

Stories From Puranas Part 2

Kaushal Kishore

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this book to
my late parents,
Shri Nawal Kishore Prasad Verma,
And
Smt. Shanti Devi,
I also dedicate the book to
My family members, and
All my teachers and mentors.

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Prologue

श्री गणेशाय नमः

Recently, we became proud witness to the great renovation of Nalanda University in Bihar, which was demolished by barbarian attackers more than eight hundred years ago. It was one of the largest Universities of world. Almost all the scholars of the University were butchered and all the great books were burnt by the foreign attackers.

These scholars and books in Nalanda University not only related with religion and philosophy, but covered all secular subjects, including history, medicine, chemistry, mathematics, astronomy, and economics.

It was not only destruction of educational centers, but mass massacre of all scholars and Brahmanas in North and Eastern India that resulted in abrupt stoppage of all research and academic works in India, in all subjects. So, India lost with this one event, its scholars and scholarly books, and further growth in all secular and philosophical studies and research.

Thereafter, control of one or other hostile colonizing forces continued for more than seven hundred and fifty years on major part of India. All out efforts were made by these forces to negate our history, and to deride and degrade the cultural and religious system. Sanskrit education lost support, and new education system of Lord Curzon was very successful in ensuring that Sanskrit is not read and known by normal Indians.

Even the independent Indian government was happy to continue the education system despite having powers for making decision for welfare of country.

The result of forgetting our basic culture, and history has been very devastating. Majority of Hindus now ape the Western culture as made available by the education system, and media. Media, including mass-media, having profiteering motives presents our culture in distorted forms. A large population is under the spiderweb of false ideas propagated by them, and sinking into lower and lower depths of superstition, not knowing the true base, the eternal wisdom of Sanatan Dharma.

While renovation of temples and universities is highly welcome step, further steps are needed to ensure that our culture, history and eternal pearls of wisdom and ideas are accessible and popularized among all Indians. There is an urgent need to make available and popularize the gems of wisdom, and true tenets of our culture in Hindi and English and modern Indian languages.

A powerful force of volunteers is required to achieve the goal along with Governmental and other institutional support for this purpose. I have volunteered myself to be a part of this force.

With the blessings of the Lord, I have been able to present the pearls of wisdom from Upanishads, known as Brahm Vidyas, which leads one to understand the Vedanta Philosophy of Shankaracharya in my books "Madhu Vidya: Straight from Horse's Mouth" and three books' series on "Eternal Meditation Principles: Brahm Vidya."

The three-book series also included the essence of the system of Yoga from the Patanjali Yoga Sutra and the teachings of Lord Shri Krishna from the Bhagavad Gita. These pearls of wisdom are for all ages past and all ages to come.

But to know about the greatness and antiquity of our glorious past, we need to know the stories and mythologies from our Puranas and History books like Mahabharata, and Ramayana.

Although there is clear proof that the available books of Puranas are much different from the original, as described in Amar Kosha by the great Amar Sinha, primarily due to loss of original copies, whatever is available is sufficient to provide very good information about our ancient history and culture.

So, I am presenting selected stories from Puranas and History, and other ancient books in a series of books.

After great acceptance of the first part, I present here the second part of the series. Please enjoy these very interesting, informative, and inspiring stories of mythology and histories of our glorious past, and apply their eternal learnings to modern problems. You will be amazed to find that despite the changes in perceptions and technologies, basics remain more the same during different periods.

Chapter 1 Introduction

Puranas

Everyone accepts the fact that Vedas are the most ancient book of humanity, and have remained almost unchanged since eternity. The knowledge and wisdom of Vedas, Brahmanas, Aranyakas, and Upanishads known as Shruti Granth, are eternal. Shruti, being relevant for all times, was required to be kept unchanged through efforts like memorizing them.

The Puranas, and other books on secular subjects, known as Smriti Granth, were designed as a record of continuing human thought and experience. They were constructed as an open book that could be expanded and enriched by new events, discoveries, and experiences as accumulated in later years and ages. As such, while Puranas are as old as Vedas, some parts of Puranas have been observed to be revised till, say eighth to tenth century A.D., and the great destruction by barbarians have resulted in loss of large parts of Puranas.

Purana was first written by the great Krishna Dwaipayana, as one voluminous work. It was based on the known and heard histories, stories, myths, etc. popular at that time. The Chhandogya Upanishad refers to Itihasa, and puranas as important subjects of study. The original Purana was modified by different groups of sages and scholars different in their devotion to separate aspects of God.

So, now there are eighteen major and an equal number of minor texts under the category of Puranas. This development seems to have happened in different parts of India since some of the Puranas have strong regional flavours.

One can easily discern a substratum of cosmology, creation, dissolution, ancient genealogy of kings, sages, and vintage astronomy common to all the Puranas. Almost all the Puranas contain historical elements some of which can be dated from eleven thousand BC to the early centuries of the Era, matching roughly with the Gupta period.

As per records, there are in all eighteen Puranas, and a similar number of secondary Puranas known as Up Puranas.

Some stories are different in different Puranas. A Purana usually gives prominence to a certain deity like Shiva, Shakti, or Vishnu. Most of the Puranas use an abundance of religious and philosophical concepts in their narration from Bhakti to Sankhya.

Quality of available Puranas

The available manuscripts of Puranas are examined based on two criteria:

1. The adherence to Pancha Lakshana.
2. The basic characteristics, quality, and number of hymns in different Puranas as given by some of the Puranas, such as the *Matsya Purana*, and in the Amara Kosha.

Puranas deal systematically with following five subjects, known as Pancha Lakshana:

- (1) Sarga - The creation of the Universe
- (2) Pratisarga - Secondary creations after dissolution
- (3) Vamsa - Genealogy of Gods and Sages
- (4) Manvantara - Creation of humanity and the first human beings
- (5) Vamsaanucharitam - Dynastic histories.

