

39. Vishwaksena

In the Krita Yuga, there was an Apsara lady named Kuntala. Indra instructed her to go to the hermitage of sage Durvasa, the sage with irritable temperment, and disturb his penance. Kuntala went as directed. By her overtures at his Ashram, Durvasa was annoyed. "You will become a huntress" he cursed her. Kuntala was afraid. She prostrated before the sage and begged his pardon. "My word shall never fail." said the sage. "I shall however, reveal to you a way out. After you beget a son you will be back in Swarga," he added. "By your grace let me have a brave son, with longevity. Let him also become a sage" prayed Kuntala. Durvasa said "Be it so".

Kuntala was born as Suvarchala daughter of Veerabahu, a hunter and was given in marriage to Bhadra. Once Varuna, the rain god saw Suvarchala near the River Narmada. Attracted by her beauty, he fell in love with her and said "I am pleased with you. You want any boon? Ask it." Suvarchala replied "If you really love me, bless me with a good son". Varuna agreed. In course of time Suvarchala gave birth to a charming boy with louts eyes, moonlike face and weapons in his hands. The boy was named Vishwaksena. When the boy was ten years old, Suvarchala died. The orphan was left to the care of sage Kasyapa who taught him Vedas and Sastras.

Vishwaksena, later on, went to Vrishabhachala and did penance for twelve years. He obtained the blessings of Lord Vishnu and was appointed as the commander-in-chief of his forces. He reached Narayanagiri, accompanied by some Gan-

dharvas, and became the leader of all powerful beings, and resided on the south-west part of the mountain peak. In valour, he was equal to Lord Vishnu.

Devajit, Mrityujit and Satrujit were three brothers. They were demons, descendants of Hiranyaksha, and experts in spreading illusion. They obtained a boon from Brahma that no God could kill them. They troubled every one and were a menace to all. Due to their atrocities, the Gods, who enjoyed a share in sacrifices hitherto, lost it. The demons usurped that. Consequently, sages could not carry on penance. Sacrifices had to be given up. The Sun did not shine. Fire did not burn. None could oppose the three demon brothers. Gods had no approach to the Lord residing on Narayanachala for protection. The Lord deputed Vishwakṣena to eliminate the demons. Vishwakṣena, accompanied by his mighty forces and powerful chiefs, marched. He attacked the demons, who gave a fierce fight. It looked as though the sky was burning. Then Devajit released his illusory powers against Vishwakṣena. Vishwakṣena's army fell in a swoon. But Kedhavi, a minister of Vishwakṣena, who was also a master of the same craft, neutralised the powers of the demon. Most of the demon's army perished. Mrityujit then put his illusory powers into action. Satrugṇa, from Vishwakṣena's army immediately cut off the ornaments on Mrityujit's head. A fierce battle took place. Kalagni, another minister of Vishwakṣena put into action his illusory powers and destroyed most of the demons' army. The demon fell down struck by the force released by Kalagni.

At last, Vishwakṣena released the Narayāna Astra, the most powerful. It rushed to the enemy like the great fire at the time of destruction of the Universe. Oceans trembled and mountains quivered. The Gods and sages witnessing the battle thought that the world was going to end. Finally, Narayanastra reduced to ashes the demons' army and the demons. Every one sang the praise of Vishwakṣena and his army and departed.