There was once an emperor of great renown in the line of Ikṣvāku named Nimi. He was the twelfth son of the celebrated Ikṣvāku and was devoted to the welfare of his subjects. He was a very honest, virtuous, righteous and good-natured man of a charitable disposition. The agrahāra (village where brahmins reside) named Jayantapura near the āśrama of Gautama Maharṣi was constructed by this emperor. This emperor of a Rājasic mind decided to perform a yāga which would take years for its conclusion and in which land was to be given as gifts. He went to his father Ikṣvāku, and took permission from him to conduct the yāga. He made all preparations for the yāga. He invited Bhṛgu, Aṅgiras, Vāmadeva, Pulastya, Pulaha and Ṛcīka all of whom were well-versed in the Vedas and were worthy of being priests in a Yāga of the kind he was conducting. He then went and invited his Kulaguru (family priest and preceptor) Vasiṣṭha for the Yāga. But Vasiṣṭha had to officiate at a Yāga conducted by Indra and so he commanded Nimi to postpone the Yāga by five hundred years. Nimi did not act according to it and he performed the Yāga with the help of the other sages and completed it successfully. After five hundred years when the Yāga of Indra came to a close, Vasiṣṭha came to see Nimi. Nimi was asleep then and the servants in the palace hesitated to go and inform him of the arrival of the sage. Vasiṣṭha got angry and cursed him and made him Videha (without body). At once the body of the King fell to the ground and the soul got out of it. But before the soul separated from the body Nimi cursed Vasiṣṭha also and separated his soul from his body. Vasiṣṭha was again born as the son of Mitrāvaruṇas.

The other sages present there took the lifeless body of Nimi and after sacrificial ceremonies and worship of gods started to churn the body. After some time a mighty and perfect man of great brilliance was born out of it. Because he was born by Mathana (churning) he was named Mithi. Because he was born from his father (Janaka) he was called Mithijanaka and because he was born of Nimi, a Videha, he was called Videha also. The country which was ruled by Mithi got the name of Mithilā. It is the country of Sītā.

MITHILĀ.

1) *General information.* A celebrated country of ancient Bhārata. This is situated on the north-eastern side of Bhārata. Its modern name is Tirhut. Mithilā was ruled by the renowned Janaka Kings. See under Mithi to know how the country got the name Mithilā.

2) *The wealth of Mithilā.* Mithilā was the capital of the extensive country of Videha. Successive generations of Janaka ruled the country. Mithilā was noted more for its sāttvic virtues than for the pomp and glory of kings. Everyday on the protruding breasts of an idol of Rājasa-rājalakṣmī (embodiment of royal prosperity) bhasma (ashes) and candana (sandalwood paste) would be smeared. In the middle of Tretāyuga Videha was ruled by a Janaka who brought fame and prosperity to the successive generations. A devotee of Śiva and of a sāttvic disposition he was a Nityabrahmacārī (observing celibacy throughout life) and his wife a disciple of Maitreyī and well-versed in Advaitavedānta was a Nit abrahmacāriṇī.

Videha grew prosperous with agricultural wealth by hard work put up by the peasants and divine wealth by the virtuous deeds of the King and the people. Agri-

culture was given importance, so much so that the royal emblem itself was the figure of a plough. Rains were there in season and in plenty because of the yāgas conducted properly by the King. (Bālakāṇḍa, Kamba Rāmāyaṇa).

3) *Other details.*

(i) Once Pāṇḍu, father of the Pāṇḍavas, attacked this country and conquered it. (Śloka 28, Chapter 112, Ādi Parva).

(ii) Śrī Kṛṣṇa, Arjuna and Bhīma once visited this country when they were on their way to Magadha from Indraprastha. (Śloka 28, Chapter 20, Sabhā Parva).

(iii) Karṇa once conquered and captured the country of Mithilā. (Śloka 8, Chapter 254, Vana Parva).

(iv) Sītā was born in Mithilā. (Śloka 9, Chapter 274, Vana Parva).

(v) Because she was born in Mithilā she is known by the name of Maithilī. (Śloka 2, Chapter 277, Vana Parva).

(vi) Once Mithilā was ruled by a King called Dharmadhvaja. Hearing about his great Dharmajñāna (knowledge about virtues and duties) a female ascetic named Sulabhā visited him in the guise of a beggar woman. (Śloka 4, Chapter 320, Śānti Parva).

(vii) Śuka the great sage, with the permission of his father Vyāsa came to Mithilā and took Dharmopadeśa from King Janaka. (Śloka 6, Chapter 325, Śānti Parva).

MITHU. A very valorous dānava. Once Bharata son of Ārṣṭiṣeṇa was making preparations for an Aśvamedha on the banks of the river Sarasvatī with Upamanyu as his priest when Mithu came and took them both to Pātāla. Then Devāpi, son of Upamanyu, got his father and the King released from there by continuous worship of Śiva (Brahma Purāṇa—127. 56-57).

MITRA.

1) *General information.* One of the twelve Sūryas. The twelve Sūryas born to Aditi of Kaśyapaprajāpati are Viṣṇu, Śakra, Aryamā, Dhātā, Tvaṣṭā, Pūṣā, Vivasvān, Savitā, Mitra, Varuṇa, Bhaga and Aṁśa. (Chapter 15, Aṁśa 1, Viṣṇu Purāṇa).

Mitrāvaruṇas are two devatās of great intimacy. They are always found together. If you pray to Mitrāvaruṇas you will get plenty of rains. (Śūkta 2, Anuvāka 1, Maṇḍala 1, Ṛgveda).

See para 2 under Agastya to understand the story of how Mitrāvaruṇas became the father of Agastya.

2) *Other details.*

(ı) Mitra came and stood in the sky at the time of the birth of Arjuna. (Śloka 66, Chapter 122, Ādi Parva).

(ii) Mitra was one among those sent by Indra to fight against Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna at the time of the burning of the forest Khāṇḍava. (Śloka 36, Chapter 226 Ādi Parva).

(iii) Mitra was a member of the Indra sabhā. (Śloka 21, Chapter 7, Sabhā Parva).

(iv) He presented two Pārṣadas named Suvrata and Satyasandha to Subrahmaṇya. (Śloka 41, Chapter 45, Śalya Parva).

MITRĀ. A female companion of Pārvatī. (Śloka 41, Chapter 231, Vana Parva).

MITRABHEDA. See under Pañcatantra.

MITRADEVA. Brother of Suśarmā, King of Trigartta. Arjuna killed him in the great battle. (Śloka 3, Chapter 27, Karṇa Parva).