

Brahmananda Purana

It is the eighteenth Purana. It has 1200 verses. Presently available in separate parts. We do not have the full text. Hence we have given the three important ones which we have:

1. About the **Mokshada Ekadasi**.
2. The **Lalitopakhyanam about Devi Lalita Tripura Sundari**. This also contains the Lalita Sahasranama Stotra and the Lalita Trishati Stotra, both of which are in our Stotras section.
3. Also included is the **The Sons of Sagara** section - an interesting story by Rishi Jaimini according to which they **dug into the earth** to find a horse in **Patala loka**. A lot of people site this as an example to support the "hollow earth theory".

This Purana has four parts- Prakriya, Anushanga, Upotaghat and Upasamhar. This Purana is said to be narrated by Sutaji on the bank of the river Drishdvati in Yaksh kshetra (identified with Sutlej in modern Himachal Pradesh). From his narration, it is clear that Sutaji had heard the Purana from Veda Vyasa who, in his turn, received it from Vayudev.

Creation of the universe, determination of Kalpa, differentiation of Yugas, description of Manvantaras, description of Jambudweep and Bharatvarsh, description of Kimpurush. Anudweep, Ketumaal varsh etc. and description of Bharat vansha, Prithu vansha, Dev vansh, Rishi vansh, Agni vansh and preceptors are the main topics of Brahmand Purana. Sages, the dynasties of rulers and the legends of Pitas and their propitiation, the conflict between Karttikeya, King of Hihayas and Bhargava Parasurama.. Subsidiary episodes as that of Sagara, the lineage of Vaivasvata Manu and the dissolution of universe, the ultimate annihilation.

Described in the Purana, Adhyatma Ramayana has seven parts. First part describes the Brahmaswarup (cosmic appearance) of Shri Rama. Incarnation of Lord Rama to relieve the earth from the atrocities of the demons. Baal-leela (childhood plays). Emancipation of Ahilya. Removal of Bhargava's (Parashuram's) ego. Second part contains: Lord Rama going into exile. Demise of Dashrath. Aranyakanda describes killing of the illusionary deer and abduction of Sita. Kishkindha khand describes the killing of Baali. Search of Sita. Sundar Khand has the tales of Hanuman's entry into Lanka. Lanka kanda contains the description of killing of Ravana and coronation of Lord Rama upon his return to Ayodhya. In Uttar Khand reasons for Ravana's birth have been described. It also contains the description of Sita's desertion by Rama. Desertion of Lakshmana. Coronation of Luv and Kush and departure of Rama to his original Vaikunth loka.

Lalitopakhyanam

It is the most important section of this Purana. The narration is written in the form of conversation between Hayagreeva and the sage Agastya. Hayagreeva in this context is a seer. There is a celestial of the same name. Who are they? We get the reply for this also in the text. There is a detailed description in the book establishing the harmonious synthesis of the aspects of the three deities Shiva, Vishnu and the Divine Mother. In the past several devotees used to daily recite Lalitopakhyana, the detailed story of Lalita. This pious story contains the inner meanings of the several technical terms of the spiritual science and the finer aspects of the Mantra Shastra (the science of holy chants). Let us enjoy the feast of nectar by listening to this pious story with deep devotion.

Penance of Agastya. Long ago, the mountain Vindhya (central India) started growing upward in gigantic proportion due to egoism. The sage Agastya decided to subdue the pride of Vindhya. For this purpose, he came from Varanasi (Uttara Pradesh, India) and settled in South India. By the divine presence of the sage Agastya, the entire South India gradually became prosperous and pious. Eventually the Kali Yuga started (As per the tradition of India, Kali Yuga is the fourth Age, the others being Kruta, Treta and Dvapara). In spite of the severe inspection of the sage Agastya, the evil traits of the Kali Yuga started sprouting slowly. Noting this trend, the sage felt sad and proceeded on a pilgrimage. The strange and unrighteous ways of the people made him quite unhappy. There was rampant selfishness and sensuousness prevalent everywhere. "How can these people attain liberation?" – This was his nagging grief. After reaching Kanchi (Tamil Nadu – South India) he was unable to bear the burden of the grief, and performed severe penance meditating on Varadaraja (The Best of the boon givers – a synonym of Vishnu). God's ways are

mysterious! His power of illusion is incomprehensible! Vishnu appeared to the sage in the form of Hayagreeva.

Agastya asked Hayagreeva "OhLord! What is the path of salvation to these ignorant people"?

Hayagreeva replied "There are two paths for this. They are:

a) After renouncing everything, one can attain the knowledge of the, attributeless aspect of God. This is a very difficult way.

b) The second method is to worship the Divine Mother who is the form of Vishnu with attributes. Even a sinner can do the worship. There is another advantage in this type. The devotee can simultaneously get enjoyment and salvation by following this path". Further, Vishnu ordered to the sage Agastya "You have to propagate this divine secret in the entire world".

The sage asked, "Lord Vishnu! Kindly narrate the story of Para Shakti (The UltimatePower, the Divine Mother) who is your aspect with attributes ".

At this stage, Vishnu asked sage Hayagreeva (born with the Lord's aspects) to tell the detailed story to Agastya.

"The Divine Mother emanated from meditation of Brahma (the Creator). Her name then was Prakruti (The nature). Mohini Avatara. For the second time, the Divine Mother manifested as Mohini at the time of the churning the ocean by the celestials and the demons (to obtain Amruta-nectar). Let us see how it happened.

Once upon a time, Indra (the Lord of the Heaven was overpowered by the pride of his prosperity. His reverence to even Shiva gradually diminished. Observing this, Shiva asked the sage Durvasa to meet Indra in the Heaven. The sage started taking the path of Gandharvas (the celestial singers), which was very beautiful. The sage appeared uglier than a beggar. Anyway he proceeded ahead pompously. On the way the sage saw a celestial lady holding a fragrant garland of divine flowers. The ugly looking sage asked the beautiful lady, "Where did you get this garland"?

She observed him keenly and realised that he was a sage. She prostrated to him and replied humbly "Sir! I am just now returning after doing the worship of the Divine Mother, who manifested and gave me this garland as Prasadam". Jumping joyously, the sage asked her to give the garland to him. She happily handed it over to the sage and, prostrated to him. The sage blessed her "May your devotion to the Divine mother be firm". Taking leave of the sage, she went away. By this incident, the sage realised that it was not difficult to others to recognise him, even if he was in any ugly appearance. He was satisfied with this thought and proceeded further.

After a while, he saw Indra riding the elephant Iravata. The sage approached Indra, who did not appear to recognise and prostrate to the sage. However, the sage did not get angry and said, "Indra! This is the garland given by the Divine Mother Herself. Take it. Saying so, the sage presented the garland to Indra. Indra didn't refuse. He received the garland with disgust and threw the same on the head of the elephant, which proceeded ahead. A little latter, the elephant threw down the garland with its trunk and trampled over it. Looking at this, the sage Durvasa became very furious and cursed Indra, "Oh! Egoistic fellow! You have not recognised me. Not only that. You have not even respected the Prasadam of the Divine mother. Due to this, May your prosperity vanish!" With these words, Indra's pride was humbled. He got down the elephant and prostrated to the feet of the angry sage Durvasa. However, the sage went away silently.

Then Indra's troubles started one by one. He saw bad omens in the Heaven. Afraid of them, Indra asked the sage Bruhaspati (the Spiritual Master of the celestials) to reveal the cause of the bad omens. The sage replied, "The effect of your sins follows you as a shadow. Saying so, the sage narrated a fine story.

Long long ago, there was a thief by name Vajra in Kanchipuram (Tamil Nadu, South India). He used to steal small things and gradually amassed large quantum of money. As the wealth accumulated considerably, he wanted to hide it safely and went to the nearby forest to do so. In a dense part of the forest, he dug a deep pit and secured the money there in. However, a hunter by name Veeradanta, sitting on a tall tree observed all this, quite unexpectedly. After the thief has left the place, the hunter dug out the pit and after taking only one tenth of the money, he covered the pit, without causing any doubt to anyone. The hunter's wife saw the money and knowing how her husband got it, she said, "It is customary that many Brahmanas visit the home of my parents. Whenever they saw me, they used to forecast "You will get rich quite suddenly. Their prediction came true now". The hunter Veeradanta

planned to purchase meat and wine with the money. However his wife said, "The Brahmana visitors of my parents' home used to tell something more. They cautioned that hard-earned money only will give durable enjoyment and that the easy money was sinful. Hence let us use this unexpected and unearned money for charities. After prolonged discussions, the wife's opinion won. Then Veeradanta selected a place of water scarcity and arranged the digging a big water tank for public use. While the work was in progress, further plans were made and accordingly, he started the construction of temples for Vishnu and Shiva by the side of the tank. When the projects were half way, the money was exhausted. Hence Veeradanta started spying to find out the several places at which the thief Vajra was hiding the stolen wealth. Without causing any doubt to the thief, the hunter used to take out money little by little from the pits and continued the construction without interruptions. Along with this, he started to donate the money. However the hunter did not use the money for himself or his family. Thus, constantly encouraged by his wife, his charities developed. The Brahmanas of Kanchi were glad and gave the titles "Dvijavarma" and "Shilavati" to the hunter and his wife. These titles eventually became their names in vogue. Some time later, the hunter planned and constructed a city. Instead of giving it his own name, the hunter named it as "Devaratapura", as a mark of respect to his guru "Devarata". After a few years, the hunter and his wife died at the same time. The messengers of Yama (The God of death and the Lord of Hell), and Shiva and Vishnu arrived to takeaway the Jivas (the subtle form of life of the dead). Their debate as to who can take the Jivas could not be settled. At that time, the sage Narada arrived there. He asked the three groups of messengers to stop the arguments and revealed another aspect of the code of righteousness thus, "The hunter has performed the deeds of merit (Punya) like charities, with the money stolen by him. Hence as per the rules of righteousness, he must move about in the form of a ghost until the death of all the owners of the stolen wealth. Hence none of you have the right to take away the Jiva. "Next, his wife was great. She didn't commit any sin. As she was a devotee of Shiva, the messengers of the Lord can take away her Jiva. "Listening to this ruling, Shilavati's Jiva sat down obstinately, saying "I won't go to Kailasha, the abode of Shiva, leaving my husband in the form of a ghost". She prayed to the sage Narada, "Sir! Kindly direct me what I have to do to unburden my husband's sins". Narada was very much pleased with her chastity and fidelity and gave initiation of Shiva mantra (chant) to her. By her penance, the husband and wife attained the grace of Shiva and were accepted to stay in Kailasha (Shiva's abode). Sometime later, the thief Vajra and the persons from whom he stole the money died. All the Jivas reached the Hell, the abode of Yama, the god of death, He asked all of them to assemble and said, "Though you did not intend to do the acts of Punya (merit), they were performed with your money. Hence you are eligible to stay in Kailasha (abode of Shiva) for sometime. Hence I ask you whether you choose to experience either the effect of Punya (merit) or Papa (sin) in the first instance. They replied in chorus "we opt to experience the effect of merit first. By doing so, we will have a chance of association with the pious which in turn will wipe out past sins". Yama felt glad by their choice and sent them all as the attendants of Dvijavarma at Kailasha. By his good association, all their sins were washed off and they settled in Kailasha happily.

Preaching of Bruhaspati. After narrating the story, Bruhaspati said, "Indra! Now you think of your sins". Indra once again prostrated to the sage and requested. "Sir! I am unable to realise my sins. Kindly give me details".