Unfortunately, the burning of ancient universities and the destruction of books by foreign barbarian attackers have impacted the quality of Puranas, available currently. When the texts were fixed in manuscripts, newer material valid for the time and place might have been added by the copyists, or even by the printers.

Several Puranas are not available in complete and pure form, as may be observed

from the fact that they do not fulfill the requirement of the Pancha Lakshan. The number of hymns in the available copies are also less than that indicated in Matsya Purana, or the Amar Kosha.

However, the available copies of Puranas may still be sufficient for historians to sketch a clear line of succession of rulers, their activities, and the status of common people in their reign. Unfortunately, foreign rulers never accepted the glorious story of Indian people. They accepted only those portions of Puranas which were confirmed by foreign writers of those periods. The history of India was created by the British historians, including their Indian disciples with the help of fertile imagination, and this fiction and myth is now accepted as Indian History.

There is urgent need of making research based on architectural evidences, narrations given in Puranas, the contemporary writing on kings and other literatures by the writers of different periods, and other available sources. This can lead to know the correct version of Indian history for our future generation.

The stories from Puranas are important not only to get a correct account of our past, but also to find the solutions of complex problems of modern days based on the knowledge of issues faced and solutions found by our forefathers in ancient times. Some of the challenges faced by humanity, despite great changes in technology, environment, and cultural changes remain same in every age. This is because the basic human behaviors, emotions and attachments do not change.

Even if you do not like learnings and information from your past, the stories of Puranas are important for the high entertainment values provided by them. These are more interesting than the stories of Arabian Nights and even the modern science fictions.

You have already enjoyed the stories of first five major incarnations of Vishnu, and Hayagreeva, Prithu, Mohini, and some more partial incarnations of Vishnu, the stories of forgotten kings, and saints, and great Asuras, stories of time travel, stories of Daksha Yagya leading to Dakshayani becoming Sati, stories of kings of Solar, lunar and Kuru races, and of Paurava race.

About fifty wonderful stories from Puranas invite you for entertainment from this second part of the series on "Stories from Puranas and History." Stories are about the three incarnations of Lord Vishnu, of Parashuram, Ram, and Krishna, and of some partial incarnations such as of Rishabh deva, and Ved Vyas.

While in the first part, we have read the story of Dakshayani becoming Sati in the Daksha yagya, we are narrating very happy stories related with Shiva in this part. These include that of marriage of Shiva and Parvati, of birth of Kartikeya, and of Ganesha, and of Skanda Vijaya. This part of the series also includes very wonderful known and unknown stories related to kings of solar, lunar, and kuru dynasties.

We have selected the stories such that they are full of entertainment and information. You will not like to miss any of these stories, whether you are a mature seeker of ancient history and mythology of India, or a reader seeking values with entertainment. The first story is one of the famous mythologies. The king of elephants, Gajendra, is losing a battle for his life against a mighty crocodile after a long-drawn battle in water, draining his strength. He could get his wisdom of previous life, and prays to God Vishnu, who becomes his savior.

Chapter 2 Gajendra Mukti

Story 1 Fight between elephant and crocodile

There was a very big mountain having three major peaks. It was known as Trikuta Parvat. The three peaks were of square shape, and full of silver, iron, and gold minerals. Besides the three major peaks, the mountain was having many more peaks on all sides containing precious stone and minerals.

The mountain, as an island, was surrounded by a milky ocean. It was lush with trees, creepers, and shrubs, and stood radiant against the sky in every direction. At its foot, being washed by the waves of the sea all around, the earth had turned dark green from green emerald stones.

It was frequented by sages, divinities, the heavenly singers, the souls of knowledge, Nagas, Yakshas, and the nymphs, who enjoyed their pastimes in the valleys there.

The caves there resounded with the sounds of Gandharva, that made the stout lions enviously roar for a mate. Great numbers of jungle animals resided in the forest. The gardens were beautifully decorated with all types of trees and chirping birds. There were several waterfalls, resulting in wonderful incessant sound mixed with chirping of birds, and sounds of animals.

In the rivers and lakes filled with crystal clear water, the damsels of the godly souls were bathing who, at the sand banks glittering with gems, enriched the air and the water with the fragrance of their bodies.

In one of the valleys there was a garden of a servant of Varuna, who was named Ritumat. This garden was a sporting place of the divine ladies. The garden was full of plants and creepers having wonderful flowers. It was everywhere most beautifully tended with flowers and fruits and Mandara and Parijat, Asoka and Champaka trees.

There were variety of fruits trees like orange, guavas, mangoes, Amratakas, grapes, sugar cane, bananas, jambu, badari, aksha, abhaya and amalaki and pomegranates as also coconut and date trees. One can see in the garden madhuka trees, palm trees, tamalas, asanas, arjunas, arishthas, udumbaras, plakshas, banyans, kimshukas and sandelwood trees as well.

There was a very large lake in the garden. It was full of shining golden lotuses, and kumuda, kahlara, utpala and satapatra flowers. The intoxicated bees were humming around flowers accompanied by the most melodious songs of the birds. The lake was crowded with swans and chakravakas, and other water birds, who all made their noises.

The water was agitated by the movements of the fish and tortoises. The agitation stirred the lotuses, so that the pollen falling from them covered the surface. The trees growing on the banks of the lake, with their fruits and flowers, adorned the place abundantly during all seasons.

Gajendra, the leader of the elephants in the forest, in the company of his wives and other elephants, one day wandered around on that mountain. Just his smell was enough to make all the lions and other beasts of prey, other large herbivorous, the rhinoceroses, big snakes, and the white and black deer flee in fear. By his mercy the foxes, boars, buffaloes, bears, porcupines, different types of dears, wolves, monkeys, and small animals like rabbits and such, could freely roam without fear.

