

King Sudyumna Becomes a Woman



Śukadeva Gosvāmī : O King, subduer of your enemies, now hear from me in great detail about the dynasty of Manu. I shall explain as much as possible, although one could not say everything about it, even in hundreds of years. O King Parīkṣit, from the navel of the Supreme Personality of Godhead was generated a golden lotus, on which the four-faced Lord Brahmā took his

birth. From the mind of Lord Brahmā, Marīci took birth, from the semen of Marīci, Kaśyapa appeared, and from Kaśyapa, by the womb of Dakṣa's daughter Aditi, Vivasvān took birth.

O King, best of the Bhārata dynasty, from Vivasvān, by the womb of Samjñā, Śrāddhadeva Manu was born. Manu at first had no sons. Therefore, in order to get a son for him, the great saint Vasiṣṭha, who was very powerful in spiritual knowledge, performed a sacrifice to satisfy the demigods Mitra and Varuṇa. During that sacrifice, Śraddhā, Manu's wife, who was

observing the vow of subsisting only by drinking milk, approached the priest offering the sacrifice, offered obeisances to him and begged for a daughter.

Told by the chief priest “Now offer oblations,” the person in charge of oblations took clarified butter to offer. He then remembered the request of Manu’s wife and performed the sacrifice while chanting the word “vaṣaṭ.”

Manu had begun that sacrifice for the sake of getting a son, but because the priest was diverted by the request of Manu’s wife, a daughter named Ilā was born. Upon seeing

the daughter, Manu was not very satisfied. Thus he spoke to his guru, Vasiṣṭha, as follows –

My lord, all of you are expert in chanting the Vedic mantras. How then has the result been opposite to the one desired? This is a matter for lamentation. There should not have been such a reversal of the results of the Vedic mantras. You are all self-controlled, well balanced in mind, and aware of the Absolute Truth. And because of austerities and penances you are completely cleansed of all material contamination. Your words, like those of

the demigods, are never baffled. Then how is it possible that your determination has failed? The most powerful great-grandfather Vasiṣṭha, after hearing these words of Manu, understood the discrepancy on the part of the priest. Thus he spoke as follows to the son of the sun-god.

This discrepancy in the objective is due to your priest's deviation from the original purpose. However, by my own prowess I shall give you a good son.

Śukadeva Gosvāmī said: O King Parīkṣit, after the most famous and powerful Vasiṣṭha made this decision, he offered

prayers to the Supreme Person, Viṣṇu, to transform Ilā into a male.

The Supreme Personality of Godhead, the supreme controller, being pleased with Vasiṣṭha, gave him the benediction he desired. Thus Ilā was transformed into a very fine male named Sudyumna. O King Parīkṣit, that hero Sudyumna, accompanied by a few ministers and associates and riding on a horse brought from Sindhupradeśa, once went into the forest to hunt. He wore armor and was decorated with bows and arrows, and he was very beautiful. While following the animals and

killing them, he reached the northern part of the forest. There in the north, at the bottom of Mount Meru, is a forest known as Sukumāra where Lord Śiva always enjoys with Umā. Sudyumna entered that forest. As soon as Sudyumna, who was expert in subduing enemies, entered the forest, he saw himself transformed into a female and his horse transformed into a mare. When his followers also saw their identities transformed and their sex reversed, they were all very morose and just looked at one another.

Mahārāja Parīkṣit said: O most powerful

brāhmaṇa, why was this place so empowered, and who made it so powerful? Kindly answer this question, for I am very eager to hear about this.

Śukadeva Gosvāmī answered: Great saintly persons who strictly observed the spiritual rules and regulations and whose own effulgence dissipated all the darkness of all directions once came to see Lord Śiva in that forest. When the goddess Ambikā saw the great saintly persons, she was very much ashamed because at that time she was naked. She immediately got up from the lap of her husband and tried to cover herself.

Seeing Lord Śiva and Pārvatī engaged in sexual affairs, all the great saintly persons immediately desisted from going further and departed for the āśrama of Nara-Nārāyaṇa.

Thereupon, just to please his wife, Lord Śiva said, “Any male entering this place shall immediately become a female!” Since that time, no male had entered that forest. But now King Sudyumna, having been transformed into a female, began to walk with his associates from one forest to another.

Sudyumna had been transformed into the

best of beautiful women who excite sexual desire and was surrounded by other women. Upon seeing this beautiful woman loitering near his āśrama, Budha, the son of the moon, immediately desired to enjoy her. The beautiful woman also desired to accept Budha, the son of the king of the moon, as her husband. Thus Budha begot in her womb a son named Purūravā.

King Sudyumna, the son of Manu, having thus achieved femininity, remembered his familial spiritual master, Vasiṣṭha. Upon seeing Sudyumna's deplorable condition, Vasiṣṭha was very much aggrieved.

Desiring for Sudyumna to regain his maleness, Vasiṣṭha again began to worship Lord Śaṅkara [Śiva].

O King Parīkṣit, Lord Śiva was pleased with Vasiṣṭha. Therefore, to satisfy him and to keep his own word to Pārvatī, Lord Śiva said to that saintly person, “Your disciple Sudyumna may remain a male for one month and a female for the next. In this way he may rule the world as he likes.”

Thus being favored by the spiritual master, according to the words of Lord Śiva, Sudyumna regained his desired maleness every alternate month and in this way ruled

the kingdom, although the citizens were not satisfied with this. Thereafter, when the time was ripe, when Sudyumna, the king of the world, was sufficiently old, he delivered the entire kingdom to his son Purūravā and entered the forest.