

THE BRĀHMAṆA CLANS IN THE MAHĀBHĀRATA

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DECLARATION

Certified that the dissertation entitled "BRĀHMAṆA CLANS IN THE MAHĀBHĀRATA" Submitted by SYEDAH AISHA NADEEM, is in partial fulfilment for the Degree of MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY of this university. This dissertation has not been previously submitted for any other degree of this university and is her own work.

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INTRODUCTION

The foundation of the Hindu social system based upon classes has to be traced from the celebrated hymn of the Puruśa Sūta of the Rg Veda which seeks to divide the society into four major classes viz Brāhmaṇa, Rājanaya, Vaiśya, and Śūdra. The earlier portions of the same scripture, although without naming the classes, refer to the four division of the people on the basis of their respective vocation. The Puruśa Sukta hymn testifies to the steady formation of the four classes with increasingly rigid characteristics.

The terms 'brahman' which developed into brahmana, signified the sacerdotal class. The word 'brahman' according to the renowned lexicographers Bohtlingk and Roth¹ is derived from the root 'Brh' and is taken to signify the 'Godward striving devotion which appears as an exuberance of spirit and particularly the pious expression of its in the service of the divine'. Others take it to signify the mysterious power inspiring the poets and the seers, While Winternitz found that in the Veda this word means mere formula and the verses having sacred magical power.

Apart from the ritualistic and magical interpretations the concept of brahman under went a great change corresponding to the change in the cultural life of the vedic people.² The philosophical significance of the term

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1. Bohtlingk and Roth, Encyclo. of Religion and Ethics, II, pp. 797f;
 2. Padma Mishra - Priests and Seers in the Vedas with Special Reference to the Evolution of the Brahmana Class, 1965, London University, p. 251.

seems closely connected with the symbolical interpretations of sacrifice. There developed the theory of an all pervading God. The supreme cosmic energy, and this absolute brahma could be propitiated by mental sacrifices, meditation and penance. This connotation gave a new dimension to the term and rendered it beyond the limitations of sacerdotalism and magical powers. This etymological change brought about a corresponding evolution in the Brahmanas by the Upanisadic times. He is no more only a singer of hymns or a priest discharging ritualistic functions. According to the Upanisadic standards the Brahmana was taken to be a person who has the knowledge of the brahma, or the doctrine of the Supreme Soul.

The knowledge of the Absolute and the realization of the same by self-abnegation and ethical life, accepted as the essential qualities of the Brahman must have been advantageous to him, because thereby he could retain the membership of his class by birth even when he was not following the priestly professions.

In the Vedic literature the Brahmana is seen performing the varied functions of Vipra, Rsi, Poet, Priest etc. In the socio-religious life of the people, his sphere of activities and obligations assumed a comprehensive character; and he came to be regarded as the most exalted of all the

classes of society. He is presented as the genius who excels in divine knowledge and virtue. He is made exceedingly mighty by divine favour and receives the special gift of godly inspiration. His utterances are welcomed by gods and men alike. What emerges out of these function of the Brahman are the different sets of roles they played in the socio-religious life of the people of the times.

By the time of the later samhitas and Brahmanas the Varna system appears to be grounded on the firm root of socio-religious stratification. The Varna theory attains a theological colour for even the diving beings are divided according to existing social set up (Agni was the Brahmana among gods; Indra, Soma-the Ksatriyas; Rudra-Vaisya; Pusan-Sudra).

By the time the epic was composed Varna distinctions became even more rigid. The tru image of a brahmana comprised purity of parentage, befitting conduct, glory and 'perfecting of people'. They have the privileges of honour, gifts, security against oppression and freedom from being beaten.

The Mahabharata often indulges in euologies of the brahmanas. Like the earlier ancient Indian works on religion

and polity, it holds them in high esteem and confers special privileges upon them. The epic is full of interesting myths and legends of the brahmana seers, priests and heroes of different clans and families.

During the course of this research various works on related topics have been probed : In G.P. Upadhyay's book Brahmanas in ancient India, an attempt has been made to stress the cultural role of the Brahmana class from 200 BC to 500 AD. The book provides an insight into the reactions, attitudes and dispositions of the Brahmana's to the contemporary forces. It also seeks to mark the relative influence exerted by them on the course of cultural transformations. Since the Brahmana's were generally held as inseparably connected with traditional culture a study of their role attracted the authors attention.

The Origin and evolution of Brahmins Through the ages has been most successfully investigated by Dr. R.N. Sharma. His book ransacks from the firsthand sources the positions of Brahmana's in the Vedic age, the pre-mauryan, the mauryan and post mauryan periods when Brahmanic Renaissance attained a highly respectable social position. Dr. Sharma has thoroughly examined the position of the Brahmana's from the earliest times in the socio-political and religio-cultural fields. The book presents a trustworthy survey of

the metamorphosis of the position of brahmins in the different periods of Indian history.

Recently some scholars have tried to study the political ideas as contained in the Mahabharata and some books have come to light dealing with the subject. B.P. Roy's Political Ideas and Institutions in the Mahabharata is one such research.

Here a comparative and critical study of the political ideas has been presented. Roy has tried to discuss the political ideas put forth in the Mahabharata-the nature and concept of state, the duties of kings, their relations with the Brahmana's and the like.

In his book The Gods, Priests and Warriors R.P. Goldman has undertaken an expansive study of a prominent Brahmana clan in the Mahabharata-that of the Bhrgus. He talks of the relations of the Bhargavas with the gods, the Asuras as well as the warriors on earth.

In a recent work on an important Brahmana clan-that of the Bharadvajas, Thaneswar Sarmah has undertaken a study of Bharadvajas in Ancient India. While referring to the Bharadvajas in the epic he mentions the Rsi Bharadvajas, Drona and his son Asvatthaman and outlines their influence on the narrative of the epic.

The present work is an attempt to collect and collate the material in the Mahabharata regarding the brahmana clans in the first chapter, the eighteen clans of the brah have been enumerated. They have been studied with regard to their activities, the claims of the different seers, their probable location, geographically, and the manner in which they occur in the eopic.

In the second chapter, the relations of the sages belonging to different brah clans, with the Ksatriyas have been analysed. The desire has been to show how, despite frequent rivalries between the two the Mahabharata repeatedly maintains that the brahmanas ought to be honoured by their Ksatriya patrons. There is a constant refrain in the epic to the effect that both are complementary to one another, augment each other's growth.

CHAPTER - I

BRĀHMAṆA CLANS

IN THE

MAHĀBHĀRATA

THE BHR̥GUS IN THE MAHĀBHĀRATA WITH SPECIAL
REFERENCE TO THE JĀMADAGNIS

The Bhr̥gus are an ancient clan . They find an extensive reference in the Mahābhārata. The aim here is to collect and collate the Bhārgava references in the Mahābhārata, in other words, to give a succinct account of all that the Great Epic of India has to say about the Bhr̥gus, Since Mahābhārata, is the richest mine for the exploration of the Bhārgava material, containing as it does the largest number and the greatest variety of legends connected with the Bhr̥gus. The purpose is to review here all the myths and legends relating to the different Bhr̥gus, which occur in the Mahābhārta, study the manner in which they are presented, investigate their repetitions and even discrepancies. We shall find that there are many more Bhārgavas mentioned in our epic than is commonly known and many more references to Bhārgavas than commonly suspected. Before looking at the Mahābhārata for Bhārgava references, it would be useful to trace the antecedents of this clan of brāhmanas in the Vedic literature.

Bhr̥gu appears as a sage of almost entirely mythical character in the Ṛgveda and later. He counts as a son of Varuṇa¹ bearing the patronymic Vāruṇi². The Bhr̥gus are repeatedly³ alluded to as devoted to the fire cult. They are clearly⁴ no more than a group of ancient priests and ancestors with an eponym⁵ Bhr̥gu⁵ in the Ṛgveda,

1. Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, xi.6,1,1;
Taittirīya Āraṇyaka, ix.1;
2. Aitareya Brāhmaṇa, iii.34
3. Rv. i.58,6;127,7;143,4;ii.4,2;iii.2,,4
4. Rv.iii. 5,10
5. i.60,1

contd..(2)

except in three passages⁶ where they are evidently regarded as an historic family. It is not clear, however, whether they were priests or warriors: in the battle of the ten kings the Bhṛgus appear with the Druhyus, perhaps as their priest, but this is not certain⁷.

In the later literature, the Bhṛgus are a real family, with subdivisions like the Aitaśāyava, according to the Kauṣītaki Brāhmaṇa⁸. The Bhṛgus are further mentioned as priests in connection with the various rites, such as the Agnisthāpana⁹ and the Daśapeyakratu¹⁰. In many passages, they are conjoined with the Aṅgirasas¹¹: the close association of the two families is shown by the fact that Cyavana is called either a Bhārgava or an Aṅgirasa in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa¹². In the AtharvaVeda¹³, the name of Bhṛgu is selected to exemplify the dangers incurred by the oppressors of Brāhmaṇas: a people called the Sṛñjaya Vaitahavyas are said to have perished^{ished} in consequences of an attack on Bhṛgu has this representative character.

6. Rv. vii.18,6; viii. 3,9; 6,18

7. In viii. 3,9; 6,18; 102,4.

8. xxx. 5

9. Taittirīya Saṃhitā, iv. 6,5,2; Av. iv.14,5

10. Taittirīya Saṃhitā, i.8,18

Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa, i.8,2,5

11. Taittirīya Saṃhitā, 1,7,2; Rv. viii.35,3;43,13
x.14,6

12. iv.1,5,1

13. v.19,1

To begin with the Mahābhātata, in the second chapter of the Ādiparva, the Parvasamgraha, which is in fact, for the greater part of it, something like a Table of contents, we make our acquaintance with one of the Bhārgavas, the most famous of them, Rāma Jāmadagnya¹⁴, not yet a full-fledged avatāra, a character which in reality has no connection whatsoever with the action of the sublime tragedy which is going to be unfolded in the epic. That comes about in this way. The place where the Mahābhārata war was fought, as everybody knows was called Kurukṣetra.

But the Suta Ugraśravas, son of Lomaharṣaṇa, who recites the epic at the twelve-year sacrificial session held in the Naimiṣa forest under the ~~auspices~~^{auspices} of Śaunaka, gives the name of the place as Samantapañcaka and is careful enough to add that he had visited that sacred spot.

Accordingly we find in the beginning of the second chapter a query about this Samantapañcaka from the sages who formed the audience. They want to know all about this new place of pilgrimage.

And from the story narrated by the Suta it proves to be a Bhārgava place of pilgrimage, situated probably somewhere in the neighbourhood of Kurukṣetra. It was in fact, as the Suta proceeds to explain, the sacred spot where the Bhārgava Rāma, the foremost of weapon-bearers (Śastrabhṛtām varaḥ 1.2.3.) after extirpating the warrior race during the interval between the Tretā and the Dvāpara

14. Special studies on Paraśurāma: Iravati Karve, "The Prasurama myth" in the journal of the University of Bombay, vol.1,1932, pp.115-139

contd..(4)

(4)

Ages, had made five pools of blood, probably forming a circle (hence obviously Samantapañcaka), and standing in the middle offered the uncanny oblation of congealed blood to her forefathers, until the shades of the departed ancestors appeared before him and pacified him, giving him the boon that those sanguinary pools of his would become holy places of pilgrimage.

A few stanzas later we read that the Kuru-Pandava war was also fought at this Samantapañcaka (1.2.9)¹⁵

Samantapañcaka is thus made out to be only another name of Kurukṣetra: evidently a Bhārgava name.

In passing, it may be mentioned that this short account of the annihilation of the Kṣatriyas by the Brāhmaṇa Rāma Jāmadagnya is a very popular theme with the redactors of our Mahābhārata.

The next reference to the Bhārgava Rāma occurs in chapter 58 of the Ādi¹⁶, and the theme is the same. The chapter, as a matter of fact, describes the circumstances which led to the incarnation of the Gods and Goddesses of the Purāṇic pantheon on this earth. But the account begins with an allusion to the great exploit of the Bhārgava Rāma his total extirpation of the bad old kings of yore.

When the Bhārgava Rāma, after making a clean sweep of the Kṣatriyas, retired to Mount Mahendra to practice austerities, there remained of the warrior caste only the

15. Mahābhārata. I.2.9.

16. Mahābhārata. I.58.4.

females, and the Kṣatriya race was in imminent danger of becoming totally extinct (Ādi 58). When the earth was thus bereft of Kṣatriya manhood, the Kṣatriya women, casting aside their pride; approached the Brāhmaṇas for offsprings. With these Kṣatriya women cohabited the Brāhmaṇas of rigid vows of those time, in pity for their sad plight. They cohabited with the Kṣatriya women, not from passion, only in season, never out of ~~season~~^{season}. Thus thousands of Kṣatriya women conceived from their inter course with pious Brāhmaṇas. Their offsprings were the virtuous Kṣatriyas, who ushered in again the Golden Age. Thus sprang up a second Kṣatriya race from the surviving Kṣatriya women owing to their intercourse with ascetic Brāhmaṇas. The new generation, blessed with long life, thrived in virtue. And there were again established the four castes, having Brāhmaṇas at their head¹⁷.

In this legend, which is here skillfully interwoven with the much lauded exploit of the Bhārgava Rāma, the Brāhmaṇas appears in the role of the de facto Creator of the later Kṣatriyas. But in a variant version of the same incident, which occurs in the Śāntiparva¹⁸ the narrator, Śrī-Kṛṣṇa himself, while admitting that there was a general slaughter of the Kṣatriyas, allows that some Kṣatriyas had escaped death at the hands of the Bhārgava Rāma and, after his retirement to the forest, emerged from their places of concealment and resumed sovereignty. But in this prologue to the Ādiparvan, Vaiśampāyana is quite certain that the

17. Mahābhārata. I. 58.8,10

18. Mahābhārata.XII. 48-49.

Kṣatriyas were totally annihilated by Rāma and the race was entirely regenerated by Brāhmaṇas.

Another little digression, chapter 60, which explains the origin and genealogy of the different orders of beings, from the Gods downwards, contains also a genealogy for the Bhārgavas, the only Brāhmaṇic genealogy considered by the epic bards worthy of inclusion in this chapter.

This cosmogonic account¹⁹ begins with the enumeration of the six mind-born (mānasa) sons of Brahmā and the eleven sons ^{of} Sthāṇu, namely the eleven Rudras. ^{The six sons of} Brahmā are: Marīci, Aṅgiras, Atri, Pulastya, Pulaha and Kratu, which list does not include Bhṛgu. Dakṣa was born it is said, from the right thumb of Brahmā and Dakṣa's wife from his left thumb. Dakṣa begat fifty daughters on his wife, of whom he gave away thirteen, in a lot, to Kaśyapa, son of Marīci. ^{Kaśyapa's} ~~Ketchups~~ offsprings were the gods and the titans (asuras). The list of gods and demi-gods closes with the progeny of Kaśyapa²⁰.

Immediately, after the list of celestials, come Bhṛgu and his descendants²¹.

They are shown in close proximity to the gods which is perhaps covert indication of the high position of the Bhṛgus. The genealogy given here is short and mentions only the well-known descendants of one branch of the Bhārgava clan, the branch made famous by Rāma Jāmadagnya. The

19. I.60.1.

20. I.60.39

21. I.60.40

pedigree begins with Bhṛgu who also was a son of Brahmā, being born by piercing his heart.

But this ancestry of Bhṛgu is in conflict with another account found in the epic in the Anuśāsana Parva according to which Bhṛgu was born from the seed of Prajāpati which had fallen in the fire. While Mahādeva, in the form of Varuṇa, was performing a sacrifice, Brahmā was presiding and all the gods and the goddesses were present. Seeing that assemblage of celestial ~~deities~~^{damsels} of exceeding beauty, desire sprang up in the mind of Brahmā. As soon as the seed came out, Brahmā took it up with the sacrificial ladle and poured it as a ~~libation~~^{libation} of clarified butter, with the necessary mantras, on the burning fire. Thereupon three beings emerged from the sacrificial fire. One arose from the flames and hence he was called Bhṛgu; another came out of the burning charcoals and hence he passed by the name of Aṅgiras; the third originated from a heap of extinguished coals and was called Kavi. Here we see that the great seer Bhṛgu is said to have been produced by the self create Lord Brahmā during Varuṇa's sacrifice from fire.

However, to return to the pedigree of the Bhṛgus given in Ādi 60, we find the statement that Bhṛgu had two sons, Kavi (whose son was Śukra) and Cyavana. About both Śukra and Cyavana we hear a great deal in our Mahābhārata. From Cyavana the pedigree runs as follows: Cyavana-Aurva, Ṛcika-Jamadagni-Rāma. About Ṛcika alone the epic does not have very much to narrate, but it is full of the wonderful exploits of the remaining Bhārgavas mentioned here, for whom the epic shows great predilection.

Thus we find, only a few chapters later, the epic relating at great length the well-known story of Yayāti (Yayātyupākhyāna, Ādi 71-80)²², in which Śukra and his haughty and ambitious daughter Devayānī play a prominent role. Between Yayāti and the Pāṇḍavas there intervene, according to the computation of Pargiter²³, nearly ninety generations. And thus although the connection of this episode with the main epic story is of a very slender character, it possesses considerable Bhārgava interest.

Bṛhaspati, son of Aṅgiras, was the preceptor of the gods, the Bhārgava Śukra (Kāvya Uśanas) that of the Asuras, Śukra, a powerful sorcerer, like all the other Bhārgavas, had the knowledge of the secret of reviving the dead (Sāmjīvanī vidyā); not so Bṛhaspati. The gods were therefore handicapped in their wars with the Asuras. So at the instance of the gods, Bṛhaspati's son Kaca goes to Śukra, who was then the court chaplain of the Asura king Vṛṣaparvan, and lives with him as his disciple in order to obtain from him the knowledge of the art of reviving the dead. Śukra's daughter Devayānī falls headlong in love with Kaca and openly proposes marriage, an honour which Kaca politely but firmly declines. Subsequently one day when Devayānī and Śarmiṣṭhā, Vṛṣaparvan's daughter, are having a bath in a neighbouring river, Indra tosses their clothes about, which had been left by the girls on the river bank, so that Śarmiṣṭhā by mistake took up the dress of Devayānī. There ensues a hefty quarrel between the girls and Śarmiṣṭhā throws her rival into a dry well. Devayānī remains there

23. I.71-80

24. Pargiter-Ancient Indian Historical Tradition,
Delhi, 1962

until she is seen and pulled out of the well by the gallant kind Yayāti, who with the approval of her father, Śukra, marries her. Previously, as a recompense for her overbearing conduct towards Devayānī, Śarmiṣṭhā had become Devayānī's slave. She now accompanies Devayānī to the capital of Yayāti and the three people live in happiness for some time. Yayāti has been warned before hand by Śukra that he must on no account call Śarmiṣṭhā on to his bed. But Śarmiṣṭhā prevails upon the softhearted and indulgent Yayāti, by dint of importunity and feminine logic to sleep with her. Yayāti ~~is constrained to admit the logic and~~ begets on her secretly three sons, while Devayānī has only two. Devayānī learns the truth of the whole affair one day by accident, and goes in a huff to her father, complaining bitterly of the perfidy of her husband. The enraged Śukra curses Yayāti that he would instantly suffer the effects of premature decrepitude, and so it happens. He relents, however, and adds that Yayāti might transfer his premature old age at will to any one who is willing to take it on in his stead. Accordingly Yayāti exchanged his decrepitude for the youth of his youngest son Puru, son of Śarmiṣṭhā, who was the only one of his five sons willing to take on his old age and to whom he subsequently handed over his vast kingdom as a reward for his filial affection.

