

Garuda-some anecdotes

Retold by
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Kasyapa the grandson of Lord Brahma married Adithi, Dithi, Dhanu, Kalika, Thamra, Krodhavasa, Manu and Anala, who were all the daughters of Daksha. Of them Thamra got five daughters viz Krounchi, Dasi syeni, Dhrutharashtri and Shuki. The children of Krounchi were owls. Dasi became the mother of Dasa(Slaves).Syeni gave birth to eagle and vulture, Drutharashtri became the mother of Swan and Nightingale. Shuki gave birth to daughter called Natha and her daughter was Vinatha. Kadru was the daughter of Kroda vasa.

(There is a different version saying that Kadru and Vinatha were sisters who married sage Kashyapa)

Once Vinatha and Kadru, were serving Sage Kashyapa who was doing Thapas. When he woke up from meditation, he told them that he was pleased with them and willing to give them one boon each. Kadru requested for 1000 sons. Vinatha requested for two sons who would be more valorous than Kadru's children. He gave them the boon as requested. After some time Kadru laid 1000 eggs and Vinatha two eggs. Both of them preserved these eggs in warm pots. After 500 years Kadru's eggs broke and from them came 1000 snakes. But nothing happened to the two eggs laid by Vinatha. So she took one egg and broke it open. Inside the egg was a half formed Aruna. Aruna became very angry with his mother and cursed her, "Due to your impatience you have made me suffer. So you would become a slave to Kadru. But a great son will come out of the other egg and he would rescue you from this slavery." He then went away to Sun God and became his charioteer. Since he was of purple colour, the dawn when he comes out is of purple hue.

Another 500 years passed by and from the other egg came out Garuda. His body was shining like fire. The fire God found that his luster was less than that of Garuda and approached the devas. The devas then approached Garuda and requested him to reduce his luster and he agreed. They all gave him several boons. Garuda returned to his mother.

Uchaisravas was a white horse born out of the churning of the ocean of milk by Devas and Asuras. He became the steed of King Indra. Once Kadru told Vinatha that the tail of this horse was black, Vinatha differed and told Kadru, that if indeed the tail is black she will become the slave of Kadru. The snake sons of Kadru simply attached themselves on the tail of this horse, when Vinatha saw the horse and the tail appeared black to her. Because of this she was forced to become the slave of Kadru. So Garuda also had to become the slave of Kadru and her snake sons. Once the snakes, ordered Garuda to carry them to the pretty island of Ramaneeyaka(heart melting pretty). Garuda flew to the island but rose so high in the sky that many of the snakes got burnt due to Sun's rays. However when Kadru requested the Sun, he sent a cooling rain and the snakes recovered.

Tired of being a slave to Kadru, once Garuda asked them, what he should do so that he and his mother got their freedom. They told him that if he can go to heaven and bring nectar(amrutha) for them, then they will free both of them. Garuda informed about his determination to bring nectar, to his mother Vinatha. He was worried about his food during the long journey to heaven. Then Vinatha told him about an island called Nishadalya((Abode of darkness). She told that he can visit the island and eat as many

Nishads as he wants. She also told him that there were a few Brahmins in the island and he should under no circumstances eat them. Garuda then asked his mother as to how to recognize Brahmins. She told him that if he tries to swallow Brahmins, they will be as hot as fire. Then Vinatha blessed her son and said that his wings will be protected by wind god, back by the Sun and the moon, head by fire and body by the eight Vasus.

Garuda reached Nishadalya and started eating thousands of people there. By mistake he happened to try to swallow a Brahmin and his wife. Since they were as hot as fire, he spit them out. They both blessed him. Then Garuda went to the place where Sage Kasyapa was doing Thapas (meditation). The sage blessed him. Garuda told him that he was very hungry. Sage Kasyapa told him to eat a tortoise and an elephant which were spoiling the waters of the lake of that island. They both were brothers called Vibhvasu and Supreethika. They quarreled for share of their father's wealth. Supreethika cursed that Vibhvasu should become a tortoise and he in turn cursed him to become an elephant. Garuda got hold of both of them, killed them and started flying with them for a proper place to eat both of them. After a long search, he located a very big Banyan tree. He sat on the tree and started eating his prey. The branch on which he was sitting broke. Then Garuda realized that sages called BalaKhilyas were doing Thapas on the branches of that tree, by hanging upside down. Then Garuda started flying with a branch so that he can keep in a place so that the sages will not be harmed. He reached the Gandhamadhana Mountains and informed Sage Kashyapa about his problem. Kashyapa requested for pardon from the sages for the unknowing deed of his son Garuda. The sages did not get angry and blessed Garuda and went to Himalayas. Garuda then ate his prey of the elephant and tortoise and continued his journey to heaven. Later he put the great branch of banyan tree in the sea. From the place he deposited the branch, a land mass came up and this is the present day Sri Lanka.