Dripping from his temples and agitated [in musth] he, surrounded by intoxicated, drinking bees, and followed by the other he and she elephants and the young in their midst, made the earth all around the mountain agitated.

From a distance smelling the water with the pollen of the lotus flowers carried by the breeze he, with his thirsty company and his vision clouded under the influence, hurried for the bank of that lake. Entering its pellucid, cool water he with his trunk drank his fill from the nectarial lotus pollen mixture, took a good bath and was thus

relieved of all fatigue.

Drawing the water with his trunk and spraying it over him, he inspired his wives and children also to take a bath and drink. Thus, being engaged he, like a concerned householder being overly attached to his family, took under the control of the deluding material world, no heed of any possible danger.

But danger was lurking very close in the form of a mighty and angry crocodile. The mighty crocodile caught his foot. The elephant thereupon with all his strength strenuously tried to get out of this dangerous position. When the wives saw that their leader was suddenly attacked and captured, they in shock started to lament. But the other elephants trying to free him from behind, were equally helpless.

While the elephant and the crocodile this way were fighting, pulling one another in and out of the water, several years passed in which they both stayed alive. That fight was considered most wonderful by the onlookers. They were asking with each other, "Who won? Who lost? Kaun Hara?"

Gajendra, the elephant king, though one of the strongest animals in the forest, gradually lost his strength in that period thereafter more and more. The fatigue of having fought so long against being pulled into the water was highly draining for him.

The crocodile, the king of all water residing creatures, was not less in strength than the elephant. Moreover, he was at home in the water and became more frantic, strong, and powerful.

The Gajendra saw that his life was in danger and that he, by the will of providence, could not free himself from this helpless condition. He thought for a long time and reached the following conclusion, "Neither all these relatives and followers can deliver me from my distress, nor can I as an elephant expect to be freed by my wives from this fate of being captured tightly by the crocodile."

Story 2 Elephant prays Bhagwan Vishnu

The distress resulted in him remembering the wisdom of his previous birth as a human. He thus decided to take shelter of Him who protects anyone who surrenders himself to Him.

He said, "I surrender to Him, who is the refuge of all." With that decision the Gajendra focused his mind on his heart by reciting a supreme prayer he had practiced in a previous birth. He said, "My obeisances unto the Supreme Godhead who moves this materially controlled existence to consciousness! I meditate on Him, the original person, the transcendental Lord who is the root cause. The universe rests in Him, exists because of Him and originates from Him. I surrender to Him, who is our cause and who is transcendental to us! I beg that root Soul, the Supreme Transcendence of the beyond, to protect me!"

"When a dancer dances it is difficult to understand the different forms he represents. The same way the gods, the sages and the common creatures cannot understand His movements or express them in words. May He give me protection! I pray the Lord of those who are free from all attachment, of those who are equal and friendly towards all! I surrender to him!"

"Adoration to Him, who is the destruction and the creation of this cosmic manifestation, and occasionally engages in activities as an *avatar*. I offer Him my respects, the Hari, the Controller, the Supreme Brahman of unlimited potency, who without a form has assumed forms and performed so many wonderful activities."

"I offer Him my obeisances who is the enlightenment of the soul, the witness present within all, the Supreme Self! Adoration to Him who defies description and is beyond the mind and even consciousness!"

"Adoration to you, the origin of the material creation! To the one who oversee the motives of the senses! To the source of all forms of belief! To You, the causeless

supreme cause of all! I offer my obeisances to You, the granter of liberation and the shelter of the Yogi.”

“My obeisances to You, the infinite mercy! To You, who releases a surrendered animal like me from being entangled! You are difficult to attain for everyone who is attached to his mind and body, to his offspring and relatives, to his home, wealth, and support. But for the liberated souls, you are present in the core of his heart.”

“They who desire Dharma, Artha, Kama and Moksha, worship You and thus succeed in attaining their desired objective, not to mention other benedictions. With no other but You as their purpose in life, they do not desire any benediction. I worship You, who has the unlimited, all-inclusive origin. May Your unlimited mercy bring me salvation.”

The great king of elephants, prayed further, “I do not want to live like this in the world. What is the use of this captivation from within and from without in being born as an elephant? I want to be liberated from that covering of my spiritual existence! I bow down before You, the soul of the universe.”

He continued, “I offer You my obeisances. My respects again and again for You, who shelters the surrendered souls. I seek my refuge with You, whose glories are unfathomable, whose Self is not known by the common man and surrender to him by whose forces and intelligence I have been defeated.”

Story 3 Vishnu saves Gajendra

Hearing the prayers by Gajendra, Vishnu in person appeared himself. He, who understood his plight, then came as fast as He could. Carried by Garuda and equipped with His Sudarshan disc and other weapons, He soon arrived where Gajendra was situated.

The moment he, who in the water so violently was captured and was suffering, saw the Lord on the back of Garuda in the sky, he lifted his trunk while holding a lotus flower and uttered with difficulty, “Oh Narayana! oh Supreme Lord! To You I offer my obeisances.”

Seeing him in pain, Vishnu, so full of mercy, alighted immediately. He saved him with His disc, before the eyes of all the godly souls present, by severing the snout from the crocodile’s trunk. and pulled Gajendra out of the water. When Gajendra was freed in this way by the supreme God, the divinities, and all the onlookers, showered flowers to praise that accomplishment of the Lord. The sky vibrated because of the sounds of the musical instruments, the songs of Gandharva and dance of Apsaras.

The saints, the venerable souls and perfected souls offered prayers to the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

Story 4 Story of Huhu and Indra Dyumna

That very moment the crocodile assumed the most wonderful form of Huhu, the best of the Gandharva. He was freed from a curse pronounced by sage Devala.