In this version of the Yayāti legend, the Bhāragvī Devayānī had it all her own way and Śarmiṣṭhā has been thrust in the background except in the finale, which raises Śarmiṣṭhā's youngest son to the throne and the tables are turned on Devayānī. However we get an insight into the role of a prominent brāhmaṇa woman, a Bhāragvī, from this episode.

The extermination of the Kṣatriyas by the Bhārgava Rāma and the subsequent regeneration of the Kṣatriya race by pious Brāhmaṇas find a mention already for the third time in the Ādi: this time in the course of a conversation between Bhīśma and Satyavatī. The continuance of the royal family of kurus was sorely jeopardized by the untimely death of both the sons of Śāntanu, Citrāṅgada and Vicitravīrya. Satyavatī asks Bhīśma to marry the young and beautiful widows of his half brother Vicitravīrya and beget children on them for the continuation of the race of the Kurus, a proposal which Bhīśma firmly rejects as that would mean a deliberate breaking of this vow of celibacy. He proposes instead that a ^{bīcha} māya be called to officiate (niyoga) and do the job. He cites a precedent for this Āpaddharma (emergency). It is no other than the story of the Bhārgava Rāma and its sequel. To avenge the death of his father, Bhīśma relates, the Bhārgava Rāma slew Arjuna, the son of Kṛtavīrya kind of the Haihayas. Then he set out on his war chariot to conquer the world. And taking up his bow, he hurled his mighty magical missiles (astras) and exterminated the Kṣatriyas more than once. In days of yore this illustrious descendant of Bhṛgu annihilated the Kṣatriyas thrice seven times²⁴!!

Then from a high sense of duty; the virtuous Brāhmaṇas of the day co-habited with the widows of the Kṣatriyas massacred by the Bhārgava Rāma and begat on them offsprings and thus revived the almost extinct race of the Kṣatriyas. Satyavatī should unhesitatingly follow this excellent precedent and arrange for the revival of the dying race of the Kurus.

So far we have come across only legends of the past achievements of the Bhārgavas. The first reference to a direct contact between Bhārgava and one of the epic characters occurs in the Ādi. In this Pseudo-historical epic, the myth may not be properly regarded as concerned with events in time. Therefore the Bhārgava Rāma, who only a few chapters previously is said to have lived in the interval between the Tretā and the Dvāpara Ages is here represented as the teacher (guru) of Ācārya Droṇa, who lived in the interval between the Dvāpara and Kali Ages. The pupilship is only symbolic, but the basis of the symbolism is significant. Ācārya Droṇa is the guru of the Kauravas and the Pāṇḍavas and of all the other valiant Kṣatriyas of the time. He was also one of the greatest warriors of the side of Kauravas in the Bharata War. But Ācārya Droṇa must also have a guru. And who would be more suitable as guru than the Bhārgava Rāma, who is the foremost of all weapon-bearers (Sarvaśāstrabhṛtām varah).

Thus we are told that when Droṇa had finished his studies and taken up the duties of a householder, he began to feel the pinch of poverty. He then happened to hear that the Bhārgava Rāma was bestowing wealth on Brāhmaṇas. No inconsistency or anachronism is felt, because Rāma is "ever-living" (cirajīvin). So Droṇa presented himself before the great Bhārgava, who was about to start for the forest and asked for some wealth for himself. Rāma ruefully confessed to him that whatever wealth he at one time possessed he had freely presented to the Brāhmaṇas; he had even presented the earth to Kaśyapa, his sacrificing priest. And now he had nothing left except his mortal body and his weapons and

magical missiles (astras). He asked Droṇa to choose what he wanted. Droṇa of course chose the famous missile with which Rāma had conquered the whole earth. Rāma accordingly gave all his weapons to Droṇa, instructing him at the same time fully in the science of arms.

we learn another fragment of Bhārgava history from chapter 169 to 172 of the Ādi²⁵, the Aurvopākhyāna, which is, as a matter of fact, a digression within a digression. While the Pāṇḍava brothers were proceeding by slow stages to the capital of king Drupada to attend Draupadī's Svayamvara, they are opposed on the way by Citraratha Aṅgāraparna, king of the Gandharvas, whom Arjuna after a brief fight overcomes. Citraratha and Arjuna soon become a close friends. This sudden friendship gives the necessary opportunity to the skillful raconteur to smuggle in some stories. Citraratha, as a matter of fact, relates to Arjuna a number of interesting anecdotes, which are a pure and unadulterated digression, among them the well-known story of Vaśiṣṭha. It is related how Viśvāmitra, king of Kānyakubja, tried to seize Vaśiṣṭha's sacred cow (kāmadhenu) and, failing, turned ascetic and in the end became a Brāhmaṇa; how king Kal-māṣapāda Saudāsa was cursed by Vaśiṣṭha's son Śakti (or Śaktī) to become a cannibal and how he began his career as a cannibal by devouring Vaśiṣṭha's own sons including Śakti; how Vaśiṣṭha subsequently freed the king from the effects of the curse. Then finally to dissuade his enraged grandson Parāśara, son of Śakti, from destroying the whole creation in his frenzy, Vaśiṣṭha relates to him the story of Bhārgava Aurva. It will thus be seen that the Bhārgava legend

is emboxed within the Vaśiṣṭha legend, which is itself a digression (upakhyana). This story of Aurva runs thus —

Once upon a time there was a king by name Kṛtavīrya of the Haihayas, whose family priests were the Bhṛgu. On them he bestowed great wealth. After his death the princes of his family, for some reason or other, demanded it back. The Bhṛgu came out with ^{some} ~~some~~ of it, but not all. It then happened that one of the Kṣatriyas, accidentally digging the ground in the settlement of the Bhṛgu, came upon a large store of wealth buried under ground. Enraged at what they naturally considered deceitful conduct on the part of the Bhṛgu, the Kṣatriyas used violence to the Bhṛgu, and slew them all indiscriminately. The Kṣatriyas even hunted down the women of the Bhṛgu, and with a view to exterminating the race killed all those that were pregnant. Pursued by the Kṣatriyas, some of the Bhṛgu women took shelter in the inaccessible fastnesses of the Himalayas. One of these women, in order to perpetuate the race of the Bhārgavas, had concealed her embryo in her thigh. The Kṣatriyas, when they came to know of it, pursued her with the intention of decimating her embryo; when, lo and behold, the child was born from his mother's thigh, blinding the Haihayas with his lustre. Bereft of sight, they roamed about in the forest and approaching the faultless Brāhṁṇī lady, prostrated themselves before her begging that their eyesight might be restored. She exhorts them to pray to her son and not her, for getting back their eyesight. Therefore all Kṣatriyas asked forgiveness of the child Aurva. But that descendant of the Bhārgava race did not forget the outrage and resolved in his mind upon destroying this wicked

world. With that object in view he started performing the most severe austerities. By the intensity of his Iusterities to afflicted all the worlds. On learning what Aurva was doing to avenge the wrong done to them by the Kṣatriyas, the shades of his ancestors came to him and tried to pacify him, saying that they were not murdered by Kṣatriyas but has willed it to be that way, since they no longer desired to live (& being brāhmaṇas could not commit suicide). Aurva replies that may be all true, but he had made a vow to destroy the world in order to calm his own anger and he must destroy it, or else he would be destroyed himself by the fire of his uncontrollable wrath. And so the world was in imminent danger of being totally destroyed; But the ancestors of Aurva show him a way out of the dilemma. They wisely advice him to fling the fire of his wrath in the waters. And Aurva does so. And it is said that in the shape of horse's head (Hayaśiras), his wrath dwells in the ocean, consuming its waters²⁶.||

In the above legend we may notice some of the repeated motives of Bhārgava stories. There is first of all the feud with the Kṣatriyas, which finally develops into the creation of the figure of the Bhārgava Rāma, "the foremost of all weapon-bearers," who single-handed, with the aid of his magical weapons, the astras, conquers the whole earth, annihilating the Kṣatriyas thrice seven times. Then there is the motif of the opportune birth of a miraculous child, whose effulgent lustre either blinds the oppressor (as here) or consumes him (as in the case of Cyavana). There is, lastly, the appearance of the shades of the ancestors, who step in to stop the carnage either contemplated (as here) or

actually perpetrated (as in the case of Rāma), to avenge some private wrong done with reference to the family. Aurva figures in the Vedic literature also. He appears in the RV,²⁷ in close connection with Bhṛgu. He must have belonged to a branch of the larger family of the Bhṛgus. In the Taittirīya Saṃhitā²⁸, Aurva is said to have received offspring from Atri.

In the Mahābhārata, the story of Aurva bears no direct link with the narrative of the epic. It is, in fact, a myth within a myth. Citraratha is relating the legend of Vaśiṣṭha to Arjuna. As a further deviation, he comes to the story of Aurva to show how the Ṛṣi Vaśiṣṭha dissuaded his grandson, Parāśara, from destroying himself and the whole universe in a fit of rage.

In the Sabhaparva the Bhārgavas are briefly mentioned several times. Thus, naturally, many of the Bhārgavas, to wit, Bhṛgu, Mārkaṇḍeya, Rāma, Jamadagnya, are several times mentioned above, as also as a matter of course in the newly erected hall of Yudhiṣṭhira. They are likewise present at the coronation of Yudhiṣṭhira. Rāma's extermination of the Kṣatriyas, which is really never quite forgotten by our bards, is mentioned again²⁹. Kṛṣṇa prefaces his long reply to Yudhiṣṭhira regarding the prerequisites of the Rājasūya sacrifice by pointing out that the contemporary Kṣatriyas were far inferior to that old race of Kṣatriyas that was exterminated by the Bhārgava Rāma.

27. viii. 102,4.

28. vii. 1,8,1.

29. Mahābhārata.II.14.2.

It was mentioned above that the high esteem in which our epic bards held Rāma Jāmadagnya had led to his being represented as the teacher of Ācārya Droṇa in the science of arms. The same ideology is responsible for the belief that Rāma was the teacher of Bhīśma also, an idea which is taken hold of and further developed in the Udyoga parva in the Amba episode (Ambopākhyāna). Rāma is represented as standing in the same relation to Karṇa, the protégé and ally of Duryodharna.

The Vana parva is a rich mine of ancient Brāhmanic myths and legends. We accordingly find that a fair amount of Bhārgava material has been incorporated in it. We further find that one Bhārgava takes a considerable share in the story-telling that is done here. The first important reference to the Bhṛgu is in the Tīrthayātrā section. The list of tīrthas given in Chapter 82 ff. is said to have been first communicated by the sage Pulastya to Bhīśma and then repeated by Nārada to Yudhiṣṭhira.

We find embedded in this list of tīrthas a legend connected with the Rāmahradaś³⁰, which appears to have considerably roused the interest of the compiler. The story is of course no other than that of the extirpation of the Kṣatriya race by the Bhārgava Rāma, of which this is already the fourth repetition in some form or other. The story is as follows.

The greatly effulgent and heroic Rāma, after exterminating the Kṣatriyas with great valour, formed five lakes filled with the blood of the slaughtered warriors.

30. Mahābhārata. III.83.26 ff

And he offered that blood as oblation to his forefathers who were most gratified by this supreme act of filial piety and asked him to ask for a boon. Rāma desired that he may be freed from the sin he had incurred by killing the kṣatriyas in a fit of wrath. Also that these sanguinary lakes become holy places of pilgrimage celebrated throughout the world.

The ancestors granted him the boon. It was thus that the bloody lakes of the illustrious descendant of Bhṛgu become sacred places of pilgrimage. Leading the life of a student of the sacred lore and observing sacred vows, if a person bathes in the lakes of Rāma (Rāmahyaḍa) and worships Rāma, he will obtain much gold.

This is the story which was briefly related already in connection with Samantapañcaka. In fact Rāmahyaḍa appears to be only another name of Samantapañcaka.

A little later there is again a Bhārgava story, the legend of Dadhīca. Lomaśa relates how the Kālakeyas under the leadership of Vṛtra persecuted the celestials, who betook themselves to Brahmā, asking for his protection. The latter advises them to go to the (Bhārgava) Dadhīca and ask for his bones. The sage magnanimously gives up his body for the good of the three worlds. The celestials took the bones of Dadhīca to Viśvakarman, the architect of the gods, who fashioned out of his bones the thunderbolt, with which Indra vanquished the enemies of the gods.

Again, a few chapters later, the arrival of Yudhiṣṭhira and his party at Mount Mahendra, the head quarters of Rāma, now a samnyāsin, afford a welcome opportunity to the bard for the presentation of a full-length portrait of the hero of the Bhārgavas, Rāma, son of Jamadagni.

It was said that Gādhi, king of Kānyakubja, had retired to the forest to practice religious austerities. There a most beautiful daughter was born to him, Satyavatī, whom the Bhārgava Ṛcika wooed. Gādhi perhaps did not relish his suit and tried to evade it by demanding a present of a thousand peculiarly coloured horses, but Ṛcika supplied them and gained her. Then a Bhṛgu (perhaps, Aurva is meant), who was a great sorcerer, visits the newly married couple and gives his young daughter-in-law the boon that she would give birth to a gifted son, and so would her mother. To fortify the boon, he prescribes that she should embrace an 'uḍumbara' tree, her mother an 'āsvattha', and both should partake of different dishes of some special 'caru' prepared by him with powerful incantations and endowed with magical potency. These good ladies go and exchange the trees as well as the dishes of caru which were apportioned to them by the great sage, with the result that the daughter was about to give birth to a Brāhmaṇa son with Kṣatriyan qualities and the mother—a Kṣatriya son with Brāhmaṇic qualities. But the Bhṛgu, who comes to know of this interchange by occult means, comes rushing to the hermitage and tells his daughter-in-law what was going to happen. Moved by her entreaties, he gives a further boon to the daughter-in-law, who had really been deceived by her mother, postponing the section of the potent charms. Thus her son Jamadagni was

saved from the taint of kṣatriyahood, which ultimately fell upon her grandson Rāma, who turned out to be, as prophesied, a revengeful and blood-thirsty warrior, perpetrator of cruel and sanguinary deeds. This legend about the birth of Rāma Jāmadagnya is slightly differ^{ent} from a similar version, who occurs in the Anuśāsanaparva. Here, the granter of the boon for progeny to Satyavatī and her mother is a Bhṛgu seer, may be Aurva. Whereas in the Anuśāsanaparva variant of the myth, sage Ṛcika himself grants the boon to his wife and her mother.

Jamadagni, though a peaceful Brāhmaṇa who excelled in the study of the Vedas, as described by his mother, was not without martial equipment, for "the entire science of arms with the four kinds of magical missiles spontaneously came to him, who rivalled the sun in lustre, without any instruction from anybody"³¹.

We are further told in the legend that Jamadagni married Reṇukā, daughter of king Prasenajit. She gave birth to five sons : Rāma being one of them. Then one day when Reṇukā happened to see Citrarātha, the handsome king of marttikāvataka, sporting in water with his numerous wives, her fortitude foresook her and she felt the pangs of desire. When she returned to the hermitage, Jamadagni noticed her pollution and guessed her secret. It is said that in a fit of rage he called in turn upon each of his sons to kill their unchaste mother. Four of them refused to do the atrocious deed and were cursed by the angry and disappointed father for their disobedience. Then came last of all that "slayer of hostile heroes", Rāma Jāmadagnya. A military

31. Mahābhārata.III.115.45

type, accustomed to receive and obey orders, Rāma, when sternly commanded by his father to slay his mother, took his axe and without hesitation chopped off his mother's head. Jamadagni, mightily pleased with the instant obedience of his son, granted Rāma several boons, among them the boon that the mother whom Rāma had decapitated might be restored to life. And the family lived again happily for some time. Then one day Arjuna Kārtavīrya Sahasrabāhu came to the hermitage and was hospitably received by the Bhārgavas. The ungrateful king, intoxicated with the pride of power, not heeding the hospitality, seized and carried off by force from the hermitage the calf of the sacred cow of the sage (a variant of the Kāmadhenu motif of the Vaśiṣṭha-Vaśvāmitra legend). This was the beginning of the terrible feud. Rāma first slew the arrogant Arjuna Kārtavīrya, and Arjuna's sons then slew the unresisting Jamadagni. Then Rāma slaughtered the sons of Arjuna K. and finally destroyed all Kṣatriyas off the earth thrice seven times and made five pools of blood in Samantapañcaka³²

Standing in these pools of blood - as has already been narrated several times above - Rama offered oblations to the manes, until at last his ancestor ^{Riṣa} ~~Reika~~ appeared and stopped him. Rāma then performed a great sacrifice to gratify Indra, in which he bestowed the earth upon Kaśyapa his priest. Then this annihilator of the Kṣatriya race was at last satisfied and retired to Mount Mahendra, engaging himself in severe austerities. It is then narrated that the Bhārgava Rāma appeared there in person on Mount Mahendra to meet the Pāṇḍavas. He was duly received and honoured by Yudhiṣṭhira and his party, and he honoured them in turn. With regard to Jamadagni, a few points deserve attention, ^{he} was

born as the son of Ṛcīka and Satyavatī, and was saved from Kṣatriyahood due to his mother's desire. As a result, he emerges in the epic as a peace loving Brāhmaṇa, and a knower of the Vedas. The Kṣatriya hood was transferred to his son, Rāma, who turned out to be a merciless and revengeful warrior.

Secondly, Jamadagni is associated with king, Prasenajit, since he married the latter's daughter, Reṇukā. The sin committed by Reṇukā and the action taken by Jamadagni in this connection have already been discussed.

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 What is most important with regard to the sage Jamadagni in the Mahābhārata is that it is with him that the struggle bet^{ween} the Bhṛgu and the Kṣatriyas commences. Jamadagni is killed by the sons of Arjuna Kā~~sta~~vīrya, and Jamadagni's son Rāma leases a reign of terror upon the remaining Kṣatriyas to avenge his father's murder.

