

child came out breaking open the thigh (ūru) and so the child was called Aurva. Even at the time of his birth Aurva shone like a brilliant torch and not only that; the child cried aloud "Oh, wicked Kṣatriyas, I will kill every one of you. I heard from my mother's womb the din of the swords you raised to kill my ancestors. I will never wait for another moment to wreak vengeance on you."

The fire that emanated from the face of Aurva burnt even Devaloka. Kṣatriyas as a class came and prostrated before him. The devas came and requested him to abandon his anger and Aurva agreed. The devas picked up the fire sparks from Aurva's face and deposited them in the ocean. From those sparks put in the ocean was born Baḍavāgni alias Aurva.

(ii) *Curse of the sage.* From Aurva was born Jamadagni and from Jamadagni was born Paraśurāma. In the race of the Hehayas was born at that time a very valorous king named Kārtavīryārjuna. Once Kārtavīryārjuna gave a dinner to Agnibhagavān. Agni began to devour all the mountains and forests in the world. The burning was so indiscriminate that it burnt the āśrama of a sage named Āpava also. The sage cursed Kārtavīryārjuna saying that the thousand hands of the latter would be cut off by Paraśurāma born in the family of Bhārgavas. From that day onwards the latent feud in him against the Bhārgavas was roused into action.

(iii) *Varuṇa's ridicule.* Kārtavīryārjuna who got a thousand hands by a boon from a sage named Dattātreya subdued all enemies of his status and not satisfied with that he went to the shores of the ocean and challenged Varuṇa for a fight. Varuṇa came before him and very modestly admitted that he was incapable of meeting the challenge thrown and suggested that perhaps Jamadagni's son, Paraśurāma might accept the challenge and give him a fight. Hearing this Kārtavīryārjuna turned towards the āśrama of Jamadagni on the shores of the Narmadā river.

(iv) *Causes of the war (immediate).* Kārtavīryārjuna went for hunting in the forests and feeling exhausted after some time went to the āśrama of Jamadagni with his retinue. Jamadagni received them well and with the help of the Kāmadhenu (wish-yielding cow) named Suśilā, Jamadagni gave a sumptuous feast to the King and his followers. When after the meals were over they started to take leave of the sage, Candragupta, a minister of Kārtavīryārjuna brought to the notice of the king the superior powers of the Kāmadhenu, Suśilā. The king wanted to get the cow and asked Candragupta to tell the sage about it. Though the minister told Jamadagni about the royal desire the sage refused to part with the cow. Then the minister with the help of the other royal servants took the cow by force and the sage followed the cow weeping. On the way Candragupta beat Jamadagni to death and brought the cow to the presence of the king. The king was pleased and the royal hunting party returned to the palace happy.

Jamadagni's wife Reṇukā went in search of her husband and to her grief found him lying dead. Reṇukā wept beating her breast twentyone times and by that time her son Paraśurāma came there and he declared that he would travel round the world twentyone times, the number of times his mother beat her breast, to kill and exterminate the Kṣatriyas from this world. Then the dead body of Jamadagni was placed on a pyre and

they were singing Viṣṇugītā before placing fire on the pyre when Śukramuni appeared there and brought Jamadagni to life by invoking the art of Mṛtasañjivani. By that time Suśilā somehow escaped from the custody of the King and came there without the calf. Then Paraśurāma vowed that he would bring the calf soon and taking with him his disciple Akṛtavraṇa he left for the city of Māhiṣmatī the abode of Kārtavīryārjuna. There they fought a grim battle and after killing Kārtavīryārjuna and many of his followers brought back the calf. To atone for the sin of this massacre Jamadagni advised his son to go and perform penance in Mahendragiri. Taking advantage of the absence of Paraśurāma from the āśrama, Śūrasena son of Kārtavīryārjuna, with his followers went to the āśrama of Jamadagni and chopped off his head. Paraśurāma returned from Mahendragiri at once and cremated the dead body of his father. Reṇukā, his mother, jumped into the funeral pyre and abandoned her life. From that moment onwards started Paraśurāma's fierce programme of mass massacre of the Kṣatriyas.

(v) *Victory march.* Paraśurāma's world-tour was confined to an all-Bhārata tour. The wars of Paraśurāma are not described in detail in the Purāṇas. They mention that Paraśurāma killed the Kings of Cola, Cera and Pauṇḍra. To stop the birth of Kṣatriyas in future Paraśurāma destroyed even the embryo in the wombs of Kṣatriya women. Then the Bhārgava ancestors like R̥cika and others came to the sky and requested Paraśurāma to stop this slaughter. They said: "Oh son, Rāma, stop this slaughter. What good do you get by killing innocent Kṣatriyas?" By that time Paraśurāma had made twentyone rounds around Bhārata killing the Kṣatriyas. (Chapter 64, Ādi Parva; Chapter 38, Sabhā Parva; Chapter 116, Vana Parva; Chapter 49, Sānti Parva and 10 chapters from chapter 83 of Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa).

7) *Samantapañcakanirmāṇa.* Samantapañcaka is Kurukṣetra itself where the great battle was conducted. This is a holy place and it was Paraśurāma who constructed it. He stored the blood of the Kṣatriyas he killed in the twentyone rounds of killing in five lakes in Samantapañcaka. He offered blood to the Manes in those lakes. The Manes led by R̥cika appeared before him and asked him to name any boon he wanted. Then Paraśurāma said, "Revered Manes, if you are pleased with me you must absolve me from the sin of this mass massacre of the Kṣatriyas and declare the five lakes where I have stored their blood as holy." The Manes declared, "Let it be so." From then onwards the place became holy under the name Samantapañcaka. At the end of the Dvāparayuga and the beginning of Kaliyuga a great battle lasting for eighteen days took place at this holy place between the Pāṇḍavas and the Kauravas. (Chapter 2, Ādi Parva).

8) *Atonement.* To atone for the sin of slaughtering even innocent Kṣatriyas, Paraśurāma gave away all his riches as gifts to brahmins. He invited all the brahmins to Samantapañcaka and conducted a great Yāga there. The chief R̥tvik (officiating priest) of the Yāga was the sage Kaśyapa and Paraśurāma gave all the lands he conquered till that time to Kaśyapa. Then a platform of gold ten yards long and nine yards wide was made and Kaśyapa was installed there and worshipped. After the worship was over according to the instructions