Huhu, with his head bowed down began to offer his obeisances to the Supreme God and thereafter chanted His glories. Enjoying the Lord’s grace, he circumambulated Him while offering his respects. He, being freed from all sin, before the eyes of everyone returned to his abode. The king of elephants, as an impact of the touch of the Supreme Lord, instantly freed from the ignorance of his state of bondage. He acquired his Sarupya.

In his former life, the elephant had been born as the best of Dravida king, the king of Pandya. Known as Indra Dyumna he was a great devotee of Vishnu. In his fourth stage, when the time to do penance had arrived, he took the vow of silence. He performed,

with matted locks, his austerities in Kulachala [the Malaya hills] where he had his hermitage.

One day he was immersed in his meditation of Vishnu. The renown Agastya, surrounded by his disciples, then on his own initiative arrived there. He saw him sitting silently alone in meditation. As Indra Dyumna did not notice anything outside, he did not offer him a respectful welcome.

The sage Agastya got very angry about it. He cursed him despises me as a brahmin. May he become a dull-minded elephant." After thus condemning him, the so very powerful Agastya departed together with his associates. The sinless Indra Dyumna cursed in this way, accepted the curse thinking that to be result of his past deeds.

When he got born as an elephant, he forgot his past life. But because of his battle with crocodile, slowly his memory came back. As he worshiped the Lord by offering prayers, he nevertheless in that elephant's body managed to remember his past devotion.

After the Lord Vishnu had delivered the king of the elephants, He was praised by the Gandharva, the perfected souls, and the sages.

Great Lord, being pleased, in the presence of everyone said to Gajendra, "They will be delivered from all their worries who, by carefully concentrating their minds remember the forms of Me and you, and the event along with the place. They who offer Me prayers this way will be granted eternal destination when they expire their last breath."

After having declared this, Govind blew on His conch, and climbed on the back of Garuda. He returned to His heavenly abode, in the company of Indra Dyumna as his associate.

The belief promotes those who hear about it to the heavenly spheres and increases their reputation.

Next story is about a gambler. It is said that he was a prior birth of the great Bali.

Chapter 3 Story of a Gambler, and a great sinner

Story 1 A sinner offers small items to Shiva

As a result of his good or bad karma, Indra may turn into a worm and a worm may become Indra. Hence there is nothing more conducive to liberation than charitable gifts. Bali, the great, was the greatest donor among all living beings. Whatever anyone desired was immediately given by him. The overlord of Asuras distributed liberally to everyone what he sought.

Whatever man does after exerting himself yields either good or bad results. Indeed, Sakra who performed a hundred Ashvamedha Yagya, and gained the realm in Amaravati was addicted to worldly pleasures only. A man gains his object, after hard work. Immediately after getting the result, a sort of niggardliness besets him. Afterwards he dies and his merit becomes exhausted.

In this connection they cite this ancient legend. It is accepted by all that this has been undoubtedly done by Bali, the son of Virochana, in his prior birth.

There was a roguish gambler, a great sinner. He was an adulterer. He used to censure Devas and Brahmanas. He indulged in great fraud and dishonesty.

Once much wealth was earned by him through gambling. He took with him flowers, betel leaves and sandal paste for giving them to a prostitute. He was hurrying towards her adobe. On the way robbers took away all his garments and ready cash.

The gambler, now wearing only a loin cloth, was running towards the house with scents, flowers, sandal paste, garlands etc. to be offered to the courtesan. He clasped his shoulders with crossed hands, to cover the nakedness of his body and for saving himself from cold air. In this posture, his body was making a Svastika sign.

He stumbled on the way and fell on the ground instantaneously. After the fall he swooned. After some time, he regained consciousness.

Although he was a sinner causing trouble to others, and dull-witted, suddenly his intellect was directed towards good thoughts. Evidently it was the result of some of his previous good deeds.

The gambler was feeling exceedingly disgusted with worldly objects. He was repentant and miserable for what he had done so far. The scent, the flowers etc. that had fallen on the ground were dedicated to Shiva by that gambler unconsciously and unintentionally. And, the, he died.

From charitable gift, knowledge is acquired and from knowledge, liberation is achieved undoubtedly. Devotion unto the Lord Shiva is greater than liberation. Sadashiv, the lord of all, gives away everything when his mind is pleased. He becomes satisfied with even a very little thing that is offered, say, even a drop of water.

Offerings of flowers, sandal paste, etc. in Swastik Mudra to Shiva was, undoubtedly, a meritorious deed. So, something good happened to him.

Story 2 Reward of offerings to Shiva

He was taken to the abode of Yama by the attendants of Yama. Yama, said to him after calling him a sinner, "O stupid fellow, you are to be sent for sufferings in great hells."

On being told by Dharmaraja, the gambler spoke these words, "O lord, I agree that many evil sins have been done by me. O Yama, there might have been some good and meritorious deeds also done by me. Be kind to consider them also truly."

Chitrugupta, the maintainer of good and evil deeds, spoke, "I reckon one meritorious deed by you. Something had been given by you to Shiva, the great Lord. Whatever fell on the ground at the time of your death was offered by you to Shiva. Due to that meritorious deed, understand, you will attain the position of Indra undoubtedly for three Ghadikas (One Ghadika = 24 minutes).

At that time the lord Indra chanced to come there riding on his elephant, Airavata. He was accompanied by all the deities and his guru Brihaspati. Yama then took the gambler with him to Sakra. Sakra was then explained of the situation.

He was advised through guru Brihaspati, "O Purandara, for a period of three Ghadikas, this gambler should be installed in your seat at my bidding."

On hearing the words of his preceptor, Indra respected them. He bowed down his head to signify assent. In this way, Sakra agreed to leave his post for that period and go elsewhere.

