

Vasiṣṭha. The marriage of Arundhatī with Vasiṣṭha was conducted in the presence of the Gods.

c) *Sons.* Seven sons, named Citraketu, Purocis, Viraca, Mitra, Ulbaṇa, Vasubhṛdyāna and Dyumān were born to Vasiṣṭha by Arundhatī. All the seven of them were Brahmarṣis.

d) *The meaning of the names Vasiṣṭha and Arundhatī.* The meaning of the name Vasiṣṭha is given by Vasiṣṭha himself as follows:—

I am known as Vasiṣṭha for two reasons. I am 'Vasumān'. The Śrutis say that Air, Earth etc. are Vasus. I have become Vasiṣṭha because I have brought under control the Vasus beginning with Apimā (the power of reducing the body to an atom). See what Arundhatī herself says, about the meaning of the name Arundhatī.

"I consider mountains, earth and heaven as elements in which I live, only after considering my husband as the element in which I live. My husband is the first and foremost element in my life. Moreover I conform (anurodha) with the mind of my husband. So know me as Arundhatī."

e) *Conjugal fidelity of Arundhatī.* The Saptarṣis (the seven hermits) once left Arundhatī alone in a forest and went to the Mountain Himālayas to gather fruits and roots. In those days, due to severe summer, the earth became a wilderness. So the hermits lived in the Himālayas. Arundhatī all alone did penance in the forest. On one day Śiva took the form of a Brahmin and going near Arundhatī requested her for alms. She replied: "There are only Ziziphus fruits here, and nothing else to eat." The Brahmin asked her to boil them. She placed the pot of Ziziphus fruits on the oven and sat there hearing the good stories told by the Brahmin. Thus without thinking about her hunger or thirst she sat there for twelve years hearing the stories narrated by the Brahmin. When the hermits returned from Himālayas, Śiva assumed his original form and said, "Hermits! This woman, sitting in the hermitage, has acquired more penance than you have acquired in the Himālayas. Good woman! What boon do you want?" She requested that that place should be known as the holy place called 'Badarapacana (cooking of Ziziphus fruits)'. Śiva allowed it. Even today that place is considered a holy place.

f) *Death.* When so many devas were dead at the sacrifice of Dakṣa, Vasiṣṭha also died along with them. Arundhatī followed her husband. After death both of them entered the firmament and became two stars.

g) *Seeing Arundhatī.* In India there is a custom of showing the women, the star Arundhatī. Arundhatī is the first of the women who took only one husband in her life. The meaning of this custom is this that this mentality of Arundhatī should be acquired by the married women of India. Moreover, if the star stands in front of the star Vasiṣṭha, it is considered to forebode calamities in the world. (Kālikā Purāṇa).

ii) *Second birth.*

*General information.* Vasiṣṭha who died at the sacrifice of Dakṣa took birth again from the sacrificial fire of Brahmā. Akṣamālā was the wife of this Vasiṣṭha. Akṣamālā was the rebirth of Arundhatī. So, in some Purāṇas, both are shown as one. This birth of Vasiṣṭha was terminated by the curse of emperor Nimi of

the Ikṣvāku dynasty. (For details see under Nimi).

(iii) *Third birth.* In the third birth Vasiṣṭha was born from a pot as the son of Mitrāvaruṇas. In this birth Vasiṣṭha was the brother of Agastya. (For detailed story see under Agastya, para 2). In this birth the wife of Vasiṣṭha was an Arundhatī, who was the sister of Nārada. Thus according to the Purāṇas, it took three births for Vasiṣṭha to complete his life. It is difficult to ascertain, in which particular birth, a particular story, stated in the Purāṇas, took place. It is probable that a large number of episodes might have taken place in the second and third births.

Stories connected with the life of Vasiṣṭha are given below:

2) *Vasiṣṭha and Viśvāmitra.* Vasiṣṭha and Viśvāmitra were two hermits who quarrelled with each other throughout their lives. The quarrel between Vasiṣṭha a Brahmin hermit and Viśvāmitra a royal hermit, is given below:

(i) *Reason for the enmity.* Viśvāmitra was a King who cared much for the welfare of his subjects. Once he went with his army to hunt. He became tired by the hunt and reached the hermitage of Vasiṣṭha who welcomed them with hospitality. He told them that food would be ready when they returned after a bath. The King and his men bathed quickly and when they returned, a grand feast was ready for so many thousands. The King was in great perplexity. After the meals Viśvāmitra approached the hermit Vasiṣṭha and asked him how he got such a grand feast ready. He replied that the cow Kāmadhenu in his hermitage was capable of granting any wish. The king desired to have the cow. He asked the hermit to exchange the cow for a crore of ordinary cows. Vasiṣṭha did not agree to this. Viśvāmitra said that the noble and superior things of the country belonged to the King. The hermit did not agree to that also. Finally Viśvāmitra was about to take away the cow by force. Thus the quarrel began. Understanding the wish of Vasiṣṭha Kāmadhenu held her horns and tail up and stood as a fierce and cruel figure. From the various limbs of the cow so many thousands of warriors jumped out and a fierce battle ensued in which the hundred sons and the huge army of Viśvāmitra met with defeat. At last Viśvāmitra tried to launch a direct attack against Vasiṣṭha. But the arrows of Viśvāmitra were changed to flowers when they touched the body of Vasiṣṭha. At last the King admitted that the power of the penance of a Brahmin hermit was the real power and he admitted defeat from Vasiṣṭha. From that day onwards a deep-rooted, hatred against Vasiṣṭha arose in the heart of Viśvāmitra. He left the administration of his Kingdom in the hands of his relatives and went to the south where he erected a hermitage and began to do severe penance. He acquired great powers of penance and became a royal hermit of immense attainments and the quarrel between the two great hermits Vasiṣṭha and Viśvāmitra began. (Vālmiki Rāmāyana, Bāla Kāṇḍa, 5 sargas from 51).

(ii) *Second confrontation.* The next contest between the two hermits was due to the king Triśaṅku of the Solar dynasty. Triśaṅku wanted bodily attainment of heaven. Vasiṣṭha tried to discourage the king. Viśvāmitra took up the matter. He began to perform a sacrifice to lift up the king bodily to heaven, and Triśaṅku began to rise up higher and higher. But Indra did not allow him