If we examine the earlier literature for a reference to this sage, we find that Jamadagni is one of the somewhat mythical sages of the R̥^{veda}, where he is frequently mentioned. In some passages³³, his name occurs in such a way as to indicate that he is the author of the hymn; Once³⁴ he is thus associated with Viśvāmitra. In other passages³⁵ he is merely referred to, and the Jamadagnis are

33. Rv.iii.62,,18; viii.101,8; ix. 62,24;65,25;

34. Rv.x.167,4

35. Rv.vii. 96,3;ix.97,51

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mentioned once³⁶. In the ^{Atharva} ~~Atharva~~veda³⁷ as well as the Yajur veda saṃhitā³⁸, and the Brāhmaṇas³⁹ he is quite a frequent figure. Here he appears as a friend of Viśvāmitra⁴⁰ and a rival of Vaśiṣṭha. It is said in the Vedic tradition that Jamadagni owed his prosperity to his 'Catūrātra', or 'four night ritual', with which his family were also very successful. In the Atharvaveda, Jamadagni is connected with Atri and Kaṇva, as well as Asita and Vītharya we are further told that he was the Adhvaryu priest at the proposed sacrifice⁴¹ of Śunahśepa.

Hence, there are lots of discrepancies with regard to Jamadagni in the Vedic and epic accounts. However, it is important to note that in the vedic lit,^{erature} Jamadagni is frequently ^{found} in close association with the sage Viśvāmitra. This association of the former with Viśvāmitra appears to have been ^{deepened} ~~deepened~~ in the epic myth. We come across detailed accounts of the birth of Jamadagni and Viśvāmitra (see the previous myths) - how one was born a brāhmaṇa; and the other a Kṣatriya, with brāhmaṇa attributes. The two were related by blood also—Viśvāmitra was the brother of Satyavatī, Jamadagni's mother. Hence, the association of Jamadagni with Viśvāmitra has been borrowed, or, to say, has continued from the vedic lit,^{erature} to the Mahābhārata. In the latter, the relationship between the two is strengthened by ties of blood as well.

36. Rv. iii.53,15.16

37. ii.32,3; Taittirīya Āraṇyaka, iv.36;
Mantra Brāhmaṇa, ii.7,1

38. Taittirīya Saṃhitā, ii.2,12,4.

39. Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, xiii.2,2,14.

40. Taittirīya Saṃhitā, iii.1,7,3.

It should be remembered that the Bhārgavas, Such as Rāma Jāmadagnya ~~agaya~~, Cyavana, R̥cika and so on, are generally used as static figures, along with other ancient sages like Nārada, in the description of largely attended and important meetings and state functions, and such treatment of these characters is quite intelligible. But the Bhārgavas - and especially the Bhārgava Rāma - are accorded a somewhat different treatment; they are represented as taking part in the action more definitely and more frequently. We have seen that the Bhārgava Rama is said to have given all his astras to Droṇa. He is also said to have taught Bhīśma and Karṇa. Here is represented as having shown himself to the Pāṇḍavas, as a special favour. In another context Rāma is said to have fought with Bhīśma, a fight which lasted for twenty-three days but was absolutely barren of any consequence. Elsewhere also we shall find Rama and some of other Bhārgava represented as taking some innocuous part in the action, which in no way affects the course of events but which serves to establish an maintain contact between the Bhārgavas and the epic characters.

Further, we read that when the Pāṇḍavas reach the Payoṣṇī and the Narmadā rivers they hear from Lomaśa the story (upākhyāna) of Cyavana: how he demanded in marriage a young prince, by name Sukanyā, who had innocently and unwittingly blinded him; ^{how he recovered his sight by the grace of Asvins} how he gave then on that account the Soma libation, paralyzing the arm ~~the~~^{of} Indra, who would have prevented it. It is also said that Bhṛgu, the father of Cyavana, had only cursed Agni, a minor God, in fact, merely the "mouth" of the Gods, to be sarvabhakṣa, devourer of all things, good and bad Cyavana did even better. He thoroughly humbled Indra, the king of gods, who had to submit to the will of Cyavana and allow thee Asvins the promised libation of Soma juice, a privilege they shared with the other gods.

The legend involving Cyavana, his wife Sukanyā and the Ásvins can be traced to the earlier literature as well. Cyavana is represented in the Rg^{veda} as an old, decrepit man, to whom the Ásvins restored youth, and strength, making him acceptable to his wife, and husband of maidens.

The legend is given in another form in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa⁴², where Cyavana is described as wedding Sukanyā, the daughter of Śaryāta. Here is there called a Bhṛgu or Āqirasa, and is represented as having been rejuvenated by immersion in the pond - the first occurrence of a motif, which later become very common in Oriental literature

Another legend about Cyavana is apparently alluded to in an obscure hymn of the Rg^{veda} where he seems to be opposed to the Paktha prince Tūrvayāna, an Indra worshipper, while Cyavana seems to have been specially connected with the Ásvins. This explanation of the hymn is corroborated by the Jaiminiya Brāhmaṇa⁴⁴ which relates that Vidanvant, another son of Bhṛgu, supported Cyavana against Indra, who was angry with him for sacrificing to the Ásvins. It is also note worthy that the Ásvins appear in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa as obtaining a share in the sacrifice on the suggestion of Sukanyā.

However, a reconciliation of Indra and Cyavana must have taken place, because the Aitareya Brāhmaṇa⁴⁵ relates

41. i.116,10;117.13;V.74,5

42. iv.1,5,1

43. x.61, 1-3

44. iii.121-128

45. viii.21,4

the inauguration of Śāryāta by Cyavana, with the great Indra consecration (aindreṇa mahābhiṣekeṇa)!

So the Mahābhārata legend of Cyavana seems be a direct import from the earlier lit. ^{erature} We find the whole story narrated in the vedic lit ^{erature} as well; and Cyavana's enmity with Indra on account of the Aśvins, and his closeness to the latter, emerges as a traditional theme regarding the sage, and appears to be a popular one in any narrative associated with Cyavana.

The next Bhārgava of importance we meet is the sage Mārkaṇḍeya, whose discourses on the most diverse topics extend over 51 chapters⁴⁶ (Mārkaṇḍeya-samāsyā) which he delivers for the delectation and edification of the Pāṇḍavas. This is not his first visit to the Pāṇḍavas by any means. For, early in the beginning of their exile, when the Pāṇḍavas had settled in the Dvaitavana Forest, Mārkaṇḍeya had paid a flying visit to them. He turns up again, as a matter of fact, also towards the end of their exile, without notice or warning, to console Yudhiṣṭhira and relates to him the Ramopākhyāna, the popular story of Rāma and Sita, as well as the Savitryupākhyāna that immortal story of wife's ~~ended~~ ^{splendid} devotion.

Mārkaṇḍeya was one ^{of} the cirajīvins : eternally youthful, though many thousands years old. How he was exactly ^{connected} ~~contacted~~ with the two well-known Bhṛgu families of our Mahābhārata (Bhṛgu-Cyavana-Rāma and Bhṛgu-Cyavana-

Śunaka) is not exactly known : but that he was a Bhārgava is beyond doubt, He is referred to as Bhārgava⁴⁷, as Bhārgava-sattama⁴⁸, as Bhṛgu Nandana⁴⁹ and as bhṛgukula-Śreṣṭha⁵⁰.

Some of the subjects of Mārkaṇḍeya's discourses to the Pāṇḍavas are the following : great power of Brāhmanas, the merits of benevolence to brāhmins^{manas}; wife's duty to her husband; and different forms of Agni. He relates, among others, stories of Manu, Yayāti, Viśadarbha, Śibi, Indradyumna (father of Janaka) Kuvalaśva and of Skanda Kārttikeya. He is also responsible for the famous story of the Righteous Hunter (Dharma-vijadha) of Mithila. Besides these, there is, as is well known, a whole Purāna^{Purāna} named after him, the Mārkaṇḍeya Purāna. The most interesting of Mārkaṇḍeya's stories, however, is how he actually witnessed the act of creation and dissolution in progress.

Yudhiṣṭhira feels that Mārkaṇḍeya alone worships Brāhmana at the time of the great dissolution, when he sleeps in a lotus flower, and when he awakes to recreate the world; and asks Mārkaṇḍeya to explain the causes of things.

Mārkaṇḍeya replies that Janārdana, attired in yellow robes, is the great creator of everything. After the dissolution, creation again comes to life.

47. III.183.60; III.189.97; III.190.2

48. III.201.7; III.217.5

49. III.205.4

50. III.205.15

Now follows a lengthy discourse on the philosophy of creation. It also highlights Mārkaṇḍeya's role in this cycle of cosmic events, and shows his closeness with the lord Nārāyaṇa.

Mārkaṇḍeya narrates that after the Kāli yuga comes destruction. When all has become water, Mārkaṇḍeya alone wanders in affliction and becomes fatigued. Then, he beholds a vast banyan-tree and on a couch attached to a bough of that tree, a fair boy with yellow robes. The boy caused ~~Mohabharat~~ ^{the rsi} to enter his body through the mouth, and then Mārkaṇḍeya beheld the whole earth, with its cities and

kingdoms, Gaṅgā, Śatadru, the Gods, Sādhyas, Rudras and Ādityas, inside the stomach of that wonderful child. At last he was suddenly projected through the boy's open mouth by a gust of wind. Within that very moment he acquired a new sight and beheld himself emancipated (nirmuktaṃ).

Overwhelmed with curiosity, the sage wished to know the boy's self. The boy, then, told Mārkaṇḍeya that he was Nārāyaṇa (in ancient times he has called the waters 'bara', and the waters had ever since been his 'ayana' home). That is why, he was called nārāyaṇa - the eternal, and unchangeable source of all things, the creator and destroyer of, all; he was Viṣṇu, Brāhman, Śakṛa; from his mouth, arms, thighs and feet sprang, the brāhmaṇas, Kṣatriyas, Vaiśyas and Sūdras; from him spring the Ṛg, Sāma, Yajur and the Atharvaveda. When virtue and morality decreases, he creates himself into new forms. When the end comes, he alone in the form of Kāla, destroys the three worlds. The grandsire of all creatures (Sarvalokapitāmaha) is half of

his body. He was the bearer of the couch-shell, the discus, and the mace. For a period of one thousand cycles of yugas he sleeps, overwhelming all creatures in insensibility, and he stays in the form of a boy though he was old, until Bráhmaṇ wakes up. When Bráhmaṇ awakes, he will, then alone create all creatures."

After this lengthy introduction, Nārāyaṇa disappeared, and Mārkaṇḍeya beheld this creation start into life. Significantly, Mārkaṇḍeya later tells Yudhiṣṭhira that Nārāyaṇa was Kṛṣṇa incarnate!

According to this account, the Bhārgava Mārkaṇḍeya is the only man who had survived the last deluge, witnessed the act of dissolution and creation in progress, and stood in his own person face to face with Nārāyaṇa in the utter solitude of total annihilation. It is to him that Nārāyaṇa reveals his real nature and character. Thus, Mārkaṇḍeya emerges as a great seer and a perfect yogi from this account.

Mārkaṇḍeya also gives some moral precepts and exhortations to Yudhiṣṭhira on the pre-eminence of brāhmaṇas, on the effects of various gifts at various times, and on the merits of making donations to brāhmaṇas.

Further a little later, Mārkaṇḍeya relates to the Pāṇḍavas the famous Ramopākhyāna, an abridgement of the Rāma story. The occasion for relating the story arises in the following way.

Jayadratha, a near relative of the Kurus and the Pāṇḍavas tries to carry off Draupadī, but is defeated and captured, and ultimately pardoned and released. Yudhiṣṭhira mourns his fate and asks Mārkaṇḍeya, if there is any mortal more unfortunate than himself. There upon Mārkaṇḍeya relates the story of the Daśarathi Rāma. There could have been no better narrator of the story of Rāma than the Bhārgava Mārkaṇḍeya, age old and yet eternally young, the only man who had witnessed the happenings of his world in all the different ages, witnessed even the dissolution and creation of the world.

After hearing the story of Rāma, Yudhiṣṭhira, says that he did not grieve so much on his own or his brothers' account as he did on account of the daughter of Drupada; and then asks Mārkaṇḍeya if he had ever seen or heard of a woman as devoted to her husband as Draupadī. To console Yudhiṣṭhira Mārkaṇḍeya then relates the well-known story (upakhyāna) of Savitri, who rescues her husband from death by the insistent importunity of her pleading, by her deep feminine intuition and by her unflinching devotion to her husband.

Rāma Jāmadagnya in the company of ancient sages is shown attending the council meeting which was held at Hastinapura. Chapter 94 of Udyoga parva shows the proceedings begin with a long speech by Kṛiṣṇa, in which he announces that the Pāṇḍavas were ready to obey implicitly the commands of Dhṛtarāṣṭra, provided they were assured that they would be treated with fairness and given what is theirs by right (Chaps 95). The Bhārgava Rāma, taking advantage of the spell of silence which followed Kṛiṣṇa's diplomatic speech,

gets up and, advising peace, relates, the story of Dambhodbhava (Chaps 96). The foolish king Dambhodbhava, who wants to be acknowledged the unconquered and unconquerable hero, challenges in his cupidity the sages Nara and Nārāyaṇa (who were ~~the~~ practising penance at Badari) to fight with him. The ascetics meekly decline, but Dambhodbhava is importunate. So in the end Nara takes up a handful of grass and, charging the blades in his hand with mystic potency, flings them at the enemy. They change into deadly missiles, overpowering the soldiers of Dambhodbhava and compell him to surrender and acknowledge his defeat. Nara reads Dambhodbhava a sermon on self-control, on kindness to all creatures and humility towards ^{Brahmanes} ~~Brahmins~~. The Bhārgava Rāma,

appearing here in the role of a peacemaker, concludes by advising conciliation and pointing out that Nara is Arjuna, while Nārāyaṇa is Kṛiṣṇa. The story has the very obvious object of reiterating and emphasizing the identity between Nara-Nārāyaṇa and Arjuna-Kṛiṣṇa.

The Udyogaparva closes with a story (Ambopakhyana), in which the Bhārgava Rāma plays a very active and prominent part. Bhīśma explains to Duryodhana that because of a vow he had taken, he would not fight with Śikhaṇḍin, who at birth had been a girl, and then relates the whole life history of Śikhaṇḍin, who in a previous birth was Ambā, the daughter of king of Kaśi. Bhīśma narrates how Ambā, having been disappointed of marriage through Bhīśma's action, vowed to compass his death and how the Bhārgava Rāma, having promised to help her, fought with Bhīśma at Kurukṣetra for twenty-three days, a fight which ends in stalemate. In the Karṇaparva, Karṇa is represented as a

pupil of Bhārgava Rāma, like Bhīśma and Droṇa. In this Parva, we have reference to the bow (Vijaya) when karṇa had from the Bhārgava Rāma, who, in turn, had obtained it received from Indra himself. Indra had used it in the fight against Daityas. Rāma had used it in his campaign against the Kṣatriyas of the earth, while had conquered thrice seven times⁵¹. Hence Rāma, who is generally represented in the Mahābhārata as a man - or rather a superman - who had fought his battles on this earth with other human beings like himself, is depicted here as having fought with, and vanquished, even the Daityas.

At the beginning of the third great sub-division of the Śkānti, the Mokṣā-dharmaparva we have a lengthy discourse attributed to Bhṛgu, called the Bhṛgu-Bhāradvāja-Samvāda, which summarizes in the form of questions and answers almost the entire Brahmanic teaching on the subject of the elements, life and death, caste distinctions, good and evil, the four stages of life and finally the other world. It is a complete tractate on Hindu sociology and ethics that here attributed to Bhṛgu, the eponymous ancestor of the Bhārgavas.

Early in the Anuśāsana Parva we have the ^{third} ~~third~~ repetition of the legend of the birth of Jamadagni. Bhīśma explains how it came about that Viśvāmitra who was ^{of} a mingled Brāh~~man~~^{mana} and Kṣatriya parentage was born in the Kṣatriya caste with Brahmanic qualities, while his nephew Jamadagni, under similar conditions was born in the Brāhmaṇacaste with Kṣatriyan qualities. We have here a repetition of old story of how R̥cīka married Gādhi's daughter Satyavatī, who obtained

some boons for herself and her mother. The mother and the daughter exchange the trees they had to embrace and carus of which they had to partake. The wise Ṛcīka had purposely made the prescriptions differently. He had in fact put the entire accumulated energy of Brāhmaṇism in the caru of his wife, while he had put the entire accumulated energy of Kṣatriyahood in the caru intended for her mother. The consequence of the exchange slyly effected by the mother was that the son of Gādhi's wife turned out to be a man with Brāhmaṇic propensities, while the son of Ṛcīka's wife would have been a model Kṣatriya; but owing to the pleadings of Satyavatī, the great sage graciously gives his consent to the postponement of the doom to Satyavatī's grandson. This story we have had at Vanaparva (115), Śānti (49) and Anuśāsanaparvas. It may be mentioned that the Anuśāsanaparva's version agrees with the Śāntiparva version in making -Ṛcīka the giver of the boons, whereas in the Vanaparva version this person is some ancestor of Ṛcīka, either Ṛcīka's or perhaps Bhṛḡu himself. Some chapters later we again meet with the Bhārgava Rāma when Bhīṣma tells Yudhiṣṭhira about the merit of the gift of gold. The shades of his ancestors had appeared to Bhīṣma and told him that the gift of gold purifies the giver. Now it happens that the same advice had been given to the Bhārgava Rāma by Vaśiṣṭha and other sages. In this connection we have again an allusion to the extirpation of the Kṣatriyas and the conquest of the earth by Rāma⁵².

The next chapter (85) deals with the mystery of the birth of Bhṛḡu, Aṅgiras and Kavi. They are said to be

52. XIII.84.31.

contd..(33)

Prajāpatis and Progenitors of many tribes and clans, in fact of the entire mankind.