Even before Garuda came to Deva loka, there were very bad omens there. Brahaspathi told the devas that it is due to the fact that Garuda is coming to take away their hard earned nectar. Indra and devas decided that they will guard the pot containing Amrutha (nectar), come what may.

Garuda neared the pot of Amrutha. First he was opposed by Viswa Karma. Garuda defeated him very easily. Due to the flapping of the wings of Garuda, lot of dust rose from all sides and the Devas were having very poor visibility. Later Devas, Indra, moon and the Sun fought with Garuda and they were all defeated. Then Garuda entered the place where the pot of Amrutha was kept. Round the pot two huge Chakra (wheels) were rotating. All round the chakras, one very dangerous Yantra (machine) was also installed. Below the Chakras several snakes were raising poisonous fumes. The snakes never closed their eyes. Garuda threw dust on the eyes of the snakes and cut them in to two pieces. He took a micro form and entered near the pot. He also destroyed the Yantra and Chakras. Then Garuda took the pot of Amrutha and rose on the sky. Lord Vishnu who was watching this valorous deed, became pleased with Garuda and offered him a boon. Garuda requested him to make him as his steed and also he should become an amara (one without death) even without taking Amrutha. Lord Vishnu granted him, both these boons.

At this time Indra opposed him and sent his Vajrayudha against him. This great weapon could only remove one of his feathers. Indra then asked for Garuda's pardon and requested him to return the pot of Amrutha. Garuda agreed to this provided Indra

permitted him to eat snakes as his food. Indra granted this boon. Then Garuda told Indra, “ I am not taking this pot for myself but to my cousins , because they have made me and my mother their slaves. I would give the pot of Amrutha to them .And I do not have any objection if you take it back from them.”

Indra agreed and followed Garuda. Garuda took the pot of Amrutha and gave it to the Nagas and Kadru. He told them that this pot should be kept on a bed of Durba grass and they should eat it only after they have taken their bath. The Nagas agreed. When Nagas went to take their bath, Indra stole the pot of Amrutha and took it back. The Nagas which came back, felt sad at the loss of Amrutha and licked the Durba grass , where some drops had spilled. This sharp grass cut their tongues in the middle. From then on all snakes have a tongue cut in the middle and are called Dwijihwas(Two tongued ones). Garuda and his mother were freed.

There is also a story that Indra was humbled by Garuda because of a curse by the Balakhilya sages.

Once Sage Kasyapa was doing a great fire sacrifice to get a very great son. He requested Indra and the 60000 BalaKhilyas who were very tiny to bring fire wood for his fire sacrifice. Indra collected the necessary fire wood in a very short time and the Balakhilya saints were trying to lift very small pieces of wood , even by that time. Naturally Indra made fun of the saints. BalaKhilyas left the place and started another fire sacrifice to humble Indra. Indra rushed to sage Kashyapa and requested to him to get pardon from the BalaKhilya stages. Kashyapa approached them. Then they transferred the effect of fire sacrifice they were doing and blessed him to get a son who will humble Indra. Garuda was born as a result of this fire sacrifice.

Garuda and Kaliya

Due to his being permitted to eat snakes for food by Indra and also due to his great enmity with them, Garuda started eating snakes(naga) en masse. The snakes who were not able to oppose him, told him that they would send one big snake as food for him everyday. Though all the snakes agreed with this arrangement, a snake called Kaliya did not agree. There was a big war between Garuda and Kaliya. This war was fought over the present day Yamuna river. While fighting, due to the movement of feathers of Garuda, water rose very high and fell on a sage called Soubhari. This sage cursed Garuda saying that if he comes to that area , his head will break in to thousand pieces. Because of this Garuda was not able to go near that spot of Yamuna and the snake Kaliya lived there with his family.

