

could not be raised. But Agastya provided everybody who took part in the sacrifice, with sumptuous meals. The hermits wondered how Agastya could do this. Some of the hermits feared that the sacrifice would have to be stopped before the stipulated time, if the drought continued. Agastya told them not to fear, and that if Indra refused to send rain, he himself would become Indra and protect the subjects. Indra was horrified, when he heard this and he began to send rain regularly. (Mahābhārata, Āśvamedhika Parva, Chapter 92).

15) *Story of Gajendramokṣa (The redemption of an elephant).* In the Bhārata a story occurs, as to how Agastya cursed King Indradyumna, and turned him to an elephant. While Indradyumna, the King of Pāṇḍya was absorbed in deep meditation on Viṣṇu, Agastya reached the palace. Being immersed in meditation the King failed to notice the arrival of the great hermit, who getting angry with the King, cursed him to become an elephant, for one thousand years. Instantly the King was deformed into a big tusker and quitting the palace it went to a big forest and lived there happily with the she-elephants there. At that time a hermit named Devala was doing penance in that forest. One day Hūhu, a gandharva (a class of semi-gods) enjoying the company of some celestial maids came to the place where Devala had put up his hermitage. The hermit saw the Gandharva and the maids playing and bathing in the pond in front of his hermitage in complete nudity. Getting angry Devala cursed Hūhu and he was deformed into a crocodile. This pond which was in the Trikūṭa Mountain was thus under the suzerainty of the crocodile. The tusker (Indradyumna) entered the pond to drink water. The crocodile caught hold of the leg of the elephant. Each tried to pull the other with equal force. This fight is said to have lasted for a thousand years. When both were tired, godly feelings began to dawn in their minds. Then, riding on an eagle Mahāviṣṇu appeared before them, cut them asunder with his Cakrāyudha (the wheel-weapon) and both were given deliverance. (Bhāgavata, 8th Skandha, Chapter 2).

16) *Agastya teaching Śrī Rāma the Āditya-hṛdaya Mantra (A hymn in praise of the Sun).* When Śrī Rāma was fighting with Rāvaṇa in Laṅkā, dejection befell him, his heart being weighed down with faintness, for a little while. Rāvaṇa made the best use of this opportunity and began to advance. The gods had gathered in the sky above to witness the fight. Agastya, at that particular moment, taught Śrī Rāma the Āditya-hṛdaya Mantra, a hymn in praise of the Sun-god and when Śrī Rāma chanted that mantra, he resumed fight with Vigour and Rāvaṇa was defeated and slain. (Vālmiki Rāmāyaṇa, Yuddha Kāṇḍa, Sarga 107).

17) *How the slant of the earth was rectified by seating Agastya.* The matrimonial ceremony of Śrī Parameśvara and Pārvatī was held in the Himālayas. On that auspicious occasion all the living beings of the world were present, and as a result the Himālayan region sank down and the earth slanted to that side. To keep the equilibrium of the earth, Śiva sent Agastya to the south. Accordingly Agastya reached Kuttālam, where there was a temple dedicated to the worship of Viṣṇu. Agastya had besmeared his forehead with ashes and so admission to the temple

was denied to him, by the devotees there who were Vaiṣṇavites. By his own power Agastya turned himself into a vaiṣṇavite and got into the temple, and immediately the image of Viṣṇu in the temple changed by itself into a Śivaliṅga (idol representing Śiva). Since then the temple at Kuttālam has remained a temple of Śiva. Agastya proceeded to the southernmost point of the earth and sat there and because of his weight the earth regained its normal position. (Skanda Purāṇa).

18) *Agastya and the Krauñca Mountain.* When Agastya passed the Vindhya mountain and proceeded to the South a Rākṣasa (giant) called Krauñca hindered his way. By his power the Rākṣasa caused to fall everywhere a very heavy rain. Agastya sprinkled a few drops of water from his waterpot on Krauñca, who instantly became a mountain. Telling him that he would get deliverance from the curse when the weapon of Subrahmaṇya struck him, Agastya continued his journey to the South. (Skanda Purāṇa).

19) *Agastya and the River Kāverī.* Once Sūrapadmā, an Asura (demon) drove the Gods out from heaven. Indra came to Śiyālī a place in the district of Tanjāvūr (Tanjore) and began to do penance to please Śiva. Rain was completely stopped. Agastya had compressed the river Kāverī and held the water in his waterpot. Gaṇapati having come to know of this, came in the form of a crow and toppled the waterpot. Agastya got angry and ran after the crow, which immediately assumed the form of a boy. Agastya caught hold of him. The boy instantly revealed himself as Subrahmaṇya and granted Agastya a boon. "Your waterpot will always be full". Since then there had never been shortage of water in the Kāverī. (Skanda Purāṇa).

20) *Agastya in the palace of Bhadrāśva.* Once Agastya lived in the palace of Bhadrāśva as his guest for seven days. Agastya praised Kāntimatī the queen on several occasions. The King wanted to know the reason. Agastya said : During her previous birth Kāntimatī was the handmaid of a rich man. On one occasion of dvādaśī (twelfth night after full moon) in the month of Tulā (second half of October and first half of November) the rich man had asked his handmaid to see that the lights in a certain temple did not go out and she did so, in consequence of which, during her current birth she has become your queen, bearing the name Kāntimatī. The King and the queen were much pleased at this explanation of Agastya and thenceforward they began to observe dvādaśī as a day of fasting. (Vāyu Purāṇa).

21) *Agastya cursing Urvaśī, Jayanta and Nārada.* Once Agastya went to the realm of the Gods, as a guest of Indra. On that day a performance of dance by Urvaśī was held in honour of Agastya. In the midst of the dance Urvaśī's eyes fell on Jayanta and she fell in love with him; her steps went out of beat. Nārada also went wrong slightly in playing on his famous lute called Mahatī. Agastya got angry and cursed Urvaśī, Jayanta and Nārada. According to the curse Jayanta became a bud. Urvaśī was born in the earth as a woman called Mādhavī and 'Mahatī' the lute of Nārada became the lute of the people of the earth.