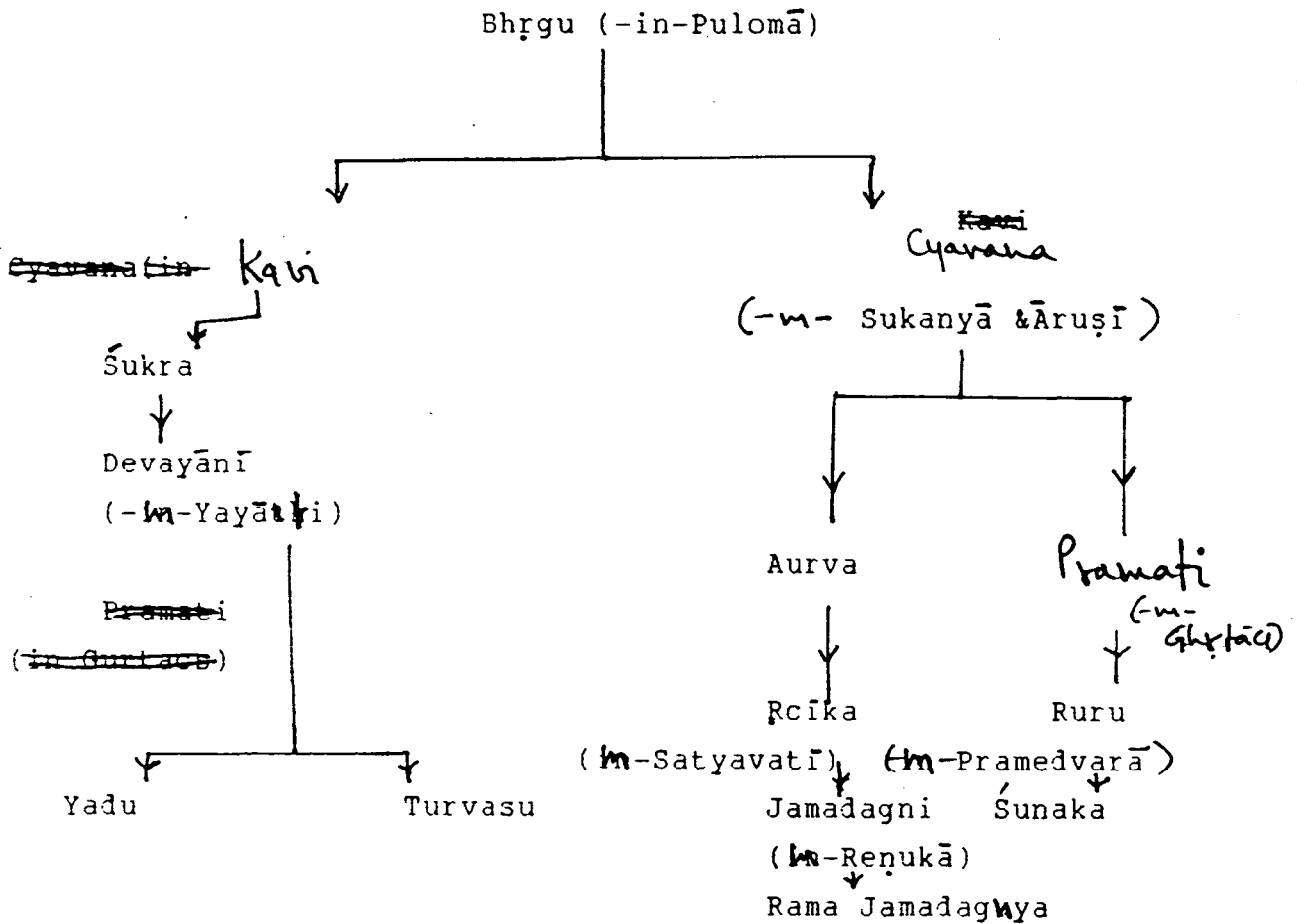
The Mahābhārata holds the Brāhmaṇas in high esteem. This is evident from a passage devoted to the praise of brāh^{manas}, showing that the brāh^{manas} are mightier than even the gods. Here, the story of Cyavana is repeated, to show how he humbled the kind of gods, Indra. The last Bhārgava story of the Mahābhārata is the Uttāṅkopākhyāna of the Aśvamedhaparva. Uttāṅka, a great Rṣi, had escaped being eaten by the cannibal king Saudāsa and obtained the ear-jewels of Saudāsa's queen Madayanmtī as fee for his guru Gautama. On the way the ear-jewels were stolen by a snake and Uttāṅka recovered them from the subterranean world of the Nāgas.

It will be noticed that this Uttāṅkopākhyāna is a variant version of Pauṣyaparvan of the Ādi Parva but with

some significant differences in details. The preceptor is not Veda, as in the Ādi, but Gotama, the husband of Ahalyā; likewise the king from whom Uttāṅka gets the ear-jewels is here not Pauṣya but Saudāsa (kalmāṣapāda) who had become a cannibal by the curse of some great sage. Moreover in the first version, the name of the snake is given as Takṣaka, the snake which had bitten king Parikṣit and had been the cause of his premature death; in the second he remains nameless. The only reason for citing the story of Uttāṅka here is the fact that in the Aśvamedha version of the story, Uttāṅka is several times called a Bhārgava, a fact which does not appear from the Ādiparva version. We have ^{thus here} a documentation for a Bhārgava ~~here~~, who, by the power of his

austerities and devotion to his preceptor is in a position to curse an avatāra of Viṣṇu himself. He demands an explanation from Srī-Kṛṣṇa for the latter's failure to bring about peace between the contending kauravas and β āṇḍavas; and had to be gently pacified by the great God.

Before we sum up, it would be useful to draw a chart showing the genealogy of the Bhr̥gu clan in the Mahabharata.



contd..(35)

From the legends preserved in our epic it should seem that the Bhārgavas were a Brāhmaṇa clan, perhaps more intimately associated with the ancient Kṣatriyas than most of the other brāhmaṇa clans, being largely connected with them by matrimonial ties. Thus Cyavana is said to have married Sukanyā, the daughter of king Śaryāti. Ṛcika had married Satyavatī, the daughter of King Gādhi of Kānyakubja and sister of the famous Viśvāmitra. Jamadagni's wife Renukā is likewise said to have been a princess by birth, being a daughter of king Prasenajit of Ayodhya. The Bhārgavī Devayānī was moreover married to king Yayāti. King Vītahavya had been adopted and made a Brāhmaṇa by a Bhṛgu, and his descendents became Bhārgavas. On the other hand some of the ancient Bhārgavas seem to have come seriously into conflict with the Kṣatriyas. ~~The relations of Rāma Jāmadagnya with the Kṣatriyas.~~ The relations of Rāma Jāmadagnya with the Kṣatriyas are too well known to be repeated here again. But even in the case of Aurva and Jamadagni, the epic has to relate conflicts with the Kṣatriyas.

In these conflicts the Bhārgavas are represented in our epic as domineering, arrogant, unbending and revengeful sages. To our epic bards they are omniscient and omnipotent who by virtue of their rigid austerities and the magical or spiritual powers acquired by them equalled the best of the Gods. Thus Bhṛgu pronounces a curse on Agni—a god lauded and worshipped by the simple Aryans—for no faults of his. The wizard Cyavana paralyzed the arm of the recalcitrant Indra, a high god of the Vedic Aryans. Jamadagni would shoot down the Sun, another Aryan god. The Bhārgava

Uttānka, when about to curse Srī-kṛṣṇa the supreme god of the Bhagavats or Vaināśnavās, was gently pacified by Kṛṣṇa himself. The kings of the earth are of course nothing when compared to these Bhārgavas. The mighty Haihayas tremble before the infant Aurva, and kind Kuśika grovels at the feet of Cyavana and meekly submits to all varieties of indignities for fear that a great sage might curse him.

But the Bhārgava most popular with the ethnic bards is surely Rāma Jāmadagnay. His martial exploits are very often repeated. The shadow of this giant overspreads the entire epic. He conquers the whole world alone and unaided. He frees the earth of the burden of Kṣtariyas thrice seven times and makes the gift of the earth to Kaśyapa, his priest, who divided it among Brāhmaṇas. As the Bhārgava Rāma is the perfect warrior, three of the leading warriors of the Kaurava army - Bhīśma, Droṇa and Karṇa - are said to have been initiated into the science of arms by Rāma Jāmadagnya !

The epic contains a number of episodes (upakhyānas) relating to the Bhārgavas, such as, the Aurvopākhyāna (Adi), Kārtavīryopākhyāna (Udyoga) and Uttānkopākhyāna (Asvamedha) and so on. Besides there are important discussions and discourses attributed to some of the celebrated Bhārgavas, such as Bhṛgu-Bhārādvaja-sāmvāda, the Cyavana-Kuśika-Sāmvāda and the Mārkaṇḍeya-samasyā. The largest number of Bhārgava references seem to be contained in the Ādiparva.

Taking a collective view of these Bhārgava references in the Great Epic, we cannot avoid the conclusion

that the Bhārgava heroes occupy a surprisingly large portion of the canvas - which is said to depict the Bhārata War - filling up as they do much of the available space of the diagram. Their myths and legends are uniformly distributed over the entire extent of the Great Epic and the figures of the Bhārgavas have also been magnified to colossal proportions. In short, the Bhārgavas, are represented in ^{the} Mahābhārata as the most important clan of brāhmaṇas. To

strengthen this convention, there is evidence of the surreptitious addition of a bunch of Bhārgava legends to the kuru-pāṇḍava epic in the shape of the so called paulomparvan in the Ādiparva which is entirely made up of Bhārgava legends and has not even the remotest connection with the story of the epic. We also have a clear and also there has been constant additions and interpolations, to the epic body we find that the legends have been repeated, so often that the redactors must have themselves come to believe in them as time passed. As it is probable that in the formative period of the epic a powerful Bhārgava influence has been at work to shape of epic for us. Hence the infiltration of masses of Bhārgava material in the shape of Bhārgava myths and legends, the manner in which they are related to the story seems to indicate the treatment of the epic under a very strong and direct Bhārgava influence. The Bhārgava redactors introduce their myths and glorified their clan with the obvious objective of giving a permanent form to some of the Bhārgava myths legends.

Most of the Bhārgava heroes are seen to figure in the Vedic literature also. Bhṛgu appears as a sage of almost a mythical character in the R̥gveda and later, Projected as being devoted to the fire cult, the Bhṛgus are a group of ancient seers and ancestors, with an eponymous progenitor, Bhṛgu. In several passages in the vedic lit, the Bhṛgus are connected with another class - the Aṅgirases. The close association of both the classes is shown by the fact that Cyavana is called either a Bhārgava or an Āṅgirasa in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa!

Another Bhārgava whose antecedents can be traced to the Vedic lit, ^{is} ~~is~~ ^{is} Aurya. ^{He} ~~He~~ appears to be closely associated with the Bhṛgus in the R̥gveda. In the Māhābhārata, however, he emerges as an extraordinary ^{person, since} ~~blinded~~ ^{as an infant he had} the Kṣatriyas with his effulgence. He is symbolic of a reconciliation bet the Bhṛgus and the Kṣatriyas, since he is said to have pardoned all the Kṣatriyas who had once massacred the Bhṛgus. The story of Aurya, bears no direct link to the main action of the epic, and it seems to have been introduced as a digression.

Jamadagni is also a Bhārgava, the myths surrounding whom appear to be a repetition in the Mahābhārata. In particular, Jamadagni's intimacy with Viśvāmitra, as shown by the Vedic lit, ^{is} ~~is~~ ^{is} finds an echo in the epic, for in the latter, the two sages are related by ties of blood. However, the strange circumstances in which Jamadagni and Viśvāmitra were born and Jamadagni's hostility with the family of Arjuna Kārtavīrya which later developed into an intense enmity between the two families, are themes which do not find a mention in the Vedic literature

Interestingly, the myths surrounded^{ing} R̥ṣi Cyavana in the Mahābhārata seem to be simply taken over from the earlier sources. Cyavana's being an old man, his marrying Śatyaṭa's daughter - the beautiful and young Śukanyā, his regaining youth through the favour of Aśvins, his performance of a sacrifice^{r. fice} for the latter, to which there was a strong opposition from Indra, and his belittling Indra and allowing the Aśvins to partake of the offering of the soma juice are patent links in the legend of Cyavana, who are mentioned in the Vedic as well as in the epic. This appears to be a popular story, for wherever Cyavana is mentioned, his extraordinary feat of humbling Indra is narrated with pride and the superiority of the brāhmaṇas, ~~in~~ⁱⁿ relation even to the gods, is praised.

It is significant^{ficant} to mention that some important aspects of life are dealt with in the epic, through the medium of the Bhṛguṣ. An eminent Bhārgava was the sage Mārkaṇḍeya, who held a superior position than the others, since he had the privilege of witnessing the entire process of dissolution and creation.

In a vividly described section, we are enlightened^{about} the mysteries of cosmic events. Mārkaṇḍeya, the great Yogi, undergoes the experience of acquiring the Supreme Knowledge inside the stomach of the great god Nārāyaṇa. The various attributes of Nārāyaṇa are discussed in this passage. He is lauded as the Absolute Deity. Mārkaṇḍeya, further, informsⁱⁿ Yudhiṣṭhira about the glory of Kṛṣṇa, by pointing out that the latter, was, in reality, an incarnation of Nārāyaṇa himself.

Hence, several myths concerning the Bhrgus are novel introductions in the epic; while, regarding, some others a strong element of continuity from earlier ~~Sources~~ sources can be perceived.

THE ANĠIRASES

Among the Mahārṣis who are described as Bráhmans spiritual sons¹ (Mānasāḥ Putrāḥ) Anġiras finds a prominent place (the others are Marīci, Atri, Pulaha, Pulastya and Kratu). He is said to be one who accepted the religion of the Vedas, & was created by Bráhman from a sacrifice (the etymology is from 'anġara', charcoal where fore he is considered as the offspring of Agni). Anġiras is said to be the father of Brhaspati Utathya & Samvartta who were all great ascetics². That Anġiras was among the sons begotten by Brahman is repeated in the Santiparva also. Anġiras is mentioned in the Mahabharata as the ancient, wise & Learned seer. He is referred to as the founding father of the race of the Bharadvajas and Gotamas.

If we look at the earliest literature for a similar reference, we find that the Anġirases appear in the Rġveda as semi-mythical beings & no real historical character can be assigned even to those passages³ which recognize a father of the race, Anġiras. Later, however, there were

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1. Mbh. I. 66.4.
 2. Mbd. I. 66.5.
 3. Rv i 45, 3;.

definite families of Aṅgrases, to whose ritual practices (ayaha, dvirātra) references are made.⁴

Returning to the Mahābhārata, we come across a passage in the Vahapara⁵, which brings the greatness of Aṅgiras to the fore. Here, the difficult aspects of the glory of Agni are described in a series of symbolical and allegorical stories, some with mythical background. It is narrated how in the past, Aṅgiras practised severe tapasya in his ashram, so much so that he excelled Agni, and illuminated the entire universe. Agni accepted Aṅgiras as his first child, and Aṅgiras's son was Bṛhaspati.

The legend connects Aṅgiras to Agni, and states Bṛhaspati as Aṅgiras's son. We are told how Aṅgiras, through severe penances, won Agni's favour. The legend serves to glorify Aṅgiras as a great ṛṣi, & praise him for his austerities.

Further, in the same parva it is said that Dhṛtimān of Aṅgiras is the Viṣṇu fire⁶ in whose worship ghee oblations are offered at the occasion of Darśa & Paurṇamāsā sacrifices. This likeness of Aṅgiras to the effulgence of

4. Av. xviii. 4,8, but this may be mythical.

5. Mbh. III. 217. 8-18.

6. Mbh. III. 221. 2.

Viṣṇu, can be an indicator of the former's leanings towards the god. Hence, in the above accounts of the Mahābārata Aṅgiras is linked to Agni and Viṣṇu, the purpose being to glorify the seer, and highlight his greatness. A significant reference to sage Aṅgiras is found in the Droṇa-parva, and is connected with the happenings of the 14th day of the battle. On this day, a terrible carnage was caused by Arjuna upon his opponents. Droṇa acknowledged his inability to oppose Arjuna on accounts of his own old age. Hence, Droṇa invoked Aṅgiras for protect⁷ Duryodhana in an invulnerable armour (invoking the vedas) and urged him to oppose Arjuna. With his armour, he need have, no fear from Asuras, Devas, Yakṣās, Rākṣasas and men. It was the armour that Śiva had given to Indra, by means of which he slew Vṛtra. From Indra, it went to Aṅgiras then to Brahaspati, from him to another learned seer Agniveśya (who according to the Mahābhārata is said to be a pupil either of Br̥haspati or Bharadvāja), and finally to Droṇa⁷. Here Brahaspati is mentioned as the preceptor of Agniveśya, while in another instance in the epic Bharadvāja was. However, on both occasions, the preceptor - pupil relationship has been emphasized. Another significant aspect of this mythical narration is that Aṅgiras is

7. Mbh. VII 69. 65-67.

projected as closely, interacting with the various-deities (Śiva, and Indra) and passing on the knowledge of the use of the divine weapon to his descendants.

Regarding the clan of the Aṅgirasas the Mahābhārta further says, in the śāntip, that originally only four gotras arose - Aṅgiras, Kaśyapa, Vaśiṣṭha and Bhṛgu. Aṅgiras is said to be a preceptor of the Vedas, a follower of the religion of Pravṛtti (ie the World affirming mārga), and is praised as a master of yoga.

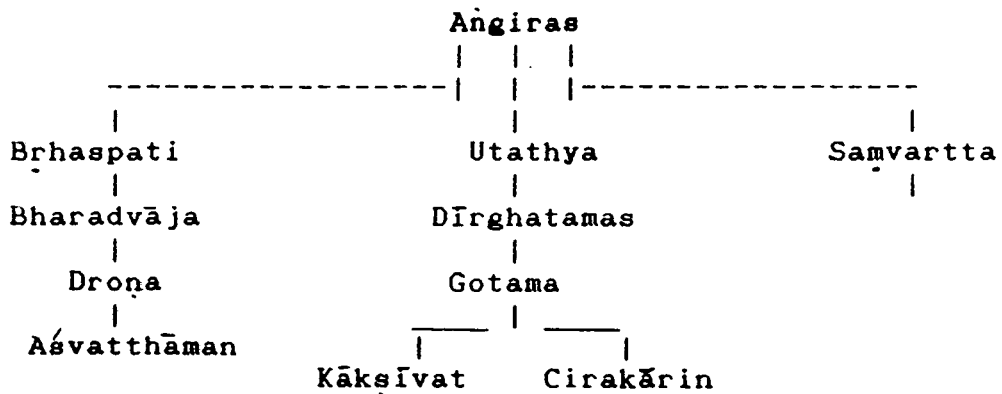
Another aspect of the clan of Aṅgirasas is brought to light when we examine their teachers. In the Śāntiparva Yudhiṣṭhira asks Bhīṣma to discourse on some, important issues connected with mans socio-religious life. The Pāṇḍava wonders that since the sacrifices, which entail heavy expenditure, can be performed only by the rich, what acts should the poor do in order to attain merit? Bhīṣma relates the ordinances about fasts which were promulgated by Aṅgiras, the regions attainable by them, and the sacrifices they are equal to.

In continuation it may be pointed out that in the Anuśāsana, Bṛhaspati Aṅgiras is seen discoursing about the merits of leading a righteous life to Yudhiṣṭhira. He opines that it is righteousness alone which is man's eternal friend and which accompanies him to the next world. The sage

further elaborates by saying that sinners can remove their sins by making gifts and donations especially gifts of food. Asked by Yudhiṣṭhira Brāhaspati discoursed on the six doors of righteousness viz., abstention from injury, the observance of the vedic ritual, meditation, restraining the senses, penances and obedience to preceptors. The man who practices the religion of universal ^{passion} ~~compassion~~ achieves the highest good.

