

for some time. Rāvaṇa came to the āśrama at that time and took the Māyāsītā away to Laṅkā.

Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa went to Laṅkā with an army of monkeys and after killing Rāvaṇa took back Sītā to Ayodhyā. Then Rāma in deference to public opinion put Sītā into the fire to test her purity. At that time god Agni taking back Māyāsītā gave the real Sītā to Rāma, unscathed by the fire. Then, when Māyāsītā was thus abandoned by Rāma she bowed down before Śrī Rāma and Agni and asked them thus "What am I to do now? Where should I go?" They advised her to go to Puṣkara and do penance there and blessed her saying that at the successful end of her penance she would become Svargalakṣmī. Paramaśiva was pleased by her penance and appearing before her asked her what boon she wanted. Māyāsītā who had become Svargalakṣmī by then requested Śiva to give her a husband. She repeated the request 'Patiṁ dehi' (Give me a husband) five times and Śiva said that she would have five husbands in her next life as the daughter of the King of Pāñcāla with the name Kṛṣṇā. (9th Skandha, Devī Bhāgavata).

ii) *Nālāyaṇī* (*Indrasenā*). Once there was an aged sage named Maudgalya. Nālāyaṇī alias Indrasenā was the wife of Maudgalya. Even though the wife was young and the husband old, Nālāyaṇī was very chaste. The sage became very old, grey-haired and rugous, skeleton-like with a foul smell emanating from his body. He was always in an angry mood. Still Nālāyaṇī stuck to him as a chaste, loving and dutiful wife. As time passed on Maudgalya became a leper. One day while the sage was eating, a finger of his broke and fell into the rice. With great calmness and devotion Nālāyaṇī removed the finger from the rice and ate the rice. Greatly pleased at this act of hers the sage asked her what boon she wanted and she replied she desired to have an amorous life with him as Pañcaśarira. Maudgalya granted her the boon and they both travelled the whole world enjoying an amorous life. When the sage took the form of a mountain Nālāyaṇī became a river and when the sage took the shape of a flowering tree she became a creeper on it. They spent thousands of years like that and then Maudgalya became tired of a sexual life and returned to the ascetic life. Even after such a long period of erotic life Nālāyaṇī was still lustful and she resented the decision of her husband to go back to the life of a hermit. She begged her husband to continue the same life for some more time. Maudgalya got cross when she thus caused hindrance to his penance and cursed her saying that she would in her next life be born as the daughter of the King of Pāñcāla when she would have five husbands to satisfy her lust. Greatly grieved at this curse she practised severe austerities standing in the midst of Pañcāgni. Pleased with her penance Śiva appeared before her and blessed her saying that she would be born in her next birth in a very noble family and she would then have five husbands, good-natured, doing godly work and equal in valour to Indra. She then pleaded that she should be granted the boon to remain a virgin during the coitus with each of her husbands. Śiva granted that wish. Then Śiva sent her to the river Gaṅgā, and asked her to fetch a beautiful young man whom she would be

seeing there. Accordingly she went to the river to do as she was directed.

At that time all the devas joined together and performed a Yāga at Naimiṣāranya. Kāla, the god of Death, was one of the chief priests for the function. The Yāga lasted for a long time and since Kāla was consecrated for the Yāga he did not attend to his duties as the god of Death. Death came to a dead stop and men increased in alarming numbers and the devas were perplexed. They went to Brahmā and acquainted him with the frightening situation. Brahmā sent them to Naimiṣāranya. They went there and were talking to Kāla when they saw a few golden flowers coming down the river. Getting curious Indra walked up the river to locate the origin of these flowers. When he reached the place of origin of Gaṅgā he saw Nālāyaṇī there. Nālāyaṇī took the beautiful young man to Śiva. Śiva was at that time engaged in a game of dice with Pārvatī and Indra did not then recognise Śiva. Indra in his arrogance argued that the whole universe belonged to him. Śiva jumped up enraged and ran after Indra who ran to the mouth of a cave. Śiva caught him and said that he would show him four Indras inside that cave. Both of them entered the cave and to the amazement of Indra he saw four other Indras sitting inside the cave. They were all the creation of Śiva and with the original Indra the number of Indras came to five. Then addressing Nālāyaṇī who had followed them Śiva said, "Oh beautiful girl, do not be worried. All these five are your husbands. You will be born as the daughter of the King of Pāñcāla. Then all these five will be born in the lunar race and will marry you."

The Indras agreed to be born on earth and do the work of God. After that they all went to Mahāviṣṇu and requested him to give them mighty accomplices to fulfil their mission. Then Mahāviṣṇu plucked two hairs from his body, one white and the other black, and dropped them on the ground. The black hair was born as Śrī Kṛṣṇa and the white hair was born as Balarāma, to help the Pāṇḍavas later.

Pāñcālī's two previous births can be explained thus: Agnideva created Māyāsītā who in turn became Svargalakṣmī to be born as Pāñcālī. Māyāsītā was a part of Mahālakṣmī and so also Nālāyaṇī who became Pāñcālī was a part of Lakṣmī. Pāṇḍavas are known to be the sons of five gods and they used for the procreation of the Pāṇḍavas Indrāṁśa (part of Indra) thus making them all Indras. (Chapters 197 and 198, Ādi Parva).

2) *Birth of Pāñcālī*. Pāñcālī was born in the palace of Drupada, King of Pāñcāla. She had a brother named Dhṛṣṭadyumna. There is a story about their birth in the Purāṇas:

Drupada insulted Droṇa his classmate in the Gurukula and Droṇa kept in mind the insult to wreak vengeance on Drupada. Drupada, therefore, wanted a son to be born who would defeat Droṇa in a battle. Brahmins advised him to conduct a Yāga for that purpose. He decided to conduct one on a large scale and went about in search of a Yajvā (one who performs sacrifices according to Vedic rites) and reached Kalmāṣapurī on the banks of the river Gaṅgā. There he saw a brahmin's house where lived two sages named Yāja and Upayāja. They were in figure and nature alike. At first Drupada went to the younger of the two, Upayāja. He went near