Bruhaspati replied "In the distant past, 'Diti', the second wife of Kashyapa gave birth to a son by name Danu and a daughter named Rupavati. Danu is the predecessor of the race of Danavas (demons). Rupavati was married to Brahma (the Creator). Her son was Vishwarupa. He did severe penance. He had many divine aspects. However he was a nephew of the demons. He was affectionate towards both the races – the celestials and the demons. After a while, Indra chose Vishwarupa as his Guru (at that time, Bruhaspati was not the Guru of the celestials). Indra expected that Vishwarupa would be partial towards the celestials and that he would destroy the demons. However Vishwarupa was friendly towards all. Observing this, Indra suspected that being a friend of the demons, Vishwarupa was harming the celestials. One day, Indra suddenly went to Vishwarupa and cut off all his three heads. By doing so, Indra was afflicted by the sin of Brahmahatya (killing Brahmana). Not only that. Aggrieved by the death of His son, Brahma (the Creator) cursed Indra. Terrified by these two (Brahmahatya and curse of Brahma), Indra accompanied by all the celestials, sought refuge at the feet of Vishnu, who contemplated deeply and allocated the effect of Indra's sins to the earth, the trees

and the women. As compensation, Vishnu gave the power that the pits of earth could be filled up, the power that even the trees once cut off could revive and the power of women to beget children. Thus Indra was relieved of the effect of the sin of Brahmahatya (killing a Brahmin). However, the curse of Brahma (the Creator) still persisted. Vishnu called for Brahma and requested Him on behalf of Indra for relief from the curse. Brahma thought over the same and said, "OK. For the present my curse won't take effect". Vishnu said nothing. Again Indra became prosperous. However, very soon his pride increased. This time, Indra was affected by the anger of Shiva and so he was cursed by the sage Durvasa".

Listening to all this, Indra recollected the past events and sadly asked Bruhaspati "Master! What have I to do now"?

When the guru was about to reply, a demon named Malaka invaded the Heaven with a huge army and seized the kingdom. Indra had to escape in a great hurry. He went straight to Brahma and prayed to Him for mercy, who also pitied Indra. However even the Creator could not decide what to do and approached Vishnu along with Indra and the celestials.

Vishnu thought of the problem deeply and advised them, "You churn the ocean to get the Goddess of prosperity".

For this purpose, Indra made reconciliation with the demons and taking their help, he and the celestials churned the ocean. During the churning, very valuable things emanated from the ocean. At last, Dhanvantari (the God of Healing) came out holding the pot of Amruta (nectar). Looking at him, the demons grabbed the pot and started running away with it. A bitter battle started between the celestials and the demons. There was utter confusion. Even Brahma and Shiva escaped and reached their abodes. Observing all this, Vishnu went to a secluded spot and started meditation of Sri Lalita Devi, who dwells within Him as the aspect of power. Due to this meditation he manifested as a form of Lalita Devi. Taking this incarnation as an embodiment of eroticism, Vishnu approached the celestials and demons. The celestials could realise the form as divine and auspicious. However, due to their predominating trait of Tamas (ignorance), the demons were enchanted by the beauty of the form and stopped fighting. She mesmerised them and took the pot of Amruta (nectar) from them, taking their consent to her to serve the nectar to all. She asked the celestials and the demons to sit in separate rows. She started to give the nectar to the celestials only first. Allured by her, the demons sat still stupefied. By the time the nectar was given to the celestials, the stock exhausted. She disappeared suddenly. The demons again started to fight with the celestials. However as the celestials have already drunk the nectar by then, the demons were defeated.

Thus, the Divine Mother who manifested and enchanted the demons was called MOHINI (the divine enchantress). Shiva, staying in Kailasha came to know of these events and wanted to note the specialty of the new form of Vishnu. Along with his consort Parvati, Shiva went to Vaikuntha, the abode of Vishnu and pressed Him to how the form of Mohini. Vishnu suddenly disappeared without saying yes or no. While Shiva was searching for Vishnu, he happened to reach a new place where he continued to search. There he heard the music of Veena. He saw a beautiful young lady. Unable to resist this infatuation, Shiva embraced her. At once a son was born. He was named SASTA (one who rules). He became a commander in Shiva's army. At once the lady disappeared. Shiva realised that she was none else than Mohini, a form of Vishnu. He applauded her beauty and returned to Kailasha along with Parvati. Thus the Divine Mother incarnated as Mohini and granted success of the activities of the celestials.

Agastya heard the story and said, "Hayagreeva! Kindly let me know in detail which form of Para Shakti (The Divine Mother, the Supreme Power) will bestow both food and salvation to the devotees in the Kali Yuga".

Hayagreeva replied, "Lalita Devi is the only Goddess who has the power to do so. Listen to her story". In the distant past, Sati Devi, a daughter of Daksha was married to Shiva. However gradually, Daksha developed hatred towards Shiva. Due to this ill will, Daksha intended to perform a Yaga (fire sacrifice) without making any offering to Shiva. He didn't invite even his daughter Sati Devi to the Yaga. She came to know of the forth-coming great Yaga to be done by her father. She didn't know other details. However, overjoyed by the news of the ritual her father was going to perform, he went to the Yaga, in spite of Shiva's disapproval of her visit. Sati Deha Tyaga (Self-immolation of Sati) Ignoring the natural affection to his daughter, Daksha insulted her and repeatedly abused Shiva. Unable to bear the insult to

Shiva, Sati Devi burnt her body in the fire created by her power of yoga. Knowing about this calamity, Shiva became furious. Creating the terrific Veerabhadra out of the locks of hair of His head, Shiva sent him to attack Daksha. Veerabhadra destroyed the hall of Yaga, swallowed even the Chakra (the circular weapon of Vishnu) and beheaded Daksha. The wives of Daksh prayed to Veerabhadra who was pacified and revived Daksha back to life by joining the head of a goat to the trunk. Daksha repented and prayed to Shiva for pardon. Sati Devi was born as the daughter of Himavanta (Himalaya Mountain) and Menaka, as the couple did penance for 150 million years with the intention to beget her as their child. The newborn was named Parvati (daughter of Parvata-mountain) and brought Her up with love and affection.

One day, the sage Narada visited Himavanta and said, "You are very fortunate. The Divine Mother is born as your daughter; Shiva is doing penance in your mountain range in his "Sthanu Ashrama" (abode of stones). After the departure of Sati Devi, He has become an ascetic. It will benefit you considerably if you send your daughter to serve Him". Himavanta's joy knew no bounds on hearing Narada's words. He went to the abode of Shiva along with his daughter. After taking Nandi's (the Ox which is the vehicle of Shiva) permission, he approached Shiva, worshipped Him and prayed to Him to allow Parvati to serve him. Shiva said, "OK. She may do so". Then onwards, Parvati used to render services to Shiva for hours together. However, Shiva used to be in a state of ecstasy of yoga continuously. Kama Dahana (Burning of Cupid)

This being so, a demon by name Taraka invaded and occupied the Heaven along with his army and started to hurt and pester the celestials. All of them approached Brahma for relief, who said, "The son born to Shiva and Parvati only can kill the demon. Hence you make such efforts that the marriage will be performed". Indra, the Lord of the celestials called for Manmatha (Cupid - the God of love). He praised Cupid and asked him to see that Shiva's ascetic attitude was lessened and that He would start to love Parvati.

Manmatha was exuberated by praises and agreed to do as directed. Rati devi, the spouse of Manmatha came to know of this new assignment and tried her best to dissuade cupid from embarking on the hazardous venture. In spite of it, Cupid proceeded to Shiva's abode "Sthanu Ashrama". There he suddenly created the alluring atmosphere of the spring season. The Pramathaganas (the armies of Shiva) were very much disturbed in their minds with the erotic feelings. Observing this, Nandi (Ox-the vehicle of Shiva) disciplined them. In the meantime, Cupid entered the abode of Shiva stealthily and saw Shiva seated in the state of ecstasy of meditation. The very sight of Shiva in the posture suddenly unnerved Cupid.

At the same moment, Parvati came there. Looking at Her, Cupid recovered his courage. While Parvati was getting up after bending low to prostrate to Shiva, Her uppergarment slipped a bit. Exactly at that moment, Manmatha aimed an arrow (of lust) on Shiva, whose mind was affected a bit. Observing this, Parvati felt a gush of joy inwardly. However Shiva analysed His feeling immediately and looked around to know why it happened so. Shiva saw Cupid hiding behind the bushes. At once, Shiva's third eye (in between the eyebrows) opened and the fire rushing there from reduced Cupid to ashes. Parvati closed her eyes out of fear. By the time She opened Her eyes in a moment, Shiva disappeared with all His attendants. Himavanta came there, consoled Her and took Her home. Rati devi wept bitterly due to the death of her husband Manmatha. Vasanta, the god of spring approached Rati devi, consoled her and reminded her of the curse of Brahma to Manmatha. Curse of Brahma to Manmatha.

Once upon a time, there were two demons by name Sunda and Upasunda, who were brothers. They did penance meditating on Brahma and obtained a strange boon that their death could not be caused by anyone else except by themselves only. They were very much fond of one another. Hence they expected that no mutual harm would be possible. Thereafter they created havoc by their terrific acts in the three worlds. All the celestials prayed to Brahma who thought of a strategy to destroy the demons. He accumulated the essence of beauty of all the fine things in the world and created a woman of exquisite beauty. As she was created with a gingelly aspect of beauty in everything, she was called Tilottama (Tila-gingelly; Uttama-Best) Her beauty enchanted even the celestials. Brahma checked up keenly whether her beauty was superb in all aspects. Manmatha, who happened to be there at that time, wanted to play a practical joke. Hence he aimed an arrow (of lust) at Brahma. Due to this, Brahma forgetting that she was His daughter chased her

lustily. As a last resort, Tilottama started running taking the form of a deer. Brahma also followed her in the form of a deer. The celestials were highly agitated by this untoward event. Observing this impending danger, Shiva manifested as a hunter and holding a bow and arrows came near Brahma who was in the form of a deer. Looking at the fierce form of Shiva, Brahma came to senses. He prostrated to His feet and prayed for pardon. By then, the celestials and Tilottama arrived there. Everyone was pacified. After taking Shiva's permission, the celestials sent Tilottamato meet Sunda and Upasunda looking at Tilottama going about in a garden, both Sunda and Upasunda competed to enjoy with her and at last the demons killed one another. Tilottama returned to Brahma, who felt happy and sent her to the Heaven with a permanent status as one of the Apsaras(celestial dancers).

After the entire affair was over, Brahma recollected what all had happened and sent for Manmatha and said "You fellow! Blinded by the power bestowed to you, how dare you aim your arrows (of lust) at one and all, disregarding their age? Do you intend to destroy the code of righteousness? I am saved of grievous sin due to the timely arrival and protection of Shiva. Hence, one day you will be burnt to ashes by the fire of Shiva's third eye. Beware!

"Hearing the curse, Rati and Manmatha were frightened and prayed to Brahma for relief of the curse. Brahma regained His composure and said, "The Divine Mother will manifest as Lalita devi. She will marry Shiva. After the marriage, She will revive Manmatha to life"

After narrating the story, Vasanta (the god of spring season) consoled Rati devi, saying, "Sister-in-law! It is a must for everyone, however great he is, to undergo the suffering of a curse. However as predicted by Brahma, my brother Manmatha will be revived to life soon. Until then, be bold and continue to pray to Lalita devi. Rati devi left the place and followed the advice.

