

PENANCE BY HIRANYAKASIPU



Thus the demons, being fond of disastrous activities, took Hiranyakaśipu's instructions on their heads with great respect and offered him obeisances. According to his directions, they engaged in envious activities directed against all living beings.

The demons set fire to the cities, villages, pasturing grounds, cowpens, gardens, agricultural fields and natural forests. They burned the hermitages of the saintly persons, the important mines that produced valuable metals, the residential quarters of the agriculturalists, the mountain villages, and the villages of the cow protectors, the cowherd men. They also burned the government capitals.

Some of the demons took digging instruments and broke down the bridges, the protective walls and the gates of the cities. Some took axes and began cutting the important trees

that produced mango, jackfruit and other sources of food. Some of the demons took firebrands and set fire to the residential quarters of the citizens.

Thus disturbed again and again by the unnatural occurrences caused by the followers of Hiraṇyakaśipu, all the people had to cease the activities of Vedic culture. Not receiving the results of yajña, the demigods also became disturbed. They left their residential quarters in the heavenly planets and, unobserved by the demons, began wandering on the planet earth to see the disasters.

After performing the ritualistic observances for the death of his brother, Hiraṇyakaśipu, being extremely unhappy, tried to pacify his nephews and instructed his family members.

The demoniac king Hiraṇyakaśipu wanted to be unconquerable and free from old age and dwindling of the body. He wanted to gain all the yogic perfections like aṇimā and laghimā, to be deathless, and to be the only king of the entire universe, including Brahmaloḥa.

In the valley of Mandara Hill, Hiraṇyakaśipu began performing his austerities by standing with his toes on the ground, keeping his arms upward and looking toward the sky. This

position was extremely difficult, but he accepted it as a means to attain perfection.

From the hair on Hiraṇyakaśipu's head there emanated an effulgent light as brilliant and intolerable as the rays of the sun at the time of dissolution. Seeing the performance of such austere penances, the demigods, who had been wandering throughout the planets, now returned to their respective homes.

Because of Hiraṇyakaśipu's severe austerities, fire came from his head, and this fire and its smoke spread throughout the sky, encompassing the upper and lower planets, which all became extremely hot.

Because of the power of his severe austerities, all the rivers and oceans were agitated, the surface of the globe, with its mountains and islands, began trembling, and the stars and planets fell. All directions were ablaze.

Scorched and extremely disturbed because of Hiraṇyakaśipu's severe penances, all the demigods left the planets where they reside and went to the planet of Lord Brahmā, where they informed the creator that Hiraṇyakaśipu has undertaken a most severe type of austerity.

Being thus informed by the demigods, the

most powerful Lord Brahmā, accompanied by Bhṛgu, Dakṣa and other great sages, immediately started for the place where Hiraṇyakaśipu was performing his penances and austerities.