Then, the gambler was ushered into the wonderfully furnished abode of the king of Devas. He was crowned and installed on the throne of Sakra. If a gambler can attain the kingdom of Indra, because he offered scents to Shambhu along with flowers and betel leaves, what cannot be attained by those people who are actuated by faith to offer large quantities of scents, flowers etc. always with great devotion to Siva?

Such devotees deserve much greater reward. They will attain Shiva Sayujya (identity with Shiva). They will be accompanied by Siva's Ganas and acquire great joy. Such blessed state is rare and difficult of achievement even by Brahma, Sakra etc. Indeed, the status of Indra is nothing compared to such people.

Story 3 The gambler gifts valuables to Sages during three Ghadikas

Thus, the gambler attained the status of Indra for a period of three Ghadikas. On being crowned by the priest, he occupied the seat of Purandara.

At the time of his coronation, this gambler of great fame was told by Narada, "Bring Indrani by whom the kingdom is rendered very splendid."

Hearing this, the gambler, the devotee of Shiva, laughed and said, "I have nothing to do with Indrani. This ought not to have been mentioned by you, O highly intelligent one."

After saying thus, the gambler began to give charitable gifts to sages, without losing a moment. He gave Airavata to Agastya, and he gave Visvamitra the horse named Uchchaihshravas. The great donor gave Kamadhenu and Chintamani of great luster to Vasishtha.

The donor of great splendors gave Galava the divine tree Kalpataru, and gave Kaula a house.

Joyously he gave these and many other jewels of diverse kinds to different sages. He gave everything for the pleasure of Shiva. The new Indra continued to give charitable gifts, without any break, over a period of three Ghadikas. After the period was over, the previous lord arrived, and he went back to Yama.

Purandara was seated on his own throne in Amaravati. He was being eulogized by the sages. He was accompanied by Sachi also. The evil-minded one said to Sachi, "O splendid and beautiful lady, I think that you have been enjoyed by that gambler! Were you not? Tell me the truth fully."

Then the lady without blemish rebuked Purandara, "Everywhere you see things and persons on the analogy of your own self, O Purandara. He in the form of a gambler, is a noble soul. By the grace of Shiva, he has been the knower of the reality and ultimate truth. He is high-minded and detached. He forsook for the sake of others the kingdom and other things that had come to him, considering them as binding nooses causing delusion. Hence, he gave them to others, and has become victorious." On hearing the words of Indrani, Purandara, the lord of Devas, became ashamed. He sat silently in his seat.

Now, one of the devas stated his observations to Brihaspati, "Airavata is not to be seen. So also, Uchchaihshravas, the horse. By whom have Parijata and other objects been taken away?"

Then, their Guru Brihaspati narrated to them the great thing done by the gambler during the short period of his status of Indra. As long as he had power, he gave away different things to the sages.

He said, "Those who are not influenced by and not attached to their own great power and position, those who are continuously engaged in meditation on Shiva are His favorites. Abandoning the fruits of the Karmas, they attain the greatest status by resorting to pure knowledge alone."

On hearing the words of Brihaspati, Indra decided to go to Yama and ask for the donated objects for sake of his own prosperity. Sakra, then immediately went to the city of Yama accompanied by Brihaspati, desiring his own objects back.

Story 4 Benefits of donations

On being welcomed and honored by Yama, Sakra complained to him, "My position and status was given to the evil-minded gambler by you. But this highly despicable action has been committed by him. All jewels and fine things belonging to me were given to different persons by him."

He severely criticized him, "O Dharma, know this exactly. Your name is Dharma! How did you give the gambler this position? Everything has been done by you for destroying my kingdom. O highly fortunate one, fetch the elephant and other things

back to me quickly, along with jewels, etc. that have been given to different persons.

On hearing the words of Sakra, Yama was furious. He rebuked the gambler, "What is this that has been done by you, a great sinner? Sakra's kingdom was given to you for your enjoyment. But it has been donated to Brahmanas. A great wrong has been done in this way. What should not be done has been committed by you! You have removed other people's wealth, O foolish one. You will go to hell because of this sin."

On hearing the words of Yama, the gambler said, "The fact that I am to go to hell does not deserve anxiety. But know that I have not donated other people's wealth. As long as I had the possession of Sakra's throne, I had the power to give it to the Brahmanas."

Yama said, "Charitable gift is commended on the earth where the fruit of Karma is acquired. In heaven charitable gift is fruitless. It should never be given to anyone by anyone at any place. Hence, O stupid one, you are worthy of being punished. What is opposed to the injunctions of the scriptures has been performed by you."

"The preceptor is the chastiser and guide of those who are wise and self-possessed. The king is the chastiser of evil-minded persons. I am undoubtedly the chastiser of all persons of sinful conduct."

After rebuking that gambler thus, the lord Yama spoke to Chitragupta, "Let him be cooked in the hell."

Then Chitragupta laughed and said to Yama, "How can this gambler be sent now to hell? The great elephant Airavata has been given to Agastya by him. The horse that came out of the ocean, Uchchaihshravas has been given to the noble-souled Galava. Chintamani has been given to Visvamitra. These and other jewels have been given away by this gambler. As a result of that act of donation, he is worthy of being praised and worshipped in all the three worlds."

"Everything that is given away with Shiva in view either in heaven or in the mortal world by men is, it should be known, everlasting. It is called a flawless Karma. Hence there is now no question of this gambler falling into hell."

"Whatever sins the gambler committed have all been reduced to ash by remembering Shambhu. He has become a noble soul. Thanks to the grace of Shambhu, many merits have been acquired by him at the same instant."

On hearing these words of Chitragupta, the king of the departed spirits bent down his head. He laughed and said this to Indra, "Indeed you are the king of the leading Suras. Though old, you are too covetous of the kingdom. One good thing of the whole of your life has been earned by you by means of a hundred Yagya. There is no doubt about it."

"So, go and request all those sages, Agastya, and others, particularly by falling at their feet or offering them monetary compensation to get back the elephant and other jewels, whereby you can become happy. You are to hasten."

