

18. They were not at all vexed or distressed thereby. They gradually increased the severity of their austerities. Thus the three excellent sons of Tāraka performed penance with Brahmā as the object of their worship.

19. Maintaining strict severity in their austerities, the excellent Asuras made their bodies emaciated by their penance.

20. Standing on the bare ground on a single foot, the strong Asuras performed the penance for a hundred years.

21. Taking in only air and enduring excessive heat and distress, the terrible and wicked souls continued the penance for a thousand years.

22. They remained standing on their heads for a thousand years. They remained standing with their arms lifted for hundred years.

23. Thus they bore extreme distress in their tenacious evil intent. They remained alert day and night.

24. O sage, thus many years elapsed even as they performed the penance. I think they had a virtuous dedication of their souls in Brahmā, these sons of Tāraka.

25. Satisfied by their penance, Brahmā the supreme lord of the gods and Asuras, of great glory, appeared in front of them in order to grant them boons.

26. He was accompanied by sages, gods and Asuras. The grandfather of all living beings spoke to them thus, appeasing them.

*Brahmā said:—*

27. O great Asuras, I am now pleased with your penance. I shall grant you everything. Speak out the boons you wish to have.

28. O enemies of the gods, tell me why you have been performing this penance. I am the bestower of the fruits of all sorts of penance. I am the creator of everything for ever.

*Sanatkumāra said:—*

29. On hearing his words they bowed to the grandfather, with their palms joined in reverence and spoke to him revealing their mind's desire slowly.