

HOLIKA (SIMHALIKA) – A DISCIPLE OF LORD OF FIRE (AGNIDEV)

A Short Story Based on Legends and Folk Tales

Dr Yatendra Sharma



Holika (Simhalika) with Bhakt Prahalad



SHRI RAM KATHA SANSTHAN PERTH,
AUSTRALIA, WA 6025

<http://shriramkatha.org>

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Shri Ram Katha Sansthan Perth (Inc)
Australia, WA 6025

Website: <https://shriramkatha.org>

Email: srkperth@outlook.com

yatendra@optusnet.com.au

Contents

Dedication	4
Foreword	5
Birth and Parents.....	9
Childhood	16
Deeksha from Lord Fire (Agnidev).....	23
Blessings from Mother Ganga.....	29
Marriage with Viprichitti	32
Return of Hiranyakashipu	40
Havoc of Hiranyakashipu.....	49
Holika.....	52
Worshipping Holika.....	61

Dedication

Dedicated to

**My Older Brother
Shri Narendra Dutt Sharma**

And

**My Son
Anshul Sharma**

On Their Birthday

9th March 2021

**May Lord Narsimha, Lord Brahmdev, Lord of Fire
(Agnidev), Brahmurishi Narad, Bhakt Prahalad and
Mother Holika Bless Them.**

Foreword

Holi is considered as one of the most revered and celebrated festivals of India, and it is celebrated in almost every part of the world. It is also called as the “festival of colour and love” as on this day, the people get together forgetting all resentments and all types of ill feelings towards each other. The great Indian festival starts in the evening of the Purnima or the full Moon day in the month of Phalgun. Festival celebration begins with ‘Holika Dahan’ (Burning of Holi Pyre) in the evening. The following day, it is celebrated with great joy by throwing colours on each other and hugging.

There are varying accounts of Holi’s origin mentioned in several ancient Vedic literature (legendary and folk tales). According to one popular version of the story, an evil king Hiranyakashipu became so powerful that he forced his subjects to worship him as a ‘God’. But to the king’s ire, his own son Prahalad refused to accept his dictate and continued to be an ardent devotee of ‘Lord Vishnu’. When all his ways to mend his son Prahalad to worship him as God failed, he tried to kill him. Fortunately, he was not successful. Finally, the angry king plotted with his sister Simhalika to kill him. Simhalika, who had a blanket as a boon from Agni Dev (the Lord of Fire), was immune to fire. She took Prahalad on her laps and sat in pyre with him. Incidentally, she was burnt to death but Prahalad escaped. Hence, this Holi festival is celebrated joyfully on the escape of Bhakt Prahalad from the fire.

When I was a young child, I had several questions in my mind on Holi festival. My young mind could not comprehend that if Holika was really an evil person, then why is she worshipped on the Holi before lightening the pyre? As we all know, before lightening the pyre, she is worshipped like a ‘Goddess’. My learned grandfather removed the doubt from my mind, and told

me that Holika was not an evil person. He told me that actually her real name was Simhalika. She was the daughter of great Rishi Kashyap and Mother Diti. She was a sister to Daitya Vanshaj (clan) kings Hranyaaksh and Hiranyakashipu. The kings Hranyaaksh and his brother Hiranyakashipu were the reincarnation of Jay and Vijay (security chiefs of Lord Vishnu), who had to take birth as Rakshasas (evil persons) on earth due to the curse of the great Rishies - Sanaka, Sanandana, Sanatana and Sanat Kumara. Simhaliika, their sister, was a great devotee of Lord of Fire. Lord of Fire gave her a blanket as a boon which gave her immunity to fire. Unfortunately, she could not become mother even after marrying for several years with Viprachitti, son of her aunt Danu and a king of Danava Vansh (clan) of Paatal Lok (Nether World). Her brother, mighty king Hiranyakashipu, obliged her by giving one of his sons, Ahalad, for adoption. She was indeed greatly indebted to his brother king Hiranyakashipu for this generosity. At one stage when all the efforts of Hiranyakashipu to kill his own son Prahalad were in vain, he asked his sister Simhalika to help him in killing Prahalad. He knew that she had a boon of immunity from Lord of Fire, hence he wanted her to take Prahalad on her laps and sit in pyre to burn Prahalad alive. Simhalika loved Prahalad very dearly as her own adopted son Ahlad, and never wanted to kill his young nephew Prahalad. Hesitatingly, she declined to oblige king Hiranyakashipu. An angry king Hiranyakashipu then threatened to kill her adopted son Ahlad and her husband Viprachitti. Both, Ahlad and Viprachitti, were very dear to her. If her husband and son were to be killed by Hiranyakashipu, this was an end of her life too. She thought that if her sacrifice could save the life of her husband and adopted dear son Ahlad, why not to embrace a dignified death that can also save the life of her darling nephew Prahalad too, a great devotee of the Lord. She accepted the dictate of her brother Hiranyakahipu to sit in pyre with Prahalad on her laps. She did so, but she covered

Prahalad with the blanket having fire immunity. Thus, Prahalad escaped from the fire, and she was burnt to death. Her sacrifice to save Bhakt Prahalad is admired and she is worshipped as 'Holika', the 'Goddess of Pyre', on Holi before the celebration begins.

I do realise that the story of Simaliika (Holika) is not well known to the great masses who always think that Simhalika (Holika) was an evil sister of Daitya Vanshaj (clan) king Hiranyakashipu based on some mythological stories. I decided to write a short story on the life story of Simhalika (Holika). This is an attempt to narrate the facts of the life of Simhaliika (Holika). I do hope that this would help in developing awareness among the masses that she was not an evil person (Rakshasi), but a great devotee of the Lord of Fire, and a great daughter of Maharishi Kashyap and Mother Aditi.

A question may arise in the mind. If Simhalika was not an evil person then why her brothers Hryanakash and Hiryanakashipu were evils? The Shruti says that no person is born as an evil. His/ her deeds make him a good or evil person. When any one of the four evil tendencies (Vikar) - arrogance, lust, anger and greed (Ahankaar, Kaam, Krodh and Lobh,) develops in a person, he tends to move towards evilness. While Simhalika was away from all these evil qualities, her both the brothers, Hryanakash and Hiryanakashipu, were filled with all these four evil qualities.

The sources of my information, other than my grandfather, are numerous legends (Poranik) and folk tales. I do hope that you will enjoy this short story.

I gratefully acknowledge the wisdom, direction and advises given to me from time to time by my family members and all my friends

particularly, Shri Sunil Garg Ji, Dr Jugal Agarwalla Ji, Dr Anoop Malaviya and Mrs Rajyashri Malaviya Ji.

Om Shanti, Shanti, Shanti.



Dr Yatendra Sharma
Shri Ram Katha Sansthan Perth, Australia
Holi, Phalgun Shukla Purnima,
28 March 2021

Birth and Parents

Maharishi Kashyap was visiting Soron (सोरों) where his wife Diti had been residing for some time in one of his Ashrams there on the bank of Mother Ganga. The beauty of Mother Ganga always mesmerised him. No place on the earth gave him such a peace of mind as the bank of Mother Ganga.

The very name 'Ganga' conjures up a picture of holiness, of peace and joy, of beauty and sweetness, of all that is uplifting to the mind of everyone. Mother Ganga is not just a river. She is a symbol of something much higher than any place on the earth could offer. If Himalaya is a Yogi steeped in meditation, Mother Ganga, rising from the heart of Himalaya, is the culmination of that meditation. She is a blessing for all, good or bad. She blesses everyone and provides both physical and spiritual nourishment to everyone. She is the life and soul of every living entity. She is the bridge between heaven and earth. She is civility in the form of water. The sinners may pollute her water by having a dip in Her, but she remains as holy as ever, retaining her sanctifying powers. The truth is Her eternal message. The God and truth are synonymous to Saints. Mother Ganga is dear to the Saints because She is the 'Mother'. She is the one who not only protects and reins in the souls of the Saints, but also teaches and guides.

Meditating on the beauty of Mother Ganga, prayer came out from his heart.

देवि सुरेश्वरि भगवति गङ्गे त्रिभुवनतारिणि तरलतरङ्गे ।
शङ्करमौलिविहारिणि विमले मम मतिरास्तां तव पदकमले ॥

Devi Sureshvari Bhagavati Gange Tribhuvana-Taarinni Tarala-
Tarangge |
Shangkara-Mauli-Vihaarinni Vimale Mama Matir-Aastaam Tava
Pada-Kamale ॥

O Goddess Bhagavati Ganga, the Goddess of the Devas, You liberate the three worlds with the (merciful) waves of Your water. O the Pure One, You reside in the Head of Shankara, May my Devotion remains firmly established on Your Lotus Feet.

Maharishi's meditation was broken by a voice of one of his female disciples, Kadambini. 'O Gurudev Maharishi, congratulations!!! Mother Diti is blessed with a girl.'

A girl! She would have borne by the blessings of Mother Prakriti (Nature). He remembered his son Lord of Fire from his other wife Aditi, telling him, 'O father, aunt Diti will be blessed soon with a girl who will be my ardent devotee'. She will be born with the blessings of Mother Nature (Mother Prakriti). She will be blessed by me as well as Lord Vaaman, and one day she will protect the great devotee of the Lord Vishnu, and her name will become immortal forever.'

On hearing the voice of his female disciple Kadambini, Maharishi Kashyap was thrilled with joy and rushed to the hermitage where his darling wife Diti had just given birth to this divine girl. He took girl from her laps into his hands, and shouted loudly, 'O Simhalika (Friend of Lion/Lioness), welcome to my family.'

Maharishi Kashyap was not an ordinary Rishi (Saint). He was the grandson of Lord Brahma and son of Maharishi Maruchi (Manas-Putra of Lord Brahma). He was one of the Saptrishies (others being Maharishi Agastya, Maharishi Atri, Maharishi Bhardwaj, Maharishi Gautam, Maharishi Jamadagni and Maharishi Vashistha). He had composed tens of hymns of Vedas and authored numerous books on Sanatan Dharma philosophy, Ayurvedic medicines, classical music etc. Some of the books which he authored were as following.

Kashyap Samhita (Vridhajivakiya Tantra or Jivakiya Tantra) is a classical reference book on Ayurvedic paediatrics, gynaecology and obstetrics. This book was written as a tutorial between Maharishi

Kashyap and one of his disciples Vriddhajivaka. This is related to caring for babies, and diseases of children and women.

Kashyapa Jnanakandah is a book of great wisdom defining the Vaishnavism tradition.

Kashyap Dharmasutra is a book describing the principles of living for a peaceful life by the kings, pupils and religious personalities (Dharma Gurus).

Kashyap Sangita is a treatise on music. This book explains Viniyoga of each Rasa and Bhava of music.

Kashyap's Alankar is a book explaining the theory of Alankara (musical note decorations).

Kasyapasilpa (Amsumad Agama, Kasyapiya or Silpasastra) is a Sanskrit treatise on architecture, iconography and the decorative arts, etc.

There are several folk tales associated with Maharishi Kashyap as the founder of Kashmir too. According to a story in 'Neelmat Purana', once entire area of India remained under water because of terrible inundation. With the passage of time, as the flood waters receded, most of the area of India became suitable for habitation. However, in the lap of the Himalayas in north of India, there was sprawling region which was still under water. This stagnant water assumed the shape of a big lake. A type of volcano eruption took place in this lake which caused cracks to the mountain peaks situated on the lake banks allowing drainage of the water. Thus, a lovely place took shape. Once, when Maharishi Kashyap was passing through this area, he was mesmerised by the beauty of this place. He decided to build his Ashram here. By his divine powers, he cut the mountains and levelled the land. He did complete the job to make this place worth habitation successfully, but there was a need for a canal which could permanently siphon out the water from this stagnant lake. Maharishi

Kashyap sought assistance of Lord Shiva. He meditated on Him. Lord Shiva appeared and on the request of Maharishi Kashyap, He stroke his trident and a river flowed from there. This spot was called 'Vitasta'.