Birth of Bhandasura. At this point of time, Chitrakarma, the commander of one of the Rudra Ganas (Gana = troupe) one day started toying with the ash of the burnt Manmatha and prepared a doll out of it. He took this doll to Lord Shiva. Lord Shiva's intentions are indeed unfathomable. As soon as the doll neared Lord Shiva, it sprang to life and the boy thus born prostrated before Lord Shiva and Chitrakarma. Chitrakarma was overwhelmed with joy. He gave the boy the Upadesha of Shata-Rudreya Mantra and asked him to undertake penance. When the penance reached the stage of fruition, Lord Shiva appeared before him. He asked Lord Shiva to grant him a special boon "Anyone who fights against me should immediately lose half of his strength and that strength should be added to my strength. None of the weapons of my opponents should be able to bind me" was his request. Immediately Lord Shiva granted the boon and added, "I am also bestowing on you the boon of ruling the kingdom for sixty thousand years". After giving these boons, Lord Shiva disappeared. He became surprised and a bit apprehensive by the words of Lord Shiva. But soon he forgot it.

Lord Brahma, who was witnessing all this, grew frustrated and swore "Bhand" "Bhand" (meaning shame, shame). From then on, he got the name "Bhanda". Because of his qualities he became an Asura (demon) and entered the domain of Asuras. This is how he got the name 'Bhandasura'.

In the mean time, from the remnants of the ash of Manmatha were born two demons – Vishukra and Vishanga. These two became the main brothers of Bhandasura. In addition, thousands of Rakshasas (demons) were born out of the ash of Manmatha. All of them became followers of Bhandasura. They formed a strong army of 300 Akshouhinis (one Akshouhini consists of 21870 elephants, 65610 horses and 109350 soldiers). Having come to know about the birth of thousands of Rakshasas, Shukracharya (the guru of Rakshasas) came there and assumed the role of the Guru for all those Rakshasas and initiated them to undertake regular Anushtanas (daily rituals). He also summoned Maya, the architect-builder of demons and asked him to create a new city in the province of Mahendra Mountains. He named the city as 'Shoonyaka Pattana'

Shukracharya asked all the demons to move to the new city. He crowned Bhandasura as the king of the newly formed kingdom and made Vishukra and Vishanga the Yuvarajas (princes) of that kingdom. Bhandasura had four wives. 1. Sammohini, 2. Kumudini, 3. Chitrangi 4. Sundari. Under the guidance of Shukracharya, activities like fire sacrifices, Vedic education and penance went on uninterruptedly in every house.

Tormenting of the three worlds: When the kingdom was well established,

Bhandasura called for a meeting of his brothers and ministers and said:

A) Devatas (Gods) are our enemies. As long as Manmatha was alive, their lineage continued without any problems. They also enjoyed many pleasures.

B) Now, because of our luck, we have taken birth from the ashes of Manmatha. The gods are trying to see that Manmatha is born again. We should not allow that to happen. Before they try anything like that, we should kill the Devatas.

C) But, if we go in our present form, we can not win. Let us therefore assume the form of air and enter their bodies. D) After having so entered their bodies, let us dry up their body fluids, especially the semen.

E) If semen dries up, the strength of other tissues and organs will automatically diminish. Then they will automatically be annihilated.

F) Let us torment the beings of all the three worlds by entering their bodies in the form of air and by drying up their body fluids.

Hearing this, the entire army of the demons cheered with joy. Without wasting much time, Bhandasura and his army of 1000 Akshouhinis assumed the invisible form of air and entered the heaven. First of all, they entered the minds of the angels and dried up their mental faculties. Subsequently they entered the face of the angels, robbed them of their beauty and made them ugly looking. All the women and men in the heaven became impotent and sterile. Not only that, their love for one another was also lost. They lost enthusiasm to do anything. Even the plants and animals suffered the same fate.

Vishukra, along with his troupes entered Bhooloka (earth) and meted out the same treatment to the beings there. People on the planet earth stopped smiling. They lost all happiness. No one had any respect for another. No one thought of helping the other. They lost interest in their activities. The situation was stone-like, devoid of any life and feelings.

Vishanga, along with his troupes entered Rasaatala (one of the seven netherworlds). He created similar havoc there also. In the Naga Loka (land of serpents) everyone became afflicted with grief for no apparent reason. Everyone started hating everyone else. Everyone became drained of energy and potency. Rasa, the fluid principle is the basis for the accomplishment of the four-fold aims of life (Purusharthas). Let us see how.

A. Rasa itself is the form of Paramatma, the Almighty.

B. From Rasa are created Shukla (sperm) and Shonita (ovum). These two are collectively called as Veerya.

C. From Veerya comes Kanti (radiance), Utsaaha (enthusiasm), Ullasa(happiness), Dharma (righteousness), Daya (compassion), Preeti (love), Buddhi (intellectual capabilities), Vikasa (development), Parakrama (valour) Shastra Vijnana (scientific knowledge), Kala Asakti (interest in arts), Soundarya Drishti (proper concept of beauty) etc.

D. In plants, the Rasa enhances the fire energy, which is hidden in them. Only when the fire energy is harnessed, the plants can branch out and bear flowers and fruits. Because of this fire principle, the dried logs catch fire easily and burn.

E. The Vedas have declared that beings can experience happiness only if Rasais present. F. Rasa is nothing but Prana (vital energy). G. Having known all these secrets, Bhandasura devised the plan of entering the bodies of all beings in the form of air and drying them up.

Vasanta, the close friend and associate of Manmatha observed this immediately and consoled Rati (Manmatha's wife). He said "Even the sun, the moon and the stars have lost their brilliance. Even Goddess Parvati seems to have become dull and has engaged in Tapas. Therefore, the day when your dead husband will come to life again is not very far. That day will come very soon. So, stop grieving." On hearing this, Rati Devi prepared to undertake penance.

In the heaven, all the Devatas including Brahma, could not comprehend what was going on and what had caused the situation. Not knowing the remedy for their hardship, they approached Lord Sri Hari. When they finally reached the abode of Lord Sri Hari, they saw that even He was sitting still with his eyes closed. It appeared as though He was merged in the bliss of Sushupti.

After the angels praised His glory for a long time, Lord Sri Hari slowly opened His eyes. "What is this? Why are you all looking drained of your energies?" asked Lord Sri Hari. He called everyone by their names and said:

- A. Your present condition is due to the invisible foul play of Bhandasura.
- B. Even I have lost the affinity for Goddess Lakshmi. What to say about other lesser beings?
- C. Myself, Brahma and Rudra are Karana Purushas (causal beings for the manifest creation). Even then, because we are also inhabiting this creation, even we can not escape the torture of Bhandasura. D. There is however one Almighty God who is beyond this manifest Brahmanda. He is called Maha Shambhu. Parashakti is constantly in His Company.
- E. He is devoid of form. He is not dependent on anything. He has nomodifications. He is greater than the greatest. He is the ultimate.
- F. He is not influenced by the foul play of Bhandasura, who is born from the ashes of Manmatha. G. He can rescue us from our difficulties. Therefore, let us all take refuge in Him and praise Him. Follow me.

So saying, Sri Hari led all the angels to the brim of the Brahmanda (Universe). There was a huge wall like fence there. The angels summoned the celestial elephants to break the wall. After toiling continuously for one year, a breach was formed in the wall. After passing through the breach, they saw Chinmaya Akasha, which was Niralamba (independent), Nirajnana (untainted) and which was devoid of the five elements. They all stood in that Chinmaya Akasha and sang the glory of Maha Shambhu, who was of the form of Chidakasha. Then Maha Shambhu appeared before them. He was dark like clouds. He had two hands. He was holding a Shoola (spear) in one hand and a Kapala (skull) in the other. He had three eyes. Parashakti also appeared before them. She was holding Aksha Mala (rosary of beads) and Pustaka (book) in Her hands. She was bright and cool like the moon.

The great Maha Shambhu smiled and said

- A. I am aware why you have all come here.
- B. Pralaya (destruction) is of three types. (i) Avaantara Pralaya (ii) Maha Pralaya and (iii) Kama Pralaya.
- C. I am the one who is responsible to rescue the world from Maha Pralaya. Vishnu is the one who rescues from Aavantara Pralaya. It is Lalita Parameshwari who rescues from Kama Pralaya.
- D. These three kinds of Pralaya take place in a cyclic pattern in every Kalpa. Now, Kaamika Pralaya has taken place because of the destruction of Kama and subsequently due to the actions of Bhandasura.
- E. Only Lalita Devi can rescue from this situation. Parashakti alone can create another Lalita Devi. Therefore, take shelter in her. Beg her to help you.
- Hearing this, the Devatas did not know what to do. They again prayed to Maha Shambhu to teach them the method of appeasing Parashakti.

Maha Shambhu explained:

- A. This is called as Maha Yaga. (great fire sacrifice)
- B. I am (assuming the form of Vayu) the Hota (the priest who makes the offerings in a Homa) in this Yaga (fire sacrifice).
- C. My Chidagni itself is the fire in this Yaga.
- D. The last of the seven seas, i.e., Jala Samudra (Water Sea) has now dried up. The huge pit so formed itself is the Homa Kunda (fire pit where Homa is performed)
- E. The remaining six great oceans constitute the six drops of ghee which is used as offering.
- F. Srishti (creation) is of five types (i) Manasa Srishti (ii) Jarayavee Srishti (creation-taking place through the womb.
- G. Human beings), (iii) Anda Srishti (creation taking place through eggs) (iv) Swedaja Srishti (creation taking place through sweat) and (v) Udbhijja Srishti (creation taking place by sprouting). These five Srishtis (creations) are the sacrifice animals in this Maya Yaga. G. Bhoomi (land), Parvata (mountains), Jala (water), Vayu (air) and Akasha (space) these five are the substances used in this fire sacrifice. Agni element (one of the five elements) being a part of my Chidagni can not be a substance to be offered.
- H. At the end of this great fire sacrifice, all of you (the performers of the Yaga) should jump in to the Homa Kunda (fire pit). While doing so, you must possess absolute devotion.

I. Then, Lalita Parameshwari will manifest.

J. She will be seated in a chariot called Chakra Raja Ratha.

K. She will create Parabrahma in the name of Kameshwara and will have Him as Her consort.

L. This couple will re-create the entire universe, which will turn out to be more beautiful than the previous creation.

M. Lalita Parameshwari will bring Manmatha back to life.

N. She will create four weapons, namely (i) Ikshu Dhanus – a bow of sugarcane (Mano roopekshu kodanda – is one of the 1000 names of Goddess Lalita) (ii) five Pushpa Banas – flower arrows (Pancha tanmatrasaayaka is one of the 1000 names), (iii) Paasha – noose (Raaga svaroopapaashaadhyaa – is one of the 1000 names of Lalita) and (iv) Ankusha (a hook, especially an elephant driver's hook) (Krodha-akaaran kushojjala is one of the descriptions of Lalita)

O. With the help of these weapons, she will destroy Bhandasura.

P. She will bring Manmatha back to life.

Q. She will give you fresh bodies.

R. If you all agree, I will begin this great sacrifice myself.

The angels became very pleased and begged Maha Shambhu to be the Hota and carry on the sacrifice. Parashakti and Maha Shambhu disappeared. The angels also returned to their abode.

