

that once Indra took birth as the daughter of this King under the name Menā.

VRŠĀNDA. An asura. Mention is made in Mahābhārata, Śānti Parva, Chapter 227, Stanza 53, that this asura had once ruled over the earth and that because of the attacks of Kāla, he had to leave the earth.

VRŠAŅKU. An ancient hermit. When Śrī Rāma returned from his forest life, the hermits such as Vṛṣaṅku, Kaviṣa, Dhaumya, Raudreya, Nārada, Vāmadeva, Saurabhi, Aṣṭāvakra, Śrīśuka, Bhṛgu, Lomaṣa and Maudgala, from the west came and bowed before him. (Uttara Rāmāyaṇa).

VRŠAPARVĀ I. A noble Asura. The following information about him is taken from Mahābhārata.

(i) Vṛṣaparvā was born to Prajāpati Kaśyapa by his wife Danu. (M.B. Ādi Parva, Chapter 65, Stanza 24).

(ii) He took rebirth in the earth as King Dirghaprajā. (M.B. Ādi Parva Chapter 67, Stanza 15).

(iii) He had a daughter named Śarmiṣṭhā. (See under Devayāni).

VRŠAPARVĀ II. An ancient royal hermit. It is stated in Mahābhārata, Vana Parva, Chapter 156, Stanza 15, that an ethereal voice was heard by the Pāṇḍavas, who were living in the forest, that they should visit this royal hermit. Accordingly the Pāṇḍavas visited the hermit and he received them cordially. This King rendered them various helps such as giving them directions for going through the forests. It is stated in Vana Parva, Chapter 177, that on the return journey also the Pāṇḍavas entered the hermitage of this hermit and received hospitality.

VRŠAPRASTHAGIRI. A holy place. It is mentioned in Mahābhārata, Vana Parva, Chapter 95, Stanza 3, that the Pāṇḍavas visited this holy place during their life in the forest.

VRŠASENA I. A son of Karṇa. The following information is taken from Mahābhārata about him.

(i) Vṛṣasena was a famous warrior in the army of the Kauravas. (M.B. Udyoga Parva, Chapter 167, Stanza 23).

(ii) In the Bhārata-battle he confronted the prominent archers such as Śatānika, Pāṇḍya, Abhimanyu, Arjuna, Drupada, Sātyaki, Nakula and others. (M.B. Droṇa Parva).

(iii) In the fight with Arjuna, he was killed. (M.B. Karṇa Parva, Chapter 85, Stanza 35).

(iv) Among the brave souls of the Kurus who were invoked to the surface of the river Gaṅgā by Vyāsa, Vṛṣasena also was present. (M.B. Āśramavāsika Parva, Chapter 32, Stanza 10).

VRŠASENA II. A King who shines in the council of Yama. It is mentioned in Mahābhārata, Sabhā Parva, Chapter 8, Stanza 13, that this King glorifies Yama.

VRŠASENA III. Mention is made in Mahābhārata, Udyoga Parva, Chapter 167, Stanza 23, about a proud and honoured Vṛṣasena who attended the Rājasūya (sacrifice of royal consecration) of Yudhiṣṭhira.

VRŠNI. A famous King of the Yadu dynasty.

1) *Genealogy.* Descended from Viṣṇu in the following order : Brahmā-Atri-Candra-Budha-Purūravas - Āyus - Nahuṣa - Yayāti - Yadu - Sahasrajit - Śatajit - Hehaya - Dharma - Kuṇi - Bhadrāsena-Dhanaka-Kṛtavīrya-Kārtavīryajuna-Madhu-Vṛṣṇi.

2) *Other details.*

(i) The birth of Śrī Kṛṣṇa was in the family of Vṛṣṇi. (See the genealogy of Śrī Kṛṣṇa).

(ii) The line of Kings beginning with Vṛṣṇi is called the dynasty of Vṛṣṇi. (M.B. Ādi Parva, Chapter 217, Stanza 18).

(iii) Thinking that the jewel Syamantaka had been stolen by Kṛṣṇa himself, Vṛṣṇi took a hostile mentality towards Kṛṣṇa. (Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa, 3 : 71 : 1).

(iv) Vṛṣṇi had two wives named Gāndhārī and Mādri. Five sons were born to him by Mādri. (Vāyu : 94 : 14; Mahābhārata, Ādi Parva, Chapter 211; 1-2; 5 : 8).

VRTRA (VRTRĀSURA). A mighty and fierce asura.

1) *Reason for his birth.* Vṛtra was the rebirth of emperor Citraketu. Citraketu and his wife Kṛtadyuti prayed to Aṅgiras, as a result of which a son was born to them. That son died in his infancy. But Aṅgiras brought him to life again. Brahmā and Nārada taught Citraketu theosophy. Citraketu sat in contemplation for eight days and changing himself to a Gandharva he flew through the sky. As he was flying, he saw Pārvatī sitting on the thigh of Śiva and laughed aloud. Knowing this Pārvatī cursed him to become an asura. Vṛtrāsura was the rebirth of the emperor according to this curse. (Bhāgavata, Skandha 6).

2) *Birth.* Two stories are mentioned about the birth of Vṛtrāsura. One story is that Kaśyapa created him from fire. The other story is that Vṛtra was the son of Tvaṣṭā. Both are given below :

(i) Hiranyakaśipu was born to Prajāpati Kaśyapa, by his wife Danu. Mahāviṣṇu killed him on being requested by the Devas. Danu was grieved at the death of her son. So Kaśyapa gave her another son. He was Vala or Bala. Indra killed him with his weapon, the thunderbolt. Kaśyapa got angry and plucking a hair from his matted hair, made a burnt offering of it, saying "Let a son who would be the killer of Indra be born." Immediately a huge giant, as black as antimony with yellow eyes was born from the fire. That asura, clad in the hide of antelope with sword in hand, opening his mouth, from which two huge tusks protruded, very wide, and shining with radiance cried out in a voice of thunder, "Oh ! Sage ! Order me, what am I to do ?"

Kaśyapa ordered him to kill Indra. He named the monster Vṛtra. (Padma Purāṇa, Bhūmi Khaṇḍa, Chapter 23).

(ii) It was Prajāpati Tvaṣṭā who created Vṛtra to kill Indra. He had sufficient reasons for it. From the very beginning Indra and Tvaṣṭā were enemies. Tvaṣṭā begot a son named Triśiras otherwise called Viśvarūpa, for the purpose of killing Indra. This Viśvarūpa had three heads. One was meant for drinking Surā (a liquor), the second for drinking Soma (liquor) and the third for eating food. Viśvarūpa was a Brāhmaṇa. Still, as his mother was an asura, he loved the asuras and mingled with them. Indra knew about the behaviour of Viśvarūpa. He concluded that it was blasphemy and wickedness. Indra who was afraid of Viśvarūpa, got angry and cut off his heads. Of the heads of Viśvarūpa, that which drank Soma became a bird called Kapiñjala, that which drank Surā became a bird called Kalapiṅga, and that which ate food became the bird Tittiri (partridge). Brahmahatyā (the sin of killing Brahmin) took shape and went against Indra. Though Indra could have destroyed it, he joined his