This river flowed smoothly quenching thirst of inhabitants, irrigating and making cultivable many areas, and finally joined the river Indus. When this area was fully levelled and banks of Vitasta (Jehlum) were completed, Maharishi Kashyap established his Ashram here. He entrusted one of his sons, Neel, to manage this Ashram. The panoramic beauty of the Ashram and surrounding areas attracted many people from all over India to this place. They migrated to live in this beautiful region, and thus Ashram turned like a county. Thus, a state of Kashmir was founded.

The Puranas and the Epics of Indian tradition mention Maharishi Kashyap as the originator of progeny on earth. On the instructions of his father Lord Brahma, Daksh Prajapati married his 13 daughters to Maharishi Kashyap and ordered to increase progeny. These thirteen daughters of Daksha were Aditi, Diti, Kadru, Danu, Arishta, Surasa, Surabhi, Vinata, Tamra, Krodhavasha, Ira, Vishva and Muni.

According to 'Vishnu Purana' and 'Vayu Purana', Maharishi Kashyap is attributed to be the father of the all the clans such as Devas, Danavas, Yakshas, Daityas, and all other living creatures with his 13 wives.

The children from his first wife Aditi were Indra, Varuna, Parjanya, Mitra, Ansh, Pushan, Dhatri, Agni, Aryaman, Surya, Bhaga and Vamana, called as Adityas (Children of Aditi). The Children from his second wife Diti were Hiranyaksha, Hiranyakashipu and Simhalika, called as Daityas (children of Diti). The children from his third wife Danu were Puloman and Viprichitti, called as Danavas (Children of Danu). The children from his fourth wife Arishta were Gandharvas, learned in the art of dance and music. The children from his fifth wife Surasa were the Nags (Snakes), called as Nagas. The children

from his sixth wife Khasa were Yakshas, the eldest son being Kuber. The children from his seventh wife Surabhi were Kamdhenu and Nandini cows. The children from his eighth wife Vinata were Aruna and Garuda. The children from his ninth wife Tamara were the Goddesses of the animal kingdom. The children from his tenth wife Krodhavasha also gave birth to snakes. They joined the clan of Surasa, and thus also called Nagas. The children from his eleventh wife Ila were the Goddesses of all the Vegetations (plants, trees etc). The children from his twelfth wife Kadru were Ananta, Vasuki, Takshaka and Nahusha. They also joined the clan of Surasa, and also were known as Nagas. The children from his thirteenth wife Muni were Apsaras, the prominent Apsaras being Orvashi, Menaka, Rambha and Thilothama.

Thus, Maharishi Kashyap was a great divine personality of the beginning of the era of progeny on the earth.

Diti, mother of Simhalika, was one of the 66 daughters of Prajapati Daksh. Diti, from her childhood, was very fond of her elder sister Sati. As we all know, Sati was an incarnation of Mother 'Prakriti' (Nature).

When Lord Brahma decided to elevate his son Daksh to the status of 'Prajapati' (Lord of all inhabitants), He knew the it would not be possible for Daksh to discharge his duties of this great responsibility without the blessings of 'Mother Prakriti'. He instructed Daksh that before the title of 'Prajapati' could be conferred on him, he should pray and mediate on Mother Prakriti. He should please Her by his devotion and get Her blessings that She be born in his family as his daughter. Accordingly, Daksh and his wife Prasuti went to the forests and meditated on Mother Prakriti. Mother Prakriti was pleased with their prayer and devotion, and blessed them that she would be born as their daughter soon. However, she put a condition that she would leave them the day they insulted Her in anyway. (This was the reason why Sati immolated Herself when Prajapati Daksh insulted Her husband

Lord Shiva and Herself during a Yagn ceremony). After this promise was made by Mother Prakriti to Daksh and Prasuti, Brahmurishi Narad also approached Mother Prakriti with another problem. Jay and Vijay (security chiefs of Lord Vishnu) were cursed by Sanat Kumars to take birth on the earth as demons. Both Jay and Vijay were very divine and powerful personalities and very dear to Lord Vishnu. It would not have been possible for an ordinary woman to keep them in their womb for nine months to give them birth. Brahmurishi Narad was sent by Lord Vishnu to Mother Prakriti to find a solution to this problem. Lord Vishnu had a desire that Mother Prakriti should bless an appropriate woman with such a strength and power that she could bear these two powerful personalities in her womb. Mother Prakriti bowed to the instructions of Lord Vishnu, and called her friend Dhara. She requested her to take birth as Her sister in the family of Daksh, eventually to marry Maharishi Kashyap, and to bear these two most powerful personalities Jay and Vijay in her womb. Mother Dhara was the only one who could have that ability and strength to do so. Mother Dhara accepted the instructions of Mother Prakriti and prepared herself to be born as sister of Mother Prakriti in Daksh family.

The carrier (Vaahan) of Mother Dhara, cow, was listening these conversations between these two friends. She prayed and requested Mother Prakriti and Mother Dhara to take her with them too as she could not bear the separation from them. Mothers obliged and blessed her saying that she would also be re-born as daughter of Dhara in the new life.

The cow, carrier of Mother Dhara, was a great friend of the carrier (Vaahan) of Mother Prakriti, lioness, and was often called as Sihmmitra (friend of lioness).

As Mother Prakriti (Nature) blessed Daksh and Prasuti, she was born to them as their daughter, and named Sati. Mother Dhara was also born to Daksh from another wife Panchajini as their daughter, and named Diti (another name of Mother Dhara). When Diti married Maharishi Kashyap, she gave birth to reincarnation of Jay and Vijay

as Hryanaaksha and Hirnyakashipu. She also gave birth to her carrier cow Simhmitra as her daughter, and she was named as Simhalika (another name of Sihmmitra/ friend of lioness) in this new life. Maharishi Kashyap, being omniscient (Trikaaldarshi) knew these stories behind these incarnations of Diti and the cow, and thus gave her daughter an appropriate name as Simhalika (friend of lioness).

Childhood

Soon after Simhalika was born, her father Maharishi Kashyap left for providing spiritual guidance to his disciples in other Ashrams. It was heard that he went to the North West towards Himalayas. He worked hard to establish a new Ashram there, and called this Kashmir. One of his disciples, Rudra, was looking after and managing Maharishi Kashyap's Ashram in Soron on the bank of Mother Ganga. Simhalika was being grown up in this Ashram of Maharishi Kashyap by Mother Diti with her two older siblings, Hryanksha and Hirnyakashipu.

The younger of both these brothers, Hirnyakashipu was her beloved brother. The older brother Hryanaksha was an arrogant and rude child. He used to tease her very often. She never liked Hryanaksha. Whenever Hryanaksha would tease her, she would run to Hirnyakashipu and complained about him. Hirnyakashipu would pacify her saying that brother Hryanaksha did love her from bottom of his heart, but he was not the type of personality to express the love and affection. He used to advise her to ignore him. She used to wonder that how such a polite, kind and loving person like Hirnyakashipu can be friend to his older brother Hryanaksha who was just opposite to that!

Time passed on. Now Simhalika was a 4-year-old girl. One day when she woke up, she saw there were lots of activities in the Ashram. Ashram was being cleaned and decorated with flowers all over. There were red carpets laid from the entrance of the Ashram to the guest room. Ashram kitchen was also busy in preparing meals for tens of guests. She was very curious to know what was going on? She went to her brother Hirnyakashipu and asked. He told her that their aunt (Mausi) Danu, sister of our mother Diti, was visiting with her two sons Puloman and Viprachitti, along with many servants and maids. Aunt Danu and her entourage was visiting to us to convey some message. Simhalika had heard about her aunt Danu, but did not know much

about her. 'Who is this aunt Danu, Bhaiyaa', she asked politely to Hirnyakashipu.

'Danu is our aunt, my lovely sister. Aunt Danu and our mother Diti are real sisters, the daughters of our grandmother Panchajini and grandfather Prajapati Daksh. She is visiting us with two of her sons Puloman, and Vipirichitti. I heard that there is animosity between the sons of our aunts, Aditi and Danu. Our Aunt Aditi is half-sister of our mother Diti and aunt Danu. Aunt Aditi was born to our grandfather Prajapati Daksh with his other wife Prasuti. The sons of aunt Aditi are called Adityas (Devas), and her eldest son is Indra. The sons of aunt Aditi (the Adityas), and the sons of aunt Danu (the Danavas) are our half-brothers. I was told that Indra has threatened to kill Puloman', said Hirnyakashipu.

'A brother threatening to kill other brother, how cruel is this Bhaiyaa?', exclaimed Simhalika.

'You are too young to understand this Simhalika. When you will grow up, you will understand such animosity between brothers. Now go and play. Aunt Danu's son Vipirichitti and you are of similar age. You will be very happy to meet with him. Plan for good and happy days ahead with Vipirichitti. Play together and enjoy while he is with us', said Hirnyakashipu and left. He had to make preparations to welcome his aunt Danu and her entourage.

(Note: The sons of Aditi were called Adityas (Devas), sons of Danu were called Danavas and sons of Diti were called Daityas. Hence Adityas (Devas), Danavas and Daitya are the Vansh (clans), and do not necessarily reflect if these were Gods or demons. Sure, the behaviors of Danavs and Daityas made them synonyms to Demons).

Aunt Danu with her two sons and several servants arrived as scheduled. The entourage was welcomed by everyone in the Ashram led by mother Mother Diti. Mother Diti and Aunt Danu hugged each other. Their eyes were wet seeing each other after long time in love

and affection. Both, Puloman and Viprichitti touched the feet of mother Diti. Similarly, Hryanaksha, Hirnyakashipu, and Simhalika touched the feet of aunt Danu. Puloman and Viprichitti met with great love and affection with Hirnyakashipu and Hryanaksha, and hugged them. Simhalika also greeted both of them.

Simhalika was very happy to meet Viprichitti. He was, of course, of her age, very handsome and having friendly smiling face. His voice was very sweet and polite. 'Thank God, Viprichitti is not like my older brother Hryanaksha. He appears to be very kind and sweet young man like my brother Hirnyakashipu. Sure, our friendship will be great.' thought Simhalika in her mind.

Mother Diti took aunt Danu to her private room. Hryanaksha and Hirnyakashipu took Puloman to their room. Hirnyakashipu asked Simhalika to take Viprichitti with her and show him Ashram. Simhalika was very happy today as she would have got a great treasure. She never had any company of a person of similar age in Ashram. Both her brothers, Hryanaksha and Hirnyakashipu, were older to her, and more or less behaved like her father, not as loving and dear brothers or friends. Though brother Hirnyakashipu was kind, loving and polite to her, but still behaved like her older brother than a friend. Hryanaksha was a very disciplined person, rude in his behavior and never spoke any kind words to her. She always wished to have a sibling of similar or younger age or a friend. She found a friend in Viprichitti.

She took Viprichitti all around the Ashram, and showed everything which she liked most. She showed him beautiful gardens of Ashram, and then took him to the bank of mother Ganga. Simhalika was a very good singer with sweet voice. She sang few songs composed by her father Maharishi Kashyap and danced around. Viprichitti was mesmerized with the beauty, soft sweet voice and purity of her heart. Both of them were very jubilant and fully enjoyed their day.

