

asked him for the reason of his remaining childless. Vyāsa replied "Oh King, hear why you have only one wife and why you do not get children. In the previous birth you had been a brahmin named Varatanu. Your wife was called Śaṅkarī. When both of you were going somewhere once, you happened to see a low-caste child falling into water. Without paying any heed to it, you went on your way. The child was drowned. Though both of you have taken births in royal families due to the several good deeds of yours, you have become childless because of that one sinful act."

According to the instruction of Vyāsa, he gave Brahmins alms of gold, clothes, oxen, pumpkin etc. and performed Bāla vrata, the rite for the sake of children. Thus he got remission of his sin. Within a year he got a son loved and respected by everyone. That handsome prince became an emperor who came to be the founder of a dynasty. (Padma Purāṇa, Brahma Khaṇḍa, Chapter 6).

**VARATRI.** One of the four sons of Śuka. The other three were, Pṛthuraśmi, Bṛhadāṅgiras and Rajata. Devendra killed them because they were against sacrifice. It is stated in Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa that after a while from the severed heads of these sons date palm trees grew up.

**VARAYU.** A King born in the family of Mahaujas. (Mahābhārata, Udyoga Parva, Chapter 74, Stanza 15).

**VARCAS I.** Son of Soma, one of the eight Vasus. Manoharā was the mother of Varcas. Abhimanyu, the son of Arjuna was the next birth of Varcas. (For further details see under Abhimanyu).

**VARCAS II.** The son of Sucetas, a Brahmin born in the family of Gṛtsamada. This Varcas had a son called Vihavya. (M.B. Anuśāsana Parva, Chapter 30, Stanza 61).

**VĀRDHAKṢEMI.** A mighty King of Vṛṣṇi dynasty. The following details about him are taken from Mahābhārata.

(i) He was a great warrior who fought on the side of the Pāṇḍavas against the Kauravas. (M.B. Udyoga Parva, Chapter 171, Stanza 17).

(ii) He was present at the Svayamvara (marriage) of Draupadī. (M.B. Ādi Parva, Chapter 185, Stanza 9).

(iii) He confronted the Teacher Kṛpa in the Bhārata battle and was killed by him. (M.B. Karṇa Parva, Chapter 6, Stanza 21).

**VARDHAMĀNA.** A character in the story of Pañcatantra. (See under Pañcatantra).

**VARDHANA.** One of the sons born to Śrī Kṛṣṇa of his wife Mitravindā. (Bhāgavata, Skandha 10).

**VARENĀYA.** One of the seven sons of Bhṛgu. The seven sons of Bhṛgu were Cyavana, Śuci, Aurva, Śukra Vajraśiṛṣa, Savana, and Varenāya. (M.B. Anuśāsana Parva, Chapter 85, Stanza 126).

**VARGĀ.** A celestial maid. There is a story in Mahābhārata, Ādi Parva, Chapter 220, describing how Vargā and her friends were changed into crocodiles and had to live in water for a long time.

Once there lived an 'apsaras' (celestial maid) named Vargā in Devāraṇya. She had four friends called Saurabheyī, Samicī, Budbudā and Latā. Once they were going to the house of Kubera their patron. On the way they saw a hermit. They saw the whole forest shining with the radiance of the power of penance of the hermit. They decided to entice the hermit

somehow. With this intention they entered his hermitage. Seeing their dalliance and coquetry, the hermit got angry and cursed them to become crocodiles for a hundred years. They implored him with tears, for liberation from the curse. The hermit told them that in due course a noble man would come and get them out of water and that then they would obtain their original form. They walked towards a lake.

On the way they saw Nārada. They told him everything. He told them. "On the coast of the southern ocean there are five tirthas (holy baths) known as Agastya, Saubhadra, Pauloma, Kārandhama and Suprasanna. You may go to these lakes and live there as crocodiles one in each. In due course Arjuna, the son of Pāṇḍu will come and redeem you."

According to the words of Nārada the five celestial maids walked to the south and reached the Pañcatīrtha (the five holy baths) and each of them entered a lake as a crocodile. After this nobody dared to live near those holy baths. After some time Arjuna started on his pilgrimage. He passed through many places and reached the Pañcatīrtha. He enquired why the place was forsaken by people. The hermits told him that there was a crocodile in each of the five baths and that they would eat anybody who got into the bath. Arjuna got into a lake. Immediately a crocodile came and caught hold of him. With great difficulty he dragged it out of the lake. Instantly the crocodile changed into a beautiful damsel. The celestial maid Vargā told the amazed Arjuna her story and she added that her four friends were lying in the neighbouring four lakes. Arjuna redeemed every one of them. After this, Vargā and her friends went to Devāraṇya and Arjuna to Maṅalūra. From that day onwards the five tirthas came to be known as Nārītīrthas.

**VARĪ.** An eternal God concerned with offerings to the manes. (M.B. Anuśāsana Parva, Chapter 91, Stanza 33).

**VĀRISENA.** A King. This King stays in the Palace of Yama and worships him. (M.B. Sabhā Parva, Chapter 8, Stanza 20).

**VARIṢṬHA.** The son of Manu Cākṣuṣa. The following story, how Variṣṭha cursed the hermit Gṛtsamada, occurs in Mahābhārata, Anuśāsana Parva, Chapter 18. Indra once performed a sacrifice which lasted for a thousand years. Variṣṭha and Gṛtsamada, as friends of Indra were present at the sacrifice. Gṛtsamada committed some mistakes in the recitation of Sāmans. Variṣṭha got angry and cursed Gṛtsamada that he would wander in the forest as an animal for ten thousand one hundred and eighteen years. Accordingly Gṛtsamada wandered through forests in the form of an animal for a very long time.

**VARĪTĀKSA.** An asura. It is mentioned in Mahābhārata, Śānti Parva, Chapter 227, Stanza 52, that he had been a King once and that fate made him an asura.

**VĀRKṢĪ.** Daughter of the hermit Kaṇḍu. It is stated in (M.B. Ādi Parva, Chapter 195, Stanza 15, that she became the wife of the ten Pracetasas. It is stated in Bhāgavata, Skandha 6, that Dakṣa was born from this Vārksī.

**VARMĀ.** In ancient days it was the custom to add the word 'Varmā' to the names of Kṣatriyas. Brāhmaṇas