

is beyond the range of senses. We have to find out its top and bottom."

15. Jointly deciding like this, the two heroes proud of their prowess immediately set about assiduously in their quest.

16-18. "Nothing will turn up if we are together". Saying this, Viṣṇu assumed the form of a Boar and went in search of the root. Brahmā in the form of a swan went up in search of the top. Piercing through the netherworlds and going very far below, Viṣṇu could not see the root of the fiery column. Utterly exhausted, Viṣṇu in the form of a Boar returned to the former battle-ground.

19. Dear one, your father, Brahmā who went high up in the sky saw a certain bunch of Ketakī flower of mysterious nature falling from above.

20-21. On seeing the mutual fight of Brahmā and Viṣṇu, lord Śiva laughed. When his head shook, the Ketakī flower dropped down. Although it had been in its downward course for many years, neither its fragrance nor its lustre had been diminished even a bit. The flower had been intended to bless them.

22-23. (Brahmā said) "O lord of flowers, by whom had you been worn ? Why do you fall ? I have come here to seek out the top, in the form of a swan." (The flower replied) "I am falling down from the middle of this primordial column that is inscrutable. It has taken me a long time. Hence I do not see how you can see the top."

24-25. "Dear friend, hereafter you must do as I desire. In the presence of Viṣṇu you must say like this. O Acyuta, the top of the column has been seen by Brahmā. I am the witness for the same." Saying this he bowed to the Ketakī flower again and again. Even falsehood is recommended in times of danger. So say the authoritative texts.

26. (Returning to the original place) on seeing Viṣṇu there, utterly exhausted and lacking pleasure, Brahmā danced with joy. Viṣṇu, in the manner of a eunuch admitting his inability (to a woman), told him the truth (that he could not see the bottom). But Brahmā told Viṣṇu like this.

27-28. "O Hari, the top of this column has been seen by me. This Ketakī flower is my witness." The Ketaka flower repeated the falsehood endorsing the words of Brahmā