Aunt Danu with her sons stayed for a week in the Ashram. Every day of this week was a memory to Simhalika. She would take Viprichitti every morning to the gardens of the Ashram and banks of mother Ganga, play around, sing and dance. When she heard that aunt Diti with her sons, Puloman and Viprichitti, was leaving the Ashram for their residence, she became very sad. After saying good-bye to Viprichitti, she went to the bank of mother Ganga and cried a lot.

She noticed that the environment of the Ashram had changed a lot after aunt Danu left the Ashram. There was a feeling of sadness in everyone. There was no smile and cheerfulness on the faces of mother Diti and her brothers, Hryanaksha and Hirnyakashipu. She was wondering what had gone wrong and why everyone in the family was so sad after the visit of aunt Danu? She wanted to ask everyone - her mother, her brothers, and even some senior Ashram members, but no one would tell her anything. Then one day, her brother Hirnyakashipu took her on his laps and with great love and affection, took her to the bank of Ganga. "Simhalika, I and brother Hryanaksha are leaving Ashram tomorrow early in the morning to the forest for meditating on Lord Brahma. We have to seek His protection and blessings for the welfare of us all. It is a necessity for us for our survival. The sons of aunt Aditi (Adityas), under the leadership of her eldest son Indra, have threatened to annihilate us so they could have supremacy over all of us. Unfortunately, our father Maharishi Kashyap is silent and neutral on this issue. He has left this matter to be decided by us only. Aunt Danu visited us to tell all such stories. Her son Puloman is already threatened to be killed by Indra. I am told that soon Indra will approach us to kill both of us, your brother Hryanaksha and me. Before he does so, we should seek divine blessings and divine boons including divine weapons from Lord Brahma to protect us. Lord Vishnu will not help us as He is siding with aunt Aditi. One of her sons, Vaaman, is said to be an incarnation of His energies. Lord Shiva is in meditation after the self-immolation of aunt Sati, hence may not be approached. You know mother Diti and Sati were very good friends. In this hour of difficulties and trouble, we are missing her a lot. If she would have been alive, she would have stood for us, and sons of aunt

Aditi would not have dared to do any harm to us. But alas, she is not there. Our only hope is Lord Brahma now. Hence, we are leaving Ashram to meditate on Him, and get blessings from Him. You have now to look after mother Diti and the Ashram", said Hirnyakashipu.

Simhalika was stunned. She had yet to recover from the feeling of the sadness of departing Viprichitti, and now his brothers, Hryanaksha and Hirnyakashipu also wanted to leave her and mother Diti. She started crying. 'No, No Bhaiyaa, you will not go anywhere. I cannot survive and live without you. Why cannot you send Hryanaksha Bhaiyaa for this meditation? Why have you to go?' screamed Simhalika. She did not mind if her brother Hryanaksha had to go to the forests for meditation.

'Try to understand Simhalika. Hryanaksha alone cannot do this. We have to do this together and get boons from Lord Brahma for our protection. Imagine, when we come back in few years, we all will have very good lives, and then I promise you I will never go away from you,' said Hirnyakashipu.

Suddenly Simhalika felt as if she had become a grown-up woman. She never wanted that anyone from her family should be killed by anyone. She thought in her small mind that perhaps it was better to bear separation from his darling brothers for few years than bearing the separation forever if someone killed them. Let them go to the forest, meditate and get the desired boons from Lord Brahma to protect us all.

'OK Bhaiyaa, if that is what you think is the best for all of us, so it be. Please go to the forest and mediate on Lord Brahma and seek His protection and blessings. Please advise me what should I be doing in your absence to keep mother happy?', asked Simhalika.

'Mother Diti understands all this, and we are leaving to the forest with her blessings. I am sure she will cope with all the difficulties and troubles till we come back. However, if any trouble or difficulty arises

which mother Diti and you cannot sort out, feel free to approach by sending a message to Vaaman, son of aunt Aditi. Vaaman is a very just person. He will not allow any wrong doing towards us by his other brothers in our absence. If you may not find Vaaman, because most of the time He is in his meditation and roaming around the forests, then you can trust Lord of Fire (Agnidev), also son of aunt Aditi. He is a good friend of mine, and will do his best to keep away his other brothers from our family till we return. I have sent a message to him to visit our Ashram as soon as possible, and console you and mother Diti. I am sure he will come soon. You can trust him and approach him anytime’, said Hirnyakashipu.

Child Simhalika, putting her head on the shoulders of her loving brother, sobbed for a long time. Brother Hirnyakashipu continued to show his love and affection to his darling sister, and allowed her to sob. She did not know when she slept on his laps. When she woke up in the morning, she saw mother Diti crying. Both the brothers, Hryanaksha and Hirnyakashipu, had left to the forests for mediation.

The time passed on. One day when she woke up, she saw a young man talking to her mother. She had not seen this man before in the Ashram. She was curious to know who this young person was, and why he was talking with my mother? She went to the chamber of the Ashram where these two were engaged in talking. The man saw Simhalika, stood from his seat, and took her on his laps. ‘O Simhalika, you may not know me, but I am your half-brother Lord of Fire (Agnidev), friend of your brother Hirnyakashipu. My apologies, though I got message from Hirnyakashipu to come and see you and aunt Diti as soon as possible, I could not come immediately’, said the young man.

‘O Lord of Fire Bhaiyaa (Agnidev Brother), yes, Bhaiyaa Hirnyakashipu told me about you. I was waiting for you to come and console us. Look, how Ashram is having a feeling of emptiness without brothers Hryanaksha and Hirnyakashipu. Father Maharishi Kashyap

has also not visited us for long. We heard that he is building a new Ashram in North West, and is very busy.’, said Simhlalika.

“Now I am here, I will do my best to assist you and aunt Diti. I know I cannot fill the gap created by the absence of Hryanaksha and Hirnyakashipu, but sure, will give my love and affection to my sister. I will stay here now till you feel safe and are well educated. I will accept you as my disciple and teach you all the knowledge a Guru can provide’, said Lord of Fire (Agnidev).

‘My humble Pranams to my brother and now my Guru Lord of Fire (Agnidev). Please accept me as your disciple and keep forgiving me considering your stupid young sister if I am not to your expectations as your disciple,’ said Simhalika’.

Deeksha from Lord Fire (Agnidev)

The next day in Brahm-Muhurat (pre-dawn), Simhalika was woken up by the Lord of Fire (Agnidev) and taken to the bank of Mother Ganga. After she completed daily obligatory actions (nitya-karma), the purification and initiation ceremonies were performed by Guru Agnidev.

गंगे च यमुने चैव गोदावरि सरस्वती ।
नर्मदे सिन्धु कावेरी जलेअस्मिन्सन्मिधिं कुरु ॥

Gange cha Yamune Chaiv Godavari Saraswati ।
Narmade Sindhu Kaveri Jaleasminsansmimithi Kuru ॥

O all Mothers, Ganga, Yamuna, Godavari, Saraswati,
Narmada, Sindhu, Kaveri, purify me with your holy
water.

ॐ अपवित्रः पवित्रो वा सर्वावस्थां गतोअपि वा ।
यः स्मरेत् पुण्डरीकाक्षं स वाह्यभ्यंतर शुचिः ॥

Om Apvatrah Pavitro Va Sarvaavasthaam Gato Api Vaa ।
Yah Smaret Pudreekaaksham S Vaahybhyyntar Shuchih ॥

Whether places are permeated with purity or with impurity,
whomsoever remembers the lotus-eyed Lord (Vishnu) gains
inner and outer purity.

यानि कानि पापानि जन्मान्तरकृतानि च ।
तानि तानि प्रणश्चन्ति प्रदक्षिणा पदे-पदे ॥

Yaani Kaani Paapaani Janmaantarkrataani Cha ।
Taani Taani Pranshchanti Pradakshina pade Pade ॥

O Lord, I have committed many sins all my life, right from my birth. I beseech you to destroy them at every step of my pradakshina (going around God).

मंत्र हीनं क्रियाहीनं भक्तिहीनं जनार्दन ।

यत्पूजितं मया देव परिपूर्णं तदस्तु मे ॥

Mantra Heenam, Kriya Heenam, Bhakti Heenam
Janaardana ।

Yatpujitam Mayaa Deva Paripurnam tadasthu Me ॥

O God, my worship to You is without Mantras, without rituals, and without devotion. Kindly accept my worship without these qualities.

ॐ असतो मा सद्गमय । तमसो मा ज्योतिर्गमय ।
मृत्योर्मा अमृतं गमय । ॐ शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः ॥

Om Asato Ma a Sad-Gamaya ।

Tamaso Maa Jyotir-Gamaya ॥

Mrtyor-Maa Amrtam Gamaya ।

Om Shaantih Shaantih Shaantih ॥

Om, (O Lord) Keep me not in (the Phenomenal World of) Unreality, but make me go towards the Reality (of Eternal Self. Keep me not in (the Ignorant State of) Darkness, but make me go towards the Light (of Spiritual Knowledge). Keep me not in (the World of) Mortality, but make me go towards the World of Immortality (of Self-Realization).

Om, Peace, Peace, Peace.

Simhalika prayed:

ॐ महाज्वालाय विद्महे अग्नि मध्याय धीमहि ।

तन्नोः अग्निं प्रचोदयात् ॥

**Om Mahajwalay Vidmahe Agni Madhyay Dhimahi |
Tanno Agnih Prachodayat ॥**

Om, let me meditate on the great flame, Oh, God of fire, grant me with higher intellect, Oh, let the radiant God of Fire illuminate my mind.

Simhalika was very disciplined and obedient disciple. She would get up early in the morning in Brahm-Muhurat, and after completing her daily obligatory actions (nitya-karma), she would get herself sanctified by taking a dip in Mother Ganga, and ready for taking lessons from her Guru Agnidev. She remained on strict fruit diet for the whole period of her education from Lord of Fire (Agnidev).

She was curious to know about her other aunts and their sons from her Gurudev. She also wanted to know why brother Indra (son of aunt Aditi) had animosity with other brother Puloman (son of aunt Danu). It was not easy for her to gather courage to ask such questions from her Guru. However, one day, when Lord of Fire (Agnidev) was in a pleasant mood, she enquired from Lord of Fire on these matters.

Lord of Fire (Agnidev) obliged her by telling details of all her aunts.

'O Simhalika, you have twelve aunts, all married to our father Maharishi Kashyap including your mother Diti. So, our father Maharishi Kashyap has thirteen wives, all daughters of Prajapati Daksh. I will describe to you their sons and daughters.

Your aunt Aditi, the eldest among all your aunts has twelve children - Indra, Varuna, Parjanya, Mitra, Ansh, Pushan, Dhatri, Agni (myself), Aryaman, Surya, Bhaga and Vamana. We are called as Adityas (Children of Aditi).'

Your mother Diti, as you know has two sons Hiranyaksha and Hiranyakashipu, and one daughter, Simhalika, yourself. You all are called as Daityas (children of Diti).'

Your second aunt Danu has two sons, Puloman and Viprichitti. These are called as Danavas (Children of Danu). You already know them and met them recently.'

Your third aunt is Arishta. Her children are Gandharvas. They are very learned in the art of dance and music.'

Your fourth aunt is Surasa. She is the mother of Nagas (Snakes). Her children are called as Nagas.'

Your fifth aunt is Khasa. Her children are called as Yakshas, the eldest son being Kuber.

Your sixth aunt is Surabhi. She is the mother of Kamdhenu and Nandini cows.'

Your seventh aunt is Vinata. She has two children, named Aruna and Garuda.'

Your eighth aunt is Tamara. She has six daughters, who are Goddesses of the animal kingdom.'