After some time, Maha Shambhunatha, accompanied by Parashakti started chanting the Lalita Maha Mantra and entered the Universe in the form of the seven-layered Vayu (air). Parashakti assumed the form of His Kriya Shakti (energy of action). With the help of Kriya Shakti, Vayu blew the Jala Samudra with all his energy. The Jala Samudra (water ocean) became totally dry. In the pit thus formed He kindled the Chidagni with the help of fire emanating from the third eye. This Agni raged from the Patala (a region in the nether-world) to the Brahma Loka. He decorated the periphery of the Homa Kunda with the stars just as one decorates a sacrificial fire pit with flowers. After this, he performed the Yaga as ordained by the Vedas. He used the Pralaya Meghas (clouds appearing during Pralaya), namely Pushkala and Aavartakaas Srik and Sruva (the two spoons which are used to offer ghee in fire worship). As the Homa progressed, the Chidagni emanating from it spread to vast area. He then offered the first six oceans and then the five-fold creations to this Agni. In the end, the gods too decorated themselves and sat on the Srik and Sruva, ready to be offered to Agni. Maha Shambhunatha offered them to Agni. After this, Maha Shambhunatha discarded his Vayu form and assumed his real form. He then chanted 8 special mantras and performed 8 Homas.

Manifestation of Lalita Devi. At the end of the Homa, Lalita Devi came out of the Chidagni Homa Kunda, seated on a special chariot called "Chakra Raja Ratha". Therefore, we find the descriptions such as "Chidagnikunda sambhoota" "Deva kaarya samudyataa" and "Chakra Raja Rathaa Roodha Sarvaayudha Parishkritaa" in Lalita Sahasranama.

The Sri Chakra Raja Ratha had the following dimensions:

A. Width 4 Yojanas (1 Yojana is approximately 9 miles)

B. Height 10 Yojanas

C. Parvas (landings) 9 in number

D. Chakras (wheels) – the four Vedas.

E. Horses – the four-fold aims (Purusharthas)

F. Flag absolute bliss.

G. The seat at the topmost landing is the Bindu Peetha.

H. Form - of the form of Meru Prastara.

I. The material that was used to make this was 'Tejas'.

The Lalita Parameshwari so manifested, created a male form from within Herself. His name was Kameshwara. By her power of will, she created 4 different weapons. They were (i) Ikshu Dhanus (ii) Five arrows, (iii) Pasha (noose) and 4 Ankusha (a special hook). She held all these weapons in her hands. We see the description – "Chaturbahu samanvitaa" in the Lalita Sahasranama. She was shining like the morning sun, with crimson color. (Udyad bhanusahasraabhaa is a description found

in Lalita Sahasranama). Her beauty was full in all aspects. (Sarvarunaanavadyangee sarvaabharanabhooshitaa – Lalita Sahasranama). She always appears as though she is 16 years of age. (Nityaa shodashikaaropaa is a description in Lalita Sahasranama. This description has two meanings. One meaning is that she always appears as one who is sixteen years of age. The other meaning is, there are 16 Nityaa Devis. She is of the form of these 16 Nityaa Devis. Maha Shambhunatha praised Her in many ways. Order of Creation. She extended Herself in both male and female forms and continued the process of creation.

A. From the left eye, which was of the nature of Soma (moon) came Brahma and Lakshmi Devi.

B. From the right eye, which was of the nature of Soorya (sun) came Vishnu and Parvati.

C. From the third eye, which was of the nature of Agni (fire), came Rudra and Sarasvati.

D. Lakshmi & Vishnu, Shiva & Parvati and Brahma & Sarasvati became couples.

E. Lalita Devi directed them to continue the process of Creation. She herself continued to create certain things. (i) From her long hair she created darkness. (ii) From her eyes, she created the sun, the moon and the fire. (iii) From the pendent hanging in front of her forehead came the stars (iv) From the chain above her forehead came the nine planets. (v) From the eyebrows, she created the penal code. (vi) From her breath, she created the Vedas. (vii) From her speech, she created poetry and plays. (viii) From her chin she created the Vedangas. (ix) From the three lines in her neck, she created various Shaastras. (x) From her breasts, she created mountains. (xi) From her mind, she created the power of bliss. (xii) From her fingernails, she created the 10 incarnations of Vishnu. (xiii) From her palms, she created the Sandhyas. (xiv) She created other things as narrated in the Purusha Sookta. (xv) From her heart, she created Baalaa Devi. (xvi) From her intellect, she created Shyamala Devi. (xvii) From her ego, she created Vaaraahi Devi. (xviii) From her smile, she created Vighneshwara. (xix) From the Ankusha (a special hook), she created Sampatkaree Devi. (xx) From the noose, she created Ashwaa Roodha Devi. (xxi) From her cheeks, she created Nakuleshvari Devi. (xxii) From her Kundalini Shakti, she created Gayatri. (xxiii) From the eight wheels of the Chakra Raja chariot, she created 8 Devatas. (xxiv) In the 9th landing, in the Bindu Peetha, she herself was seated. (xxv) Afterwards, she created the Devatas who would protect the Chakra Rajachariot.

After having thus completed the great creation, Lalita Devi requested her consort, Shiva Kama Sundara to create the Shiva Chakra. He immediately brought out a big humming sound and from this, the Shiva Chakra Devatas numbering 23 manifested. Later, Lalita Devi crowned Shyamala Devi as the prime minister. Therefore Shyamala Devi is called Mantrini Devi. Lalita Devi handed over the finger ring to Mantrini Devi.

She made Vaartaalee Devi the chief of her army. Therefore Vaartaalee Devi is also called as Dandanaathaa Devi. She is also called as Vaaraahee Devi. Lalita Devi created a mace (a weapon) from her eye brows and gave it to Dandanathaa Devi. After this, Lalita Devi created two chariots from her chariot and gave them to Mantrini Devi and Dandanatha Devi. Mantrini Devi's chariot is called "Geya Chakra Ratha". This chariot used to make musical sounds whenever it moved. Dandanatha Devi's chariot is called "Kiri Chakra Ratha". Later, Lalita Devi hummed with rage. From this hum, 64000000 Yoginis were born. Another 64000000 Bhairavas were also born. Innumerable Shakti Senas (armies) were also created by her hum.

Devi vijaya yatra (Devi's victory procession) Later Lalita devi, making the noise emanating from the four oceans as the drums and accompanied with several other instruments proceeded for the battle against Bhandasura. From Lalitha devi's Ankusham (=spear), 'Sampat karidevi', came out along with crores and crores of elephants and started following Lalita devi (sapatkarisamarudha sindhura vraja seva). Sampatkari Devi was sitting on the elephant named 'Ranakolahalam' (=battlebustle, battle uproar). From Lalita devi's Pasham (=whip) arose Ashwaroodha devi along with a big army of horses and was moving in front of Lalita devi. (ashwarudhadhishtishtaswa koti kotibhiravruta). The horse carrying Ashwaroodha devi was named 'Aparajitam' (=one which cannot be defeated). Later, commander of the army Dandanatha devi played the drums to start marching. As the march started Dandanatha devi got down from her chariot and sat down on the lion. The lion is named 'Vajraghosham' (kirichakra ratha rudha damdanadhapuraskruta).

All her soldiers started praising her by twelve different names. (Panchami dandanatha cha sakjeta samayeshwaritatha samaya sakjeta varahi potrini tathavartali cha maha sena pyajna chakreshwari tathaarighni cheti samproktam nama dwadasakam yune). Later Mantrini devi played the drums of marching. Her soldiers were mainly decorated sensuously. They were playing veenas and singing. Mantrini devi was moving in her Geyachakra ratha (circle of army formed by singers) [geyachakra ratha rudha mantrini parisevita). She was being praised by sixteen names. (Sangeeta yogini shyama shyamala mantra nayikamantrini sachiveshani pradhaneshi shukapriyavina vati vainiki cha mudrini priyakapriyanipapriya kadambeshi kadamba vanavasinisadamada cha namani shodashaitaini kumbhaja) One who recites this strotra can conquer all the three worlds.

Then, from the bird in the hands of Mantrini devi, appeared god Dhanurveda with a spectacular bow in his hand and said "Mother! this bow is called chitrajeevam. This quiver is akshaya (=one which is unlimited, fills up spontaneously). Please accept them for demolishing the demons." Now Lalita devi started moving with sugarcane, bow, arrows, spear and whip in the 'srichakraraja'chariot. She is being praised with 25 names - simhasanesi lalitha maharajni varankusha sundari chakranathacha samrajni chakrini rathachakreshwari mahadevi kameshi parameshwari kamaraja priyakamakotika chakravartini mahavidya shivananga vallabha sarvapatalakulanatha amnayanatha sarvamnaya nivasinishringara nayika cheti panchavimshati namabhih. One who recites this stotra attains ashta siddhi (8 spiritual accomplishments) Bhandasura vadhodyukta shaktisena samanvita in Lalita sahasranama stotram means one who is ready with her army (shakti sena) to annihilate Bhandasura.

Bhanda's war preparation: While Lalita devi was proceeding for the war, many bad omens were observed in Bhanda's 'Shunyaka' town. Bhandasura called upon an urgent meeting along with his brothers Vishukra and Vishanga to assess and evaluate the situation. In the meeting Vishukra spoke thus:

- a.) All gods have burnt themselves by jumping into fire, out of despair.
- b.) From that fire arose mother goddess, who rejuvenated all gods
- c.) She is coming for a war with us, along with an army of women
- d.) Those gods are trying to cut stones using tender leaves
- e.) Even then we should not neglect that woman. We must send our army immediately.

Vishanga said:

- a.) Any work should only be done after properly thinking about it.
- b.) First we must send spies and see how powerful their army is.
- c.) We must not under estimate the enemies army.
- d.) In the past Hiranyakashipa was killed by an animal.
- e.) Sumbha and Nishumbha were killed by a woman.
- f.) So, we must get more information about her
- g.) Who is she ? Who is supporting or protecting her? What does she want? All these queries should be answered.

Listening to this Bhandasura shuddered at the proposal with a sarcastic grin. "Even if all the gods are behind her, we have nothing to fear. Do not entertain such useless thoughts and spoil your mind".

Immediately Bhandasura ordered 'Kutilaksha', Commander-in-chief of his army, to protect the fort. He ordered the priests and ministers to perform abhichara (black magic) homa. He ordered Lalita to be dragged to him holding her hair. Now, the demons played the war drums. Kutilaksha sent the first batch of army with demon Durmada as the commander..At Shunyapura Kutilaksha made arrangements for protection - Eastern entry _ Tala jangha, Southern entry - Tala bhujja, Western entry -- Talagriva, Northern entry - Tala ketu were placed along with 10 akshohini army each. For each corner of the town another 10 akshohini was allocated for protection.

Shakti senas's uproar. Durmada was confronted by Sampatkari devi and her army of elephants (who arose from Lalita devi's spear). Realising that his army was being defeated Durmada himself came for the war seated on a camel. Sampatkari devi who was seated on 'Ranakolahala' her elephant, faced him. In the ferocious battle Durmada was able to destroy one gem from the crown of Sampatkari devi. Angry with this, Sampatkari devi killed Durmada with her arrows which pierced his heart.

With that the remaining demons fled back to their town out of fear.

