

Surāvān. Agastya returned to his hermitage and adorned himself as Lopāmudrā had demanded. (Mahābhārata, Vana Parva, Chapter 99).

6) *Birth of a son.* Lopāmudrā became pregnant. Agastya told her, "A thousand ordinary sons, or hundred sons, each having the strength of ten ordinary sons, or ten sons, each having the strength of hundred ordinary sons, or a son, greater and nobler than one thousand sons—which of these do you prefer?" Lopāmudrā preferred one son. When she was with child Agastya again went to the forest to do penance. After seven years of pregnancy Lopāmudrā gave birth to a lustrous son. The hermit Dṛḍhasyu, who is also called Idhmavāha, is this son. This child is said to have chanted the Vedas (Holy Scriptures) immediately on his birth. He used to gather twigs for kindling the sacrificial fire of his father, and hence he got the name Idhmavāha.*

7) *How he stamped the Vindhya mountain down.* Once the talcbearer Nārada happened to come to the Vindhya Mountain, who gladly welcomed Nārada, gave him a seat, showed hospitality and asked for news. Nārada said "May you be blessed. Just now I am coming from the Mahameru. Indra, Agni (fire) and other gods live there. Kailāsa, Niśadha, Nīla, Gandhamādana etc. are mountains far nobler than this Meru. But they are not so haughty as him. That the Sun and the Moon and such others revolve round him, is the reason for his arrogance". On hearing these tales, Vindhya thought that Meru should be taught a lesson. Once Vindhya made his peaks grow higher and higher till they touched the sky. The Sun, the Moon and others found it very difficult to pass over the high peaks in their usual journeys to the West, and so they had to roam about in the sky. When the journeys of the Sun and the Moon were hindered, everything in the world fell into chaos. The gods came to Vindhya in groups and tried to pacify him. But their attempts were futile. So they approached Agastya and made their petition to him. He agreed to pacify Vindhya somehow or other. Agastya and his wife came to Vindhya from Kāśinagara. When Vindhya saw Agastya he began to shiver with fear. Contracting all his high peaks, he bowed before Agastya, who said to Vindhya thus "Vindhya, I am going to South Bhārata. Let your heads be low till I come back". Vindhya agreed. Agastya passed on to the South and built a hermitage in the Malayācala and lived there. Since then Agastya had never gone to the North and Vindhya had never risen up. As he had made the mountain (Aga) bow its head he got the name Agastya. (Tenth Skandha of Devībhāgavata).

8) *Nahuṣa transformed to a huge serpent by Agastya.* Devendra killed Vṛtrāsura, an enemy of the gods. As Devendra had resorted to treachery for killing the enemy (see the word Vṛtrāsura) he incurred the sin of 'Brahmahatyā'. Once Indra went to the Mānasasaras, without the knowledge of anybody and hid himself in the petal of a lotus flower. The gods and especially Śacīdevī were much alarmed at the disappearance of Devendra. Heaven was without a King. Bad omens began to appear. Indra, who had hidden in the lotus stalk in the shape of a water-snake, was not at all visible

as the petals had closed over him. It was at this critical moment that King Nahuṣa had completed hundred horse-sacrifices and became eligible for the throne of Devendra. At a great gathering of the Gods Nahuṣa was elected as Devendra. Though Nahuṣa got all the celestial maids at his disposal in the Nandanodyāna (Nandana Garden) his passion for women was not satiated. So he began to have an eye on Indrāṇī. She was in sorrow and misery at the disappearance of her husband Indra, and did not at all look with favour on this new move on the part of the new Indra. She sought the help of Bṛhaspati, who agreed to protect her from Nahuṣa. The newly-elected Indra could not tolerate this disloyalty on the part of Indrāṇī. He became furious and threatened Bṛhaspati with death, if Indrāṇī was not sent to him forthwith. All hermits gathered round Nahuṣa and tried with their advice to dissuade him from this attempt, but he would not be dissuaded. Nahuṣa belittled Bṛhaspati and all the hermits and was rude to them. Finally the hermits, being afraid of Nahuṣa, went to Bṛhaspati to persuade him to send Indrāṇī to Nahuṣa. Bṛhaspati suggested to Indrāṇī a way of safety. Accordingly she came to Nahuṣa and said to him "Lord, to become your wife, is a matter of great pleasure to me. But before that I must make sure if my husband is living anywhere. So allow me to make a search". Nahuṣa agreed to this and by the blessings of Devī, Indrāṇī found out her husband. But Indra would not return to the court, with Indrāṇī, who then complained about Nahuṣa's outrageous behaviour. Indra advised her a new way to protect herself from Nahuṣa's onslaught.

Indrāṇī returned to Nahuṣa and told him "Lord, women generally love pomp and glory. I have a mania for vehicles. You should make a palanquin. Let the palanquin bearers be hermits. You must come to my house in that palanquin with hermits as your palanquin bearers and then I will accept you as my husband." Nahuṣa agreed. He employed Agastya and such other hermits to bear his palanquin. He got into his palanquin and started for Indrāṇī's house. His desire to reach Indrāṇī was such that he thought the hermits to be very slow. To make them quick enough he ordered "Sarpa, Sarpa" (walk quick, walk quick). The hermits began to run. Still Nahuṣa was not satisfied. He kicked at the heads of the hermits and whipped the dwarfish Agastya.

Agastya got angry and cursed Nahuṣa thus: "Since you have whipped me saying 'Sarpa Sarpa', may you be transformed into a mahāsarpa (huge serpent) and fall into the great forest."***

The horror-stricken Nahuṣa pleased Agastya by praise. Agastya said that Nahuṣa would be freed from the curse and attain heaven when he happened to meet Dharmaputra. Nahuṣa instantly changed into a serpent of immense size and slid into a great forest in the Himālayās. (Devībhāgavata, 8th Sarga).

During their sojourn in the forest, the Pāṇḍavas visited many holy places and reached the Yāmuna mountain in the Himālayās. When Bhīma was passing by the mouth of a cave he was attacked by a huge serpent. In spite of his immense strength Bhīma could

* Idhma—twigs of firewood. (Idhma=twigs of firewood) (vāha=carrier).

**It is mentioned in the Mahābhārata, Anuśāsana Parva, Chapter 100, that the person who cursed Nahuṣa and turned him into a huge serpent, was the hermit Bhṛgu, who had been hiding in the hair of Agastya.