Your ninth aunt Krodhavasha, like your fourth aunt Surasa, also gave birth to Nagas. They joined the clan of your aunt Surasa, and thus, are also called Nagas.'

Your tenth aunt is Ila. She gave birth to a daughter, who is the Goddess of all the vegetations (plants etc).'

Your eleventh aunt is Kadru. She gave birth to four sons, namely, Ananta, Vasuki, Takshaka and Nahusha. They also joined the clan of your fourth aunt Surasa, and also known as Nagas.'

Your twelfth aunt is Muni. She gave birth to the Apsaras. Her prominent daughters are Orvashi, Menaka, Rambha and Thilothama.'

'Now on your another question about animosity between Puloman (son of your aunt Danu), and Indra (son of your aunt Aditi), I only can say that this is due to their ambitions to rule the Universe. Indra wants to be the Lord of the Universe, as well as Puloman.'

'The demon Vritra (a giant Cobra type demon) was a great obstacle to the prosperity and happiness of the world. He captured Lord of Rain and Lord Sun, and did not allow rain and Sunshine on the earth. Indra fought and killed Vritra and annihilated his deceiving forces (Maya) in a battle, and thereby brought rains and the Sunshine to the Universe. Lord Brahma was very happy with his bravery and declared him as a friend of humanity. He made him the king of Swarg (Heaven), and allocated him the city of Amaravati as his capital. The demon Vritra was a great friend of Puloman. The demon Vritra and Puloman were actually planning to win over the Universe and rule together. The killing of Vritra by Indra did upset the plans of Puloman, and he became a bitter enemy of Lord Indra, and bowed to take revenge for killing his best friend Vritra. Indra also fell in love with his daughter Sachi, and wanted to marry her. Since Puloman declined for this alliance, Indra eloped with her and married her. This act of Indra also annoyed Puloman and he

became bitter enemy of Indra, with only ambition to kill him.’

‘Briefly, I have answered all your questions. You are too young to understand many of these issues and should not worry about them at all. All your brothers are capable to look after themselves and their welfares. You should now concentrate on your studies and look after your mother till Hiranyaksha and Hiranyakashipu return from their mediation to Lord Brahma’, said Lord of Fire (Agnidev).

Lord of Fire (Agnidev) stayed in the Ashram of his aunt Diti for some time and continued to give education of Vedas, warfare, politics and management to Simhalika. Simhalika was very obedient, loyal, disciplined disciple and served the Guru Agnidev with her heart and soul. Lord of Fire (Agnidev) was very pleased with her devotion. When her education was completed, Lord of Fire decided to leave the Ashram and took permission from his aunt Diti for the same. Before departing from the Ashram, Lord of Fire (Agnidev) blessed Simhalika and gave her a blanket which was immune from the fire.

Simhalika was very happy in the company of her Guru, Lord of Fire (Agnidev), and forgot all about her brothers Hiranyaksha and Hiranyakashipu for the time being. However, when Lord of Fire left the Ashram, she again became lonely, and would come to the bank of Ganga and chatted with Mother Ganga for several hours.

Blessings from Mother Ganga

She used to go to the bank of Mother Ganga early in the morning and after taking holy dip, used to sing her glory.

तव चेन्मातः स्रोतःस्नातः पुनरपि जठरे सोऽपि न जातः ।
नरकनिवारिणि जाह्नवि गङ्गे कलुषविनाशिनि महिमोत्तुङ्गे ॥

**Tav Chenmaatah Strotah Snaatah Punrapi Jathare Soapi
Na Jaatah I**

**Narahnivaarinin Jaahanavi Gange Kalushvinaashini
Mahimottunge I I**

(Salutations to Devi Ganga) O Mother, whomsoever takes bath in the flow of Your Pure Water, he/ she will not be re-born. O Jahnavi Ganga, You continue to save people from falling into the Naraka (Hell) and destroy their sins. O Mother Ganga, I pray to Your Greatness.

Mother Ganga became very happy with her devotion, and appeared one day before her in person.

‘O my pious daughter, I bless you that you will not be re-born. Your sacrifice of life one day in the service of the Lord Vishnu will highly please Him, and you will get salvation’, blessed Mother Ganga.

Simhalika could not understand the mystic words of Mother Ganga, but fell at Her feet.

‘Mother, I am very lonely. I miss my brothers, Hiranyaksha and Hiranyakashipu. Please bless me that they return soon’, requested Simhalika to Mother Ganga.

‘Sure, Simhalika. Your brother Hiranyakashipu will return back soon after obtaining his desired boons from Lord Brahma. Hiranyaksha has chosen other fate. You will come to know that in due course of time. However, before your brother Hiranyakashipu returns back and you see him, you will have another good news. You will meet soon with your childhood sweetheart Viprichitti, and marry him. You will have blessed married life with him till you sacrifice your life in the service of the Lord Vishnu. I cannot tell you anything more now. Go home now and get ready to meet Viprichitti. You will soon get married with him,’ replied Mother Ganga.

After blessing Simhalika, Mother Ganga disappeared in the holy water.

‘My brother Hiranyaksha has chosen other fate’, murmured Simhalika. She could not comprehend this. However, learning from Mother Ganga that her brother Hiranyakashipu was returning soon, she became very cheerful. Somehow, she felt in her heart that this really did not matter if brother Hiranyaksha did not return and had chosen some other path. She missed her loving brother Hiranyakashipu a lot. The thought of meeting Viprichitti and getting married to him made her even more cheerful. She had a good friendship with Viprichitti when he visited her Ashram with her older brother Puloman and aunt Danu. She often missed him.

Simhalika returned to her Ashram with very smiling face and straight went to the room of her mother Diti. Simhalika was cheerful after a long time. Seeing a pleasant smile on her face, mother Diti hugged and asked Simhalika the reason for her being so happy.

‘O mother, Mother Ganga appeared before me in person today and blessed me that my brother Hiranyakashipu will

return soon after obtaining blessings from Lord Brahma. Mother, I am very happy to hear this good news. However, Mother Ganga told me that my brother Hiranyaksha has chosen other fate, and will not be returning with brother Hiranyakashipu. I did not understand that, mother. She also said that get ready to marry with Vipichitti, my childhood friend', hurriedly said Simhalika all this in one breath.

'Yes, I have received a message from Puloman that he wants your hand for his younger brother Viprichitti. I agree to this 'Proposal' in principle, and have sent a message to your father Maharishi Kashyap in North West for his consent. As soon as I receive his consent, I will reply to Puloman. Are you happy with this alliance?' asked mother Diti.

'Hiranyaksha has chosen other fate, I also do not understand this. I am sure Lord will do whatever is best for him', continued Diti.

'O mother, do whatever you and father think is best for me', replied Simhalika. One could clearly observe a shyness on her face by listening the name of his childhood sweetheart Viprichitti. From her heart, she was very happy on this Proposal.

This was a wonderful day for Simhalika. She got two good news - return of his loving brother Hiranyakashipu soon, and proposal to get married with her childhood sweetheart Viprichitti. She came out from the room of her mother Diti, and went to the gardens of the Ashram where no one could see her. She sang and danced to her heart content.

Marriage with Viprichitti

The time passed on. Diti got consent from Maharishi Kashyap to get their daughter Simhalika married with Viprichitti. She sent the message to Puloman accepting the alliance of Simhalika with Viprichitti. A date was decided for their marriage. However, an unfortunate incident occurred before the marriage could take place.

The animosity between Puloman, son of Danu, and Indra, son of Aditi, was growing day by day. Lord Brahma wanted to protect both of them by keeping them apart as much as possible. He allocated the kingdom of Swarg (Heaven) to Indra, and the kingdom of Paatal Lok (Nether World) to Puloman, which were situated at the two corners of the Universe. But even this distance and giving them different kingdoms could not reduce their animosity.

Puloman had a beautiful daughter named Sachi. Because of her beauty and sensuality, she was desired by every king of that era. However, she fell in love with Indra, son of her aunt Aditi in spite of knowing about the animosity of her father Puloman with him. Indra approached Puloman through his Guru Brihaspati to accept and agree to this alliance. As expected, Puloman declined. Indra then planned to elope with Sachi, and was successful. When Puloman came to know this, he followed Indra to the Swarg with his army to fight, defeat and kill Indra, and get back his daughter Sachi. A fierce fight took place between them. For Puloman, it was very unfortunate that he was defeated and killed by Indra.

When this sad news of death of Puloman arrived in Paatal Lok, Danu was very saddened, and mourning was declared in Paatal Lok. This sad news was also conveyed to Diti, and marriage date of Viprichitti with Simhalika was postponed till the mourning period was over. Simhalika and her mother Diti too mourned the death of their dear Puloman.

Since kingdom could not be kept without a king, Danu declared Viprichitti as the new king of the Paatal Lok.

After the mourning period was over, the kingdom of Paatal Lok slowly trickled down to being normal. Danu conveyed to her sister Diti a new date for the marriage of Viprichitti and Simhalika. Diti commenced preparation for the marriage. Maharishi Kashyap was informed of the new date of the marriage between Simhalika and Viprichitti. He had to be there for giving away bride (Kanya Daan).

Viprichitti's fame as a great warrior reached every nook and corner of the Universe. What was he really like? The last time Simhalika saw him, they were kids. Everyone said that he wielded an unmatched power and strength. But, was he still so loving as he was in childhood? Did he too love her from his heart? These were the questions popping in her mind.

Simhalika wanted to know more about Viprichitti to understand him fully before marriage. How could she achieve this target and know more personal details about Viprichitti, were the thoughts she remained engrossed? In the meantime, she came to know that a messenger from Paatal Lok had arrived to discuss the marriage ceremony and details with her mother Diti. She decided to meet this messenger who might throw light on Viprichitti. She requested her mother Diti to permit her to meet this messenger. Mother Diti obliged Simhalika and introduced the messenger to her.

The messenger greeted her with a reverence. Simhalika asked him in confidence to tell her about the personal life of the king Viprichitti. How many wives he already had, and to whom he loved more?

'Your Majesty, king Viprichitti is married only to one more princess, Her Majesty Suhashini. This alliance was fixed by mother queen Danu and the late king Puloman to strengthen the ties of the kingdom of Paatal Lok with Bhoo Lok (The Earth). As far as I know, he never wanted to marry princess Suhashini because he had given his heart

to Your Majesty. But the late king Puloman promised him that the marriage with Suhashini would not come in between the holy alliance between two of you. Since this alliance with princess Suhashini was important for the political reasons, prince Viprichitti had no choice than to accept it. As king Viprichitti is a very kind hearted person, he gives all the respect and honor to the queen Her Majesty Suhashini, but his heart is with you. Please accept my king Viprichitti as your husband and rule Paatal Lok,' politely replied the messenger.

'How does she look like? She asked the messenger.

"Your Majesty, people in Paatal Lok say that she is one of the most beautiful women in the Universe,' said the messenger.

Simhalika felt the blood rising up in her veins, and mother Diti could sense it. She dismissed the messenger and turned towards her.

'What has gotten into you? Beauty has got no parameters my darling daughter. I thought you were clever enough to understand all this', said mother Diti.

'So, you mean to say that I am not beautiful', she asked mother.

'Who says that you are not beautiful, my darling daughter? Besides being beautiful, you are a disciple of Agnidev. You are a very learned young lady. No woman in this Universe can match your wisdom, knowledge and expertise in all matters including warfare. Viprichitti loves you from bottom of his heart. As you heard, he never wanted to marry this princess. You will understand soon that for a stable kingdom, political alliances are very important. Even if a king may not want to do so, he is sometimes forced to enter into such alliances for the benefit of the kingdom and his subjects. So, give up the negative thoughts and accept this alliance from your heart. You will find Viprichitti a worthy and loving husband,' said mother Diti.