Listening to this Bhandasura was very angry and sent Durmada's elder brother Kurunda for battle. He is an expert in maya yuddha (war using mystical powers). Full of vengeance he attacked Sampatkari devi. In the meanwhile Ashwarudha devi who had taken birth from Lalita devi's whip came forward and pleaded Sampatkari devi to give her a chance to fight with this demon. Now Ashwarudha devi along with her army pounced upon Kurunda. Ashwarudha devi mounted on 'Aparajita' was herself leading the army. In that battle she killed Kurunda by piercing his chest with her spear. Remaining demons fled for their lives.

Bhanda became furious. He sent a huge army this time (100 akshohini) along with 5 commanders. They materialised serpent gods by name 'Ranashambari' which attacked shaktisena. The demons had previously defeated gods using these mystic powers. Crores and crores of serpents, which arose from the serpent gods, started torturing the shaktisena. They were taking birth again and again even after being killed a number of times. Then Nakuli devi mounted on garuda came to the battlefield. From her mouth came out 32 crores of mongooses. These mongooses started gobbling up all the newborn serpents immediately after birth. Then Nakuli devi killed Ranashambari with Garudastram. All the five commanders now attacked Nakuli devi. Nakuli devi's mongoose army attacked them from the rear. In that ferocious battle Nakuli devi who was mounted on Garuda was making aerial strikes on the demons who were not able to catch her. She killed the five commanders by chopping of their heads.

Bhanda after listening to this sent Valahaka and other seven commanders along with 300 akshohini army. These seven demons are sons of demoness named Kikasa. In the past they obtained a boon from sun god that at the time of war sun would reside in their eyes. As soon as these demons entered the battlefield the shakti sena army started becoming blindfolded and incapacitated unable to face the brilliance of their eyes. Demons started becoming ferocious. Immediately the bodyguard of Dandanatha devi –named Tiraskarinika devi, entered the battle field mounted on an aeroplane named 'Tamoliptam'. At the order of Damdanatha devi she discharged an arrow named 'Andhanastra' and the seven commanders were forced to close their eyes. Now shakti sena started pouncing back. Keeping Tiraskarinika devi in the forefront, other gods killed the seven commanders. With this blow Bhandasura lost his senses. He called upon his two brothers for a discussion.

In that meeting it was decided that Vishanga would attack devi's army from its rear side in a treacherous way (This is called Parshti grahamu). This decision was taken because they got information from their spies that Lalita devi was having less army and protection at her rear end and it was easier for them to approach Lalita devi directly and attack her, if they approached from the rear. After the first day's war, at dusk, Vishanga with a small army proceeded to the rear of Lalita devi's army noiselessly without any drums. By then Lalita devi's army was moving westward. Vishanga along with his army moved north wards and then turned to reach eastern side. He was able to see Srichakraraja chariot very near to him. Lalita devi was looking forward observing the movement of the army. She was not having much army close to her. Taking this opportunity Vishanga attacked devi's chariot from the rear, all of a sudden.

Anima and other gods who were present there were taken back at this sudden attack but quickly recovered themselves and prepared for a counter fight. Exactly at the same time Kutilaksha along with ten akshohini army attacked from the front side. Seeing attack from both ends Lalita devi was a little angry. In the mean while, struck by an arrow from Vishanga, the fan present in Lalita devi's hand fell down and broke. Seeing this Tithidevatas got very angry. They went and requested Lalita devithat Vahnivasini and Jwalamalini nitya devas have property and capacity of self illumination. If they glow then the demons who are in the dark will all become visible. With the permission of Lalita devi, Vahnivasini and Jwalamalini devis started glowing like fireballs. All the demons who were hiding in darkness now became visible. Now the 16 nitya devi's became outrageous and attacked Vishanga's army. All the commanders in the demons army died. Wounded all over the body Vishanga fled for his life shamelessly. Even Kutilaksha who attacked from the front also fled. (In Lalita sahasranama - nityaparakrama topa nirikshana samatsuka =seeing the valour of nityadevatas, Lalita devi was very pleased). Mantrini devi and Dandanatha devi felt unhappy about this unprecedented attack in the night They felt very sorry that their arrangements of protection were not up to the mark. Agni prakara (compound wall made of fire). Both of them went to Lalita devi, expressed sorry for what had

happened and made arrangements for protection. At the instance of Lalita devi, Jwalamalini devi made a compound wall of fire around the devi's army. The fire wall is 100 yojana wide and 30 yojana tall. (1 yojana is approximately 8 miles). At the southern end of fire wall is a 1 yojana long entry, to enable devi's army to go out and fight because Shunyapuram is facing this end. (L.S.N—jwalamalini kashipta vahniprakaramadhyaga) Stambhini devi a member of Dandanatha devi family along with 20 akshohinisenas was protecting this entry point. She is also called Vighna devi. By then it was dawn.

Knowing all this news Bhandasura was in despair and started thinking what to do. This time he sent all his 30 sons for the war. After listening to this news Lalita devi's daughter Baladevi wanted to fight these demons herself. Baladevi is the only daughter of Lalita devi. She resembles Lalita devi very much but is always only years old. She stays permanently with her mother. Baladevi approached her mother and requested for permission to fight in the battlefield. At the outset Lalita devi denied but looking at the courage and will power exhibited by Bala devi she ultimately gave permission. Seeing Bala devi coming for the war Mantrini and Dandanayaka were astonished and they stood as her body guards. Now Baladevi started ferocious fighting with Bhandasura's sons. Every one was surprised at her valor. Whole of the second day Baladevi fought. That evening she shot 30 arrows at a time and killed the 30 sons of Bhandasura.

Lalita devi was very happy and she embraced her daughter (Bhandasura putra vadhodyukta bala vikrama nandita).

Bhandasura was grief stricken. Desperately he himself started off for the war. Vishukra and Vishanga pacified Bhandasura.

Vighnayentra nashnam (Destruction of the mystic symbol of obstacles). Now Bhandasura sent Vishukra to the warfront. In the darkness Vishukra approached the Vahniprakara (firewall) –on a flat stone he drew a mystic symbol and performed some black magic. He then threw that mystic symbol forcefully. It fell in the firewall at some point. With the effect of that yantra (mystic symbol) laziness crept into the minds of the devi's army. Some started arguing that war itself was wrong. (b.) Some said, "Why should we fight on behalf of the gods". (c.) Some said, "Who is this Lalita devi? Who has given her superior ship over us?" (d.) Some said, "If all of us together decline not to fight what can Lalita devi do?" (e.) All of them fell into sleep of ignorance. After midnight Vishukra along with 30 akshohini sena surrounded the fire barrier. Even then none of the members of shakti sena moved under the influence of the ignorance caused by the Vighna yantra. However, Vighnayentra was not able to affect Mantrini and Dandanatha. But they were both very sad worried seeing the state of their army. Not knowing what to do they went and enquired Lalita devi. Then Lalita devi looked at the Kameshwara's face and passed a gentle smile. From her smile Ganapathi took birth. He immediately searched in the firewall and noticed the 'vighnayentra shila' at one place. He broke the shila into pieces and powder with his tooth. (kameshwaramukhaloka kalpita sri ganeshwara Mahaganesh nirbhinna vighnayentra praharsita). With that shaktisena's ignorance and sleep was dispelled, they immediately got ready for the war. Now Vighneswara along with this army came out of the fire barrier and started fighting with Vishukra.

Vishukra sent Gajasura to attack him but soon Gajasura was slayed. Seeing this Vishukra ran away.

Annihilation of Vishukra and Vishanga. After discussing with Bhandasura, Vishukra came back to war, along with his brother Vishanga and son-in-law. With this the third day war had started. Mantrini and Dandanatha both started to fight simultaneously. In the front was Dandanatha devi mounted on her kirichakra ratha with her plough weapon (halayudha) swirling it rapidly. Behind her was Mantrini devi mounted on Geyachakra ratha as an archer with bow and arrows. Dandanatha devi attacked Vishungas. Mantrini devi confronted Vishukra. Ashwarudha, Sampatkari and others attacked the son-in-law of the demons who had come. The army of the demons started slackening. Noticing this Vishukra discharged Trushastram (weapon which produces thirst). Shaktisena's army started to experience intense thirst. Then Dandanatha devi invited 'Madyasamudra' (=ocean of liquor) devata from her kirichakra and quenched their thirst. Madyasamudra deva showered liquor rains. With that the army quenched their thirst and rejuvenated. By sunset most of the demons including Bhandasura's son-in-law had died. Then Shyamala devi (Mantrini) fought with Vishukra and killed him with 'Brahmashironamakashtra' (a powerful weapon named brahmashira). Dandanatha devi (Potrini) killed Vishanga with her plough weapon and pestle. However in Lalita sahasranama it is mentioned that

Vishukra was killed by Varahi and Vishanga was killed by Mantrini-Mantrinyamba. Virachita, Vishanga, Vadhatoshita, Vishukra, Prana, Harana, Varahiveryanandita. By then it was past midnight.

Only Kutilaksha, the commander in chief, was left over to console Bhandasura. Bhandasura along with Kutilaksha started towards the battlefield. 2185 akshohini army along with 40 commanders followed him.

A.) He boarded a chariot named 'Aabhilamu' (=dreadful). It is dragged by 1000 lions instead of horses.

B.) His sword is named Yatana (=torture in hell).

Noticing this Lalita devi herself started moving in her Srichakra raja ratha towards the warfront. Behind her was Mantrini in the Geyachakra ratha followed by Potrini in kirichakraratha. Other shakti deities followed her in crores. In the usage of sastra's (mystic weapons) and pratyastra (corresponding neutralising weapons), none of them were drawn aback (LSN—Bhandasurendra nirmukta shastra pratyastra varshini)

Now Bhandasura by his mystical powers regenerated Madhukaitabha, Raktabija and other old demons. Then Lalita devi made a violent frenzied laughter—Durga devi and other deities described in chandi saptashati were born and slayed these demons. Now Bhandasura generated Somaka and other demons. Then Lalita devi generated the 10 incarnations of Vishnu from the finger tips of her hands (LSN—Karanguli nakhotpanna narayana dasakrutih). Sun was about to set. Lalita devi decided not to delay any more. She then discharged Narayana astra and Pashupata astra and destroyed the demons and their commanders who were all turned into ashes (Mahapashupatastragni nirdagdhasura sainyaka). Now Bhandasura was the only one left. Lalita devi discharged the Mahakameshwarastra and annihilated Bhandasura. Immediately his shunyaka town got burnt down. (Kameshwarastra nirdagdhasabhandasura sunyaka).

Gods proclaimed victory of Lalita devi on the drums and they showered flowers, lighted camphor blazes and shouted victory slogans.

Kama sanjeevanam (rebirth of kama). Brahma, Vishnu, Indra and other gods praised Lalita devi's grandeur (LSN—Brahmopendra mahendradi deva samstuta vaibhava). In that praise they proclaimed thus:

A.) Mother! Bhandasura is dead but his friend Taraka is still alive to trouble us.

B.) To annihilate him Shiva must have a son

C.) We were trying for the same but in the mean while Manmadha (god of love) died and all these events happened

D.) Therefore kindly give rebirth to Manmadha and perform the marriage of Shiva and Parvathi.

Lalita devi smiled compassionately and looked at Kameshwara. From her looks Manmadha took rebirth. (Haranetragni sandagdha amasanjeevanaushadhih - meaning Lalita devi is the sacred herb sajeevini which gave rebirth to Manmadha who was destroyed by the fire from Shiva's eye). Rati and Manmadha prostrated to the mother goddess and praised her.