So Āṅgiras and his son Brāhaspati are seen in the epic preaching righteousness and showing the correct path to be followed in order to attain liberation.

The following chart illustrates the descendants of the race of Āṅgiras, as they are shown in the Mahābhārata.



It is shown how the two clans of the Bharadvajas and the Gotamas had sprung from the race of Angiras. These two brahmana clans are important since they repre two distinct

brahmana families and are seen playing an active role in the epic's narrative.

Hence, Aṅgiras is portrayed in the Mahābhārata as a semi-divine figure, being one of the mind-born sons of Brahma and portray him as the venerable father of the illustrious Bṛhaspati and Utathya. The Vedic literature does not help us much with regard to the Aṅgirases, since, there too they are shown as semi-mythical figures, whose historicity cannot be ascertained. The legends surrounding Aṅgirases, encountered in the Mahābhārata reflect different aspects of this brahman clan. Their likeness to Agni's excellence and Viṣṇu's effulgence, attempts to glorify the clan.

Further, the incident in the Droṇaparva, where sage Aṅgiras, is seen to be instrumental in handing over the celestial weapon to Bṛhaspati, illustrates the seer's closeness with gods and men alike, and serves to re-inforce his semi-divine status.

Aṅgiras is lauded in the Mahābhārata as a preceptor of the Vedas, a follower of the religion of Pravṛtti and a master of yoga. The sage is also seen discoursing on various socio-religious issues, and explaining the merits of leading a pious and righteous life. He is seen emphasizing the need to make liberal donations.

Significantly, Aṅgiras is shown in the Mahābhārata as the progenitor of the race of the Bharadvājas and the Gotamas. He is depicted as the founding father from whom sprang these eminent clans of brāhmaṇas.

THE BHARADVĀJAS

In this chapter, an attempt is being made to discuss the Bharadvāja clan as it is found mentioned in the Mahābhārata. The chapter intends focussing on the activities of the Bharadvāja sages, on their claims as seers, on their relations with various ruling families or kingdoms of the time, on the myths and legends surrounding them and on their visibility in the Mahābhārata.

The Bharadvājas is an ancient clan mentioned in the Mahābhārata. Its antecedents can be traced to vedic literature where Bhardvāja is known as the son of Brahaspati Āngiras.¹ Bharadvāja is said to be the name of the reputed² author of the sixth Maṇḍala of the Ṛgveda. The attribution is so far correct that Bharadvāja³ and the Bharadvājas⁴ are repeatedly mentioned as singers in that Maṇḍala.

In the Mahābhārata a Bharadvāja is noticed first of all in the Ādiparva, as among the sages who came to see the dead Pramadvā.⁵

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1. Ṛg Veda. vi. 2,10; 11,3.
 2. Āśvaśāyana Grhya Sūtra, iii. 4,2; Sankhayana Grhya Sutra, iv.10.
 3. Ṛg Veda vi. 15,3; 16, 5.33.
 4. Ṛg Veda vi. 10,6; 16,33, i. 59,7.
 5. Mahābhārata I.8. 23-24 (wife of the Bhrgu Ruru, who, owing to a serpent bite, had died in the prime of her youth. She was later revived by her husband).

A next significant passage in which a Bharadvāja occurs in the Mahābhārata, is the Yavakri to pākhyana in the Tīrthayātraparva of the Vanaparva. Here a story is told about a Bharadvāja's friendship with another ṛṣi, ṛṣi, Raibhya, and about the former's son Yavakrīta.

It is said that the learned Raibhya and the ṛṣi Bharadvāja were friends. Raibhya had two learned sons Arvāvasu and Parāvasu, while Yavakrīta was Bharadvāja's only son. Yavakrīta practised severe austerities in order to acquire vedic knowledge for himself and his father, and to gain esteem in the eyes of other brāhmaṇas. Finally due to his austere practices Lord Indra is said to have appeared before him and granted him the boon that the vedas should be revealed to him and his father and that he should excel other men. Ṛṣi Bharadvāja warned his son not to become proud and, uncharitable (due to the god's favours). However, Yavakrīta committed a sin by seducing the daughter-in-law of the ṛṣi Raibhya, in consequence of which he was killed by the latter. We are further told that upon hearing of his sons murder, ṛṣi Bharadvāja cursed Raibhya, saying that he should be killed by his eldest son. After cremating Yavakrīta, Bharadvāja himself entered the fire. Later, however the story unfolds to show that Bharadvāja and his

son Yavakrīta were both revived by Raibhya's son Arvāvasu.⁶

This episode in the epic appears to be a mythical one, having no real historical value. Yet, it serves a useful purpose - that of highlighting the activities of some members of the Bharadvāja clan of brāhmaṇas. The internecine rivalries of these members with other sages is brought out vividly through this episode. Further, it may be pointed out that the idea lying behind this story seems to be to convey a social message-that even eminent brāhmaṇas, well-versed in vedic lore, cannot escape the punishment for committing a sin (in this case the seduction of a brāhmaṇa woman).

In this context, it is important to point that the above mentioned story regarding a Bhavadvāja ṛṣi and his son Yavakrīta seems to have no earlier reference in vedic literature, and appears to be mentioned for the first time in the Mahābhārata.

Bharadvāja as an author and a seer is frequently referred to in the later Saṃhitās⁷ and the Brāhmaṇas.⁸ To return to the epic's narrative, a Bharadvāja is found

6. Mahābhārata. III. 135-138.

7. Atharvaveda. ii. 12,2; iv. 29.5.
Kāṭhaka Saṃhitā, xvi. 19; xx. 9.

8. Aitreya Brāhmaṇa, vi. 18.

mentioned again, though briefly, in the Bhīśmaparva. The Bhavadvāja here with Kṛtavarmah, the Vṛiṣṇi warrior, is said to be placed in the eyes of Bhīśma's Garuḍa-Vyūha (battle formation).

However, the most important reference to a Bharadvāja is found in the Mokśadharmaparva of the Śāntiparva, in the well-known discourse known as the Bhr̥gu-Bharadvāja Saṁvāda. This is a tractate on the philosophy of creation and Bhr̥gu is seen answering the various questions put forth by the inquisitive Bharadvāja. It is said that the Primeval Being Mānasa, created a lotus pregnant with Energy, i.e., Brāhman. Agni and Soma (the sun and the moon) are his eyes.

Upon Bharadvāja's query as to what is the extent of the firmament, Bhr̥gu answers that the firmament of space is infinite and is peopled with systems upon systems of self-luminous bodies (devāh) Bharadvāja asked how Brāhman created all things, and Bhr̥gu replies that first water, the life of all creatures, was created, and then came other elements. Bharadvāja enquired why all the elements (of life) are not seen in the immobile objects Bhr̥gu answered how all objects consist of all the five primal elements, but in each the proportions are different; as an example he adduced the trees which he shows to be not inanimate.

This philosophical discourse is an enlightening one for it discusses various issues of a religio-philosophic nature. An important point in the conversation is when Bhardavāja enquired on the true nature of life, and Bhṛgu explained that it is antarātman, i.e., that which ~~inhabits~~ the body. In death there is ~~no destruction~~ of the living agent: it is the body that gets dissolved.

Further, Bhṛgu outlines the order of creation by saying that the creator (Brāhman) first created only some brāhmanas, who were Prajāpatis, then came the Truth; then Devas, Daityas, Dāhavas, Gandharvas, Asuras, Yakṣas, Rākṣasas, Nāgas, Piśā-cas & men with their four divisions.

Here we have the theory of the origin of the four castes - brāhmanas (white), Kṣatriyas (red), Vaiśyas (yellow) and the Sūdras (black). Another important point to be noticed is that the Baradvāja seer seems unwilling to admit any original distinctions between the four castes. Bhṛgu admitted that initially the world consisted only of brāhmanas; gradually different castes arose Bhṛgu stressed the need for castes to remain righteous and dutiful to their respective varnas; and explained the consequences of righteousness of conduct, of gift giving, of penances, of

the study of the vedas, and of sacrifices, and discoursed on the four modes of life.

This is a unique passage which discusses religio - philosophic issues elaborately. It shows a Bharadvāja in conversation with another learned seer, expounding religious doctrines.

Sometimes it has been seen that the myths surrounding a brāhmaṇa clan seem to be any extended form of a somewhat similar myth from earlier times - the Bharadvājas' association with the royal house of Kaśi, and with king Divodāsa in particular, is one such instance.

In the Mahābhārata, Bhīṣma is shown telling Yudhiṣṭhira about the traditional enmity between the Haihayas and the kings of Kaśi. The sons of king Haihaya invaded Kaśi and slew the Kaśi monarch. This kept on recurring till Divodāsa came to the throne of Kaśi. He was an illustrious king who built the city of Vārāṇasi at the command of Indra. Again Haihayas attacked Divodāsa; the latter lost the battle and fled to the retreat of a sage named Bharadvāja who was his priest, and who performed a sacrifice in consequence of which a son Pratardana, was born to Divodāsa. Pratardana was a bright child and had mastered the Vedas and the Dhanuṣveda. The ṛṣi of the Bharadvāja clan it is said, aided by yoga,

had entered into the prince and caused all the energy of the universe to enter his body. Pratardana, we are told further in the narrative, ultimately slew all the sons of king Haihaya.

This legend about a Bharadvāja's association with king Divodāsa, and with Pratardana is not new to the epic. We have earlier traces of the same legend: For instance, the Pañcaviṃśa Brāhmaṇa⁹ says that a Bharadvāja was the Purohita of Divodāsa. The former's connection with the house of Divodāsa also appears from the statement of the Kāthaka Samhitā¹⁰ that Bharadvāja gave Pratardana the kingdom. The later Samhitās also refer to Bharadvājas.

This myth appears to have been slightly modified over time - till it is found in the Mahābhārata. In the Vedic references Bharadvāja is seen as the chief priest of king Divodāsa. In that capacity he may have even anointed the latter's son, Pratardana, as the next king. But the version of the story in the epic is more extended and elaborate. Apart from narrating the rivalries of the kingdoms of the Haihayas and that of Kāśi, we are told about the

9. xv. 3,7.

10. xxi. 10.

extraordinary spiritual powers of the Bharadvāja ṛṣi, his obtaining a son for the distressed Divodāsa in exile and then, through his yogic powers making Pratardana an unusually brilliant child, capable of vanquishing all his foes. Hence in the epic the Bharadvāja ṛṣi is shown playing an important role in the political strife between the Haihayas and the Kāśi kings and is not merely 'handing over the kingdom' to Pratardana as earlier sources indicate.

In the Vedic literature we find references to Bharadvājas relations with people called the Br̥bu, Br̥saya and the Pārāvatas.¹¹ Hillebrand¹² has pointed out that they are also connected with the Sr̥ñjayas. In particular the Śāṅkhāyana Śrauta Sūtra¹³ mentions that a Bharadvāja gained largesse from Prastoka Sārñjaya and Br̥bu. In the Mahābhārata, however, the Bharadvāja clan is shown to have intimate relations with the kingdom of Northern Pāñcāla. It is said that a ṛṣi Bharadvāja had friendship with Pr̥ṣata the king of Northern Pāñcāla, and the father of Drupada. As result, the sons of the two, Drona (son of ṛṣi Bharadvāja) and Drupada, were friends from boyhood. Yet Drupada,

11. Rg Veda. vi. 61,1-3.

12. Vedische Mythologie, i. 104.

13. xvi. 11,11.

inflated with kingly pride, insults Drona, and the later vows to avenge the insult. Hence Drona of the Bharadvāja clan, directs his pupils under Arjuna's leadership to conquer Pāncāla. This is done, and Drupada has no recourse but to concede half of his kingdom to Drona. The passage in the epic explains the cause of enmity between Drupada and Drona - the former a Kṣatriya of the royal house of Pāncāla, and the latter a brāhmaṇa of the Bharadvāja clan, who had adopted the kṣatriya mode of life.

Further, the Bharadvāja clan of brāhmaṇas is depicted to have developed close ties with the kauravas and the Pāṇḍavas as well. Ācārya Drona and his son Āsvatthāman were on close terms with the members of these royal families. The former being the guru (preceptor) of the sons of Pāṇḍu and ~~Dhṛtāstea~~ ^{Dhṛtāstea} in the arts of warfare. An interesting story about the birth of ācārya Drona is narrated in the Mahābhārata. It is said to be an instance of an unnatural birth (since Drona was not born of a woman, but from the seed of Bharadvāja preserved in a vessel).

It is said that the sage Bharadvāja got excited when he saw the beautiful nymph Ghṛtācī appear before him with a bare bosom.¹⁴ The seer of the Bharadvāja clan dropped his

 14. Mahābhārata I. 121. 1-5.

semen, which was put in a vessel called Droṇa, out of which was born a male child, later known as Droṇa, the renowned preceptor of the kurus and Pāṇḍus, and a brāhmaṇa embracing the life of a warrior. Epithets such as Bharadvāja guru Bharadvāja suta, and Bharadvājātmaja are applied to Droṇa in the Mahābhārata. The legend of Droṇa's birth is repeated several times in the epic.¹⁵

In still another place in the Mahābhārata¹⁶ one Srucāvati is reported to have been born of the outflowing seed of one Bharadvāja under similar circumstances. These legends of the Mahābhārata find a parallel in the old Indian literature where similar instances of unnatural births are recorded. The birth of Bharadvāja himself is a case in point. It is said that Br̥haspati, possessed with desire, approached his sister-in-law Mamatā, when she was pregnant with her husband's child (ie., Br̥haspati's brother Uśija)¹⁵. Mamatā rejected Br̥haspati's advances and refused to Cohabit with him. Out of desperation, Br̥haspati's semen fell in a pot-from this seed was born a male child, Bharadvāja.

In the same context, we may cite another legend from the Mahābhārata which highlights the extraordinary

15. Mahabharata I. 57.89.

16. Mahabharata IX. 47. 57-58.

capabilities of the Bharadvāja seers-viz., the handing over of the Āgneyāstra (afire missile) which is recorded in the epic¹⁷ Tradition holds that Brhaspati gave the Āgneyāstra to Bhardvāja, and Bharadvāja, gave it to Agniveśya, who handed it down to Droṇa (the latter is said to have imparted the weapon to his illustrious pupil, Arjuna).

A variant of the same legend is found a little later in the Droṇa-Parva.¹⁸ This is in respect of handing of a coat of mail (Varmā). Droṇa informed Duryodhana, in the wake of the fierce battle fought after Abhimanyu's death, that the coat of mail had a divine origin. In the hoary antiquity, elaborates the Bharadvāja preceptor of the Kauravas and Pāṇḍavas, Indra clad in that particular coat of mail, had fought Vṛtra and won the battle. Then, that coat was given to Āṅgiras who gave it to his son Brhaspati. The latter handed it over to Agniveśya, from whom it came to Droṇa. Ācārya Droṇa, with the muttering of potent mantras, passed it over to Duryodhana, so that Arjuna's shaft would not cleave his heart!

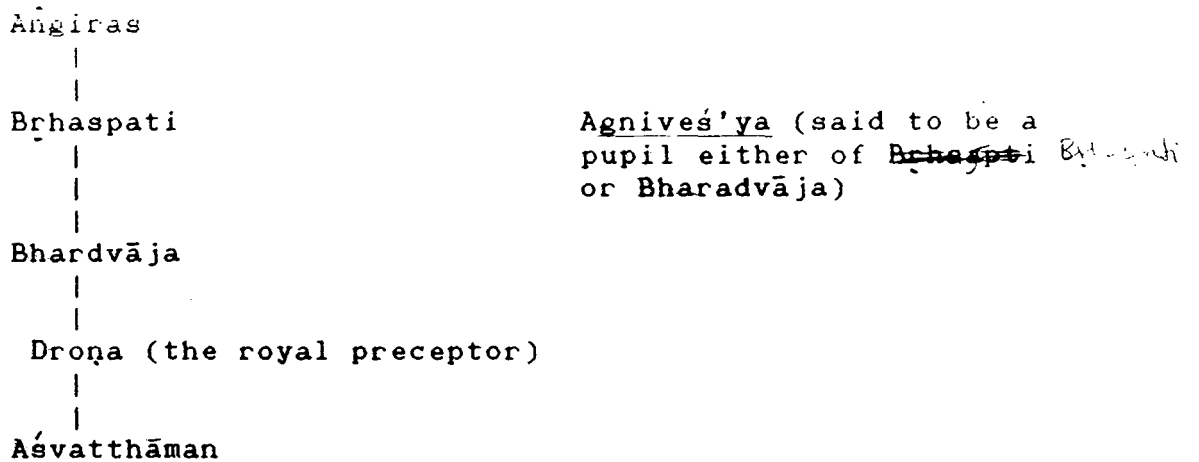
It will be noticed that here Brhaspati is mentioned as the preceptor of Agniveśya, while in the earlier version

17. Mahābhārata I. 158. 26-27.

18. Mahābhārata. VII. 69. 65-67.

Bharadvāja was. However, on both occasions, the preceptor-pupil relationship between Agnivesya and Droṇa on the one hand and between Droṇa and Arjuna or Duryodhana on the other, is found in conformity with the spirit of Mahābhārata legend as whole.

The following is a chart of the prominent members of the Bharadvāja clan mentioned in the Mahabharata.



A significant fact with regard to the Bharadvājas is that members of this clan were constant adherents to vedic sacrifices and were always well-versed in the Vedas and Śāstras, and maintained a long tradition of Dhanuveda (the science of archery). They excelled both in learning and in śāstra vidya, ie. playing of a martial role in war.

Members of the Bharadvāja clan are seen enunciating political doctrines and acting as advisors to their royal

patrons. A passage in the Mahabharata¹⁹ says that Brāh̥spati, Viśalākṣa, Kāvya (ie. Uśanas), Prācetas, Manu, Bharadvāja, Gaurasīras were Rāja Śāstra Praṇetārah (ie, the authors of the science of politics); and Brahmavadinah (knowers of the Brāhman). That a Bharadvāja was a teacher of politics is further supported by facts in the epic.²⁰ "A king should always have his danda (rod of punishment) ready. He should always show his prowess and have no weak points visible to others; rather he should see the weak points of others and pursue his foes taking the thread of those weak points. People are kept dreaded of the king who holds his danda always ready". Here the Bharadvāja sage is portrayed as an authority on statecraft. His bold pronouncements urge the rulers to be strong and ever vigilant.

The Bharadvāja clan emerges as an ancient and a reputed one in the Mahābhārata. It can be traced back to the Vedic literature, where Bharadvāja is known as the son of Brāh̥spati Angiras—a contention which is found repeated in the epic.