The words of mother Diti touched her heart, and she now got ready to be the queen of Paatal Lok.

The date of the marriage was approaching fast. Maharishi Kashyap arrived few days before the marriage to this Ashram in Soron where his wife Diti and daughter Simhalika had been residing with several disciples. Simhalika was overjoyed to see her father after a long time. Simhalika touched the feet of her father and got blessings from Maharishi.

‘Simhalika, you have a great responsibility through this marriage. The animosity between the sons of Danu and Aditi has increased many folds after Indra killed Puloman. I know that the heart of Viprichitti is burning with a desire to take revenge from Indra for killing his darling older brother Puloman. Though Viprichitti undoubtedly is a great warrior, but sure is no match to the strength of Indra which is supported by his brother Vaaman, an incarnation of Lord Vishnu. Also, do not forget that your Guru Agnidev is also brother of Indra, and will never go against him. You must always discourage Viprichitti to take any fight against Indra. You have to keep him protected from the sons of Aditi. All of us are born on this earth for a purpose. You are also born for a purpose to the service of the Lord. You will play your part accordingly when the time comes, but till then, you should try to keep peace and harmony among brothers. You are a learned young lady with a charm to mesmerize any young man, and Viprichitti is no exception,’ said her father Maharishi Kashyap. He blessed her by keeping his right hand over her head.

‘I fully understand that father. I will try my best and follow your instructions. Please continue to bless us similarly always. I expect that you will not be favoring any of your sons,’ humbly said Simhalika.

‘That is the very reason Simhalika, I do not interfere in any activities of my any son. Be assured, I will always be neutral,’ promised Maharishi Kashyap.

As the date of marriage approached fast, the grand preparation of the marriage ceremony commenced.

At the right time, the groom party arrived with mother queen Danu and warriors of Paatal Lok. Maharishi Kashyap and all his disciples welcomed the groom party.

Simhalika saw Viprichitti after a long time. He had grown into a very handsome person with strength of an elephant. He had golden hair which were coiffed to perfection. His eyes had the startling clarity as a mountain stream and the lineaments of his face were in perfect proportion to each other. He seemed molded from a different cast as he had an androgynous look. Lacquered and enameled, he radiated energy and brio. His mountain peak cheekbones appeared chiseled into shape by a master craftsman. They were of such sharp contours, it looked as if they were sculpted and pared to perfection. With eyes as bright and spellbinding as lode stars, they bewitched all those who were present. He was very soft spoken and appeared to be a thorough gentleman.

Viprichitti was also stunned to see the beauty of Simhalika. He could never imagine that an innocent girl Simhalika to whom he met several years ago had turned into beauty like a Goddess. Her eyes were black, and large as lotus-petals. Her complexion was bit dark. Her locks were blue and curly. Her nails were beautifully convex, and bright as burnished copper. Her eye-brows were fair, and bosom was deep. She resembled the veritable daughter of a celestial born. Her body gave out fragrance like that of a blue lotus, perceivable from a considerable distance. Her beauty had no equal in the Universe.

Both Simhalika and Viprichitti instantly fell in love with each other. Simhalika thanked God for motivating her to take a right decision to decide to marry Viprichitti.

Simhalika was married to Viprichitti with the blessings of her parents, father Maharishi Kashyap and mother Diti, and aunt Danu. She was

missing blessings of her brothers Hiranyaksha and Hiranyakashipu on this occasion. Before departing to Paatal Lok with her husband and aunt, now mother-in-law, Danu, she went to the bank of Mother Ganga. Seeking Her blessings, the tears rolled down from her eyes. 'O Mother, I miss my brothers. Please keep them safe wherever they are. O Mother Ganga, please convey my message to my brothers that I want them to know that they are my divine brothers, my beloved friends and the most trusted elders. I miss their smile, face and advice. I want to thank them for everything they have done in my life. I also want to appreciate them for their love they have always shown to me. Please ask them to come back soon now, and come to Paatal Lok to see me and bless me,' requested Simhalika to Mother Ganga with tears in her eyes.

Next day, she left to Paatal Lok with her husband and all the marriage party.

On arriving in the palace at Paatal Lok, she requested Viprichitti to allow him to go and meet his first wife Suhashini in her palace. It was a surprise to Viprichitti. He could not deny her request. Viprichitti wanted to accompany her to the palace of Suhashini, but she requested him to allow to go to her alone.

Simhalika knew in her heart that it must be very hurtful for Suhashini to accept a co-wife of her husband, especially when this co-wife is none other than the daughter of his own aunt, and very dear to her mother-in-law Danu. She indeed felt pity for Suhashini at that moment as she realized that both of them loved the same man, Viprichitti. For peace and harmony, Simhalika thought it necessary to try to appease Suhashini and assure her that she was not there to gain love of Viprichitti alone, but to share his love between both of us.

She slowly moved inside the room of the palace where Suhashini was still sleeping. Though Suhashini had already heard that Viprichitti was

back with his new wife Simhalika, but felt so depressed that did not want to get up from her bed. Simhalika stood before her with folded hands. Suhashini's face was tear stricken. She failed to recognize Simhalika. Simhalika slowly said, 'O Queen of Paatal Lok, please accept my humble greetings.'

Suhashini wiped her tears and asked, 'Who are you a beautiful young lady? Although you look like a 'Rishi Kanya' (daughter of a sage), but you possess regal bearings. Where have you come from?'

Simhalika humbly said, 'O Queen, I came from Soron, the land of Mother Ganga. I am the daughter of Maharishi Kashyap and his wife Diti. My name is Simhalika, and now I am married to Viprichitti. I have come here to greet my older sister Suhashini and the queen of Paatal Lok to take permission from her to enter into the palace of Paatal Lok. Please bless me as your younger sister.'

The loving and kind words of Simhalika touched the heart of Suhashini. She got up from her bed immediately wiping her tears and hugged her. Simhalika touched the feet of Suhashini.

Suhashini could never imagine even in her vivid dreams that Simhalika would ever come to her palace in such a humble way to greet her and seek permission from her to enter the palace of Paatal Lok. She was highly moved. Then, they spent many hours talking about themselves and their lives. Suhashini was convinced now that Simhalika had come to Paatal Lok as her younger sister and not an arrogant co-wife of her husband.

Suhashini said, 'O my younger sister Simhalika, I have enjoyed your company thoroughly and you have taken my pain away. I would love to have a sister like you. Let us go to the palace of mother-in-law Danu where I will personally welcome you.'

Both Suhashini and Simhalika then left to the palace of mother queen Danu where Simhalika was officially welcomed as part of the Danav Vansh (Danav clan).

The time passed on. Suhashini and Simhalika became great friends and shared the love of their husband. Both together guided Viprichitti on administrative matters of the kingdom for the welfare of their subjects. Paatal Lok kingdom was very peaceful during that time. Neither they attacked any other kingdom, nor any other kingdom attacked them. The life was moving peacefully and joyfully.

Then suddenly, one day Suhashini fell seriously ill. The Rajvaidya (Royal Physician) was unable to diagnose her illness. She was becoming weak day by day, and unfortunately, one day she lost her battle of the life in the arms of her husband Viprichitti.

Everyone was very sad in the kingdom to lose their beloved queen Suhashini. Simhalika took courage and consoled her husband in this difficult time. She had now even greater responsibilities towards her husband and the subjects as the queen of the kingdom.

One day when she was in the royal court with her husband, a messenger came with a news that her brother Hiranyakashipu had returned back after obtaining desired boons from Lord Brahma, and soon would come to meet her in Paatal Lok. Simhalika was thrilled to hear this news and waited now for his brother Hiranyakashipu to come and see her. She wanted to know about Hryanaksha too, but messenger would not say anything.

Return of Hiranyakashipu

Simhalika heard that Lord Brahma, pleased with the penance of his brothers Hryanaksha and Hiranyakashipu, gave them the kingdom of the Earth. Hryanaksha, being the elder brother, was coronated as the Emperor of the Earth. The sons of Aditi (Devas) were not happy with this boon of Lord Brahma to Hryanaksha and Hiranyakashipu, and wanted to recapture the Earth. Fearing that Indra would attack soon, Hryanaksha decided to take help from his half-brothers from Danavas clan of Paatal Lok. The sons of Aditi (Devas) challenged Hryanaksha, but were soon defeated. Mother Earth then prayed to Lord Brahma to rescue Her. Lord Brahma, along with the sons of Diti (Devas) and few sages, prayed to Lord Vishnu, the Preserver of the Universe, to come to their rescue and redeem the Earth.

Lord Vishnu, pleased with the prayers of Lord Brahma, appeared as a minuscule creature from the nostrils of Lord Brahma. This miniscule creature looked like a flea in its appearance. It flew out with great speed and began circumambulation of Lord Brahma gradually growing in size. It was no more a flea now, but a boar (Varaah). The boar grew in size till it became massive, even larger than a full-grown elephant. Lord Brahma worshipped the boar realizing that Lord Vishnu had appeared in this form to rescue Mother Earth. They bowed their heads to Lord Vishnu in the form of the boar (Varaah). Varaah roared and blessed them. His voice acted like balm to their troubled minds.

The Varaah leaped to the skies. He cleared the skies of all the clouds by lasing out his tail. The rays of the Sun can be clearly seen now with great brightness and warmth.

He galloped across the ocean in which Mother Earth laid submerged and waiting for Him to come and rescue.

Hiranyaksha was frightened to see such a mighty creature. He turned to the Ocean (Saagar) for a help. The Ocean, who knew that this Boar is none other than Lord Vishnu, retorted, "O Hiranyaksha, I am old now and quite unfit for a battle. You are a mighty warrior blessed by Lord Brahma Himself. I am confident that you will defeat this creature. Go and challenge this creature Varaah for a duel. The pride of Hrianyaksha thus was instigated by the Ocean. He roared, laughed and said to the Ocean, 'O Ocean, do not worry. I will soon kill this Varaah in a duel. It is just a pig. Even mighty sons of Aditi ran away for their lives in fight with me. This creature is nothing to face my might.'

The Ocean, however warned Hriyanaksha, and said, 'O Hriyanaksha, this is not an ordinary boar. Lord Vishnu has incarnated in this form Himself. Be cautious. He has taken this incarnation to rescue Mother Earth. Do not underestimate Him and fight with Him, if you can with all your divine powers given to you by Lord Brahma'.

Lord Varaah located Mother Earth soon who was waiting patiently to be rescued. Lord Varaah held Mother Earth between His large and magnificent tusks and lifted Her above the ocean. Hiranyaksha saw this and screamed in fury. He hurled insults and expletives at Varaaha, challenging Him to a duel. Varaaha paid no heed to the roaring of Hriyanaksha and proceeded to return Mother Earth to Her assigned place in the Universe.

Hiranyaksha, stung by insult, set out to kill Him. He had not to wait long when Varaah came in front of him and accepted his challenge of duel.

The Varaah had by now assumed an anthropomorphic form with four arms carrying His deadly mace, Kaumodhaki

(Gada). He had garland of flowers around His neck, and declared, 'O Hriyanaksha, I have wedded the Earth. She is my wife now, and to protect her is my duty as a husband. You should respect this tradition, and love of husband and wife, and leave. I have no personal animosity against you, and will spare your life. However, since I am the wedded husband of the Earth now, I am the ruler of the Earth. You are no more king of the Earth.'