The mother goddess blessed them and instructed:

A.) Manmadha! Now you need not fear

B.) Go once again and cast your magical arrow on Shiva

C.) Shiva will loose to you and will marry Parvathi

D.) With my blessings Shiva will do you no harm.

E.) From now on you can enter every one's body and cause aesthetic/ sensuous pleasures to them.

F.) Protect my devotees.

At the instructions of mother goddess Manmadha with his family went and cast his magic charm on Shiva. This time Shiva left renunciation and started searching vehemently for parvathi. Then Manmadha cast magical arrows on Parvati also. Shiva was very pleased with parvathi's penance. He appeared before her, granted a boon and married her. Kumaraswamy was born to Shiva and Parvathi. He became the commander of Gods army and annihilated Tarakasura. He then married Devasena devi, the daughter of Indra.

After helping all the gods Manmadha left to Sripura to serve goddess Lalita devi.

Sripura varnanam (description of Sripura) What does Sripura mean? After the annihilation of Bhandasura, Trimurtis called upon the cosmic architect Viswakarma and the architect of demons Maya , and instructed them to construct 16 palaces in 16 kshetras (sacred places) for the residence of Lalita & Shiva Kameswara. Meru and other gigantic mountains (9) Jalasamudra and other oceans (7) – total 16 Kshetras. The palatial buildings of mother goddess located in these kshetras are called Sripura. Wherever a Sripura is located , its dimensions are like this.

1.) Mount Meru has 4 peaks One on the eastern side, one on north west, one on the south west. Each is 100 yojanas tall and 100 yojanas wide these are trimurtis worlds. In the center of these is the fourth, which is 400 yojanas tall and 400 yojanas wide.

2.) Sripura is on the Middle peak. Sripura has got metallic compound walls 7 in number they are square shaped. Each wall is separated from the next one by one a distance of 7 yojanas.1. Kalayasa (iron) wall – The perimeter of this wall is 16 thousand yojanas.2. Kansya (bronze) wall—Between these two is the first chamber. Several trees and gardens are located here. Mahakali and Mahakala are the gate keepers here. Kalachakra is their throne.

3. Tamra (copper) wall - Here is a forest of Kalpavruksha (wish granting tree). This is also called as Kalpavatica. This is the second chamber. Vasanta (spring) is its protector .Madhusri and Madhavasri are his consorts.

4. Seesa (lead) wall - Here is a forest of santana trees (progeny granting). This is the third chamber Grishma (summer) is the ruler . Shukrasri and Shuchisri are his consorts.

5. Aarkuta (brass) wall - This is the fourth chamber. Here is a forest of Hari chandanavruksha (yellow fragrant sandal wood). The ruler is varsharutu (rainy season. Nabhasri and Nabhasyasri are his consorts.

6. Panchaloha (five metal) wall—In this fifth chamber is a garden of mandara trees (Calotropis gigantea).Sharadrutu is the protector. Ishasri and Urjasri are his consorts.

7. Raupya (silver) wall – Sixth chamber.Parijata tree forest .Hemantarutu is the protector. Sahasri and Sahasyasri are his consorts.

8. Hema (gold) wall - Seventh chamber. Kadamba forest. Sisira (winter) s the protector. Tavasri and Tavasysri are his consorts. This is where Mantrini devi resides in a temple. She has one more quarter very close to that of Lalita devi in Mahapadmatavi(forest of lotuses). When she is on duty she stays in that quarter. In this seventh chamber near Mantrini's residence Matanga kanyas are constantly singing and dancing.

Matanga kanyaka charitra (story of Matanga kanya). In the olden days a sage named Matanga used to expand the creation byvirtue of the power of his penance.362. His son Matanga was a great saint and practitioner of penance. He was the friend of Himavanta. Once Himavanta started boasting saying that he was the father of Gauri devi. With that Matanga felt humiliated and started great penance for Mudrini devi(Mudrinidevi is none other than Mantrini devi who had received a ring from Lalita devi. She is also called Shyamala devi.

She was very happy with his penance and gave boon that she herself would be born as a daughter to him. A few days later Shyamala devi appeared in the dream of Siddhamati devi (consort of Matanga). Shyamala devi gave her a flower from the bunch decorating the formers ear. Very soon she had a female child who was named Laghushyama as she was born in a very short duration (Laghu = short, small). She was also called Matangi, Matanga Kanyaka. With her power she generated crores of virgins, who stay near Mantrini devi's house and keep singing her praises all the time.

The Compounds of precious stones: Inside the golden compound, there are eleven prakaras (compounds) one inside the other and inside them there are six more compounds described hereunder. All these compounds are perfect squares. Here also, the distance between one compound and the other is Seven yojanas. (yojana is a measurement of length of about nine miles).

1. Pushyaraga Prakara (The compound of Topaz) The area between the golden compound and this one is called Pushyaraga area. Here male and female Siddhas reside. Those who were born earlier in the race of Siddha and who obtained attainment (Siddhi) in their spiritual practices worshipping the Divine Mother, stay here as Siddhas and gladly continue to worship Her.

2. Padmaraga Prakara (The compound of Ruby) Here celestials of the species called Caranas reside. Those who were born in Carana world and worshipped the Mother are reborn here, after attaining Her grace.
3. Gomedhika Prakara (The compound of Agate) In this arena, Kala Sankarshani devi resides. She is worshipped by the Yoginis and Bhairavas.
4. Vajra Prakara (The compound of diamonds) Apsaras and Gandharvas (divine dancers and singers) stay in this arena. They are ever engaged in the Japa (repetition) of the Divine Mother's names and stay here happily. The river Vajranadi flows in this place. The Goddess Vajreswari stays here. When the demon Bhandu swallowed the diamond weapon (Vajra Ayudha) of Indra, he could get back his weapon by worshipping the Mother here.
5. Vaidurya Prakara (The compound of Cat's eye) Those of the netherworld, who attained spiritual achievements by worshipping the Mother, stay in this arena. The emperor Bali also resides here.
6. Indraneela Prakara (The compound of Sapphire) Those people who were born on the earth stay in this area enjoying pleasures, after their worship of Lalita during their lifetime there. Soon after the effect of their punya (merit) is exhausted, they will be born again as human beings on the earth. By the effect of their previous pious deeds, they again worship the Mother and return once more to this pious place. Due to the blue colour of these precious stones, the dark effect of likes and dislikes persists in them. Hence they are born again and again. Those who can control their senses to merge in the ultimate state of salvation, i.e., in the Divine Mother. They do not have rebirth.
7. Mukta Prakara (The compound of pearls) Several rivers named Tamraparni, Mahaparni, Sadamukta, Sadodaka etc. flow in this area. The celestials who worshipped the Mother and chanted her Mantras stay here. The cities of the rulers of the eight sides exist here. (The eight sides are East, West, North, South, North-East, South-East, North-West and South-West).
8. Marakata Prakara (The compound of Emerald) The abode of the Goddess Dandanatha also called Varahi exists in this area. There is a garden of golden palm-trees here. The Goddess Unmattabhairavi, Svapnesvari, Tiraskarinidevi, Kirapadadevi reside in this area. When Goddess Dandanatha is on duty, she stays in a separate palace in the forest of Mahapadma (Big lotuses).
9. Vidruma Prakara (The compound of Coral) In this area, Brahma along with sages like Marica stays and worship the Divine Mother.
10. Manikya Prakara (The compound of Gem) This area is also called the hall of gems i.e. Manikya Mantapa. Her Vishnu worships the Mother.
11. Navaratna Prakara (The compound of nine precious stones) In this area exists a huge hall with thousands of pillars. Here Siva along with his attendants constantly supervises the activities being done as per the orders of Lalita Devi.
12. Manomaya Prakara (The compound of mind) The entire area is a big well of Amruta (nectar). The Goddess Tara resides here. Along with her attendants, she rows a big boat and takes her devotees inside along with Her.
13. Buddhi Prakara (The compound of the intellect) The entire area is a big well of Bliss. The captain of the ship in this arena is the Goddess Varuni. She is also called as Sudha malini and Amruteswari.
14. Ahankara Prakara (The compound of Egoism) The entire area is a big well of criticism and nectar; The water of this well is nothing else than the nectar in the nerve Sushumna (The central nerve between Ida and Pingala nerves of one's backbone). The captain of the ship in this area is the Goddess Kurukulla.
15. Suryabimba Prakara (The compound of the Sun) Here brilliance comparable to the light of the rising Sun exists always. Plenty of flowers called Kuruvinda are abundant here. The Sun performed penance here and obtained brilliance. Martanda Bhairava stays here. He has a very luminous form. His three wives are Mahaprakasa Sakti, Cakshusmati Sakti and Chayada Sakti (The powers of great brilliance, eyesight and shade).
16. Candrabimba Prakasa (The compound of the Moon) Moonshine ever exists here. The Moon performed penance here and attained illumination. Somanatha, the Lord of the stars is the chief deity of this area.
17. Srungara Prakara (The compound of eroticism) This area is full of waters of eroticism. Here Manmatha, (Cupid-the god of love) does Japa of the Mother's

sacred names, rowing in a boat. Only those who are of pure mind by nature can cross this area.

18. Cintamani Gruha (The abode of Gems) This is the great palace of Sri-chakra. It is called Mahapadmatavi also. Around the mansion, hundreds of thousands of lotus like palaces exist. To the east of this place, there is a large vessel with a diameter of one Yojana. This is called Arghya Patra (the vessel used to wash hands) b) At the south-east corner exists Cidagnikunda (The fire pit of knowledge). At the south-west exists Sricakra Ratha, the vehicle of Sricakra. At the north-west exists the Geya Cakra Ratha of the Goddess Mantrini. At the north-east exists the Kiri Cakra Ratha of the Goddess Dandini. In between the East and the south-east exists Mantrini gruha - the abode of the Goddess Mantrini. In between the East and the north-east exists Dandini gruha – the abode of the Goddess Dandini.

The description of the Palace of Cintamani

1. This palace is centrally located in Sripattana – The City of Sri (Wealth).
2. The walls of the palace are built with Cintamani gems.
3. The roof also is made of the same stones of Cintamani.
4. The palace has three towers by names Iccha Sikhara, Kriya Sikhara and Jnana Sikhara i.e. the towers of desire, action and knowledge.
5. The palace has four doors. They are called Amnaya devas. They are Purva, Dakshina, Pascima and Uttara – Amnaya devas (on the East, South, West and North sides). Amnaya means Veda.
6. Bindu Peetha (central seat of power) is centrally located in the palace.
7. This seat of power (peetha) has steps on four sides.
8. The entire structure described above is of the design of Sricakra.
9. All the male and female deities of Sricakra reside here.
10. The Bindu Peetha is called Sri Peetha, Maha Peetha, Vidya Peetha and Ananda Peetha also (The seat of prosperity, greatness, knowledge and bliss).
11. On the pedestal exists the cot of the five brahmas.
12. The cot has four legs namely Brahma, Vishnu, Mahesana and Iswara. These four deities have attained female form by worshipping Mother.
13. The plank resting on these legs is Sadasiva.
14. To the east of this cot, there are 36 steps, representing the 36 aspects of spiritualism.
15. There is a foot-rest in front of the cot.
16. There is swan like bed on the cot.
17. On the cot, there are two pillows for the head and one pillow for the legs.
18. A light red blanket is spread on the bed.
19. The Lord Kameswara sits on the cot facing the East. He is ever in the form of a sixteen year old boy. He has four hands and three eyes. He wears erotic costumes.
20. On His lap sits Lalita Devi. She is ever in the form of a sixteen year old girl. Her complexion is rosy. She wears erotic costumes. She has four hands. Her decoration is the moon.
21. As she pleases Sadasiva, she is called Lalita (Lalana - to please) Siva Kameswarankastha Siva Svadheena Vallabha Sumeru madhya srungastha Srimannagara nayika. Cintamani guruhantastha Panca Brahmasana sthita. Maha Padmatavi samstha Kadamba vana vasini Sudha sagara madhyastha Kamakshi Kamadayini The above names in the Lalita Sahasra nama indicate the Srinaara, the Cintamani gruha (the palace of the Mother) and her other divine aspects described above. The Mother incarnated to kill the demon Bhanda. She is the Supreme Mother as per these divine names, will achieve everything auspicious

Mokshada Ekadasi

Yudhishtira Maharaj said, "O Vishnu, master of all, O delight of the three worlds, O Lord of the entire Universe, O creator of the world, O oldest personality, O best of all beings, I offer my most respectful obeisances unto You.

