DESTRUCTION OF YADUVANSHIS

To remind the Lord about the moment of His departure, Brahma arrived in Dwaraka accompanied by all the gods. He prayed to Him: "O Lord, you have completed your duty of what we had once requested you. Now, You please return to your abode. Lord said: "On the seventh day from now, Dwaraka shall submerge in the sea and Yadavas shall fight among themselves to death. I too shall depart then. The arrow of a hunter shall be the cause of my departure."

When Uddhava learned that Lord was about to wind up His plays, he approached Him and said: "I understand, O Lord, that this all is happening by your wish. But I cannot part for a moment from your feet. Hence, take me also with you to your abode." Lord said: "Uddhava, I will not go anywhere. My entire brilliance will be present in Srimad Bhagavat. You stay here preaching Bhagavat dharma." Saying thus, lord preached Uddhava about the Gita Jnana through the tale of Avadhoot.

Lord narrated thus: "Uddhava, Once, our ancestor Yadu happened to see Lord Dattatreya in a forest. Lord was indulged in the supreme joy in the guise of Avadhoot. Yadu asked him about the reasons for his whimsical state." Avadhoot had said: "O king, making the various animals, birds, insects etc as my teacher, I have learned about spirituality from them. That is why I am free from mourning and attachment. Earth, air, sky, water, fire, the moon the sun, pigeon, python, sea, grasshopper, bumblebee, honey bee, elephant, extractor of honey, deer, fish,

prostitute, osprey, boy, girls, arrow-maker, snake, spider and wasp are all my teachers. I took refuge at these twenty-four teachers and learned from their behaviour.

I learned forgiveness from earth, purity from the sky, holiness and cleanliness from the water, innocence and renunciation from the fire; indifference from the air, to remain unaffected by circumstances from moon, abdication from the Sun, incoherence from the pigeon, dependence upon fate and remain effortless from the python, to remain always happy and serious from the sea, to be under the control of sense organs and hence meet total destruction from the grasshopper, acquiring of virtues from bumblebee, fault in cumulating from honey bee, to abstain sensuous talks from the deer, to eliminate greed from the fish, sorrow in hope and happiness in desperation from the prostitute, to feel happy in uncertainty from osprey, dispute among many from the girls, concentration from the arrow-maker, to roam alone and detachment from a particular place from the snake, virtues of the creator Lord from the spider, and I learned similarity from the wasp."

In the guise of Avadhoot, Lord Dattatreya says: "O king, I learned wisdom and apathy from my body also, because life, death, life and death again are inseparably intertwined with it. Hence the net result of loving this body is nothing but sorrow. Thus our own body also helps us to learn about metaphysical knowledge.

Lord Krishna also explained Uddhava regarding futility of physical and heavenly luxuries. This human body is like a tree, on which two birds - Jivatma and Paramatma (microcosm and supreme soul) - have taken shelter. Two fruits - happiness and sorrow - appear on it. These fruits are eaten by Jivatma (microcosm) while Paramatma (supreme soul) stays as an indifferent onlooker. There are three kinds of Jiva - Baddh (Bound), Bhakta (devotee) and Mukta (liberated). Baddh Jivas (bound souls) are those who indulge in sensual pleasures and those who dislike pious company. Mukta Jiva (liberated souls) are those who are free from attachment and bindings. Bhaktas (devotees) are those who meditate on me and dedicate their everything in my feet and have love for my virtues. My devotee is kind, free from flaws, tolerant, has feeling of fraternity for all and controls his desires.

BHIKSHU GEET

Lord said: "Uddhava, in the world, there is indeed a dearth of such tolerant people who can tolerate bitter remarks of evil ones. In this context there is a tale of a greedy Brahmin who lived in Ujjain. That Brahmin had been badly tormented by the evil people after he had lost his wealth. But still the Brahmin did not lose his patience and regarding his present state as a result of his previous birth's deeds, he expressed his feelings thus:

These people are not the cause of my miseries; neither the gods, nor body, not even planets and time, can be blamed for my miseries. Scriptures and learned ones held the mind itself guilty of one's miseries. It is the mind that runs the cycle of the world and makes every kind of efforts.

In the absence of mind, even the soul is rendered motionless. When one accepts the dictates of the mind and indulges in sensual pleasures, soul too comes to be bound with them. The ultimate outcome of all the spiritual efforts like celibacy, study of Vedas etc. and abidance to pious

actions is the concentration of mind. Concentration of mind and is abstainment from sensual pleasures are the primary conditions for attainment of Param Yoga (supreme meditation). Thus Lord preached Uddhava about Jnana Gita. Uddhava too took Bhagavat (which is a form of the Lord) with honor and departed for Badrikashrama.

CHAPTER TWELVE

DESCRIPTION OF DYNASTIES IN KALI YUGA

Shukdev describes about the dynasties that would occur in Kali Yuga. Ripunjay or Puranajay would be the last king of Brihadrath dynasty. This dynasty would be succeeded by the kings of Nand dynasty. Then a diplomatic Brahmin, named Chanakya, would exterminate this dynasty and enthrone Chandragupt Maurya. In Maurya dynasty, a great king would occur by the name of Ashokvardhan. After him, Yavans would rule then for six hundred and forty years. Their rule would be succeeded by the governance of the fair-complexioned foreigners, who would rule for one hundred and sixty years. Thereafter, there would be no king and no subjects because people from all the classes would come forward to rule.