Hiranyaksha could not bear this insult. Roaring demonically, he charged with all his might, swinging his heavy mace wildly at Varaah, husband of the Earth (Bhoo-Pati). The Varaah dodged his attack and dealt out a blow that knocked Hriyanaksha off his feet. Both of them fought in the skies, on land and finally in the ocean. They swam and attacked each other. This battle continued for a long time. It appeared that Hiranyaksha would have the upper hand, and Varaah was on the edge of being defeated. Then Varaah crushed the weapons of Hiranyaksha. Varaaha soon overpowered Hriyanaksha and dealt him with a fatal blow on his cheek.

Hriyanaksha's massive body sank to the bottom of the sea and Varaah roared in victory. He safely returned Earth to her designated place and returned to His Saket Dham.

Hearing the death of his older brother Hriyanaksha, Hiranyakashipu was very sad and feared for his own life. He developed hatred and animosity with Lord Vishnu for killing his brother Hriyanaksha and bowed to kill Him one day. However, as an intelligent and learned person he thought that if Lord Vishnu could kill his mighty brother Hriyanaksha, his powers were no match to his older brother's. There was no way that he could challenge Lord Vishnu with the powers he currently had including those given by Lord Brahma. He decided in his mind that at an appropriate time, he would seek more powers from Lord Brahma to be able to kill Lord Vishnu. But this was the time for

patience, and he would wait for the right moment to challenge and attack Lord Vishnu.

Fearing for his life, Hiranyakashipu approached Lord Brahma and begged for His mercy. Lord Brahma assured him fearlessness, and with the permission of Lord Vishnu made him king of a small part of the Mother Earth. He founded a new city in present Rajasthan state of India, Hiranyakashipu Ki Kher, (Hindaun), and made this city as his capital. Hiranyakashipu married Kayadhu, a daughter of Jambha, from Danav clan.

After settling well in his newly founded kingdom with the blessings of Lord Brahma, Hryanakshipu decided to meet his darling sister Simhalika and her husband Viprichitti, ruler of Paatal Lok. He was on his way to Paatal Lok. When Simhalika heard that his brother Hiranyakashipu was coming to meet her, Simhalika was very happy and thrilled on prospect of seeing her brother Hiranyakashipu and Bhabhi (sister-in-law) Kayadhu soon. Sure, she felt some sadness on hearing the death of her older brother Hryanaksha in her heart, but as she was never close to him anyway, it did not move her to tears.

Hiranyakashipu arrived in the capital of Paatal Lok with his wife Kayadhu and entourage. Both Simhalika and Viprichitti met them on the gate by touching their feet and with great respect, took them to the palace of mother queen Danu. After touching feet of aunt Danu and taking blessings from her, Hiranyakashipu and his wife Kayadhu returned to the private palace of Simhalika where they were lodged.

Both brother and sister met with great love and affection. There were tears in the eyes of Simhalika. They hugged each other for a long time, and sat to remember their olden days memories. Kayadhu, being from Danav clan and a distant relative of Viprichitti knew him very well. While Hiranyakashipu and Simhalika were having emotional sibling reunion, Viprichitti and Kayadhu were busy in chatting about their past time together.

It had been several years since Simhalika and Viprichitti were married, but unfortunately Simhalika was yet to become mother of a child. Hiranyakashipu was very curious to know why an heir apparent to Pataal Lok, and a child to Simhalika and Viprichitti was not yet born. Viprichitti himself told him a very unfortunate story of his younger days on a curse to him by aunt Tamara that he would never become a father.

‘As a young boy, I was very fond of collecting birds’ eggs. I would go far in the forests in search of eggs of different birds, and used to take away from their nests. The birds were very disappointed with my behavior as they were deprived of their parenthood. They approached our aunt Tamara, the mother of Garuda. On hearing this, aunt Tamara got angry with me and cursed that, as I had no respect for the parentage and did not understand the bond between parents and children by taking away the eggs of the birds from the bird parents, I have caused great distress and sufferings to them, I will never be a parent,’ said Viprichitti in a very sad voice to Hiranyakashipu.

‘I am very sorry to hear that Viprichitti, but do not worry. I promise to give you one of my children to be adopted by you and Simhalika as your child,’ said Hiranyakashipu in a consoling voice to Viprichitti. Viprichitti was thrilled and hugged his brother-in-law Hiranyakashipu.

‘Brother Hiranyakashipu I can never repay this debt to you, but I promise that I will always be faithful to you. I will lay my life on your instructions,’ promised Viprichitti.

‘Yes, brother Viprichitti, I may seek your help one day to kill Vishnu to avenge the death of older brother Hryanaksha. I plan to go for penance to please Lord Brahma in due course of time to get a boon of immortality from Him. Once I get that boon, I will challenge Vishnu, and kill him. When I am ready for that, I will send you a message and together we will kill Vishnu, and then all sons of Aditi. We will capture the kingdom of heaven and together rule the entire Universe forever,’

said Hiranyakashipu in a very loving but authoritative tone to Viprichitti.

‘Sure brother, anytime,’ reassured Viprichitti to Hiranyakashipu.

After staying for few days in Pataal Lok, Hiranyakashipu took leave of his aunt Danu, Simhalika and Viprichitti to return to his kingdom. With heavy heart, Hiranyakashipu, his wife Kayadhu and entourage, departed from Pataal Lok.

The time passed on. The queen Kayadhu, wife of Hiranyakashipu, became pregnant with their first child. The fire of revenge with Lord Vishnu was continuously burning in the heart of Hiranyakashipu. He could take no more now and decided to go to penance to worship Lord Brahma to give him a boon of immortality before he could attack and kill Lord Vishnu. He left behind his pregnant wife Kayadhu in the care of his Generals.

The son of Aditi Devraj Indra, saw this as a good opportunity to destroy the kingdom of Hiranyakashipu in an attempt to annihilate his greatest enemy forever, and also to kill the demon child in the womb of his wife Kayadhu which could become a trouble to himself and his brothers later. He attacked his kingdom, killed the Generals and their army, and kidnapped Kayadhu.

Devraj forcibly boarded Kayadhu on his chariot, and headed to Indralok (heaven). Reprimanding Devraj Indra in highly pitiable voice, the chaste woman Kayadhu said, ‘O Devraj Indra, what purpose would it serve to you by kidnapping me? O Surendra, do you not see a sin you are occurring in kidnapping a helpless woman like me?’

Coincidentally, Brahmurishi Narad was passing through the same passage at that time. He heard these pitiable words of the queen Kayadhu, and appeared before Devraj Indra. He stopped the chariot.

Brahmrishi said to Devraj Indra, 'O Mahendra, you are the king of the Heaven, son of Maharishi Kashyap and Aditi, and brothers of mighty Devas (Gods). It does not fit your grace to kidnap a helpless woman. Set this chaste woman free at once'.

Devraj Indra, however, replied, 'Brahmrishi, this woman is nurturing the seed of the demon. I will destroy it before it germinates, then I will set this chaste woman free. I assure you that she will have no pain'.

Brahmrishi Narad said, 'O Devraj Indra, you do not know that it is not in your powers to kill this unborn baby. You and your brothers should not fear from this unborn child. He is rather going to be the cause of your welfare. In the womb of the queen Kayadhu, there is a supreme devotee of Lord Vishnu'.

Knowing that a supreme devotee of Lord Vishnu was present in the womb of queen Kayadhu, Devraj Indra respectfully went around Kayadhu, greeted her and asked for her forgiveness. He respectfully deboarded her from the chariot and handed over to Brahmrishi Narad, and went to his abode.

Brahmrishi Narad said to the queen Kayadhu, 'O daughter, your kingdom is in ruins now. I will take you to the hermit of my disciple Maharishi Anand, where you will stay safe and comfortably till your husband Hiranyakashipu returns from his penance'. Thus, queen Kayadhu came to stay at the hermitage of Maharishi Anand.

In the hermit of Maharishi Anand, she served Maharishi and the residents of the hermitage with great faith. She used to clean the hermitage and smear it with cow dung and fetch water from the river for the residents. She even began to worship Lord Vishnu by following other Rishies and Rishi-Patnies (Wives of the Rishies) in the hermit. She adopted a hermitic life, wore clothes of bark, slept on Khusha bed, observed difficult fasts and ate roots and tubers to satisfy her hunger. Thus, she was totally transformed to a great devotee of the Lord. Devrishi Narad used to visit her too in the hermit from time to time.

Addressing her fetus, Maharishi Anand preached her Yoga, devotion and cryptic knowledge of Mantras. Declaring the world as meaningless, he preached her Vairagya (abstaining).

This divine knowledge entered into the brain of the unborn child. In due course of time, a handsome baby boy was born to the queen Kayadhu. Maharishi Narad visited hermitage of his disciple Maharishi Anand at the time of the birth of this handsome baby boy and named him, Prahalad (an extremely joyful person).

As narrated in Scripture, Hiranyakashipu was able to please Lord Brahma by his penance. Lord Brahma appeared before Hiranyakashipu and offered him a boon of his choice. Hiranyakashipu asked for immortality. Lord Brahma declined to give him this boon as it was beyond His powers. Hiranyakashipu requested Lord Brahma to grant him boon as following.

Hiranyakashipu asked, 'O my lord, O best of the givers of benediction, if you will kindly grant me the benediction, I desire, please let me not meet death from any of the living entities created by you. Please grant me that I do not die within any residence or outside any residence, during the daytime or at night, nor on the ground or in the sky. Please also grant me a boon that my death not be brought by any weapon, nor by any human being or animal. Please also grant me that I do not meet the death from any entity, living or nonliving. Please grant me further that I not be killed by any demigod or demon or by any snake from the lower planets. Since no one can kill me in the battlefield, I may have no competitor. Therefore, grant me the benediction that I have no rival. Please give me the boon of being sole lordship over all the living entities and presiding deities, and give me all the glories obtained by that position. Furthermore, give me all the mystic powers attained by long austerities and the practice of yoga, for these cannot be lost at any time.'

Lord Brahma blessed him by granting these boons, Lord Brahma said, 'Tathastu (so it be)'.

After obtaining these boons of near immortality, Hiranyakashipu returned to his kingdom. He found that his kingdom was completely ruined. On hearing that Devraj Indra attacked his kingdom in his absence, ruined it and kidnapped his loving wife queen Kayadhu, he was very angry and immediately attacked Devraj Indra. For the fear of their lives, Devraj Indra and all his brothers fled from the Heaven and hid at a safe place. Hiranyakashipu declared merger of the kingdom of Heaven into his own kingdom, and became the Emperor of both the worlds.

After gaining control of the kingdom of the Heaven, Hiranyakashipu, moved his chariot to the Ashram of Maharishi Anand. At that time, Maharishi Anand had gone to preside over a Yagn organized by Maharishi Atri. He challenged the residents of the Ashram, threatened to kill them and burn the Ashram. Guru Mata faced his challenge. Unfortunately, he killed Guru Mata and several residents of the Ashram. In spite of pleading by his own wife Kayadhu not to harm anyone in Ashram, he burnt and ruined the Ashram completely. Then he brought his wife Kayadhu and his son Prahalad to his palace.

As the time passed on, Hiranyakashipu and Kayadhu were blessed with five more children. Of course, as said above, their first born was Prahalad. Their other children were, four sons, Sahlad, Ahlad, Shivi, Vaashkal and one daughter, Sinhika. As promised by Hiranyakashipu, the couple gave their son Ahlad to Simhalika and Viprichitti for their adoption. For Simhalika, as if she got the world. Her entire time now was revolving around Ahlad.

Havoc of Hiranyakashipu

After getting boon from Lord Brahma, Hiranyakashipu now considered himself as immortal. He was now the ruler of Earth as well as Heaven. He also had direct influence on Viprichitti, the king of Paatal Lok. He decreed to all the kingdoms (Earth, Heaven and Paatal Lok) that he was the God and be worshipped. Anyone who would not obey his decree, would be killed instantly.

