

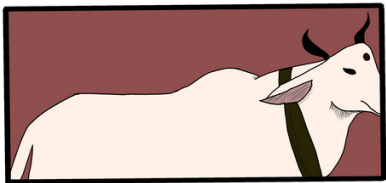
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THE BIRTH OF URVASHI

CREATED BY NARA-NARAYANA


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THE SAGE KASHYAPA WAS THE GRANDSON (OTHER SOURCES SAY WISH-BORN SON) OF LORD BRAHMA. ONCE, HE WISHED TO PERFORM A GREAT YAGNA (SACRIFICE), AND BORROWED A DIVINE COW FROM VARUNA TO ASSIST HIM IN CONDUCTING THE SACRIFICE. AFTER THE SACRIFICE WAS OVER, HE DID NOT RETURN THE COW. DESPITE REPEATED REMINDERS FROM VARUNA, HE REFUSED TO RETURN THE COW.

VARUNA GREW ANGRY AND COMPLAINED TO LORD BRAHMA. WHEN BRAHMA PLEADED HIS INABILITY TO CONTROL KASHYAPA, VARUNA UTTERED THE FOLLOWING CURSE.



SINCE KASHYAPA HAS COVETED MY
DIVINE COW, MAY HE BE BORN IN THE COWHERD CASTE
AMONG MEN. HIS WIVES DITI AND SURASA
WHO WERE PRESENT DURING THIS SACRIFICE SHALL ALSO BE
BORN WITH HIM. JUST AS MY COW,
CALVES ARE GRIEVING, SEPARATED FROM THEIR MOTHER, LET
ADITI SUFFER THE SORROW OF PARTING
FROM HER CHILDREN. SHE SHALL SEE HER CHILDREN DIE BEFORE
HER VERY EYES THERE. SHE WILL
LEAD A LIFE OF SORROW, SPENDING MOST OF HER TIME IN
PRISON!

BRAHMA ALSO AFFIRMED THIS CURSE, PRONOUNCING THAT KASHYAPA AND HIS WIVES SHALL
BE BORN
AMONG THE YADAVAS (A COWHERD CLAN) ON EARTH. ACCORDING TO THESE CURSES,
KASHYAPA WAS
BORN AS VASUDEVA IN THE YADAVA CLAN AND MARRIED DEVAKI, THE SISTER OF KAMSA. SHE
WAS
THE INCARNATION OF ADITI. SOMETIME AFTER THIS, INDRA, THE SON OF ADITI, GOADED BY HIS
MOTHER HAD CAUSED THE FETUS
OF DITI TO BE SPLIT INTO SEVEN PIECES (I BELIEVE WITH THE VAJRA), AND HENCE DITI UTTERED
THE FOLLOWING CURSE ON ADITI: LET SEVEN SONS BE BORN TO YOU AND BE KILLED. " THIS
CURSE TOOK EFFECT WHEN ADITI WAS BORN AS DEVAKI.

DEVAKI



VISHNU WAS BORN AS A SON NAMED NARYANA TO KASHYAPA, BY A WIFE NAMED MOORTHY. THE PRIMORDIAL MAN NARA WAS BORN AS HIS YOUNGER BROTHER. FROM A VERY YOUNG AGE, BOTH THESE SAGES, DISPLAYED A GREAT INTEREST IN TAPAS (PENANCE). THEY REPAIRED TO THE BANKS OF THE RIVER GANGA AND BEGAN MEDITATING UPON THE SUPREME BRAHMAN, ALSO KNOWN TO AS "

THEY BEGAN TO BE REGARDED BY THE VARIOUS RISHIS AS THE FOREMOST AMONG ASCETICS. POSSESSING THE ESSENCE OF VISHNU, THESE TWO HERMITS INDULGED IN THE MOST SEVERE AUSTERITIES.