Understanding that it must be done, Purandara of indiscriminate vision went back to his city. With his neck bent down in humility, he requested the sages.

Then he got back (the tree) Parijata. In the same manner, Purandara got back the whole of the kingdom. He became, once again, the king in Amaravati along with noble-souled persons.

A rebirth was granted to the gambler by Yama.

Story 5 The gambler born as Bali

Because of some noble action, he became the son of Virochana. Suruchi, the daughter of Vishwa parva, the principal queen of Virochana, became the mother of the gambler. He remained in the womb of that noble-souled lady.

From the son of Prahlada and from Suruchi, he inherited the great inclination for virtue and charity.

Even as he was staying in the womb, his own mind was made excellent by his prior karma as a gambler. What is difficult of access even to learned men, was accomplished by that gambler.

Story 6 Virochana donates his life

Sakra once went to Virochana, the lord of Daityas, in the guise of a Brahmana beggar. He was desirous of killing him. After reaching Virochana's abode, Indra spoke these words on assuming the guise of an old Brahmana, "O king of good holy rites, O lord of Daityas, you are the most celebrated learned man and donor in the whole of the three worlds. I am a beggar. Brahmanas extol your wonderful life-story and spotless fame. O lord of Daityas, give me what I am going to beg."

On hearing his words, the lord of Daityas spoke these words, "O holy lord, what should be given to you. Tell me quickly."

Indra in the form of a Brahmana spoke to Virochana, "It is a humiliating thing, yet I beg of you. Whatever is most pleasing and dear to you, should be given to me. There is no doubt about it."

The Asura, the son of Prahlada, laughingly spoke these words, "If you desire, O Brahmana, I shall give you, my head. I shall give even this kingdom without any strain. I shall undoubtedly offer everything to you."

On being told thus by the king of Asuras, Indra pondered over it and said, "Give me your own head adorned with the crown."

When these words were spoken by Sakra in the form of a Brahmana, the Asura, the son of Prahlada, joyously hurried up and cut off his own head with his own hand and gave it to Mahendra.

There is nothing greater than a charitable gift anywhere. That charitable gift offered to persons in distress is highly meritorious, and is capable of infinite results. There are three types of charitable gifts, viz. Sattviki, Rajas and Tamas.

That charitable gift which is characterized as Sattviki, was performed by him. The head was cut off and given to Indra who was in the guise of a Brahmana. The crown fell there. So also, the gems and jewels of great luster fell simultaneously for the benefit of the groups of Daityas, kings, and serpents.

That charitable gift of Virochana became well-known in all the three worlds. Even today poets sing about the gifts of the noble-souled king of asuras.

Story 7 Bali, the great king, and greatest donor

In this way, the gambler of great refulgence became the son of great donor Virochana. He was born after the father had died. His mother, a chaste lady, forsook her body and attained the world of her husband.

Then in the very same throne of his father, he was crowned by Bhargava (Shukra). He earned great fame and he became well-known by the name Bali. All the groups of Suras of very great strength were terrified by him. Bali directly enjoyed the three worlds himself.

After advised by Prahlad, Bali became a great ruler. He became eagerly devoted to and engaged in munificent charitable gifts due to the previous practice which the gambler had.

Bali had the great initiation. He performed ninety-nine Ashvamedha yagya. He kept a Brahmana as his Acharya (preceptor). He had sixteen Ritviks. All of them were well-tested by the noble souled Bhargava.

He decided to complete the hundredth Ashvamedha yagya also.

By the time the full merit of the hundred yagya was to accrue, the excellent Vrata of Aditi to make her son Lord of Amaravati again, was also completed. Hari became Aditi's son in the form of a great religious student. In his Vamana incarnation, he

went to Bali to ask for donation.

We have already read about that great story in the first part of the series “Stories from Puranas: Part 1”, which narrates how Bali made the most famous donation.

We have read the story of Dakshayani in first part of the series, which led to great sorrow to the world. Shiva devoted himself to penance. The next story is of Girija, and her marriage with Shiva.

Chapter 4 Birth of Girija and her penance

Story 1 Tarak gets invincibility

When Dakshayani got her body burnt in the fire of the Yagya of Daksha, and even her burnt limbs were cut to pieces by the Sudarshan Chakra, Mahesha was left without Shakti. Hence, he performed a great penance on the Himalaya Mountain. He was surrounded by his associates including Bhiringi, Visva, Nandi, and others and by crores of Ganas.

The Supreme Atma thus engaged in penance suddenly went to the top of Himalaya. He was alone, being bereft of the Mulavidya, shakti.

Because of absence of Mulavidya, thousands of Daityas were born of Avidya. Then those powerful Daityas became tormentors of gods headed by Indra. They were famous as Kalakhaijas, Kalakeyas, Nivatakavachas and Ravaravakas. These and many other groups of Daityas were causing the massacre of all the subjects of three worlds. Taraka, the son of Namuchi, was leading the Asuras. He propitiated Brahma by means of a great penance. Brahma was pleased with him. He agreed to grant to the evil-minded Taraka boons just according to his wish.

He said, "Choose your boon! Welfare unto you! I shall give you all that your desire."

On hearing those words of Brahma, he asked for a boon that instilled terror in all the worlds, "If you are pleased with me, grant me freedom from old age and death and give me invincibility too from all."

On being told thus by the evil-minded Taraka, Brahma laughingly spoke these words, "Wherefrom can you have immortality? Know it as a fact that certain indeed is death unto one who is born."

Then Taraka laughed and said, "Then give me invincibility."

Brahma then said to the Daitya, "Invincibility has been granted to you, o sinless one, except from an infant. An infant will defeat you."

Then Taraka bowed down and said to Brahma, "O lord, o lord of Devas, I am blessed and contented by your grace now."