Viprichitti, the king of Paatal Lok was great follower of Hiranyakashipu. He also felt indebted to Hiranyakashipu because he gave him his son Ahlad for his adoption. He supported the decree of Hiranyakashipu in his kingdom, and ordered all his citizens to worship Hiranyakashipu as God. Simhalika was the only one against this idea, but due to love towards her brother Hiranyakashipu and fearing that if she did not support the dictate of Hiranyakashipu, he might take away Ahlad from her, which was now her soul, did not oppose this decree.

The soldiers of Hiranyakashipu, on hearing the decree from their master, commenced tormenting the saints and the followers of Sanatan Dharma. They commenced destroying the holy Yagns and the sacrificial rites conducted by holy persons. These Raakṣhasas were killing any holy person chanting the name of Lord Vishnu and not accepting the decree of Hiranyakashipu to accept him as God.

However, in the palace of Hiranyakashipu, his own first-born son Prahlada revolted on this decree. He had learnt in the Ashram of Maharishi Anand during his childhood that there is only one supreme personality of Godhead, and that is either Lord Vishnu Himself or His incarnations. He tried to convey this message to Hiranyakashipu, who became very angry on this behaviour of his son.

He deputed Prahalad to Sanskrit Acharyas (Professors) Shanda and Amarka. He instructed these Sanskrit Acharyas to teach Prahalad that Hiranyakashipu was the God, not Vishnu.

These Sanskrit Acharya were followers of Hiranyakashipu and had already accepted him as God. They were stern disciplinarians and ordered Prahalad not to even take the name of Vishnu in their Gurukul. Prahlada, instead of learning from their teachings, continued to worship Lord Vishnu, and also to teach other disciples of Gurukul to do the same. When the Acharyas found it out, they were frightened for the fear of the mighty king Hiranyakashipu. They tried their best to dissuade Prahalad to do so. When Prahalad did not obey their instructions, they had no choice than to inform Hiranyakashipu.

Hiranyakashipu became very much enraged when he heard this and summoned Prahalad to his court. He tried by gentle persuasions to dissuade Prahalad from the worship of Vishnu and tried to teach him that he was the only God, and hence should be worshipped by Prahalad. All such instructions and orders of Hiranyakashipu went in vain. Prahalad continued to declare, again and again, that the omnipresent Vishnu, Lord of the Universe, was the only Supreme Personality of Godhead and should be worshipped, even by the king Hiranyakashipu. The rage of Hiranyakashipu knew no bounds now, and he ordered the boy to be immediately killed. So, the Daityas struck him with pointed weapons. However, Prahalad's mind was so intent upon Lord Vishnu that he felt no pain from them.

When Hiranyakashipu saw that torturing Prahalad in this way had no effect, he then ordered him to be trampled underfoot by an elephant. The enraged elephant also could not crush Prahalad.

Hiranyakashipu made several attempts to kill Prahalad. He ordered Prahalad to be thrown over a precipice. Prahalad continued to chant the holy name of Lord Vishnu during this attack. Surprisingly, he came down upon the earth as gently as a flower drops upon the grass. All the possible methods such as to poison him, starving him, throwing him into a well etc were also tried to kill Prahalad, but every time he escaped the death.

Hiranyakashipu then ordered Prahalad to be tied with mighty highly poisonous serpents, and then cast to the bottom of the ocean. Prahalad continued to pray his beloved Lord Vishnu, 'Salutation to Thee, Lord of the Universe. Thou beautiful Lord Vishnu'. Thus, meditating on Lord Vishnu, he began to feel that Lord Vishnu was near him and everywhere. As soon as he realised this, all the snake bonds snapped asunder. The mountains were pulverised. The ocean was upheaved. He was gently lifted up above the waves and safely carried to the shore. As Prahalad stood there, he forgot that he was a child of Daitya Vansh and had a mortal body. He felt that Lord Vishnu was the Universe and all the powers of the Universe emanated from Him. There was nothing in Nature that could injure him when the Ruler of the Nature, Lord Vishnu, was with him.

When Hiranyakashipu found to his horror that all mortal means of getting rid of Prahalad, who was intensely devoted to his enemy Vishnu, were powerless, he was at a loss to know what to do. He again tried to persuade Prahalad once more to listen to his advice, though through gentle means. But Prahalad did not accept his advice. He thought then that perhaps these childish whims of Prahalad would be rectified with the age and further training, so he asked the Acharyas Shanda and Amarka to teach him the duties of a king once again. All the efforts of these Acharyas to teach Prahalad again to accept Hiranyakashipu as the God had no effect. On the contrary, Prahalad started teaching other disciples of Gurukul once again to pray the Supreme Personality of Godhead Lord Vishnu.

His Generals then advised that his sister Simhalika had a boon from Lord of Fire (Agnidev) of immunity from fire in the form of a blanket. Prahalad could be burnt to death by her help. Knowing this, Hiranyakashipu immediately summoned his sister Simhalika to his royal court.

Holika

A message was sent to Viprichitti in Paatal Lok that Hiranyakashipu wanted to see both, Viprichitti and Simhalika, as soon as possible in his capital. On hearing this message, Simhalika was thrilled on a possibility to see his loving older brother and his family after a long time. She also thought in her mind that this might be a good opportunity for her to dissuade her brother Hiranyakashipu to kill his own son Prahalad.

Simhalika had great love towards Prahalad. Prahalad was the brother of Ahlad, her adopted son. She always dreamt that one day when Prahalad would be the king of Daityas and Ahlad, the king of Danavas, these two brothers would rule the Universe with great love among themselves. The peace will prevail in the Universe. She knew that her brother Hiranyakashipu did not like Prahalad, but was always optimistic. Time is a big healer. One day my brother Hiranyakashipu would forgive his son Prahalad, and would decorate him with a title of 'Crown Prince' (Yuvraj).

Happily, Viprichitti, Simhalika and their royal entourage reached the capital of Hiranyakashipu. They were welcomed by Hiranyakashipu and queen Kayadhu on the gate of the palace. Simhalika then went with the queen Kayadhu to her palace and Viprichitti accompanied the king Hiranyakashipu to the royal court.

Simhalika wanted to see and meet his loving nephew Prahalad and hug him. She did not see Prahalad in the palace of the queen Kayadhu. Humbly, she asked her sister-in-law Kayadhu, 'Where is Prahalad, Bhabhi? He did not come to welcome me and pay his respects to me. This is not the way of my little lovely nephew Prahalad, who is always very polite, obedient and respectful to his elders.'

Queen Kayadhu broke on hearing the name of Prahalad with such kind words for him from none other than the sister of Hiranyakashipu, her husband. She was of an opinion that like her husband, Simhalika

would also speak ill words about her loving and kind son Prahalad. She started crying loudly by putting her head on the shoulders of Simhalika.

'My dear sister, your brother had tried all the possible ways to kill his own loving son Prahalad. The only fault of Prahalad is that he does not accept your brother as the God. He continues to pray Lord Vishnu and preaches that He is the only one as Supreme Personality of Godhead. Now your dear nephew is imprisoned. He is in prison with chains all around his neck and body. You have been summoned by your brother to help him to kill Prahalad, my loving innocent child. I beg you, and will be indebted forever if you could kindly forgive my son, and do not be a part to kill Prahalad', begged queen Kayadhu with tears in her eyes, continually sobbing and falling at the feet of Simhalika.

'Bhabhi, what are you talking about? I will help my brother Hiranyakashipu to kill my own loving nephew, brother of my son Ahalad, impossible! impossible! I cannot think this even in my wildest dreams. You know how much I love Prahalad. He is like Ahalad to me. I have rather been thinking that one day these two brothers will rule the Universe in harmony and peace', Simhalika was stunned to hear this from her sister-in-law.

'Bhabhi, also, I cannot understand that how brother Hiranyakashipu think that I may help him in killing Prahalad. What plan does he have for that? Please describe me in details so I am prepared to give him a befitting reply. Bhabhi, please be assured that I will protect Prahalad in a similar way as I will protect Ahalad from any danger even at the cost of my own life', pleaded Simhalika to her sister-in-law.

'Simhalika, my loving sister, you know your Guru Agnidev gave you a boon in the form of a blanket to provide you immunity from the fire. Your brother wants you to sit in the pyre with Prahalad covering yourself with this divine blanket, so that Prahalad is burnt to death, and you are escaped', told queen Kayadhu to Simhalika.

'Hum, so that is the plan of my evil brother. Please leave it on me now Bhabhi,' said Simhalika without elaborating any on her plans if her brother Hiranyakashipu asked her to do so.

Next day, early in the morning Hiranyakashipu visited the palace of his queen Kayadhu where Simhalika was staying. He was seated with great honour by his wife queen Kayadhu. He did not see Simhalika in the palace, so asked his wife where his dear sister was? Simhalika was busy in worshipping her Guru Lord of Fire (Agnidev). Interestingly, Hiranyakashipu did not get angry on his sister Simhalika worshipping Agnidev. He smiled and thought, 'O my good sister had already understood me, and now getting ready to take Prahalaad into pyre with her, and seeking blessings from her Gurudev to burn Prahalaad.' He waited patiently till Simhalika finished rituals of her prayer.

When Simhalika finished her prayers, she was advised by a maid that her brother king Hiranyakashipu was waiting for her in the main hall of the palace. She rushed to the main hall. When she was bowing to touch the feet of her brother, he immediately took her into his arms, and hugged her.

'O Simhalika, how much I missed you! I am so happy to see you and Viprichitti after a long time. How is Ahalad doing? I understand he has grown to be a very handsome, obedient and learned child. I also learnt that he is taking part in the administration of the kingdom with his father Viprichitti. How lucky you are! Look at me. My first born and darling son Prahalaad is just doing opposite to that. I have millions of dreams on the future of this young man. I defeated sons of Aditi and captured Heaven for him. I always thought that these two brothers, Prahalaad and Ahalad, will rule the whole Universe. But he is behaving against me at every step. I tried all my possible ways to mend him, by persuading, by making him crown prince (Yuvaraj), by punishing, and by exploiting (Saam, Daam, Dand, Bhed). He never listened to me, his Acharyas and senior court advisors. As a proud and self-esteemed person, I could not take it anymore. I just do not want to see his face. I want to see him dead. My court has already

ruled the death penalty to him. However, I have tried all the ways to implement death penalty, but in vain. I know you respect the pride, self-esteem and honour of your loving older brother who has always thought of your welfare. I gave to you even my darling son Ahalad for adoption because you could not become mother. What else I could have done? I request you and beg your help to get death penalty implemented on Prahalad, so my words could be honoured.'

Simhalika was surprised to see his arrogant brother talking to her in such a soft and loving voice. She was expecting that he would just order her to carry out his orders. No request, no mercy. She collected courage and replied to his brother.

'Bhaiyaa, you know that I am your loving obedient sister. I and Viprichitti are so obliged to you for giving Ahalad to us for adoption. Sure, I will carry out your any order within my power,' said Simhalika.

Hiranyakashipu was thrilled to hear these sweet words from Simhalika.

'O my baby sister, that is what I expect from you to respect the orders of the court of your brother. I am very pleased. If my orders are carried out, I have already thought that I will make Ahalad Crown Prince (Yuvaraj) of my kingdoms (Earth and Heaven) too. Ahalad will now rule all the Universe,' said Hiranyakashipu.

'What can I do my brother to make you happy,' asked Simhalika as if she did not know any plans of her brother Hiranyakashipu.