There are several important references to this clan in the Mahābhārata, some of who are mythical, having no real

19. Mahābhārata XII. 58.2-3.

20. Mahābhārata XII. 138. 7-9.

historical value. For instance the Yavakritopākhyana (in the Vanaparava) serves to highlight the activities of some members of the Bharadvāja clan. The episode focuses on the mutual jealousies of these seers, as well as it conveys a social message, i.e. everyone including eminent brāhmaṇas, cannot escape the punishment for committing a sin. The story is important for it seems to have no earlier reference and appears to be mentioned for the first time in the Mahābhārata.

The Bhṛgu-Bharadvāja Saṁvāda in the Śāntiparva is a unique tractate on the philosophy of creation, where Bhṛgu is seen satisfying the curiosity of the inquisitive Bharadvāja, and discoursing on religio philosophic issues.

It has been noticed that some of the myths surrounding the Bharadvāja clan seem to be an extended form of a somewhat similar myth, which continued from earlier times. The Bharadvāja's association with the royal house of kaśi, especially with king Divodāsa is one such instance of an elaborated myth in the Mahābhārata. The epic account, apart from stating that Bharadvāja was the priest of king Divodāsa, goes on further to narrate the former's spiritual excellence, his helping his patron much when the latter was in exile and obtaining an extraordinarily bright son for his

king. Hence the Bharadvāja ṛṣi is portrayed as playing an active role in the political strife between the Haihayas and the kingdom of kaśi.

Another trait of the Bharadvāja clan which comes to light in the Mahābhārata is that they are shown to be intimately associated with some ruling dynasties of the time the kingdom of Northern Pāñcāla, as well as the Kaurava and Pāṇḍava houses; with the latter in the form of Droṇa, who became the preceptor of the young sons of Pāṇḍu and Dhṛtrāṣṭra.

Still another legend which highlights the extraordinary capabilities of the Bharadvāja-^{seer}~~seer~~ is recorded at two places in the epic—first in the Ādiparva and then in the Droṇaparva. The legend, which is with regard to the handing over of a celestial weapon to Droṇa, by eminent ancestors, is slightly different in the Droṇaparva. In the Ādiparva Bharadvāja is mentioned as the preceptor of Agniveśya, a learned seer, while in the 2nd version Bṛhaspati is. What is emphasized, however, is the preceptor-pupil relationship, who is a striking feature of the Mahābhārata legend as a whole.

The Bharadvāja's are shown to have consistently performed the Vedic sacrifices, to have mastered the Vedas

and Śāstras as well as the Dhanurveda (the science of archery) ie they were accomplished both in Vedic learning, as well in the arts of warfare. That they were learned seers is evident when we see Bharadvājas enunciating political doctrines and acting as advisors to their royal patrons. For this reason, a passage of the Mahābhārata mention a Bharadvāja as proficient in the science of politics, viz. a 'Rāja Śāstra Pranētārah; and a knower of the Bráhmaṇ, the supreme being or a 'Brahmavadinah'.

Hence, the Bharadvāja's are seen as important personalities in the epic, exercising a social, religious and political influence on its course of events.

THE GOTAMAS

An important clan in the Mahābhārata is that of the Gotamas are men several times in the R̥gveda,¹ but never in such a way as to denote personal authorship of any ~~human~~^{hymn}. A ~~rsi~~^{rsi} Gotamas also occurs in two passages of the Atharv^{va}veda.²

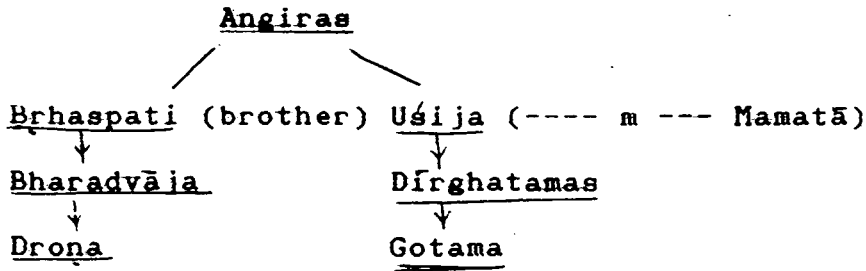
The earliest reference to a r̥si of this clan is in the Ādiparva, when r̥si Gotamas, along with several other seers, came to bemoan the fate of the brāhmaṇa Ruru, whose wife Pramadvarā had died of a serpent bite.³

In the same parva we are informed that Gotama was the eldest son of Dīrghatamas and Pradveshi.⁴ Then follows an interesting legend to explain why Dīrghatamas was thus named. It is said that the rsi Uśija's wife Mamatā was pregnant with his child, when she was approached by Uśija's brother Bṛhaspati. She declined to cohabit with him for the obvious reason that she was already bearing a child. When Bṛhaspati forcibly tried to unite with her, the child in Mamatā's womb, who had acquired the Vedic knowledge while

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1. R̥g Veda, i 62, 13, 78, 2; 84; 5; iv 4, 11.
 2. Atharva Veda ihv 29,6; xviii. 3,16. Bṛhadāranyaka Upaniṣad, ii.2.
 3. Mbh I. 8.23-24.
 4. Mbh I. 104. 21-23.

yet unborn, prevented him from doing so. Enraged, Brah̥aspati cursed the unborn child that he would be born blind-hence the name Dīrghatamas.

This legend helps us trace Gotama's genealogy as well as it tells us about the circumstances in which his father was born. We are also told that Gotama belonged to the race of Aṅgiras and that his grandfather Uśija and sage Brah̥aspati were brothers. The following chart would make the above stated contention clear.



That Gotamas belonged to the race of Aṅgiras is a fact which seems to be echoed in the Vedic literature also. It appears that the Gotamas were closely connected with the Aṅgirases, for in the R̥gveda, the Gotamas frequently refer to Aṅgiras.⁵ The Vedic literature further says that a Gotamas bore the patronymic Rāhūgana.⁶

5. R̥gveda i. 62, 1; 71,2; 745;.

6. R̥gved. i. 78,5.

To return to the Mahābhārata we find another reference to Gotamas in the Ādiparva itself when it is said that Gotamas with his brothers threw their father Dīrghatamas into the Gaṅgā !⁷

The clan of Gotamas is portrayed as a considerably reputed clan of seers by the epic bards. Whenever a Gotama ṛṣi is mentioned in the narrative, it is usually with the intention of imparting a teaching to the epic characters thereby highlighting a particular trait of the ṛṣis of the clan.

In the Sabhaparva⁸ kṛṣṇa while describing the city of Magadha to Arjuna points out that it was at Magadha that the rigid vowed Gotama had kākṣīvat and other sons by Uśīnarāś daughter, a Sudra woman - Auśīnarī. This is the reason why, kṛṣṇa explained, the race of Gotama stayed at Magadha and paid homage to the rulers of the kingdom of Magadha.

It is worth noting that the clan of Gotamas has been brought in indirectly in the narrative here and has been connected with royal family of Magadha. The incident has no actual bearing on the progress of the narrative and may proved to be diversion from the actual story. However the

7. Mbh. I. 104.34-35.

8. Mbh. II. 21.5-6.

implication of the statement appears to be that the ṛṣis of the clan of Gotamas had made Magadha their home since an eminent ancestor of theirs had lived there. The Gotamas resided happily in Magadha and were on friendly terms with the Magadhan kings, who, in all probability, might have generously patronised them.

In this connection, it may be recalled that in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa,⁹ a Gotama ṛṣi appears as the domestic priest or purohita of one Māthava Videgha, and as a bearer of Vedic civilization. He is also mentioned in the same Brāhmaṇa¹⁰ as a contemporary of Janaka of Videha and Yājñavalkya.

Hence the discrepancy between the Vedic and the epic accounts becomes clear. In the former Gotamas are associated with Videha - as contemporaries of king Janaka and Yājñavalkya; while in the latter they are depicted to be on cordial terms with the monarchs of Magadha. So the epic account differs from the Vedic as far as the royal patronage to the Gotamas is concerned.

In this chapter, the intention is to focus attention on the activities of the Gotama seers, on their claims as

9. i. 4, 1, 10; xi. 4, 3, 20.

10. xi. 4, 3, 20.

sages, on the various legends surrounding them, on their relations with the ruling dynasties of the time and on the space occupied by them in the various parvas.

To move on to the next reference to the Gotamas, we find in the Vanaparva that the forest of the ṛṣi Gotama is mentioned as a beautiful place and as a centre of veneration. It is said that bathing in the Ahalyā lake one attains perfection.¹¹

This passage illustrates the esteem and respect the ṛṣi had come to enjoy as a result of his penances, devotion and piety.

The epic does not have anything worthwhile about the ṛṣi until we came to the Śantiparva, which contains two interesting legends regarding the Gotamas.

The first one is called the kṛtaghnopākhyāna¹² or 'the story of the ingratitude of Gautama,' and was related by Bhīṣma. It runs thus—Gautama was brahmana devoid of Vedic learning, who began living in a village of aborigines and made his livelihood by practising archery and even robbery at times. However, he was urged by a brāhmaṇa friend to give up

11. Mbh. III. 84.108.

12. Mbh. XII. 168-171.

that sinful life. Gautama repented, and set out in search of earning wealth.

On the way he met Rājadharmān, the king of Cranes (son of kaśyapa), who directed Gautama to his friend, Virūpakśa, the chief of the Rākśasas. Gautama reached the city of Meruvraja, where he was welcomed by Virūpakśa. The latter, gave enough wealth to Gautama, who returned and met Rājadharmān. But since he had no food to live on by the way, he decided to slay Rājadharmān. Having done so, Gautama fled. ^{However,} ~~He~~ he was caught by the Rākśasas sent by Virūpakśa and brought to Meruvraja. The Rākśasas refused to eat the flesh of that great sinner, so he was hacked into pieces and given away to the robbers. But even the robbers refused to eat the flesh of that vile man.

Nevertheless, Rājadharmān, revived by divine powers, upon being requested by him, Indra restored Gautama also to life. The legend continues to say that Gautama came back home and he got many sinful children upon his sūdra wife. According to a heavy curse denounced upon him by the gods, the legend concludes, he afterwards, had to sink into a terrible hell for many yrs !!

The story illustrates the life of a brāhmaṇa of the clan of the Gotamas, his sinful exploits, his association with mythical beings - the king of cranes and the chief of

the Rākṣasas, and his final damnation in hell. The question that arises now is, how is the legend relevant for our purpose. It should be remembered that the legend is narrated in the Śāntiparva of the Mahabharata - a section of the epic which is a rich mine of information on the art of governance. Hence, through the medium of this story, Bhīṣma is desiring to impress upon Yudhiṣṭira the bad consequence of leading an evil and a sinful life. Even the brāhmaṇa Gautama had to suffer indignities in this world, as well as incur the displeasure of the gods due to his greed for wealth.

Further, in the story Gautama is seen interacting with divine figures, like Indra, as well as with mythical creatures. We are further informed that though a brāhmaṇa himself, (of the family of Gotamas) he had a sūdra wife. The legend does not appear to have a historical background and is intended to serve as an advice to the Pāṇḍava.

The next legend with regard to the Gotamas which is recorded in the Śāntiparva highlights absolutely divergent traits of a sage, of this brāhmaṇa clan. In the Mokṣadharmaparva, Yudhiṣṭhira is seen asking Bhīṣma when one should act speedily or with delay while deciding an important issue. In reply, Bhīṣma recounts the story of what occurred with respect to the wise Cirakārin, the son of

Gotamas of the race of Angiras (Āngirasekule) who came to be called thus he used to reflect long upon all matters and was regarded an idle and a foolish person. It is said that Mahaṛṣi Gotamas, who was the foremost of the practisers of yoga, witnessing an act of grave misconduct in his wife Ahlyā (who was defiled by Indra) in wrath, commanded his son Cirakāṣin to slay her. He, himself, departed for the woods. As a punishment, Gotama even cursed Indra to wear a green beard. However he only cursed the king of gods for the sake of righteousness, he did not hurt Indra !

Meanwhile, Śirakārin dwelt long on the issue and finally decided that his mother was innocent, since Indra had come to her in the form of her husband. When Gotama returned from the forest after many days, repenting for this hastiness in ordering his wife to be killed, he was overjoyed to see her alive. He blessed his son for the latter's wisdom. It is said finally, that Gotama ascended to heaven with his son !

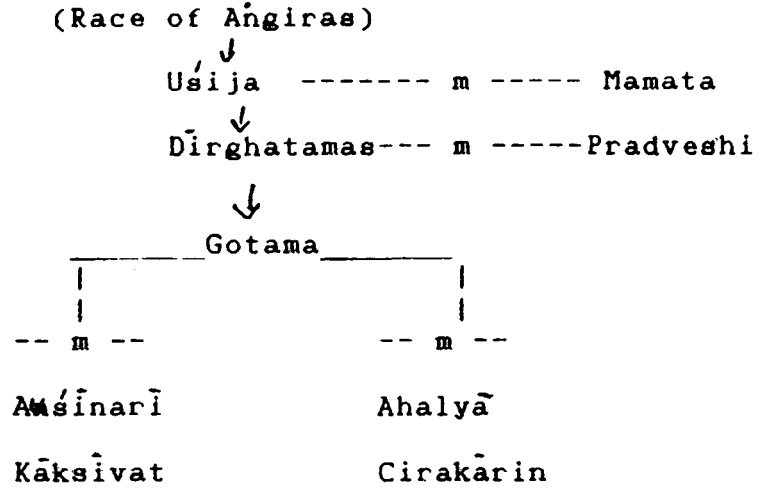
Again, the objective of narrating this myth appears to instruct Yudhiśthira about the merits of reflecting long and not being hasty while deciding important issues.

By an analysis of both the myths, relating to Gotamas in the śānti¹ we find that the two have some features in
Purva

common. firstly, the purpose of both seems to be allegorical - i.e., advising the king on various matters connected with life. He is advised not to lust for wealth (in the former myth) and the example of Gotamas is adduced to show how such evil and greedy persons suffer eternal perfdy and damnation through the second story, the purpose is to instruct the monarch to think well before making a decision.

The legends here are symbolic and provide a means the attainment of a goal. Of doubtful historicity, they, nevertheless, project the Gotamas sages to be in constant interaction with gods and men alike. In both Indra plays a vital role. Interstingly, rsi Gautama is depicted as performing diametrically opposed functions in both the legends as an evil character in the first, who sank into Hell for his misdeeds and as a maharsi in the second, who was the foremost of the practisers of yoga, and attained to the regions of the highest bliss. The yogic element in the latter myth is evident since we are informed about the sage's mastery over it and his being a perfect practiser of yoga.

At this stage it would be appropriate to draw a table of the important members of the clan of Gotamas, as they figure in the Mahabharata a task ^{which} who has been facilitated by the narration of the two myths.



The next significant mention of the Gotamas is made in the Anuśāsanaparva. It tells us that upon being questioned by Yudhiśthira regarding the holy places on earth Bhīśma repeated their enumeration as made by Āṅgiras to Gotama (who had put the same question to the former). He named the various tirthas and mentioned the meritorious results of bathing in candrabhāga, Puśkara, Hiranya bindu, Gangādvāra, Devikā and Narmadā. For the purpose of repairing to all the tirthas in the world, one should mentally think of those among them that are wholly or almost inaccessible. Āṅgiras has obtained this discourse from Kaśyapa, and imparted it to Gotamas. The passage illustrates the spiritual inclination of the Gotamas, and the idea that the highest knowledge had been obtained by them, through eminent seers like Āṅgiras and Kaśyapa.

The last important ref to Gotamas is made in the Aśvamedhikapara. Asked by Janamjaya about the penances of ṛṣi Uttanka, Vaiśampāyana related that Uttanka's preceptor Gotama, having permitted thousands of disciples to return home, was so pleased with Uttanka's devotion that he would not dismiss him even after hundreded years and decrepitude over-took Uttanka. However, one day Gotamas permitted Uttanka to leave him when he perceived signs of old age in the latter. So much was his admiration for his disciple that he said he was highly gratified in having Uttanka as his pupil, and refused to take any fee (dakṣīna) from the latter. Later, however, Uttanka having gained youth once more, married his preceptor's daughter.

This story, connected with ṛṣi Gotama portrays him as a venerable sage, a practiser of Yoga and possessing virtues like knowledge (Jñana) and righteousness.

Among the descendants of Gotamas in the Mahabharata kṛpa and his sister kṛpī (or Gautami) are worth mentioning. In the earliest literature, the Gotamas are mentioned in several passages of the Ṛgveda,¹³ Vāmadeva and Nodhas being specified as sons of Gotamas. They include the Vājaśtavases. Further, the patronymic Gotamas is applied to the sages

13. Rgveda i. 60,5; 61; viii. 88,4. Asvatayana Sruta Sutra, xii. 10; Weber, Indische Studies, 1,170,180; Geldner, Vedische Studien, 3, 151, 152.

Aruna,¹⁴ Uddālaka Āruṇi,¹⁵ Kusri¹⁶ Sāti¹⁷ and Hāridrumata¹⁸ in the earlier literature.

To go back to the Mahabharata it is stated that kṛpa and kṛpī are among the epic characters who belong to clan of Gotamas. In a legend in the Mahabharata, the birth of these twins is narrated.¹⁹

It is said that once when Gotamas Sāradvata saw an Apsara alone, out of exhilaration he dropped his semen; a portion of which was contained in a lotus leaf, while the other portion fell outside. Out of the two portions were born Kṛpa and Kṛpī, who were taken under his care by the Kuru Sāntanu. Kṛpa became a teacher of the Kuru princes and kṛpī was married to Droṇāchārya.

What is significant about this myth is that it connects a member of the Gotama clan with the royal house of the Kurus. Kṛpa, the myth regarding whose birth links him to a

14. Satpatha Brahmana x. 6,1,4.

15. Ibid, xi. 4, 1. 3; 5; 1,2. Chandogya Upanishad, V.3,5; Kausitaki.

16. Satpatha Brahmana x. 5,5,1.

17. Vamsa Brahmana in Indische Studien, 4,373.

18. Chandogya Upanishad, iv. 4,3.

19. Mbh. I. 120. 12ff.

Gautama r̥ṣi, grows up to become an eminent teacher of the Kuru princes.

To conclude the Gotamas are seen to have occupied a considerable space in the Mahabharata the largest no of references to them are found in the Ādiparva, while the others are scattered in the epic and are not very many. There are legends who project the Gotamas as belonging to the race of Āṅgiras. This aspect seems to find a parallel in the Vedic literature, where the Gotamas appear to be closely connected with the Āṅgirasas. In this respect the Mahabharata account seems to have borrowed from the Vedic myth.

Further, the Gotamas sages are said to have close links with the city of Magadha, since one of their esteemed ancestors had resided there. AS a result, the later generations of the clan stayed at Magadha, and held the kings of Magadha the highest esteem. Therefore, the clan of Gotamas is depicted to be inclined, towards the royal family of Magadha. Besides, we are also told that a descendant of the Gotamas kṛpa, became the teacher^(ācārya) of the Kaurava and Pāṇḍava princes. In this manner, a Gautama is seen to be closely associated with the two main royal families of the Mahabharata. These two instances point to wards the geographical location of the clan at the time, as well as

their political inclinations. It should be remembered that the vedic literature gives a different story. It mentions Janaka of Videha and Yājñavalkya as contemporaries of the Gotamas. Hence the difference in both the accounts regarding the royal patronage to the Gotamas has been clearly brought out.