Having acquired the boon thus, Taraka, the Asura of great strength, challenged Devas for war and fought with them. Resorting to great king Muchukunda, Devas became victorious. Although Devas were repeatedly attacked and tormented by Taraka, they matched the might of invincible Taraka with the support of Muchukunda.

"What is to be done by us? We are being continuously attacked and dragged into war," thinking thus, Suras including Indra went to Brahma's region.

In the meanwhile, Bali was bound by Vishnu. And, Vishnu was in a way, bound by Bali by his promise to remain with him and safeguard his kingdom. He was living with him in his kingdom as per the promise.

Going in front of Brahma, they spoke, "Madhusudana is staying in Patala along with Bali. Without Vishnu, we have fallen on account of the enemies, all those leading Daityas. O highly fortunate one, o lord, we pray you to save us."

Then an ethereal voice from unseen source spoke to them consolingly, "O Devas, let my suggestion be carried out exactly and immediately. O Devas, when an exceedingly powerful son is born to Shiva, he will undoubtedly kill Taraka in battle. Take such a course of action that lord Shambhu, dwelling in the cavity of the heart of everyone, takes a wife unto himself. Let a great effort be made by you all. These words cannot be otherwise. Know this, o ye Devas."

Hearing the unembodied voice, Devas were struck with wonder. They discussed among themselves, about some means to make possible the conditions declared by the voice.

Story 2 Birth of Girija

All the Devas, led by their preceptor Brihaspati, went to Himalaya. They spoke to Himalaya explaining the seriousness of the matter, "O Himalaya of great fortune, please hear our words. Taraka terrorizes us. Render assistance in killing him. Be our refuge!"

On being requested thus, Himavan, the most excellent among mountains laughed a lot. Full of satirical laughter against Mahendra, he said, "O Suras, it was by Mahendra himself that mountains have been made incapable of anything. What task of Suras can we do in this matter of killing Taraka? If only we had our wings, O excellent Suras, we would have killed Taraka along with his kinsmen. I am an immobile mountain. Devoid of wings, what shall I do to help you?"

Devas spoke, "All of you and all of us are incapable of killing Taraka, o highly fortunate one. Let the means whereby Taraka, our enemy of great power, can be brought under control, be thought off."

Then Himavan replied, "By what means, o Devas, do you wish to kill Taraka? Please tell me quickly so that I can understand the matter on hand."

Then Suras mentioned everything that had been previously declared by the ethereal voice. Hearing it, the Mountain spoke these words, "When Taraka, the Daitya of great might, will be slain by the intelligent son of Shiva, every objective of Suras shall be auspicious. Hence let that be done by you, which makes Mahesha take up a wife for himself. Who is that girl suitable to Shiva? Let that be ascertained by Suras now."

Suras laughed and said, "For the sake of Shiva and for accomplishing our task, a daughter has to be begotten by you. O Mountain of great intellect, carry out our suggestions. You will undoubtedly become the support of Devas."

On being told thus by Devas, the lord of mountains went to his house. He said to his wife Mena, "The task of Suras has become our responsibility. To accomplish the task of Devas a divine daughter must be begotten. Of course, the birth of a daughter may not be pleasing to women. Still, o lady of splendid face, a daughter must be procreated."

Mena laughed and spoke to him, "What has been spoken by you, is true. Let my words be heard by you now. O my lord, a daughter is the cause of misery unto men. She also causes sorrow unto women. Hence ponder over this for a long time yourself with your keen intellect. Let what is conducive to our welfare be done, O lord of Mountains!"

The intelligent Himavan, motivated by a desire to help others, told, "An intelligent person should do that whereby others can sustain themselves. The same should be done by a woman also, viz. that which helps others."

Thus, his queen was made to comply by the Mountain. Then the lucky Mena conceived a girl in her womb. She was the great Vidya, the great Maya, the embodiment of the highest intellect. She was Amba, the great daughter of Daksha, Rudrakali, Sati.

The chaste lady of beautiful eyes and excellent fortune, Mena, bore in her womb that highest glory of large eyes. Then Devas, sages, Yakshas and Kinnaras eulogized Mena and the Mountain Himavan.

When the goddess manifested herself, she was born as their daughter named Girija, Apsaras danced, Gandharva sang, Siddhas and Charan eulogized her, and Devas showered plenty of flowers.

Then everything, the entire unit of the three worlds became delighted. When the great Sati, Girija, incarnated herself, Daityas became excessively frightened. The groups of Devas, the great Sages, Charan, and the groups of Siddhas attained great joy.

Story 3 Parvati meets Shiva daily and serves him

Parvati grew up day by day and shone very much. Living in the house of Himalaya, she reached the age of eight years.

At that time Mahesha was performing a great penance in a valley of Himalaya. He was

surrounded by all the groups or Ganas, Virabhadra and others. Accompanied by Parvati, the intelligent Himavan went to Mahesha engaged in this penance, to see his lotus feet. When he arrived, he was stopped by Nandi who was standing at the entrance. Then for a moment he stood steady.

Meanwhile, Nandi went to inform Shiva that the mountain Himavan wanted to meet Him. On hearing his words, Parameshwara spoke these words to Nandi, "Bring the Mountain here."

Saying, "So be it," and honoring his words, Nandi brought the Mountain Himavan to Shankara, the benefactor of the worlds. The lord of everyone was engaged in penance with his eyes closed. He had matted hair with the digit of the moon as an ornament. He can be understood only through the Vedanta and Upasana.

On seeing him, Mountain Himavan of unimpaired inherent strength, bent down his head and saluted him. He then attained the greatest joy. He spoke these words to the Lord, "I am lucky, O Shankara, the great lord, thanks to your grace. I shall come here every day, O lord, to pay a visit along with this daughter of mine. It behooves you, O lord of Devas, to grant me permission."