The ruler would be selected by the majority votes. There would be no any thing like holyness. Cows would grow thin like nannies. People would not marry, as per their castes. Greed, selfishness and sex would be the base of marriage life. In adverse conditions, spouses would desert each other. There would be nothing like duty, responsibility and conduct. Hair would be the main item of adornment for the women.

People would not have the knowledge of religious scriptures in Kali Yuga. Talkativeness would be identified with knowledge. Only those would be regarded as clever, who could pick others' pockets. Children would not regard or pay due respect to their parents. Children would maintain relations with parents till their marriage only, not after that. Boys would not touch the feet of their own parents, but would pay full respect to their father and mother-in-law, Brother-in-law would be dearer to them than their own brother.

Shukdev says: Parikshit, Kali Yuga is the mine of faults, But it has only one great virtue - that the people will acquire divine position only by reciting Lord's name. Recitation of Lord's name, regardless of intention and motivation-- whether it is love, derision, laziness or maliceness-- would destroy one's sins.

But O Parikshit, the sinister people would do even the most difficult tasks in Kali Yuga, but they would not recite Lord's name. They would not have an interest in the Lord. Their interests would be more in sensuous things like sound, touch, beauty, scent etc.

O Parikshit, the Paramagati (supreme salvation) that people could receive by ten thousand years of meditation in Satya Yuga; by performing Yagya for hundred years in Treta Yuga and by worshiping Lord's idol for ten years in Dwapar Yuga, that supreme salvation is easily available for people in Kali Yuga simply by reciting Lord's name for one day and one night continuously. But still, in Kali Yuga people would not have faith in Lord's name. It is their misfortune.

Shukdev says: O Parikshit, recitation of Sri Hari has occurred in Srimad Bhagavat MahaPurana. O King, this soul is eternal, so you abandon this animal- like feeling that you would die. You are

not the body. You are the eternal form of joy. Imbibe your mind with the reflections of Paramatma (supreme spirit) and have a sight of Him in the end. You are God yourself. Then neither Takshak nor death would do any harm to you. Unify yourself in the supreme being by thoughts like, 'I am Parabrahma.' Thus Shukdev assured Parikshit to be fearless.

FINAL BEATITUDE OF PARIKSHIT AND NAGYAGYA OF JANMEJAY

Thus graced by Shukdev, king Parikshit faithfully worshiped Brahmurishi and prayed to him with folded hands: "Lord, you are an idol of kindness. You have bestowed your graced on me narrating the plays of Lord Sri Hari. Now I am saved and have achieved my natural state. You helped me receive the supreme position in my life alone. Now I can experience the soul as separate from my body." Accepting Parikshit's worships, Shukdev made his departure. Parikshit himself achieved the status of the sage and concentrated his soul in supreme spirit. Thus, before Takshak could bite him, he was merged in Brahma. Takshak stung his physical body only, which was burnt by the effect of the sting.

When Janmejaya, the son of Parikshit, learned that a snake had stung his father, he organised, Sarpsatra. During the Satra, and invoked by the hymns of Brahmins, snakes drew from far and near and got burnt in the fire. Frightened Takshak approached Indra for refuge. Indra promised to help him. There, on earth, Janmejaya asked the Brahmins: "Why has Takshak, the killer of my father, not arrived yet?" Through reconciliation, Brahmins saw that Takshak was clinging to Indra's throne. The Brahmin invoked Takshak along with Indra. Indra's throne began to move earthward. But then Brahaspati, the teacher of the gods, intervened and stopped the Yagya.

BRANCHES OF VEDAS AND DIVISIONS

Suta described about the Samhitas and divisions of Vedas to the sages like Shaunak etc. Veda Vyasa divided Vedas into four parts and created four Sanhitas viz, Rig, Yajur, Sama and Atharva and taught Rigveda to Pail, Nigveda to Vaishampayan, Chhandogya Sanhita to Jemini and taught Atharvangiras Sanhita to Sumantu. All these four sages are the disciples of Veda Vyasa.

PENANCE OF MARKANDEYA AND SIGHTING OF MAYA

Suta narrated the tale of Mrikandu's son Markandeya. Taking shelter at Mahakal (Lord Shiva), Markandeya had turned away even Kal (death). And by penance had a sight of Lord Sri Narayana. He prayed God to show His Maya (illusion). Thus Markandeya saw the scene of Pralaya. All the creatures were drowning in the deluge. On a leaf of Banyan, then he saw Bal Mukund. Markandeya entered Lord's heart and saw endless cosmos there. Then, by God's instinct, Markandeya returned to his hermitage. Thus Markandeya had the knowledge of Lord's metaphysical state.

In the last chapters, a brief content of Bhagavat and glory of Lord's devotion have been discussed. Suta says: O great sages, I have described what you have asked on the occasion of this pious assemblage. That voice is useless, which cannot recite Lord's name and can not praise His virtues. All the sins and omens are destroyed by constant recitation of Lord's name. One then receives devotion for Lord with pure heart and begins to experience and feel God's tangible form. Though all the other Puranas contain description of Lord's appearance, but in Srimad Bhagavat Mahapurana, there is profuse description of Sri Hari in every chapter. Srimad Bhagavat has a confluence of knowledge, asceticism and devotion. One receives devotion for Lord and salvation eventually merely by reciting, listening and reflecting over it.
