

9) *Śikhaṇḍī's Revenge*. The Mahābhārata, Bhīṣma Parva, Chapter 108, describes Bhīṣma's encounter with Śikhaṇḍī during the Kaurava-Pāṇḍava battle. The Pāṇḍavas started the day's battle by keeping Śikhaṇḍī in the vanguard. Bhīma, Arjuna, Abhimanyu and other warriors were giving him support. It was Bhīṣma who led the Kaurava forces. Arrows began to fly from both sides. It was the tenth day of the battle and Śikhaṇḍī shot three arrows aimed at Bhīṣma's breast. Bhīṣma with a smile of contempt said to Śikhaṇḍī, "Śikhaṇḍī ! Brahmā created you as a woman. You may do as you like". Hearing this taunt, Śikhaṇḍī became more infuriated. Arjuna inspired him with greater courage. After that, keeping Śikhaṇḍī in front, Arjuna began to fight with Bhīṣma. Śikhaṇḍī also showered his arrows on him. Ten of these arrows of Śikhaṇḍī hit Bhīṣma's breast. Bhīṣma disregarded even those arrows. At last he said: "I cannot kill the Pāṇḍavas because they are invulnerable (avadhyāḥ). I cannot kill Śikhaṇḍī because he is really a woman and not man. Though I am also invulnerable and cannot be killed in battle, yet today I have to die; the time has come for me to die." Meanwhile Śikhaṇḍī and Arjuna were discharging a continuous and heavy shower of arrows at Bhīṣma. At last Bhīṣma fell down. (M.B., Udyoga Parva, Chapter 173).

AMBĀJANMA. It is a place of sacred bath where the sage Nārada usually resides. Those who die here will attain salvation (Mokṣa) by Nārada's blessing, according to M.B., Vana Parva, Chapter 83, Verse 81.

AMBĀLIKĀ. (1) The youngest of the three daughters of the King of Kāśī—Ambā, Ambikā and Ambālikā. Vicitravīrya, son of Śantanu married Ambikā and Ambālikā. The mother of this princess was Kausalyā.

2) *Pāṇḍu's Mother*. Vicitravīrya died before children were born to his wives. To avoid the extinction of the family, Satyawatī, mother of Vicitravīrya summoned Vyāsa, her other son and asked him to beget a son for Ambikā. Vyāsa obeyed his mother half-heartedly. Ambikā did not like the dark-complexioned, crudely attired Vyāsa. Still owing to the Mother's pressure, she passively submitted to the act. As a result of their union was born Dhṛtarāṣṭra, who was blind from his birth. The grief-stricken mother called Vyāsa again and asked him to have union with Ambālikā this time. As Ambālikā's face was pale at the time of their union, a child with pale complexion was born to her. He was named Pāṇḍu. Having thus failed in both attempts, Satyawatī asked Ambikā to go to Vyāsa again. At night Ambikā secretly disguised her waiting-maid and sent her in her own place, to Vyāsa. The waiting-maid experienced exquisite pleasure in Vyāsa's company and as a result a most intelligent son was born to her. It was he who became the renowned Vidura. (M.B., Ādi Parva, Chapter 106).

AMBARĪṢA I. A King of the Ikṣvāku dynasty.

1) *Genealogy and Birth*. From Viṣṇu was born in the following order : Brahmā-Marīci-Kaśyapa. - Vivasvān-Vaivasvatamanu-Ikṣvāku-Vikukṣi - Śaśāda - Purañjaya-Kukutstha-Anenas-Prthulāśva-Prasenajit - Yuvanāśva-Māndhātā-Ambarīṣa. Māndhātā had three sons: Ambarīṣa, Mucukunda and Purukutsa and fifty daughters.

The Muni (Sage) Saubhari married the daughters.

2) *Ambarīṣa's Yāga (sacrifice)*. In Vālmiki Rāmāyaṇa there is a story of Devendra's theft of the sacrificial cow from Ambarīṣa's yāgaśālā. Devendra could not bear the thought of King Ambarīṣa winning world-renown and glory by performing yāgas. Therefore Indra stole the sacrificial cow and took it away. The Upādhyāya (Chief Priest) was alarmed at the disappearance of the cow and expressed his opinion to the King that it would be enough to sacrifice a human being instead of the cow. The King searched for the cow in all countries, cities and forests. At last he reached the peak of Bhṛgutuṅga where the sage Ṛcika lived with his wife and children. The King explained to the sage the whole story. He requested him to sell one of his sons in exchange for 100,000 cows. Ṛcika had three sons. The eldest was his father's favourite and the youngest was the mother's pet. In the end, Ṛcika sold the second son, Śunaśśepha in return for 100,000 cows.

On his return journey with Śunaśśepha the king rested for a while at Puṣkara Tīrtha. There Śunaśśepha happened to meet his uncle Viśvāmītra and complained to him about his sad plight. Śunaśśepha's wish was that the king's yāga should be performed and at the same time his own life-span should be extended. Viśvāmītra promised to save Śunaśśepha. He called Madhucchandas and his other sons and said to them: "One of you must take the place of Ambarīṣa's sacrificial cow and save the life of Śunaśśepha. God will bless you."

But none of the sons of Viśvāmītra was prepared to become the sacrificial cow. Viśvāmītra uttered a curse on his sons that they would have to spend a thousand years on earth, eating dog-flesh. Then he turned to Śunaśśepha and told him that if he prayed to the gods at the time of Ambarīṣa's yajña, they would save him. So Śunaśśepha went to Ambarīṣa's yāgaśālā. As ordered by the assembled guests, Ambarīṣa bound Śunaśśepha and had him dressed in blood-red robes, ready for the sacrifice. Śunaśśepha began to praise and pray to the gods. Soon Indra appeared and blessed him with longevity. He also rewarded Ambarīṣa for his yāga. Thus Śunaśśepha was saved.* (Vālmiki Rāmāyaṇa Bāla Kāṇḍa, Sarga 61).

3) *Ambarīṣa and Durvāsas*. In Bhāgavata we see a story which describes how the Sudarśana Cakra which emerged from Ambarīṣa's forehead chased Durvāsas in all the three worlds. Ambarīṣa was a devout worshipper of Viṣṇu. From the very beginning of his reign, peace and prosperity spread all over the country. Mahāviṣṇu who was pleased with the deep piety and devotion of Ambarīṣa appeared to him and bestowed on him the control of his (Viṣṇu's) Sudarśana Cakra. After that Ambarīṣa started the observance of Ekādaśī vrata. The rigour of the observance alarmed even Indra. He decided to obstruct the observance somehow or other. At that time, Durvāsas arrived in devaloka. Indra instigated Durvāsas to spoil the Ekādaśī observance of Ambarīṣa.

Durvāsas went to Ambarīṣa's palace. There the King received him with due respect and sent him to the river Kālindī for his bath and morning rites. Durvāsas went

* The story of Śunaśśepha may be seen with slight variations in the Devī Bhāgavata and other Purāṇas. In those versions, Śunaśśepha has been described as the sacrificial cow at Hariścandra's yāga, and moreover, Ajigarta is referred to as the father of Śunaśśepha. (Brahmaṇḍa Purāṇa, Chapter 58 gives the same story as in Vālmiki Rāmāyaṇa).