

from the fire. The serpent asked Nala to walk a few steps counting his footsteps. Nala did so and at the tenth step, Karkotaka stung him and his whole body was turned blue. Suddenly Karkotaka assumed his own original shape and spoke to Nala as follows:—"I have changed your appearance so that people may not be able to recognize you. Kali who is troubling you, still lives within you. It is he who is affected by my poison. You need not fear danger from poison any more. You will never be defeated in battle. Go and engage yourself as the charioteer of Rtuṣarṇa, King of Ayodhyā. You will teach him Aśvaḥṛdaya mantra. In return for it he will teach you Akṣaḥṛdaya mantra. Here are two garments which I give you. If you put them on, you will be restored to your own shape. May you be blessed again with a happy family life." After saying this, Karkotaka vanished. (M.B. Vana Parva, Chapter 66).

KĀRKOTĀKA. A land beyond the eastern ocean. It is not far from there to the river Śitodā. The Udaya mountain is just across it. (Kathāsaritśāgara).

KARMABHŪMI. The land of Bhārata. How this continent got the name of Karmabhūmi is given below. All those born in this land enjoy a life in Svarga, on earth or in hell according to the class to which their actions belong namely Sāttvic, Rājasic or Tāmasic. It is possible for only this land to obtain for its people life in other worlds.¹ Therefore this land got the name Karmabhūmi. (8th Skandha, Devī Bhāgavata).

KARMAJIT. A King of the family of Arjuna. He was the son of Bṛhatsena and the father of Śrutañjaya. (9th Skandha, Bhāgavata).

KARṆA I. The eldest son of Kuntī. Though he was the brother of the Pāṇḍavas he joined sides with the Kauravas and became the King of Aṅga. So the name of Karṇa comes in the genealogy of the Aṅga royal family. 1) *Genealogy.* Descending in order from Viṣṇu:—Brahmā-Atri-Candra-Budha-Purūravas-Āyus - Nahuṣa-Yayāti-Turvasu-Vahni-Bharga-Bhānu-Tribhānu-Karandhama-Marutta - (Marutta had no son and he adopted Duṣyanta) - Duṣyanta - Varūtha - Gaṇḍira - Gāndhāra-Kola-Druhyu-Babhrusetu - Purovasu - Gharma - Ghṛta-Viduṣa-Pracetas-Sabhānara-Kālanara - Śrñjaya - Purañjaya - Janamejaya-Mahāsāla-Mahāmanas-Uśīnara - Titikṣu-Ruṣadratha-Paila-Sutapas-Bali-Aṅga - (The Aṅga dynasty begins) - Dadhivāhana - Draviratha - Dharmaratha-Citraratha - Satyaratha - Lomapāda - Caturaṅga-Pṛthulākṣa-Campa-Haryaṅga-Bhadraratha-Bṛhatkarmā-Bṛhadbhānu-Bṛhadātmā-Jayadratha-Bṛhadratha - Viśvajit-Karṇa.

2) *Birth of Karṇa.* Pāṇḍu, a King of Candravamśa, married Kuntī, daughter of King Śūrasena. This girl was brought up even from childhood by a King called Kuntibhoja. She grew up in the palace of the King. She was once put in charge of attending to the welfare of those engaged in religious duties. The sage Durvāsas came there then and stayed for four months as the king's guest. Kuntī served the sage during his stay there with so much care, patience and devotion that the sage was immensely pleased and gave her at the time of his departure a divine mantra. If she called upon any god repeating that mantra once, that god would manifest himself to her and bless her with a son equal to him

in glory. The mantra was to be used only five times. Kuntī was young and wanted to test the power of the mantra. So she recited the mantra meditating on the Sun. Instantly she felt she saw a divine person coming to her from the sun. She was perplexed. But the divine form embraced her and consoled her saying that she would never lose her virginity even if she bore a son from him. None excepting her step-mother knew about this. In due course Kuntī delivered a male child and with the help of her step-mother she put that child in a box and floated it on the river Aśvā.

That box leaving the river Aśvā entered the Yamunā river and leaving Yamunā it entered the river Gaṅgā. Drifting slowly the box reached Campāpurī, a country of Sūtas. Adhiratha born of the Sūtavamśa and an ally of the Kauravas, saw a box floating on the river while he went for his bath and took it home. Rādhā, wife of Adhiratha, who was childless was greatly pleased to see a babe inside the box and they adopted it and brought it up. The boy was named Vasuṣeṇa. It was this babe that became the celebrated Karṇa afterwards. (Four chapters from 305, Vana Parva).

3) *Education of Karṇa.* Karṇa grew up in the house of Adhiratha in the country of Aṅga bearing the names Vasuṣeṇa and Vṛṣa. Kuntī knew this through spies. When the time came for imparting education to Karṇa Adhiratha sent him to Hastināpura to the presence of Droṇa for teaching him archery. Karṇa studied under Kṛpa and Paraśurāma also. After his education he entered into a treaty with Duryodhana. (Chapter 309, Vana Parva).

4) *Karṇa is cursed.* Karṇa was cursed by a brahmin and Paraśurāma. The story is given below.

Even while they were studying archery Arjuna and Karṇa vied with each other. Karṇa once requested Droṇa to teach him in private the secret of the Brahmā missile to fight against Arjuna. But Droṇa did not accede to his request.

Karṇa then went to Mahendragiri and bowed before Paraśurāma and represented himself as a member of the Bhṛgu family. He said he had come to him to be his disciple and learn the secret of the Brahmā missile from him. Paraśurāma believed him and accepting him as his disciple taught him many new techniques in archery. Once Karṇa was wandering in the vicinity of the āśrama when he saw a lonely cow grazing there and Karṇa without knowing that it belonged to a brahmin sent an arrow and killed it. The brahmin got furious and cursed Karṇa thus "Oh, sinner, the wheel of your chariot would go down in the mud when you face the enemy to fight against whom you are now taking training. Then, when you stand perplexed, your opponent would cut off your head." Karṇa requested for a removal of the curse but the brahmin refused to show any mercy. Paraśurāma taught Karṇa the secret of the Brahmā missile. One day tired after a day's fast and a walk around the āśrama with his disciples Paraśurāma slept resting his head on the lap of Karṇa. Then a beetle named Alarka attacked Karṇa and started sucking blood from his thigh. Blood was oozing from his thigh and still Karṇa did not stir from his position lest it should disturb his guru in his nap. Suddenly Paraśurāma awoke and stared at the beetle and the beetle fell

¹ According to a belief of old, all other parts of the world excepting Bhāratavarṣa were inhabited by Devas.