On hearing his prayers, Mahadev told, "O Mountain, you may come here every day to meet me after keeping this girl in the house. Otherwise, there would be no audience with me."

With his neck bent down the Mountain replied to Shiva, "Why should I not come along with this girl? Let that be told."

Shambhu who was performing the holy rites, laughingly spoke these words to the Mountain, "This slender-bodied girl of good lips and exquisite speech should not be brought near me. I am forbidding it repeatedly."

Girija heard Sambhu's harsh words. Being devoid of blemishes and free from any desire, she laughed and spoke, "O Shambhu! you are endowed with the power of penance. You are performing a great penance. This inclination for performing penance you have because you are noble-souled. But let this be pondered over- Who are you? Who is the subtle Prakrti, O holy lord?"

On hearing those words, Mahesha spoke, "Oh, I am destroying my connection with Prakrti by means of the greatest penance itself. In fact, O lady of good eyebrows, I will stay without Prakrti. It is said that nothing that has been evolved out of Prakrti should be accumulated together at any time by Siddhas."

Girija replied, "What has been said by you, O Shankara, by means of speech, is it not Prakrti? In that case how are you beyond it? O lord, of what avail is our disputation and arguments? Whatever you hear, whatever you see and whatever you eat, O Shankara, is entirely the evolute of Prakrti. Why should penance be performed after going beyond Prakrti? O Lord Shambhu, just now on this mountain Himalaya you have met Prakrti. But you cannot understand it, O Shankara."

Then, she added, "What have we to do with oral dispute and argument, O Lord? If your statement that you are beyond Prakrti be true, you need not be afraid of me now, O Shankara!"

Then Lord laughed and replied to Girija, "Serve me every day, O Girija of excellent speech."

After saying thus to Girija, Mahesha spoke these words to Himalaya, "Here itself, on this very ground, I shall perform a great penance with concentration on the ultimate truth. Permission should be granted to me for performing the penance, O Lord of Mountains. Without your permission it is not possible to perform penance here."

On hearing these words of the Trident-bearing Lord of Devas, Himavan laughed and spoke these words to Sambhu, "The entire universe along with Devas, Asuras and human beings belongs to you. I am an insignificant person, O Mahadeva. What can I give you?"

On being told thus by Himavan, Shankara, the benefactor of all the worlds, laughed

and respectfully said to the Lord of Mountains, "You may leave now." Permitted to go by Shankara, Himavan went to his abode. Every day he came there along with Girija to pay a visit. Thus, some time passed when the father and the daughter continued their visits and service. But Shankara was difficult to be tackled and won over.

Story 4 Attack of Madana, and his burning by Shiva

Suras began to worry with the thought, 'How will Shankara join Girija?' They asked their guru, "O Brihaspati, what should we do now? Tell us. Do not delay." Brihaspati advised, "O Mahendra, this must be done by you. Let it be understood and acted upon. This task can be carried out only by Madana (the god of Love). None else will be competent for it in all the three worlds. The penance of many ascetics has been upset by him. Hence Mara (Kamdev) should be requested immediately."

On hearing the words of Guru, Indra sent for Madana. Madana came there on receipt of the call, accompanied by Rati (his wife) and Madhava (i.e. the Spring season).

The flower-armed deity came to the assembly in front of Mahendra and spoke these proud words in a manner captivating the minds of the people, "Why have I been called today, O Indra? Tell me what work should I do? Do not delay. The moment they think about me, the ascetics meet with their downfall. You do know, O Indra, my valour and prowess."

He continued in proud tone, "Parashara, the son of Shakti, knows my power and vigor. Thus, many other sages such as Bhṛigu do know it. Brihaspati too knows it, as well as the wife of Utathya. Bharadvaja was born of her begotten by Guru and was thus illegitimate. Prajapati (Brahma) knows my heroism and powerful valour."

"Krodha (Anger) is my kinsman. He has great strength and valour. By both of us, this great universe consisting of mobile and immobile beings has been conquered (and liquidated, i.e. excited, and stirred up). Everything beginning with Brahma and ending with a blade of grass, the whole world of mobile and immobile beings, has been overwhelmed by us."

Devas said, "O Madana, you are undoubtedly capable of always conquering us. Go immediately to Mahesa for accomplishing the task of Suras. Unite Sambhu with Parvati, O highly intelligent one."

On being requested thus by Devas, Madana, the enchanter of the universe, went to the grounds of the mountain Himavan. That wielder of a great bow made the twanging sound of his flowery bow. He took with him charming and fascinating arrows. He was accompanied with several celestial damsels, viz. Rambha, Urvashi, Sulochana, Mitrakesi, Subhaga, and Tilottama. There were others also to render different kinds of assistance to him.

Ganas saw all these damsels along with Madana. All of them were suddenly enchanted by Madana. Huge romantic transformation was the result in the Shiva's penance-grove.

Bhṛigu, Virbhadrā, and Nandi approached different apsaras. Tilottama and others were surrounded by the Ganas then, who had become mad and abandoned all shame although they were high-minded and learned. Swans became intoxicated in the company of female swans, he-elephants with she-elephants and peacocks with peahens. Though all these had been free from lust due to the qualities arising from contact with Shiva, they now became excited.

The whole of the earth was pervaded by sounds of cuckoos, though it was not spring season. Ashoka, Champaka, mangoes, jasmine, Kadambas, vine creepers, plantains, Ketakis and other flowers, etc. were in full bloom and they were rendered beautiful by bees.

The highly refulgent Nandi, of immeasurable infinite valor, pondered over this, 'Why have these become so suddenly? This must be the working of Rakshasas or of gods.'

In the meantime, Madana took up his bow and fixed five arrows to it. He resorted to the shade of a Deodar tree.
From his hidings, he saw Sambhu performing his penance.