



disguised as a Brahmin to carry out his allotted task of killing the king. As the serpent's bite reduced Parikshit's body to ashes, his soul soared free while celestial beings scattered fragrant flowers.

Yet, though Parikshit had come to terms with his fate, his son, Janamejaya, was enraged and in his grief vowed to kill not only Takshaka, but every living serpent. To this end he organised a great sacrificial fire into which he hurled thousands of innocent serpents. Finally, when only Takshaka

was left, he threw himself at Indra's feet. Janamejaya, however, was so devoid of pity that he was prepared, if need be, to also hurl Indra into the fire. Terrified at this prospect, Indra sought the help of the same Guru who had taken the idol to Guruvayur.

Guru addressed Janamejaya, telling him he would not be able to kill Takshaka for the simple reason that the latter had drunk *amrit*, the elixir of immortality. Guru further explained that all creatures have a destiny and must reap

*Old photograph of the Utsavam.*