'It is very easy for you Simhalika. I know you have a boon from your Guru Agnidev in the form of a blanket which makes you immune from fire. Cover yourself with that blanket and sit in the pyre with Prahalad. Nothing will happen to you, but Prahalad will be burnt to death. The order of the 'Royal Court' will be honoured in this way easily, and your brother can raise his head with proud and self-esteem,' said Hiranyakashipu in a very calm voice.

‘What! You ask me, his loving aunt, to kill her own nephew! You know Bhaiyaa, Prahalad is as dear to me as Ahlad. How can I get courage to carry out your orders to kill Prahalad? Ahlad has deep regards, love and affection to his older brother Prahalad. When he was hearing that you were trying all the possible ways to kill his loving brother Prahalad, he used to get very angry. I and Viprichitti were consoling him and trying to keep him calm. If he will learn now that I killed his loving brother, he will hate me deeply and never forgive me. I cannot live without love and affection of Ahalad. Bhaiyaa. Please forgive me. I beg you not to ask me to do this. I will lay my life for you, but not for this task,’ said Simhalika in a very humble voice to Hiranyakashipu.

‘How dare you to disobey my words? I have given you everything, including my son for your adoption. I could not have dreamt that you will ever behave in such a disobedient way to me. I was trying to be humble and kind to you. You do not deserve my kindness. I order you to carry out the death penalty of Prahalad as said above,’ ordered Hiranyakashipu in an angry tone.

‘No Bhaiyaa please, please listen to me. Do not ask me to do which will take away everything from me which you gave. I beg you humbly not to force me to do this aghast task,’ again pleaded Simhalika.

‘I heard that you said that Ahalad was unhappy and angry on me when I was trying to kill his older brother Prahalad. That is the training you have given to my other darling son! You have made up his mind too against me, your older loving brother. Shame on you. It looks now that even Ahalad is of no use to me. If you do not carry out my orders, I will kill both, Viprichitti and Ahalad, immediately. You are my sister, so I will not take your life. But I will leave you to die to live by taking away your most precious things, your husband and your son,’ said angrily Hiranyakashipu.

‘No, No, brother, you cannot do so. I beg you. Please do not touch my loving husband Viprichitti and my son Ahalad. I love both of them more

than my own life. I will carry out your orders,' said Simhalika fearing the death of her husband and son.

'Good. Now you understand and respect me. Get ready to obey my orders tomorrow,' said authoritatively Hiranyakashipu, and left the palace of Kayadhu.

It was a shock to Kayadhu. She talked to Simhalika yesterday only, and begged her to spare the life of her dear son Prahalad. Now she agreed to obey orders of his brother to kill her loving son Prahalad. She could not believe her ears. With tears in her eyes, she approached Simhalika, and once again begged Simhalika to change her decision.

'Bhabhi, I will do whatever is the best for Prahalad, Ahalad, yourself and Viprichitti. I can only say this now. Please wait for the right time and leave me alone now,' said Simhalika to her sister-in-law and left the hall to her private room. She closed the door from inside and commenced meditating on her Gurudev Lord of Fire (Agnidev).

She went into trance. Lord Fire appeared to her in dream and blessed her, 'My daughter, I pray that Almighty give you every strength to carry out your wishes.'

She did not know when she fell asleep. She was awakened by a loud bang on the door of her room. Someone was shouting loudly that the king Hiranyakashipu was waiting for her. A pyre had been organised, and Prahalad was present there too.

She woke up hurriedly. She told the person banging the door to convey to the king Hiranyakashipu that she would soon be there.

She got refreshed, took her fire immune blanket and hurried towards the pyre place. She saw Prahalad after a long time. The young boy was standing before her with a mesmerising smile. He looked just like Ahalad. For a moment she forgot that she was at the palace of

Hiranyakashipu and it was Prahalad who was standing before her. She thought Ahlad was standing there and smiling on her mother inviting her to take him into her arms. Simhalika ran towards Prahalad and immediately took him into her arms. She commenced kissing him intensely on his cheeks and forehead. Then she heard a hoarse voice of his brother Hiranyakashipu.

‘Enough exhibition of love Simhalika. Now carry out my orders,’ ordered Hiranyakashipu.

‘Yes, Bhaiyaa. For sure, I will carry out your orders, but I have one request. I do not want that the world sees my cruelty that I am taking my dear, young, smiling nephew to the fire pyre. So, no one should look at me including yourself when I move towards pyre’, requested Simhalika to her brother Hiranyakashipu.

‘Oh, that is all. No problems. I am going to my palace anyway, and order all my soldiers to leave both of you alone. I will wait for you in my private chamber to see you soon there returning alive and happy, and giving me good news that the death penalty to Prahalad has been carried out,’ saying this Hiranyakashipu left to his palace. Slowly all the soldiers also left the pyre place obeying the orders of their master.

She took Prahalad into her laps, and started moving slowly to the pyre. She was looking all around to see if there was no one to see her and Prahalad jumping into pyre. Once again, she had a close look at Prahalad.

‘O my loving nephew Prahalad, please look after my son and your brother Ahalad. He is a very nice, kind and loving child and always loves you. Please promise me that you will forgive him even if he is on a wrong path, and you will instruct him to do the right thing,’ saying this, Simhalika covered Prahalad with fire immune blanket, and jumped into the pyre.

Simhalika was burnt to death, thus sacrificed her life, and saved Prahalad. Brahmishi Narad appeared on the scene and started singing glory of Simhalika.

‘O Simhalika, Lord Vishnu will never forget your sacrifice. You will not be re-born. Lord Vishnu is waiting for you in His Saket Daham. In the memory of your great sacrifice, you will be called as Holika from today. Whomsoever will pray and worship you on this day of Phagun Shukla Poonina, will be blessed by Lord Vishnu Himself and will get peace, prosperity, name, fame and success in this world and after death, will attain Saket Dham of the Lord Vishnu,’ blessed Brahmishi Narad. He took the fire immune blanket with him and left the pyre place singing glory of Holika.

Brahmrishi gave a new name ‘Holika’ to Simhalika. In Sanskrit, Holika is made up of two words – Hol + lka. Hol means pyre and lka means Goddess. Holika means the Goddess of Pyre.

When several ghadies (hours) passed and Simhalika did not return from pyre, Hiranyakashipu became anxious and ran towards the pyre. He was surprised to see that Prahalad was standing before the pyre alive with smiling face. He saw that his sister was burning to death. There was no blanket anywhere.

‘O, this so-called God of Fire, after all proved that he is the son of Aditi. He took away his boon from my sister and burnt her. What a wretched person! Why did I not realise this and trusted that God of Fire will stick to his boons. Sons of Aditi are not trustworthy anyway. My poor sister, I am very sorry. Please forgive me’ Lamented Hiranyakashipu on the death of her loving sister. He declared a period of mourning for one month in his kingdom on the loss of his loving sister. He ordered to take Prahalad once again to the Acharyas so that they try to mend his ways.

Queen Kayadhu now understood the words of Simhalika. She thanked her in her heart for saving the life of her son, and prayed for her salvation.

Worshipping Holika

Brahmrishi Narad blessed Simhalika by the name of Holika (The Goddess of Pyre) and gave a boon of health, happiness, prosperity, name and fame to those who will worship Holika on the Phalgun Poonnima. Later, on the instructions of Brahmrishi Narad, Lord Narsinhm Avatar, Lord Brahmdev and Lord Agnidev, the rituals were established for the worship of 'Mother Holika'.

Holika Installation (Sthapana)

It is instructed in the Scripture that a proper place for the Sthapna of Holika should be selected. The place where Holika is to be installed, should preferably be rinsed with cow dung and the holy water of Ganges. In absence of cow dung or holy Ganga water, the water with Tulsi leaves may be sprinkled. A wooden pole should be kept in the centre, surrounded with beads or garlands of toys made of cow dung which are popularly known as Gulari, Bharbholiye or Badkula. In absence of availability of cow dung, these Gulari may be made out of the clay. The idols of Holika and Prahlada, usually made of cow dung or clay, should be placed on the top of the heap. Holika pile should be decorated with shields, swords, sun, moon, stars and other toys made of cow dung or clay.

When Holika Dahan is performed, the idol of Prahlada should be taken out from the pile. Also, four beads of the cow dung or clay should be kept safe at one side before bonfire. One bead is kept safe in the name of ancestors, second in the name of God Hanuman, third in name of in the name of the family and fourth in the name of Goddess Holika.

Puja Process (Vidhi)

The following Samagri or materials may be used for Puja. In absence of these materials, only Sankalp in the heart is good enough to please Holika.

One bowl of water, beads made of cow dung or clay, roli, unbroken rice (Akshat), fragrances like agarbatti and/or dhoop, flowers, raw cotton thread, turmeric pieces, unbroken moong daal, batasha/ sugar/ gud, gulal powder and coconut. Also, if available, fully grown grains of freshly cultivated crops like wheat, gram or any other crop may be included in the Puja items.

All the Puja ingredients may be kept in a plate. Pooja materials should also be accompanied with small water pot with Puja Thali. Then, sit on the Puja spot, if possible, facing either the East or the North direction.

Before commencing Pooja, some water (which contains Tulsi leaves) should be sprinkled on the Puja Thali, yourself and all presents there.

The Pooja is commenced first to worship Lord Vishnu and seek His blessings.

**ॐ पुण्डरीकाक्षः पुनातु ।
ॐ नृसिंहाय नमः पंचोपचारार्थं गंधाक्षतपुष्पाणि समर्पयामि ।**

**Om Pundareekakshayah Punatu ।
Om Narsinmah Namah Panchopachaaraarthe
Gandhakshtpushpaani Samarpayaami ।**

Then Bhakta Prahalad is worshiped and we seek his blessings

**ॐ प्रह्लादाय नमः पंचोपचारार्थं गंधाक्षतपुष्पाणि समर्पयामि ।
Om Prahaladaay Namah Panchopachaaraarthe
Gandhakshtpushpaani Samarpayaami ।**

And finally, Holika is worshipped.

असृक्पाभयसंत्रस्तैः कृता त्वं होलि बालिशैः ।

अतस्त्वां पूजयिष्यामि भूते भूतिप्रदा भवः॥

Asrkpaabhaysantrstaih Krata Twam Holi Baalisheh I
Atstwaam Poojyishyammi Bhute Bhootiprada Bhavah I I

O Mother Holika, some foolish and childish people have created Holi to burn you, but you are Goddess. We worship you and seek your blessings to get power, wealth and prosperity for myself and all present.

May Lord Nrasimh, Bhakta Prahalad and Mother Holika (Goddess of Pyre) bless all of us. Om Shanti, Shanti, Shanti.



Dr. Yatendra Sharma, the author of this book, was born in a Sanatan Dharma Hindu family. Following his family traditions, he developed an interest in reading, listening, and narrating religious scriptures since his childhood. He learnt Sanskrit in his childhood from his grandfather Shri Bhagwan Das Ji and Shri Saligram

Sharma Agnihotri Ji, the great scholar of Sanskrit and retired Principal of Naravar Sanskrit Mahavidyalay. He completed his Doctorate in Chemical Technology from the Technical University of Graz, Austria, and now serving the mining and mineral industry of Western Australia for more than three decades.

In 2016, with the help of some like-minded friends, he founded a religious organisation 'Shri Ram Katha Sansthan Perth', based on the teachings of Bhagwan Swami Ramananad Ji Maharaj, and following the traditions of 'Shri Ramanand Sampraday'. 'Shri Ram Katha Sansthan Perth' has regularly published books and booklets on the life stories of the great Sanatan Dharma Saints, Mothers, patriotic kings, and others, to create awareness about the Sanatan Dharma culture for followers of Sanatan Dharma.