The legends surrounding the Gotamas in the Śāntiparva, are in fact, meant as lectures to Yudhiśthira by Bhīśma on leading a pure and meritorious life, and on dealing with problems with patience, fortitude and wisdom. Introduced in the epic, these legends highlight various traits of Gotama seers, and show their interaction with men and divine beings alike. The yogic element in some myths is clearly brought to the fore when we are told that the Gotama seers are proficient in yoga practices.

Most of the legends associated with the Gotamas in the Mahabharata portray them as seers enjoying a high regard and esteem of the people, as a result of their piety, devotion and penances. Most of the sages are 'rigid vowed', given to righteousness and the practice of Dharma. Then the myths seem to lack historical conviction, yet the Gotamas emerge as venerable sages, practising yoga and possessing virtues like spirituality and knowledge (ie Jñana).

The Kāśyapas

The clan of the Kāśyapas is enveloped in legends in the Mahabharata. Ṛṣi Kasyapa is mentioned as a prajapati and the son of the Marīci (who is said to be a spiritual son of Brāhman).

If we scan the earliest literature we find that Kāśyapa is the name of a sage, who is mentioned only once in the R̥gveda¹, but is a common figure in the later saṁhitās.² He is always of a mythical character, as belonging to the distant past.

According to the Aitareya Brāhmaṇa³, he anointed king Viśhvakarman Bhauvaṇa. In the Upanisads,⁴ he is mentioned as a Ṛṣi. The Kāśyapas also appear in connection with Janamejaya in the Aitareya Brāhmaṇa.

However, the Mahabharata has different tales to narrate regarding this clan.

In the Ādiparva, we are told that the daughters of Prjapati, Kadṛū and Vinatā, obtained from Kāśyapaḥ, their

1. IX. 114.2

2. Sāmaveda, i.1,2,4,10; 4,2,3,2.
AV. i. 14,4; ii 33,7; iv. 20,7; Maitrāyaṇī Saṁhitā, iv. 2,9

3. VIII, 21. Satapatha Brāhmaṇa, xiii.7,1,15.

4. Brāhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad, ii. 2.6.

husband, the boon to get offspring. The ṛṣi ordained that kadrū would have one thousand snakes as her children, while Vinatā would be the mother of 2 sons - Aruna (who, afterwards is said to have become the charioteer of the sun) and Garuḍa. The 2 sons of Vinatā were to surpass kadrū's 1000 sons in valour and glory.

Ṛṣi Kaśyapa is said to be the father of all creatures. In the Ādiparva it is stated that Marīci's sons married the 13 daughters of Dakśa. He became the progenitor of all beings including the gods ^{and the Asuras. Upon the best of} and the daughters of Dakśa, i.e. on Aditi, Kaśyapa begat the Ādityas. Some call him Kaśyapa, while others Ariṣṭanemi. His status is further elevated by the fact that he is said to have received from Brāhman the knowledge of neutralizing poisons.⁵

It is apparent from these legends that Kaśyapa is regarded as the father of beings and is thus revered.

The birth of Vinatā's son Garuda is a favourite legend with the epic bards, and we find it occupying a considerable space in the Ādiparva itself.

Earlier it had been stated that Kaśyapa granted his wives the boon to beget children. A little later in the same

5. Mbh. I.20.16.

parva we are told that kaśyapa hosted a sacrifice in order to have a son. AT this sacrifice which was performed by kaśyapa, Lord Indra, out of arrogance and a sense of self pride, insulted the Vālakhilya ṛṣis. The latter cursed Indra, and predicted that there would arise another Indra, who would equal the former in all respect. Kaśyapa, however, acted as the mediator between the ṛṣis and Indra and propitiated the former. Nevertheless, the ṛṣis' prophecy proved true, Since kaśyapa begat on Vinatā an Indra of the winged creatures (viz. Garuḍa).

This, again, is a repetition, since the story behind the birth of Garuḍa, Kaśyapa's son is narrated though the circumstances stated in both accounts in the Ādiparva, show a slight difference.

The story of Kaśyapa being the father of Garuḍa is found again in the Udyogaparva, where it is stated that he, through Vinatā, was the progenitor of the Suparṇas (through Garuḍa) as well as of the serpents (through Kadrū). It is again stated that both Garuḍa and Indra are the sons of Kaśyapa.

Ṛṣi Kaśyapa is found involved in another very significant legend in the Mahabharata that of Rāma Jāmadagnya's strife against the Kṣatriyas. The first reference to this effect is found in the Ādiparva, where we

are told that Rāma Jāmadgnya, gave the whole earth to Kaśyapa⁶. The story unfolds to show that the Bhārgava Rama had 'cleared the earth' of the Kṣatriyas, thrice seven times, and presented the whole earth to Kaśyapa.

Further in the epic, in the Bhīśma and Drona Parvas Kaśyapa is mentioned constantly in connection with the story of Rāma Jāmadagnya. After Rāma had slaughtered all the ~~Kaśyapas~~ ^{Kṣatriyas} on earth, he was filled with remorse. Then, kaśyapa performed a sacrifice for the Bhārgva, in which he received from Rāma a golden alter, eighteen ^{nalas} ~~males~~ high, as well as the earth. Moreover, at Rāma's horse sacrifice, Kaśyapa was gifted with 100,000 elephants. After that the story goes on; Kaśyapa ordered Rāma Jāmadaghya to go out of the boudaries of the earth !

The story shows ṛṣi Kaśyapaṣ in close association with a prominent Bhārgava hero. We are told about how he assisted the Bhārgava at the latter's sacrifices (after he had massacred all, the Kṣatriyas), and received as dakṣiṇā the 'earth with her oceans'.

That this myth of the Bhārgava Rāma is very popular with the epic bards, is further confirmed when it appears in an elaborated form in the śāntiparva.

6. Mbh. I. 131. 38.

In this account, it is stated that after Kaśyapa had ordered Rāma to quit his territory and repair to the bank of the Southren ocean, Rāma look up his abode in a place called sūrpāraka. kaśyapa gave the earth to the brāhamaṇas. When the earth had sunk to the Rasātala, Kaśyapa. held her on his lap. The earth begged the sage to grant her a king. Kaśyapa, then, sought out those Kṣatriyas who had been preserved and installed them as kings.

The legend of the Bhārgava Rāma is repeated very often in the epic. In each account, some details are added. However, Kaśyapa is found playing an active role in all these accounts through out the Mahābhārata the sage is shown in the guise of a benefactor and a peace maker. It was he who brought order to a society ravaged by Rāma's whole sale destruction of the Kṣatriyas. Kaśyapa is seen instrumental in creating a congenial environment for the kṣatriyas to once again rule the earth without fear. Kaśyapa is portrayed as Rāma's guide and advisor. He is also shown performing extraordinary tasks like preventing the earth from sinking further into the RAs̄tala.

The greatness of ṛsi Kaśyapa is emphasized once again in the Śāntiparva, when it is said that the original gotras were only four - viz, Aṅgiras, Kaśyapa, Vasistha and Bhṛgu; and that the other have been due to the penances of those

that have founded them. So kaśyapa is esteemed as one of the early predecessors of all beings.

To proceed further in the epic, we find in the Anuśāsana parva (Anuśāsanikaparva, bisastainyo - pākhyāna) that kaśyapa is mentioned as a maharṣi and the master of yoga.

In the Pavan Arjun Samvāda of this parva, there is another story about Kaśyapa which highlights the sage's unusual yogic powers. It is said that once a king named *Anga* wished to give away the whole earth as daksīnā to the brāhmanas. The goddess of the earth, then, left this king and his kingdom to meet with destruction and departed for the region of Brāhman. Leaving his body by way of yoga (samāhita), kaśyapa then entered the earth, which, penetrated by kaśyapa, grew in prosperity and righteousness for 30,000 celestial years. Then the goddess came to Kaśyapa and became his daughter.

The legend shows the sage's interaction with a divinity—the goddess of the earth—and focusses on the unusual spiritual powers and yogic excellence of Kasyapa.

So, in the Mahābhārata the sage is mentioned as a maharṣi, one of the founders of the original gotras and master of Yoga. The earlier literature shows him as

mythical sage belonging to a hoary past. Nothing of important can be gleaned from the vedic literature as far as this brāhmaṇa clan is concerned. The Mahābhārata ^{account} ~~text~~ weaves a number of legends around the Kaśyapa clan, and we are informed, through different myths, how he became the progenitor of the gods, the Aśurās, the suparnas, and the serpents.

Kaśyapa is again brought to the fore when the exploits of the Bhārgava Rāma are narrated in the epic. At various instances in the Mahābhārata, when the legendary, massacre of the Kṣatriyas by Rāma Jāmadagnya is reported, ṛṣi kaśyapa is shown performing sacrifices to purge the former of his guilt. He is depicted as Rāma's guide and counsellor in these accounts.

The clan of Kaśyapas is not found to be directly related to either the Pāndava or the Kaurava houses, yet the sage is present on all important occasions in the epic's story, viz, at Arjuna's birth, is mentioned among the esteemed figures present in the palace of Brāhmaṇ (when that palace was being described in the Sabhaparva); he is among the munis who eagerly await the arrival of Yudhiṣṭira at various ^{holy} ~~By~~ places (vana parva), and is even seen surrounding the Kuru warrior, Bhīṣma, when the latter lay on a bed of arrows in the battlefield.

The clan of the Kaśyapas assumes importance when the creation of the universe and all beings is described in the epic. He is said to have fathered the different races of men, demons and animals. Kaśyapa comes to exercise an indirect influence on the epic's narrative, since he plays an important role in the myths and legends contained in it.

THE VASIṢṬHAS

A very eminent brāhmaṇa clan is that of the Vasiṣṭhas ^{which} who occupies a considerable portion of the epic's narrative space. The sage Vasiṣṭha appears at several places in the Mahābhārata and we find varied epithets applied to him at different places. He is known as Āpara, as Arundhatīpati (the hurb of Arundhati), Hairanya garbha (son of Hiranyagarbha, ie. Brāhman), Maitrāvārūṇi (son of Mitra and Varuṇa), Vārūṇi (son of Varuṇa,) Brahmaṛṣi and Dēvāṛṣi. He is also referred to as the father of the well-known Parāśara and the great grandfather of Vyās the brāhmaṛṣi who is supposed to have composed the Mahābhārata, initially. Vasiṣṭha is called 'Sreṣṭhaḥ' (eminent) among ṛṣis and is one who had kāma (desire) and krodha (anger) under his control,¹ since 'vaśa' means to subdue, he was thus called because he had subdued his senses.

It will be seen that the clan of Vasiṣṭhas has earned repute and glory not only in the Mahābhārata but in the earlier literature as well. Vasiṣṭhas is the name of one of the most prominent priestly figures of vedic tradition. The 7th Maṇḍala of the Rgveda is ascribed to him, this ascription is borne out by the fact that the Vasiṣṭhas² and

1. Mbh. I. 55.14.

2. Rv. vii. 7.7; 12,3;23,6.

Vasiṣṭha³ are frequently mentioned in that maṇḍala, besides being sometimes referred to elsewhere. One hymn,⁴ in particular seems to show clear traces of Vasiṣṭha's authorship. Besides, there are numerous other references to Vasiṣṭha as a ṛṣi in the Vedic⁵ literature, in the sūtras,⁶ and in the Epic, where he and Vasiṣṭhas fight out their rivalry.

The Ādiparva informs us that Ganga's eight sons by her husband Sāntanu were, in fact, the Vasus who were reborn on earth as human⁷ beings, as a result of a curse of the sage Vasiṣṭha. The myth elaborates to show that the Vasu Dyans, who had stolen the homadhenu of Vasiṣṭha (the wish-fulfilling cow Nandinī, used by Vasiṣṭha for his home rituals) was cursed along with the other Vasus to take birth on earth in the world of men. Dyans was cursed as one who will not be delivered from the earthly life, whereas, the curse would leave the rest after 1 year of their birth Dyans was destined to be vasu as Bhīṣma, we are told who would be noble minded, learned in the Śāstras, renowned for his

3. Rv. vii. 9,6,; x: 65, 15.

4. Rv. vii. 18.

5. Mbh. I. 67.75.

6. Av. iv. 29,4.

7. Weber, Indische Studien, 10,89-92.

filial devotion, and would remain celibate. A little later in the Ādiparva it is stated the Bhīśma learned the Vedas,⁸ with their Āngas from Vasiṣṭha⁹!! Hence here Vasiṣṭha is depicted as the preceptor of Bhīśma.

The treatment of the clan of Vasiṣṭhas in the epic brings them, very often, into conflict with Kṣatriyas—first with Viśvāmitra, then with Kalmāśāpād. The traditional and inborn rivalry between the brāhmaṇa and kṣatriya, the former being proud of their spiritual knowledge and vedic learning, and the latter, considering themselves master of the earth by virtue of their physical prowess, is the theme of the episodes related to Vasiṣṭha and Viśvāmitra in the epic.

In the Ādiparva is narrated the famous story of Viśvāmitra encountered with the kṣatriya Viśvāmitra⁹ the latter's forcible seizure of Vasiṣṭha's wish-fulfilling cow Nandinī and upon Viśvāmitra's high-handedness, Nandinī's rout of the king's army. It is pointed out that Vasiṣṭha's patience, forbearance, righteousness and brāhmaṇic learning is secretly admired by his enemy Viśvāmitra, who realises that the real strength lay in tapasya and forgiveness. Therefore, becoming disgusted with his

8. Mbh. I. 100. 35.

9. Mbh. I. 177. 1-55.

Kṣatriya, ^{Power} ~~status~~ he renounces his kingdom to become an ascetic.

The legend further unfolds to show that Viśvāmitra becomes a ṛṣi, but is determined to avenge his defeat and insult at the hands of Vasiṣṭha. Hence he makes use of king Kalmāsapāda to get Viśvāmitra's sons killed. King Kalmāsapāda, we are told, had a quarrel with Śakṛ (the eldest of Vasiṣṭha's 100 sons) and had been cursed by the latter. Viśvāmitra, in a wily manner, causes a ~~N~~ākṣasa to possess Kalmāsapāda; Kalmāsapāda, then, devours Śakṛ and the other sons of Vasiṣṭha up on the instigation of Viśvāmitra.¹⁰

The epic legend continues to state that the grief stricken Vasiṣṭha tried to commit suicide but hearing of his daughter-in-law (Śakṛ's widow) being quick with child, he refrained from his purpose.

There is another side to legend, which brings Vasiṣṭha in contact with king Kalmāsapāda. Kalmāsapāda had, at one time, been cursed by a brahman woman - that he would die while ~~cont~~habiting with his wife.

So, Vasiṣṭha is shown to magnanimously deliver Kalmāsapāda

10. I. 178. 1-49.

from this curse. He then begets a son for the king and his queen Madayantī. The son was named Aśmaka, we are told, and was the founder of the city called Paudanya.¹¹

Hence, it will be noticed that the conflict between the barhman Vasiṣṭha and the Kṣatriyas-turned-brāhmaṇ Viśvāmitra serves to fulfil an important purpose. It highlights the age-old rivalry between the two upper castes of the Hindu society, each attempting to secure for itself power and social prestige in the epic narrative we are inclined towards the brāhmaṇ Vasiṣṭha, who is shown to bear misfortune (the loss of his sons), hatred and enmity (of Viśvāmitra with grace and endurance - thus, in a way, demonstrating the superiority of the brāhmaṇ in relation to his Kṣatriyas counterpart. The sage Vasiṣṭha even does so much as procure a son for the distressed king Kalmāsapāda, so that the latter might continue his race.

At this point in our discussion it would be useful to see when the myths relating Vasiṣṭha with Viśvāmitra and Kalmāsapāda have an earlier reference or are introductions in the epic itself.

While examining the Vedic literature, the most important feature of Vasiṣṭha's life that emerges is his hostility to

11. Mbh. I. 122.21-22; I. 179. 1-47.

Viśvāmitra. It is said that the latter was certainly¹² at one time the Purohita (domestic priest) of Sūdās (Kalmāsapāda probably), but he seems to have been deposed from that post, to have joined Sūdās enemies, and to have taken part in the onslaught of that kings against him, for¹³ *the* hymn of Sūdās' triumph has clear references to the rain Viśvāmitra brought on his allies.

Regarding the strife of Vasiṣṭha and Viśvāmitra, Geldner finds in the *Rgveda*¹⁴ a compressed account, indicating, the rivalry of Śakti, Vasiṣṭha's son, (we see the difference in the name) with the Viśvāmitra, the acquisition by Viśvāmitra of special skill in speech, and the revenge of Viśvāmitra, who secured, the death of Śakti by Sūdās's servants; and account to which reference seems to be made in the brief notices of the Taittiriya Saṃhitā.¹⁵ and the Pañcaviṃśa Brāhmaṇa.¹⁶ Vasiṣṭha's sons having been slain, and his overcoming the Saudāsas. But it is important to note that no mention is made in these authorities of Sūdās himself being actually opposed to Vasiṣṭha while in the

12. Rv. iii. 33.53.

13. Rv. vii. 18.

14. Rv. iii. 53, 15.16.

15. vii. 4,7,1. In iii. 1,7,3.

16. iv. 7,3;viii. 2,3.

Vasiṣṭha

Aitareya Brāhmaṇ¹⁷ appears as the purohita and consecrator of Sūdas. Some recognized Viśvāmitras as the purohita of Sūdas; this accords with what seems to have been the general idea in the Vedic literature that Viśvāmitra originally held the post. Probably, however, with the disappearance of Sūdas, Viśvāmitra recovered his position, it is started and Vasiṣṭha in revenge for the murder of his sons secured in some way unspecified the defeat of the Saudāses.

An analysis of the legends brings to light the discrepancies noticed between the Vedic and epic accounts. In the former case, Vasiṣṭha, Viśvāmitra and Sūdas (Kalmāsapāda) are seen juxtaposed against one another, the two sages holding by turns the post of the king's purohita. The theme of enmity between Vasiṣṭha and Viśvāmitra is repeated in the Mahābhārata account but here the cause of strife is different that of Vasiṣṭha cow Nandini. As a consequence, Viśvāmitra's adoption of brahmanhood is narated in dramatic terms in the epic account. Another variation between the two accounts is that whereas in the Vedic literature Viśvāmitra is shown acquiring special powers of speech, and geting Vasiṣṭha's son Śaktr eliminated with the help of Sūdas's servant the Mahābhārata states a different manner in where

17. vii. 34,9.