WHEN THEIR Penance CAME TO THE ATTENTION OF INDRA, HE BECAME AFRAID THAT THEY WERE COVETING HIS THRONE. BESIDES, BY THE INTENSITY OF THEIR Penance, ALL THREE WORLDS WERE TORMENTED BY UNBEARABLE HEAT. THE KING OF THE CELESTIALS BEGAN TO THINK AS TO HOW THIS Penance OF NARA - NARYANA MAY BE RENDERED INEFFECTIVE. AT LAST, HE PROCEEDED TO THEIR HERMITAGE AND SAID TO THEM,

"O RISHIS! KNOW ME TO BE THE IMMORTAL INDRA, THE KING OF HEAVEN! I AM VERY MUCH PLEASED WITH THE AUSTERITIES UNDERGONE BY YOU TWO. I SHALL GRANT YOU ANY BOON YOU DESIRE. ASK, AND IT SHALL BE YOURS."



SINCE THE TWO RISHIS WERE DEEP IN
MEDITATION, THEY DID NOT EVEN PERCEIVE THAT
THEY WERE

BEING ADDRESSED BY INDRA. ANGERED, INDRA
TRIED TO FRIGHTEN THEM BY RESORTING TO HIS
TRICKS OF ILLUSION. THE SAGES PAID NO
ATTENTION TO IT. HE OF THE THOUSAND EYES
THEN CAUSED

FEROCIOUS ANIMALS TO SPRING FORTH FROM
THIN AIR. HOWEVER, THE LIONS AND TIGERS AND
ELEPHANTS THAT HE CREATED, WOULD NOT
ATTACK THE SAGES, FOR THEY PERCEIVED THE
SPARK OF
DIVINITY IN THEM.

THWARTED IN HIS ATTEMPTS, INDRA RETIRED TO
HIS CAPITAL AMRAVATHI IN THE HEAVENS. HE
THOUGHT TO HIMSELF, "NARA AND NARAYANA,
WHO ARE MEDITATING UPON THE GLORY OF THE
SUPREME DEVI, WILL NOT BE SWAYED BY EITHER
FEAR OR GREED. THEY CANNOT BE CONQUERED
BY

ILLUSION, NOR BY FORCE. THEY ARE SINLESS AND
CANNOT BE DEFEATED BY ANY ARMY THAT I CAN
CONJURE UP. HOW CAN I DISRUPT THEIR
PENANCE?"

KAMA



KAMDEV FIRST ORIGINAL FROM



DESPITE HIS BETTER JUDGMENT, IMPELLED BY FATE, INDRA RESOLVED TO MAKE ONE MORE ATTEMPT

TO THWART THE PENANCE. HE SUMMONED KAMA, THE GOD OF LOVE AND THE ANGEL OF SPRING AND

SAID TO THEM: "O KAMA, GO FORTH WITH SPRING, YOUR WIFE RATI AND THE MOST BEAUTIFUL OF THE APSARAS. REPAIR TO THE PLACE KNOWN AS SUNDHMADHANAPARVATHA (A MOUNTAIN). IN THE HERMITAGE KNOWN AS BADRIKASHRAMA, THE NARA AND NARYANA, THE SONS OF KASHYAPA ARE INDULGING IN THE SEVEREST OF AUSTERITIES. THEY HAVE RENOUNCED ALL WORLDLY PLEASURES AND HAVE DEVOTED THEIR LIFE TO PENANCE. USE YOUR MOST POTENT ARROWS OF LOVE ON THEM. MAKE THEM FALL IN LOVE WITH THE LOVELY NYMPHS, THE CELESTIAL DANCERS FROM MY COURT AND MAKE THEM FORGET THEIR VOW OF CELIBACY. YOU ARE THE SOLE MEANS FOR MY DELIVERANCE FROM THE DANGER THAT THEY POSE TO MY THRONE!"

OBEYING THE ORDERS OF HIS KING, MANMATHA CHOSE FIVE OF HIS MOST POTENT ARROWS AND PLACED THEM IN HIS QUIVER. HE THEN REACHED THE HERMITAGE, ACCOMPANIED BY HIS WIFE RATI

AND THE CELESTIAL NYMPHS. THESE NYMPHS, INCLUDING RAMBHA, TILOTTAMA BEGAN TO SING IN A SEDUCTIVE VOICE, ACCOMPANIED BY DIVINE MUSIC AND STARTED TO DANCE BEFORE THE YOUNG SAGES. FOR HIS PART, THE ANGEL OF SPRING CAUSED ALL FLOWERS TO BLOOM IN SEASON.