"O Lord of lords, for the benefit of all living entities, kindly answer some questions that I have. What is the name of the Ekadasi that occurs during the light fortnight of the month of Margashirsha (November-December) and removes all sins? How does one observe it properly, and which Deity is worshipped on that holiest of days? O

my Lord please explain this to me in full."

Lord Sri Krishna replied, "O dear Yudhishtira, your enquiry is very auspicious in itself and will bring you fame. Just as I previously explained to you about the dearest Utpannaa Maha-Dwadasi - which occurs during the dark part of the month of Margashirsha, which is the day when Ekadasi-devi appeared from My body to kill the demon Mura, and which benefits everything animate and inanimate in the three worlds - so I shall now relate to you regarding this Ekadasi that occurs during the light part of the month of Margashirsha. This Ekadasi is famous as Mokshadaa because it purifies the faithful devotee of all sinful reactions and bestows liberation upon him. The worshippable Deity of this all auspicious day is Lord Damodara. With full attention one should worship Him with incense, a ghee lamp, fragrant flowers, and Tulasi manjaris (buds).

"O best of saintly kings, please listen as I narrate to you the ancient and auspicious history of this wonderful Ekadasi. Simply by hearing this history one can attain the merit earned by performing a horse sacrifice. By the influence of this merit, one's forefathers, mothers, sons, and other relatives who have gone to hell can turn around and go to the heavenly kingdom. For this reason alone, O king, you should listen with rapt attention to this narration. "There once was a beautiful city named Champaka-nagar, which was decorated with devoted Vaishnavas. There the best of saintly kings Maharaj Vaikhaanasa, ruled over his subjects as if they were his very own dear sons and daughters. The brahmins in that capital city were all expert in four kinds of Vedic knowledge. The king, while ruling properly, had a dream one night in which his father was seen to be suffering the pangs of hellish torture in one of the hellish planets ruled over by the Yamaraj. The king was overwhelmed with compassion for his father and shed tears. The next morning, Maharaj Vaikhaanasa described what he had seen in his dream to his council of twice born learned brahmins.

" ' O brahmanas,' the king addressed them, 'in a dream last night I saw my father suffering on a hellish planet. He was crying out in anguish, "O son, please deliver me from this torment of this hellish condition !" Now I have no peace in my mind, and even this beautiful kingdom has become unbearable to me. Not even my horses, elephants, and chariots and my vast wealth in my treasury that formerly brought so much pleasure, gives me no pleasure at all.

" 'Everything, O best of the brahmins, even my own wife and sons, have become a source of unhappiness since I beheld my father suffering the tortures of that hellish condition so. Where can I go, and what can I do, O brahmins, to alleviate this misery? My body is burning with fear and sorrow ! Please tell me what kind of charity, what mode of fasting, what austerity, or what deep meditation, and in service upon which Deity I may have to perform to deliver my father from that agony and bestow upon liberation upon my forefathers. O best among the brahmins, what is the use of one's being a powerful son if one's father must suffer on a hellish planet? Truly, such a son's life is utterly useless, to him and to his forefathers.

" The twice born brahmins replied, 'O king, in the mountainous forest not far from here is the ashram where a great saint Parvata Muni resides. Please go to him, for he is tri-kala-jnan (he knows the past, the present, and the future of everything) and can surely help you in your gaining relief from your misery.'

"Upon hearing this advise, the distressed king immediately set out on a journey to the ashram of the famous sage Parvata Muni. The ashram was indeed very big and housed many learned sages expert in chanting the sacred hymns of the four Vedas (Rg, Yajur, Sama, and Arthava). Approaching the holy ashram, the king beheld Parvata Muni seated among the assembly of sages adorned with hundreds of tilaks (from all the authorised sampradayas) like another Brahmaa or Vyaas.

"Maharaj Vaikhaanasa offered his humble obeisances to the muni, bowing his head and then prostrating his entire body before him. After the king had seated himself among the assembly Parvata Muni asked him about the welfare of the seven limbs of his extensive kingdom (his ministers, his treasury, his military forces, his allies, the brahmins, the sacrificial offerings performed, and the needs of his subjects). The muni also asked him if his kingdom was free of troubles and whether everyone was peaceful, happy and satisfied. To these enquiries the king replied, 'By your mercy O glorious and great sage, all seven limbs of my kingdom are doing very well. Yet there is a problem that has recently arisen, and to solve it I have come to you, O brahmana for your expert help and guidance'.

"Then Parvata Muni, the best of all sages, closed his eyes and meditated on the

king's past, present and future. After a few moments he opened his eyes and said, 'Your father is suffering the results of committing a great sin, and I have discovered what it is. In his previous life he quarrelled with his wife and forcibly enjoyed her sexually during her menstrual period. She tried to protest and resist his advances and even yelled out, "Someone please save me! Please, O husband, do not interrupt my monthly period in this way!" Still he did not stop or leave her alone. It is on account of this grievous sin that your father now has fallen into such a hellish condition of suffering.'

"King Vaikhaanasa then said, 'O greatest among sages, by what process of fasting or charity may I liberate my dear father from such a condition? Please tell me how I can relieve and remove the burden of his sinful reactions, which are a great obstacle to his progress toward ultimate release (salvation - liberation - going back home).'

"Parvata Muni replied, 'During the light fortnight of the month of Margashirsha there occurs an Ekadasi called Mokshadaa. If you observe this sacred Ekadasi strictly, with a full fast, and give directly to your suffering father the merit you thus attain/obtain, he will be freed from his pain and instantly liberated'.

"Hearing this, Maharaj Vaikhaanasa profusely thanked the great sage and then returned to his palace to perform his vrata (austere rite). O Yudhishtira, when the light part of the month of Margashirsha at last arrived, Maharaj Vaikhaanasa faithfully waited for the Ekadasi tithi to arrive. He then perfectly and with full faith observed the Ekadasi fast with his wife, children, and other relatives. He dutifully gave the merit from this fast to his father, and as he made the offering, beautiful flower petals showered down from the devas who peered out from behind the clouds in the sky. The king's father was then praised by the messengers of the demigods (devas) and escorted to the celestial region. As he passed his son, as he traversed the lower to middle to higher planets, the father said to the king, 'My dear son, all auspiciousness unto you!'

At last he reached the heavenly realm from where he can again with his newly acquired merit perform devotional service to Krishna or Vishnu and in due course return back to home back to Godhead.

"O son of Pandu, who so ever strictly observes the sacred Moksha Ekadasi, following the established rules and regulations, achieves full and perfect liberation after death. There is no better fasting day than this Ekadasi of the light fortnight of the month of Margashirsha, O Yudhishtira, for it is a crystal-clear and sinless day. Whoever faithfully observes this Ekadasi fast, which is like chintaa-mani (a gem that yields all desires), obtains special merit that is very hard to calculate, for this day can elevate one from hellish life to the heavenly planets, and for one who observes Ekadasi for his own spiritual benefit, this elevates one to go back to Godhead, never to return to this material world."

Thus end the narration of the glories of Margashirsha-shukla Ekadasi or Mokshada Ekadasi, from the Brahmanda Purana.

The Sons of Sagara

CHAPTER FIFTY-TWO

The Sacrificial Horse is let loose

Jaimini Said:

1. " After banishing his son, the virtuous-souled Lord Sagara transferred his love for him to the child Asumam whose conduct was righteous.
2. At the very same time, O king, the sons of Sumati grew up collectively. All of them were amiable, devoted and faithful to one another.
3. They had adamantine bodies. They were cruel, merciless and shameless. They were habitually evil in their activities. They had the same nature and characteristics.
4. They cooperated in doing simultaneously the same work. They were deluded in their minds. They were easily irritable. They could not be easily assailed by any living being. They regularly harassed the people.
5. They had no concern for humility, good conduct or the path of virtue. They harassed the entire world around as they pleased, like Asuras.
6. Attacked and tormented by them, the whole world became distressed and unhappy in particular with Yajñas and paths of virtue destroyed. The people could not have their regular selfstudy of the Vedas nor could they perform holy rites by

uttering the Vasatkara mantra.

7. When everything was being completely destroyed by the sons of Sagara who were haughty on account of the boons they had been granted, the Devas, Asuras and the great serpents became extremely agitated.

8. The Earth, overwhelmed by the ocean, began to quake though its name is Acala (immovable). There was a break and hindrance in the penance and abstract meditation of the ascetics.

9. Deprived of the Havya and Kayva offerings, the Devas and the Pitris became oppressed by great sorrow. They went to the abode of Brahma.

10. After going there, the Devas with Sharva* (probably Shakra) at their head, duly reported to him the entire activities of the sons of Sagara.

11. On hearing their words, Brahma, the grandfather of the worlds, became engrossed in thought for a short while. The most excellent one among the Suras then said:

12. O Devas, listen, attentively to my words. Welfare unto you. There is no doubt that the sons of Sagara will be destroyed ere long.

13. Wait for a short time. Everything is being controlled by time. Everything else is but an instrumental. That time alone is the master of all.

14. Hence, O excellent Suras, what I am going to say for your welfare should now be carried out by all of you without any slackness.

15. The holy lord Kapila, the most excellent among victorious ones, the roost exalted among the leading Yogins, is born on the earth with a partial power of Visnu, for the welfare of the universe.

16. He is now sitting, meditating in a lonely place somewhere in the ocean, the water of which had been sucked up by Agastya. This meditation has been going on for the last hundred years according to the reckoning of heaven dwellers.

17. At my behest, all of you go to the leading sage Kapila. Stand near him wishing for the conclusion of his meditation.

18. At the close of his abstract meditation, you will bow down to him and tell him your purpose in full. He will do what is conducive to your welfare.

19. O excellent Devas, do something whereby a break in the abstract meditation of the sage can be caused through the sons of Sagara". Jaimini said:

20. On being told thus by him, the Devas bowed down to Brahma and went to Kapila, the most excellent among the brahmanas; with palms joined in reverence, they spoke to him. The Devas said:

21. Be pleased with us, oh excellent sage. We have sought refuge in you. The whole of the universe, harassed by the sons of Sagara, is perishing.

22. It is well known that you are the cause of the sustenance and annihilation of the worlds. With the partial power of Vishnu, you have incarnated on the earth and you stay here as the leading Yogin.

23. A physical body has been voluntarily assumed by you, only for the destruction of the great distress of men afflicted by the three types of agony. Indeed, you are the most excellent among those who perform austerities.