Garuda and the King Sagara

There was a king called Subahu in the Sun dynasty.. He had a queen called Yadavi. For a long time after marriage she did not conceive. After prayers by Subahu and Yadavi she conceived. The other wives of Subahu did not like this development. They gave her a poison through deceit. Yadavi did not give birth to a child for seven years and carried her pregnancy. At this time Subahu decided to leave the kingdom and become a disciple of a sage called Ourva. Yadavi also accompanied him. Suddenly Subahu died. Yadavi also wanted to die in his funeral pyre. Sage Ourva told her that she was carrying a child and that child would become one of the great kings of the world. Then she desisted from death and in due course gave birth to a son called Sagara. During this time Vinatha who

had lost her way in the forest , reached the hermitage of Ourva. When he came to know that she was living as a slave to Kadru, he blessed her and told her that a son called Garuda would be born to her and he will free her from slavery. At that time Vinatha had a daughter called Sumathi. Her hand was requested by a sage called Upamanyu , to save his ancestors. But Sumathi refused to marry him. He cursed her saying that , she would not get a Brahmin as her groom. Because of this Vinatha was terribly worried and send Garuda to the hermitage of Ourva. When Garuda explained the problem, the sage suggested Garuda to give his elder sister in marriage to Sagara. Sagara later became a very great king and begot 60 thousand sons out of Sumathi.

How Garuda himself was humbled?

Mathali the charioteer of Indra had a very pretty daughter called Guna Kesi. He went on searching for a suitable groom for his pretty daughter. He took the help of Sage Narada in this search and reached Patala. There they located the Very eligible Sumukha who was a Naga(serpent) Lord. But Chikura the father of Sumukha had just then been eaten by Garuda. At that time Garuda has told Sumukha that he would eat him in another month. Then Mathali and Narada approached Indra to find a solution to this problem. At that time Lord Vishnu also happened to be in Indra's court. Indra blessed Sumukha with long life and as a result he married Guna Kesi. When he heard about this Garuda was terribly upset and flew to the court of Indra and threatened him. Lord Vishnu, then extended his right hand to stop Garuda and asked him whether he can lift it. As soon as Lord Vishnu's hand was kept on Garuda's head, he felt as if the entire universe was kept on his head and felt miserable. Garuda requested the pardon from Lord Vishnu.

Garuda and Galava.

Once the God of death took the form of sage Vasishtha and went to the hermitage of sage Viswamithra. He requested for food. But since the food prepared was over, Sage Viswamithra himself prepared rice. By this time the God of death left the place saying he will come in a minute. Sage Viswamithra brought a plate full of hot rice and was waiting for the God of death. Since he did not come, he had to wait for one hundred years. God of death came at that time and took the food. Galava was the disciple of Viswamithra who was with him and who looked after him during that hundred years.

Viswamithra blessed him. After his education was completed , it was time for Galava to go away. At that time he asked his teacher, what he can give him as fees .Viswamithra refused to accept anything from such a good student. But when Galava went on insisting,, he requested him to bring him 800 white horses with black ears .Galava did not have money to purchase the horses. When he was upset , Garuda came near him and offered his help. He flew with Galava on his back to the eastern side. After lot of time they reached the Rishbha Mountain. There a Brahmin lady called Sandali was doing penance. She prepared food and gave them. While taking food Garuda insulted Sandali. After food both of them slept. When he woke up Garuda found that all his feathers have fallen away from him Garuda begged the pardon of Sandali. She excused him and blessed him. His feathers grew on him again.

Then they traveled again and reached the palace of King Yayati. Yayati did not have sufficient money. But he gave his daughter Madhavi, to Galava. Galava was able to obtain only 600 horses by giving Madhavi in turn to three kings, He then gave

Viswamithra the 600 horses as well as Madhavi instead of the remaining 200 horses. Viswamithra had a son called Ashtaka from Madhavi.

Also according to the Mahabharata, Garuda had six sons from whom were descended the race of birds. The members of this race were of great might and without compassion, subsisting as they did on their relatives the snakes. Vishnu was their protector.