NARA OPENED HIS EYES AND CAST A QUESTIONING GLANCE AT HIS ELDER BROTHER. NARYANA SAID, "BROTHER, THIS DIVINE SONG AND MUSIC IS BEING CAUSED BY THE APSARAS. OBEYING THE ORDERS OF INDRA, THEY HAVE COME HERE ACCOMPANIED BY KAMA AND RATI TO DISRUPT OUR PENANCE. HOW ELSE CAN WE EXPLAIN THE FACT THAT IT SEEMS TO BE SPRING IN THE MIDDLE OF WINTER? LOOKS LIKE INDRA HAS LOST HIS SENSE AND IS TRYING TO OVERCOME US WITH SEDUCTION!"

WHILE NARYANA WAS THUS EXPLAINING THE SITUATION TO HIS BROTHER, THE ARMY OF LOVE APPEARED BEFORE THEM. IT WAS TRULY A SIGHT TO BEHOLD. KAMA WAS THE HANDSOMEST MAN IN ALL THREE WORLDS, HIS WIFE RATI, THE MOST BEAUTIFUL WOMAN. CONFRONTED BY THE UNITED BEAUTY OF THE APSARAS RAMBHA AND TILOTTAMA IT WAS HARD FOR ANYONE TO RETAIN POSSESSION OF THEIR SENSES.



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THESE DIVINE NYMPHS APPROACHED THE SAGES AND
SALUTED THEM. AFTER THAT, THEY RESUMED
THE SINGING AND DANCING, WITH THE INTENT TO AROUSE
THE BASER INSTINCTS IN THE HERMITS.
HOWEVER, THE SAGES WERE UNMOVED. NARYANA
THOUGHT,

" THESE NYMPHS HAVE TOO
MUCH PRIDE IN THEIR BEAUTY. I
SHALL DEMONSTRATE THE POWER
OF MY PENANCE! I SHALL CREATE
A WOMAN
WHO SHALL SURPASS ALL THESE
WOMEN IN BEAUTY!"



HE THEN SLAPPED HIS HANDS ON HIS THIGHS (IN SANSKRIT, URU MEANS THIGH), AND FROM HIS THIGHS SPRANG A MAIDEN WHO WAS FAR MORE BEAUTIFUL THAN THE APSARAS. THIS WOMAN WAS NAMED URVASHI. ALONG WITH THIS NYMPH, MANY MORE BEAUTIFUL WOMEN WERE CREATED BY THE NARYANA TO SERVE HER.



SEEING THE DIVINE BEAUTY OF URYASHI, RATI, RAMBHA AND TILOTTAMA
WERE ASHAMED AND
REPENTED THEIR EVIL INTENT TO DISRUPT THE PENANCE. THEY
PROSTRATED THEMSELVES AT THE
FEET OF THE HERMITS AND SAID, "O GREAT ONES, LET THESE NEW NYMPHS
CREATED BY YOU GO TO
HEAVEN INSTEAD OF US. ALL OF US WANT TO BECOME YOUR WIVES AND
SERVE YOU. PLEASE ACCEPT
US."
NARYANA SAID, "IT IS ENOUGH THAT YOU HAVE SEEN THE ERROR OF YOUR
WAYS. INDRA HAD NOTHING
TO FEAR FROM US. IMPELLED BY HIS FEARS, HE TRIED TO USE YOU TO
DISRUPT OUR PENANCE. HE
HAS NOT SUCCEEDED. WE TWO HAVE TAKEN A VOW OF CELIBACY IN THIS
BIRTH. WE CANNOT ACCEPT
YOU AS WIVES. HOWEVER, I SHALL BE BORN AS KRISHNA AND MY BROTHER
NARA SHALL BE BORN AS
ARJUNA. YOU WILL BE BORN AS OUR WIVES AT THAT TIME. NOW, RETURN
TO HEAVEN. TAKE THIS
MAIDEN URYASHI AND HER ATTENDANT NYMPHS WITH YOU. LET THEM BE
OUR GIFTS TO INDRA.



