

## CHAPTER TWENTYFOUR

*The Origin of Serpents*

*Earth said:*

1. O Varāha, be pleased to tell me how the mighty serpents arose by contact with your body.

*Varāha said:*

2. After hearing about the origin of Gaṇapati, king Prajāpāla asked the sage (Mahātapas) in a soft voice.

*Prajāpāla said:*

3. O sage, be pleased to tell me how the crooked serpents were born and how they got the enmity of Garuḍa.

*Mahātapas said:*

4. When Brahmā was creating, he first conceived in his mind his son Kaśyapa to beget Marīci.

5. Dakṣa's beautiful daughter Kadrū became his wife. In her he begot many valiant sons.

6-7. Ananta, Vāsuki, Kambala, Karkoṭaka, Padma, Mahāpadma, Śaṅkha and Kulika were the chief among them.

8. The earth was filled by the progeny of these.

9. They were all crooked, heinous and violent, and with their fangs stung people and reduced them to ashes.

10. Their contact was reducing human population day by day severally.

11. Finding their kind thus becoming steadily reduced, men went to the great god Brahmā, the refuge of all.

12. They flocked to him who was seated on the lotus, and told him.

13. "Protect us, O god, from these venomous serpents. Please realise that (otherwise) all men and beasts will be soon reduced to ashes.

14. What was created by you is being annihilated by the serpents. Please do what is fit to avert this danger",

*Brahmā said:*

15. Doubtless I shall give you protection. You may all go to your homes in confidence.

16. When they were all gone, Brahmā called the serpents Vāsuki and others, and cursed them in great anger.

*Brahmā said:*

17. Since you are annihilating my progeny, the men, in another age, in the Svâyambhuva manvantara, by a curse of the mother, you will face a serious decline.

18. Said thus by Brahmā shivering with anger, they fell at his feet and implored:

*The serpents said:*

19. O god, we were made crooked by nature by you. Our venom, cruelty, and the use of eye as weapon were all given by you. The intensity of all that was given may be reduced.

*Brahmā said:*

20. Granting that I have created you crooked, what right have you to eat away men every day ?

*The serpents said:*

21. O god, prescribe us a limit and allot us separate regions.

22. Hearing the words of the serpents, Brahmā said: "I shall make for you an agreement with men.

23. Listen with attention my verdict.

24. Pātāla, Vitala and Sutala are the regions allotted to you. You may all have your abode there.

25. I ordain that you shall enjoy all pleasures there and remain there till the seventh manvantara.

26. At the beginning of Vaivasvata manvantara you will become the relations of Devas as well as of Garuḍa the wise.

27. Then all your progeny will be consumed by fire but for your own selves there will be no danger.

28. The end of such serpents as are fierce and insolent will certainly occur, but not of others. You may eat and bite a person if he is so destined, and also to retaliate when somebody injures you.

29. You should move away in fear from persons who recite the mantras, or take in the medicine or wear the garuḍamaṇḍala (yantra) (all these being precautions against snake bite). O Earth, otherwise you will bring about your own disaster”.

30. Thus said by Brahmā, the serpents went to the nether-world allotted to them.

31. And gaining in the end, Brahmā’s relenting mood, they remained in Pātāla with satisfaction.

32. All this happened on the Pañcamī tithi. So this tithi is auspicious and capable of removing all sins.

33. If one remains austere on that day, gives up all that is sour in food and bathes the (images of) Nāgas in milk, they become friendly towards him.