

demoness named Śūrpaṅkhā. In the fight that ensued very many demons were killed. Śūrpaṅkhā complained to Rāvaṇa who decided to kill Rāma and carry away Sītā. For this he sought the help of his uncle Mārīca. Flying in his golden Vimāna and crossing mountains and oceans he approached Mārīca and told him of his plan. Mārīca who was aware of the force of Rāmabāna dissuaded Rāvaṇa from such a venture. But Rāvaṇa persisted in his plan and gave Mārīca the following instructions : "Become a golden deer with beautiful white spots all over the body and roam about near the āśrama of Rāma for his wife Sītā to see. I am sure Sītā will request her husband Rāma to catch hold of you. Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa will follow you and Sītā will be left alone. I will then carry away Sītā as Rāhu takes Candrikā (moonlight) and live happily with her. I will be contented if I can then tease Rāma who will be lamenting over his separation from his wife". Thinking that it would be better to die at the hands of Rāma than at the hands of Rāvaṇa, Mārīca agreed to do as his nephew desired.

Rāvaṇa and Mārīca came near the āśrama of Rāma in Rāvaṇa's aerial chariot. Mārīca on alighting from it took the form of a beautiful fawn and entered the precincts of the āśrama. The false fawn was capable of attracting the attention of anybody. It is described thus : "It appeared as a wonder to those who saw it. It was golden in colour with blue horns with white lines on it. The ears were like leaves of blue lotus and the face was of the colour of red lotus. The lips were like sapphire and the body beautifully shaped with sides like yellow flowers. The waist was thin and well-shaped and a rain-bow-coloured tail adorned its back. The whole body was silver-spotted and the deer was a feast for the eyes of anybody."

The deer went and grazed in places where it could be seen by Sītā. It would run away from the āśrama and graze hidden from Sītā but would come back again to the vision of Sītā. It would mix with the deer of the āśrama for some time and run away from them to distant places. Like a butterfly it flitted about always trying to attract the attention of Sītā. Other deer approached it but on getting its scent flew away from it. The false deer suppressing the demon-instinct in him to kill and eat the animals which came near it played well the role of a fawn.

Sītā was enamoured of the deer and expressed to Rāma her desire to get it. Rāma followed it and finding it keeping a distance always got suspicious and shot it down with an arrow. The deer cried "Hā Lakṣmaṇa" and fell down dead. The cry was intended to mislead Lakṣmaṇa and draw him also away from Sītā. (Chapters 43-44, Aranya Kāṇḍa, Vālmiki Rāmāyaṇa).

MĀRĪCA II. Kaśyapaprajāpati. Marīci was the father of Kaśyapa and so Kaśyapa was known as Mārīca also. (Sarga 46, Vālmiki Rāmāyaṇa).

MARĪCI I. A Maharṣi (sage) born from Brahmā's mind.

1) *Birth and Genealogy.* The six great sages born from Brahmā's mind were :—Marīci, Aṅgiras, Atri, Pulastya, Pulaha and Kratu, according to Mahābhārata, Ādi Parva.

2) *Domestic life.* Marīci had several wives and children. He married Kalā, the daughter of Kardama Prajāpati by his wife Devalūti. Marīci had two sons Kaśyapa

and Pūrṇiman by Kalā. This Kaśyapa was the original ancestor of all living beings. But Pūrṇiman's family did not become well-known. Pūrṇiman had two sons, Virajas and Viśvaga and a daughter Devakulyā. Devakulyā washed the feet of Mahāviṣṇu and merged with Ākāśa Gaṅgā.

Ūrṇā was another wife of Marīci. Six sons were born to Ūrṇā. Under a curse of Brahmā they were born first as the sons of Hiranyakaśipu and in their next birth as the sons of Vasudeva and Devakī. It was these six children who were born as Śrī Kṛṣṇa's elder brothers whom Kariṣa killed immediately after their birth. (See under Kṛṣṇa).

Marīci had another wife named Sambhūti. She gave birth to Paurṇamāsa. In Viṣṇu Purāṇa, Part I, Chapter 10, we see that Paurṇamāsa who was a Mahātmā had two sons Virajas and Parvata. Dharmavratā was yet another wife of Marīci. She was a daughter born to Dharmavati by Dharmadeva.

3) *Dharmavratā cursed.* Marīci lived happily for long with his wife Dharmavratā. Once he returned from the forest, carrying darbha grass, flowers etc. He was tired after a long walk. After taking food, he wanted his wife to massage his legs. While she was massaging him Marīci fell asleep. Just then Brahmā happened to come there. Dharmavratā was in a fix. She had to attend to her husband and at the same time receive Brahmā with due respect. She could not leave her husband's guru (Sire). It was her duty to honour him properly.

At last she got up and welcomed Brahmā, offering him the customary honours. Meanwhile Marīci woke up and not finding his wife near him cursed her to be turned into a stone. Dharmavratā who was distressed at the curse pleaded innocence and explained to him that she had been honouring his guru. She warned him that he would incur the curse of Śiva.

Under Marīci's curse Dharmavratā was separated from him. She performed penance in the midst of fires. Mahāviṣṇu appeared before her and asked her what boon she wanted. She prayed that her curse might be lifted. Viṣṇu replied :—"It was Marīci who cursed you. That curse cannot be withdrawn. You will be turned into a sacred stone. Your name "Dharmavratā" will be changed into "Devavratā". In future, that stone will become famous under the name "Devavratā" or "Deva-śilā". Brahmā, Viṣṇu, Maheśvara and goddesses like Lakṣmī will dwell in that stone."

After saying this, Mahāviṣṇu disappeared. Once Dharmadeva held this Devaśilā above the demon Gaya and the place became famous under the name of "Gayā tīrtha". (See under Gayātīrtha).

4) *Other details.*

(i) Marīci had participated in the celebration connected with Arjuna's birth. (M.B. Ādi Parva, Chapter 122, Verse 52).

(ii) Marīci was a member of Indra's assembly. (M.B. Sabhā Parva, Chapter 7, Verse 17).

(iii) Marīci attended the celebration connected with Subrahmaṇya's birth. (M.B. Śalya Parva, Chapter 45, Verse 10).

(iv) After the Bhārata Yuddha, Marīci visited Bhīṣma who was lying on "Śara Śayyā" (bed of arrows). (M.B. Śānti Parva, Chapter 47, Verse 10).