24. Undoubtedly, O Brahmana, you are capable, at your will, to mentally, create the entire universe, sustain it and annihilate it.

25. You are our creator and dispenser of our destiny. You are our preceptor. You are our greatest resort. You are our protector. Put an end to our adversity.

26. O leading Brahmana, be the resort and refuge of the leading Brahmanas in particular, who reside in the three worlds and who are being persecuted by the sons of Sagara.

27. Indeed, the activities of people like you will be of Satva (very good) nature. Hence, O sage of good holy rites, it behooves you to save us and all the world.

28-31a. If not, O holy saint, the entire universe will be destroyed prematurely." Jaimini Said: " On being told thus by all the Devas, Kapila slowly opened his eyes. Glancing at there, he spoke these pleasing words ' Utterly burned by their own actions, the sons of Sagara will surely perish when the proper time arrives. Let that time be awaited by you all. For the achievement of your purpose, O excellent Suras, I shall become the cause of destruction of those evil-minded ones.'

31-33. Ere long, the sons of Sagara, whose minds are inclined towards sinful

activities and whose intellects have been adversely affected by Kala (Time, God of Death) will be burned by the fire of my anger. Hence, O Devas, all the worlds shall be rid of distress. They will have fear from nowhere. Let them (sons of Sagara) be wicked in their actions. They will quickly meet with their annihilation. So be free from fear and go back to your own city. Wait for some time. Thereafter, you will realise what you desire."

34-38. On being told thus by Kapila, all those Devas including Indra, became delighted. After bowing down to him they went towards heaven. In the meantime, king Sagara, the Lord of the Earth desired to perform Vajimedha (HorseSacrifice), the great Yajna. With the permission of Vasistha, he gathered together all the necessary requisites. Accompanied by Aurva and other Brahmanas he duly took the initiation for the performance of sacrifice. For the purpose of letting the horse roam about, the king of great renown called all his sons and commanded them thus: O my sons, make the horse roam about all round the earth. It behoves you to do this immediately and bring it back to me." Jaimini said:

39-43. " At the behest of their father they took the horse and made it wander over the entire earth. It was only because of the directive of the Vedic injunction that the horse was made to go round the earth and not for the conquest of the quarters nor for levying taxes and tributes as the whole of the earth had already been conquered by that king. Kings had already been made payers of tributes by that king of exalted heroism in the battlefield. Then those princes reached the lower ground surface of the salt ocean wherein there was no water. With great delight they encircled the horse and entered the interior of the earth.

CHAPTER FIFTY-THREE

The Destruction of the Sons of Sagara

Jamini Said:

1. When they reached there, the wind god who had been directed by Indra, carried away the horse to the netherworlds within a moment.
2. Stealing the horse without being seen by any of them, O king, the wind god carried it away along that path to the vicinity of sage Kapila.
- 3-4. When the horse disappeared, all those princes became perplexed. Searching for the horse, they went 'round and 'round the earth. After searching the entire earth including the cities, mountains and forests, they attained great sorrow because they were still unable to see the sacrificial animal.
5. Then they went back to Ayodhya, surrounded by the sagas, met their father, bowed down to him and initiated to him everything.
6. " The moment we entered the ocean after wandering over the whole of the earth, the horse was taken away by some one though it was being vigilantly guarded by us who were on the watch."
- 7-8. On being told thus by them the excellent king became infuriated and told them " Go away hence, unrighteous ones, never to return again. How was it lost by you, while you were alive. You were indeed evil minded ones. There is no question of your returning without the horse here".
9. Then all of them together set out from that place and said to one another: " Even now the horse is not to be seen, what shall we do ?"
10. The whole of the earth was searched by us, including the mountains, forests and parks. The horse is not seen anywhere nor its news is heard.
11. Hence, starting with the ocean and extending as far as the netherworlds, we shall split the earth and dig it. We shall enter the netherworlds and search for the horse.
12. Having decided thus, all those sons of Sagara, of cruel resolve, dug the earth everywhere beginning with the seashore.
13. Being dug by them, the earth became greatly excited and cried aloud. On seeing their activity, all living beings cried in distress.
14. After digging the Bharata subcontinent and casting it off on the ground, they united a thousand Yojanas of the earth to the ocean.
15. Digging the earth upto the netherworlds, the sons of the king saw the horse grazing in the netherworlds.
16. Delighted very much they gathered together and laughed out of contentment. Some of them danced with great joy.

17-21. They saw the noble-souled Kapila of brilliant lustre who was very old; who was seated in the lotusposture, with his eyes fixed yet at the tip of his nose, who had kept the head and neck straight and long; who had kept the chest projecting forward, who was shining with his own splendour radiating all round in full like a lamp placed in a windless spot; whose body was full of perfect knowledge shining within himself; whose mind was engaged in abstract meditation; who appeared like the motionless ocean; who was duly engaged in the yogic exercise; whose mind was engrossed in what should be meditated upon; who was the most excellent among leading Yogins and who looked like the fire with its clusters of flames extinguished. On seeing him staying there, they consulted one another about him for a short while. For a short while, they underwent excessive agitation.

22-23. Thinking that it was he who stole the horse, the evil-minded sons of Sagara, induced by the God of death, surrounded Kapila, the excellent sage. Encircling him they said, " This is the thief: There is no doubt about it. This evil-minded robber of the horse deserves to be killed by us".

Jaimini said :

24-27a. " All those Sagaras whose intellect had become deluded and whose death was imminent, suddenly molested the sage who was sitting like an ordinary person.

Then sage Kapila who had never been dejected in mind, was overwhelmed with wrath, because he had been upset due to the break in his abstract meditation. He was agitated. Assailed by those evil-minded ones, the unassailable sage Kapila became agitated. He assumed a huge size like the fire that increases in size at the end of the Kalpa on account of the gusts of wind.

27b-30a. The fire of anger arising out of his body as vast and majestic as the ocean, burst forth like the Samkarshana fire issuing from the poison of Sesha out to burn down the netherworlds. His anger was further kindled by the recollection of attack. The sage who had a lustre similar to that of a wheel of fire (i.e. whirling fire) opened his eyes. Then for a moment, O king, his eyes became extremely red and shone like the Sun and the Moon simultaneously appearing in the sky at dawn.

30b-35. He looked at the princes with rolling eyes gravely, like the God of annihilation at the close of (Kalpa) period. Sparks and flames of fire suddenly emerged from the eyes of that infuriated sage and spread all round in various directions continuously, like the sparks of Kalagni (destructive fire at the time of final annihilation). The sparks of fire of the Sage's anger pervaded the quarters all round, with columns of smoke projecting forward and emitting floods of sparks frequently.

The sparks emanating from his eyes like the poisonous flames with the cavity of the belly of a python, shone like the flames of the Vadavafire (submarine fire) of the violent ocean.

The fire of anger, O great king, that pervaded the spaces in the quarters by means of its flames, enveloped the firmament and burned the sons of Sagara.

36. The world became enveloped by the clusters of flames of fire and smoke whirling round and round on account of the angry (i.e. violent) blasts of wind that blew with a loud report. It became filled with the dusts of the earth too, that were blown up excessively. Hence, the world became too much afflicted.

37. All round, the fire appeared to be scraping the firmament by means of its flames struck by the velocity of wind. It immediately burned down completely the sons of the king who were the enemies of the Suras.

38. Even as all the worlds were watching, the fire of Kapila's anger reduced the Sagaras to ashes completely, sparing only the horse.

39. Thus the sons of Sagara, of sinful mind, were burned suddenly on account of that fire of anger like the dry trees that get consumed in the forest conflagration.

40. On seeing the annihilation of those evil-minded Sagaras, the Devas spoke to one another in wonder, along with the Sages.

41-42. Oh, the ultimate bad result of those persons who have committed terrible sins has not been delayed. Indeed, in this world, men of wicked souls have to meet with a bad end. These wicked and cruel minded persons, huge in size like mountains, have suddenly and forcibly perished like dry grass in fire.

43. They had caused anxiety and torture to all living beings. They were extremely censured by good men throughout their lives. Fortunately, they have met with their destruction.

44. Which man can attain happiness in this world after committing an inauspicious action that is censured by the worlds and that causes harassment to others? 45. These sinners had made all living beings cry aloud. They have now been struck dead by means of brahmadanda (the punishing rod of a brahmana). Hence, on account of their own evil actions, they have gone to hell where they will be spending many many years.

46. Hence, only good actions should be performed by intelligent persons. The other type of actions censured by the world should be cast off far away (i.e. completely avoided).

47. As long as one is alive, one should strive for the attainment of final beatitude. This should be done by one who knows what is good for him. One should not harm or injure any one, as life is transitory.

48. This body is nonpermanent. Riches are extremely fickle. The entire worldly existence is utterly worthless. How may the learned one believe (otherwise)?" 49. Even as the leading Suras and sages were telling one another thus, the sons of Sagara perished after becoming the fuel to the fire of the anger of the sage.

50. The sons of Sagara whose bodies were burnt down suddenly, (as if) paralysed the earth with their ashes and instantaneously fell into hell due to their sinful deeds.

51. After burning those sons of Sagara entirely, the fire arising from his anger was on the point of burning all the worlds suddenly in a moment.

52. The Devas who became frightened gathered together and stood by in the firmament. Being desirous of suppressing the fire of anger, they eulogised the noble-souled sage."

CHAPTER FIFTY-FOUR

Recovery of the Sacrificial Horse:

Jaimini said:" It behoves you, O Leading Brahmana, to restrain immediately this Fire of anger. If not, the entire universe is likely to be burnt by it untimely. Your greatness has been seen. The whole world including the mobile and the immobile beings has been pervaded by this fire of your anger. Forbear, please restrain this anger, O leading Brahmana. Obeisance to you."

On being eulogised thus, the saintly Kapila, immediately controlled the extremely terrible fire of anger. Thereupon, the entire universe including the mobile and the immobile beings became calm. Devas and the ascetics became free from distress.

In the meantime, the saintly Rishi Narada, O King, casually went to Ayodhya from the Devaloka (the world of the Devas).

On seeing that Narada had arrived, Sagara worshipped him perfectly in accordance with the injunctions of the scriptures, with Arghya, Padya and other materials of worship.

Accepting that honour and worship, Narada sat on the exalted seat and spoke these words, O King, to Sagara the tiger among kings.

Narada said : " Your sons who had gone to take horse around the, world, O excellent king, have been struck down by the curse of a Brahmana. All of them have perished.

Your sacrificial horse, O King, that was being guarded by all of them was taken somewhere in the heaven without being noticed by anyone, as ordained by fate.

They began to search for the lost horse all over the earth. For a long time, O king, they did not get any information of its whereabouts.

Thereupon, they decided to search for the horse underneath the earth. Beginning earnestly, those Sagaras dug up the surface of the earth.

While digging the earth, O King, they saw the horse in Patala (Netherworlds) and near it they saw the great sage Kapila, the leading Yogin.

On seeing him, they committed a sinful deed. All of them being urged by Kala (God of death), saying "This is the robber of the horse", they made Kapila sufficiently infuriated.

Thereupon, your sons perished with their bodies as fuel to the fire emanating from his eyes and caused by his anger, the fire that burned the quarters.

You need not grieve over them. It does not behoove you to grieve over them, O leading King, because they were cruel, of sinful conduct and were creating troubles and impediments to all people. Retain your courage as your asset .