Viśvāmitra got Vasiṣṭha's sons killed — that of causing a rākṣasa to possess king Kalmāsapāda, thereby annihilating Śakṛta and his brothers. However, in both versions there is no mention of Sūdas or king Kalmāsapāda being himself opposed to Vasiṣṭha; whatever happens is due to the craftiness of Viśvāmitra.

So, the rivalry of ^{Vasiṣṭha} and Viśvāmitra is a theme which has continued from the Vedic times to the Mahābhārata, with certain variations.

The myth involving the ^{sage} Vasiṣṭha and king Kalmāsapāda goes a step further in the Mahābhārata. Here, Vasiṣṭha is shown to generously pardon the king and beget a son for the continuation of the king's race. This aspect of the myth appears to be a later addition, which is noticed for the first time in the epic, having no such earlier reference elsewhere.

To return to the epic's narrative for a study of the clan of Vasiṣṭha, we see in the Vanapara¹⁸ Vasiṣṭha being mentioned among those ṛṣis who had become of pure souls by virtue. "It was adherence to Dharama that made pure souls of Vyāsa, Vasiṣṭha, Maitreya, Nārada Lomaśa, Suka and other". For this reason, visiting the āśrama of

18. Mbh. III. 31.12.

Vasiṣṭha, Badarī pācana, was like going to a tirtha !!¹⁹

In the Udyogaparva, Vasiṣṭha's again been juxtaposed with his traditional rival, Viśvāmitra.²⁰ However, here Vasiṣṭha remains in the background since the tale focusses primarily on Viśvāmitra's attainment of brahmanhood. The story of the confrontation between the two sages is again narrated in the Śalyaparva, and the effects of discussion between the brāhmaṇa and Kṣatriyas are emphasized. The story ends with Viśvāmitra setting his heart on ascetic austerities and rejecting the Kṣatriyas status.

While discussing the brāhmaṇa clay of Vasiṣṭha in the Mahābhārata, it is important to take note of the religious ideas propounded by these seers. Vasiṣṭha's discourse on 'Vidya' and 'Avidya' acquaints us with the religiophilosophical views held by him in the epic. In the Mokṣadhāra parva of the Śāntiparva. Vasiṣṭha opines that "Yogins have a great regard for the Sāṅkhya system as also for the Vedas; in the Sāṅkhya system of philosophy no principle transcending the twenty fifth is admitted; in the Yoga, it is said that the Brāhmaṇa becomes the personal soul (jīva) only when invested with ignorance. In the Yoga

19. Mbh. III. 83.179-181.

20. Mbh. V. 106. 1-27.

scriptures both Brāhman of Jīva are spoken of?" Vasiṣṭha further discourses on 'Buddha' and 'Abuddha', a knowledge he is said to have received from Hiranyagarbha himself (the first born being of ~~Creation~~, or the 'unborn'.)

In this narrative in the Śāntiparva, Bhīṣma says that "this knowledge was obtained by Vasiṣṭha from Hriṇya garbha; from Vasiṣṭha it was handed over to Nārada and from him to me" (ie. Vasiṣṭha obtained the sacred knowledge from Hriṇya garbha, who in turn passed it down to Bhīṣma).

This passage highlights the spiritual knowledge of Vasiṣṭha. His study of the Yoga and Sāṅkhya system of philosophy makes him appear as a thoroughly learned and eminent brāhman of the epic. It is for this reason that Vasiṣṭha finds mention among the 7 ṛṣis named Citrasikhaṇḍins²¹ in the Mahābhārata (these are Maricā, Atri, Aṅgira, Pulastya, Pulaha, Kratu and Vasiṣṭha; they were the first persons who had composed a comprehensive code of conduct in order to regulate the law in society).

To proceed further in the epic, the story of Viśvāmitra's destruction of the 100 sons of Vasiṣṭha and his becoming a brāhmaṇa is once again repeated in the Anuśāsana Parva. Upon Yudhiṣṭhira's queries this story is

21. Mbh. XII. 322. 26-27.

narrated by Bhīṣma to the Pāṇḍava. In the same parva, Vasīṣṭha, who is depicted as the purohita of Saṁdāsa (Kalmāṅgapāda) is portrayed instructing Saṁdāsa about the merits of gift giving. Hence, there is not only a repetition of an earlier contention - Vasīṣṭha being Saṁdāsa's priest, but there is a further elaborating in the form of the sage's advice to the king. According to Vasīṣṭha the most productive of merit accrued from the gift of kine. Vasīṣṭha discoursed on the pre-eminent sancity of ^{kine} kine and on the diverse merits attached to gifts of different kinds of kine. "Those who gift a thousand kine, departing from this world would proceed to the region of the Gandharas and Apsaras, where there are many palatial mansions of gold. By giving a Kapila cow, one succeeds in entering the palace of Yama that is so different to enter. Honouring these words of Vasīṣṭha, Saṁdāsa made gifts of a very large number of kine unto the brahman and attained to many worlds of felicity in the next life".

Further, Vasīṣṭha is seen emphasising the view that apart from gifts of kine, those persons observant of righteousness who make gifts of gold are regarded as giving away all the deities since gold is considered to be very auspicious. By liberally donating gold, one attains to the supreme region of bliss. Vasīṣṭha is seen addressing Rāma

Jāmadagnya in this manner and urging him to donate gold to purify himself from the sin of killing the Kṣatriyas. Rāma Jāmadagnya accordingly, made gifts of gold to the brāhmaṇ and became cleansed of his sins, thus attaining, to a high place in heaven that is, not easily attainable by men.

This legend in the Anuśāparva has no corollary in the Vedas. However a rivalry of with Jamadagnya is reported in the Taittirīya Saṃhita.²² This myth shows in conversation with a legendary figure, Rāma Jāmadagnya, renowned for his martial exploits. The idea behind incorporating such a legend in the Mahābhārata becomes clear, when we analyse that it was intended to persuade the people to donate generously kine, gold, and anything they held valuable. But doing so it was said not only pleased the Brāhmaṇa, (ie. God) but was also assured a place in heaven.

The brāhmaṇa clan of Vasiṣṭha is shown in the Mahābhārata to have had associations with king Viśvāmitra of the family of Kuśika & with king Kalmāṣapada. Apart from these two royal personages Vasiṣṭha is depicted to be on close terms with the Ikṣvāka royal family. It is said at one place in the epic that Vasiṣṭha became the purohita of Saṃvataṇa the Ikṣvāka king and helped him to reconquer his kingdom²³ (when

22. iii. 1,7,3,.

23. Mbh. I. 94.45-46.

Samvarana was driven away from his capital city by enemies) By having Vasistha as his priest, the Ikṣvāku king achieved success and the dynasty earned glory and fame. Vasistha performed for them all their varied yajñas. It is said that as Brhaspati was the gods purohita, so was Vasistha the king's purohita !

This passage in the Mahābhārata, apart from exhibiting the seer's closeness with a royal dynasty, seems to fulfill another purpose—that of serving as an advice to the Kṣatriyas - ie. they ^{should} always appointed as their purohita a noble Dharma -practising, sense subdued, Dharma - Artha - kama knowing brāhmaṇa. "First a brāhmaṇa then the world", goes the wise teaching.

Further, Vasistha is portrayed as performing a sacrifice for the Kuru in Kutrukṣetra, according to the Salyaparva. Though no more details of the sacrifice are given, yet ^{we} ~~the~~ can infer that the royal family of Kurus must have developed intimacy with the Vasisthas, which who enabled their sage to perform sacrifice for the Kurus.

So the Mahābhārata shows the Vasisthas interacting with several royal families that of the Kurus, Samvarna, that of the Kusika Visvāmitra, and Kalmāsapāda. Going back to the Vedic literature we find the Vasisthas being closely

associated with the Bharatas. There is evidence²⁴ that of the Bharatas had the Vasisthas as purohitas, while other versions²⁵ regard them as purohitas for people (Prajah) generally. It seems that the Vasisthas were pioneers in adopting the rule that purohitas should act as the Brāhmaṇa priest²⁶ at the sacrifices: the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇas²⁷ states that the Vasisthas were ^{once} the only priests to act as Brāhmaṇas but that later any priest could serve as such.²⁸ However, what is important to note is the fact that it ^{is} from the Vedic literature, the Vasisthas are shown to have relations with the Bharatas. The Mahābhārata further confirms this contention by portraying the Vasisthas on cordial terms with the Ikṣvākus and the Kurus.

Certain myths regarding the Vasisthas in the Mahābhārata seem to be simply taken over from earlier times, while some are innovations in the epic itself. For instance, the myth regarding ^{Vasistha} being the son of Mitra Varuna is a direct import from the Vedic literature. According to Pische²⁹ in

24. Pancavimsa Brahmana XV. 4, 24.

25. Taittiriya Samhita, iii. 5, 2,1.

26. Vasistha was the brahmana at the sacrifice of Sunahsepa, Aitareya Brahmana, vii. 16.

27. xii. 6,1,41.

28. Sadvimsa Brahmana, i.5.

29. Vedische Studien, 2,35.

a particular hymn,³⁰ Vasistha appears as attempting to steal the goods of his father Varuna, Geldner³¹ here shows that the Rgveda³² contains a reference to Vasistha being a son of Varuna and the nymph Urvasi. Perhaps this explains the fact that the Vasisthas are called the Tritsus in one passage of the Rgveda,³³ for being of miraculous parentage, Vasistha would need adoption into a gotra, that of the princes whom he served, and to whom Agastya seems to have introduced him.

The following is a chart of the prominent members of the Vasistha clan mentioned in the Mahabharata.

Vasistha (---- m ---- Arundhati)
 Sakṛ (---- m ---- Adṛsyantī)
 Parāśara (---- m begot Vyāsa on Satyavati, the Fisherman's daughter)
 Vyasa

At this juncture in our discussion a note may be made of some illustrious members of the clan of Vasistha.

Parāśara was a ṛṣi who was the son of Sakṛ and Adṛsyantī and the father of Vyāsa. He begot Vyāsa on

30. Rv. vii. 55.

31. Vedische Studien, 2, 138.

32. Rv. vii. 33,11.

33. Rv. vii. 83,8.

Satyavati (as the chart indicates). The Ādiparva³⁴ tells us why Parāśara was so named—~~as~~ the narrative has it that Vasiṣṭha refrained from, killing himself after his sons death, when he learnt that his daughter-in-law was bearing a child in her womb. Hence the child was named Parāśara since he had hindered Vasiṣṭha, his grandfather, when the later was parāśu (ie. resolved upon self-destruction) so Parāśara was the "transformer" (of Vasiṣṭha).

In the same vein it is stated that Parāśara, since childhood, regarded Vasiṣṭha as his father. But once he came to know from his mother that vasiṣṭha^{father} was his grandpa²¹ and not his father as he had supposed. Disillusioned and angry, Parāśara decided to destroy the whole universe. However, we are told that the "Veda-wise, strictly-ascetic Vasiṣṭha son of Mitrāvaruṇa, learned in skilled arguement" dissuaded him from doing so.

The son of Parāśara, Vyāsa, occupies an important place in the epic, for the obvious reason, that he is the supposed compiler of the Mahābhārata. Vyāsa is the father of Dhṛtarāṣṭra, Pāṇḍu and Vidura (with the wives of Vicitravīryā and with a Sūdra woman respectively). Vyāsa's proper name was Kṛṣṇa. One account of his being born on an

34. Mbh. I. 180. 1-9.

island (dvīpa) he is called Draipāyana. The Mahābhārata tells us the reason for the ṛṣi's being called Vyāsa - he had arranged the Vedas, hence he was called Vedavyāsa or Vyāsa. Vyasa had taught his disciples the Vedas, of which the Mahābhārata was the fifth one.

The sage comes on the scene at various intervals in the epic to discourse on different aspect of religion, life and death, or is seen performing various sacrifices. For instance, the Satyaratīṣṭh is seen acting as the brahmana priest at the rājasūya sacrifice of Yudhiśthira in the Sabhaparva. The sage's deep learning and eminence is brought to the fore when he is shown prophesing the destination of the Kuru house after 13 yrs !!

However, the most important aspect of Vyāsa's role in the Mahābhārata seems to be his spiritual knowledge, his frequent discourses on Nara and Nārāyaṇa the two supreme deities of the Hindu religious pantheon.

From the very beginning, we are informed that Vyāsa through his extraordinary insight, had known that Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna were the incarnation of Nara and Nārāyaṇa. Vyāsa is seen expressing this view several times in the epic and even Bhīṣma is made to proclaim that he had heard of the glory of Kṛṣṇa from Vyāsa.

In the Drona ^{Parva} Vyāsa is seen narrating the story of Nārāyaṇa to Aśvatthāman. The sage proceeds to say that Nārāyaṇa took birth as the son of Dharma, and practised severe austerities on the Hīmavāt for ~~1000s~~ ^{thousands} of years. He thus became Brāhman (brahmabhūtaḥ), and praised the supreme deity Siva, in order to gain the latter's favour. Siva, gratified, granted Nārāyaṇa the boon that no creature in the universe - be it the gods, the Asuras, the Pisācas, the Gandharvas, men, the Rākṣasas, the birds, the Nāgas—should ever be able to withstand his prowess. Vyāsa further adds that Nārāyaṇa then walked over the earth as Kṛṣṇa Vāsudeva, beguiling the universe by his illusive power from the austerities of Nārāyaṇa, Vyāsa continues, was born a great muni Nara, who was equal to Nārāyaṇa himself. Arjuna was none other than that Nara. The sage concludes by saying that the two ṛsis are said to take their births in every Yuga (age) for the benefit of the world !!

The above legend serves to fulfil a significant purpose. Not only does it highlight Vyāsa's spiritual pre-eminence to have realised the true nature of Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna, but it also helps in creating an aura of sanctity over the two protagonists of the Mahābhārata. It makes them appear as other - worldly beings, different from and having an edge over, the other mortals, for they are supposed to be Nara and Nārāyaṇa incarnate. Kṛṣṇa is stated to be the

creator of everything, he is eternal, and should be adored with sacrifices, since he is worthy of the highest regards.

Later in the epic (śāntiparava) it is stated that Vyāsa himself was an incarnation of a portion of Nārāyaṇa and that he had learnt from Nārada the Skāntagati, i.e., the religion of Nārāyaṇa and had taught it to Yudhiṣṭhira !

It is worth noticing, nevertheless, that both Parāśara and Vyāsa make their appearances on important occasions in the epics narrative - be it Yudhiṣṭhira's coronation, or the heavenly palace of Indra or Brāhman, or the battle field of Kurukṣetra when Bhīṣma lay on a bed of arrows. While discussing the legends surrounding the Vasiṣṭhas, we come across some instances where the Vasiṣṭhas are related with gods and are shown to perform unusual feats. In the Pavana Arjuna Samvada of the Anuśāṅkya Parva Vayu (or wind) is depicted narrating an achievement of the ṛṣi Vasiṣṭha once the gods, performing a sacrifice at the Vaikhānasa, lake thought of the ṛṣi Vasiṣṭha. Seeing the gods emaciated and reduced in consequence of the dīkṣā, the gigantic Dānavas named Khalins desired to slay them. The Dānavas attacked the gods, who repaired to Indra. Indra sought Vasiṣṭha's help, who burnt the Khalins and caused the Gaṅga, who had gone to Kailāsa, to penetrate the lake thus arose the river Sarayū, the place came to be named after the Khalins. The account ends with

the favourite line - "Name though a Kṣatriya superior to Vasistha".

This myth appears to have no historical base. It merely attempts to depict the extraordinary prowess of the ṛṣi Vasistha, who is seen as a saviour of the gods from the Dānavas.

To conclude, the Vasisthas emerge as a powerful clan of brāhmanas in the Mahābhārata. Their antecedents can be traced back to the vedic literature, where they are frequently mentioned. There are number of myths surrounding these clan, these myths show their gradual evolution from the earliest times to the epic period where they are seen to have firmly established their identity.

There are various myths surrounding this clan, who are encountered in the Mahābhārata. Some seem to be simply taken over from earlier times like the one regarding Vasistha being the son of Mitrā and Varuna. Some relate the sage Vasistha to gods, and show his interaction with the devās - like the one dealing with Gaṅga's 8 sons, the Vasus, being born on earth due to ^{Vasistha's} ~~V's~~ curse. This myth also shows Vasistha as the preceptor of Bhīṣma. There is another myth in the Anuśaṅgaparva ^{which} shows Vasistha accomplishing unsung tasks - like saving the gods from the clutches of the Dānavas. Then, there are legends which highlight the

internecine rivalry of Vasīṣṭha with Viśvāmitra. Conflict and mutual enmity is the theme of the episodes relating Vasīṣṭha to Viśvāmitra, and then to Kalmāsapāda. Regarding the strife of Vasīṣṭha and Viśvāmitra, we have found numerous references in the earlier literature. There are some differences between the vedic and epic accounts. but it is noteworthy that the traditional rivalry between the two sages seems to be a theme who has continued from the Vedic time into the Mahābharata. Regarding Vasīṣṭha's relations, with Kalmāsapāda, it has been seen that there is another myth in Anusāsana parva which shows Vasīṣṭha accomplishing unusual tasks like saving the gods from the terror of the Dānavas.

Then there are legends in the narrative ^{which} who emphasize the spirituality and learning of Vasīṣṭha. For instance Vasīṣṭha's discourse on 'Vidya' and 'Avidya' on 'Buddha' and 'Abuddha' highlights the philosophy/learnings of the sage. His views on the yoga and sāṅkhya systems of philosophy makes this section of the narrative appear yogic in nature and highlights some useful teachings of the sage.

Another legend ^{which} who is narrated in the Anusāsana parva shows Vasīṣṭha in association with Rāma Jāmadaguya, instructing the latter to make liberal donations, to purge himself from the sin of annihilating Kṣatriyas. This legend,

whose historicity is doubtful, seems to have appeared very briefly in the earlier literature. ^{The} account in the Mahabharata is more detailed and purposeful—the idea being to promote gift giving and donation by the people to the brahmins.

Further, the clan of Vasishṭhas is portrayed to have developed close ties with a number of royal families the Kurus, the Ikṣvāka king Samvarāṇa, with the a Kuśika Viśvāmitra and king Kalmāsapāda. ^{Very} ~~Vasishṭha~~ often the sage is shown to have intimate relations with the royal patrons except in the case of Viśvāmitra).

Hence, the Vasishṭhas are depicted as surrounded by a number of myths, some yogic some highlighting their spirituality, while some showing their interaction with men, kings and gods. Very often, the myths do not seem to have a historical base and appear to be introduced in the narrative in order to emphasize the greatness of clan.

THE AGASTYAS

This clan of brāhmanas also finds mention in the Mahābhārata, though not very frequently in the vedic literature, Agastya is the name of a sage of mythical character, who plays an important part in the later literature. He was a Māna¹ and therefore is called Mānya² and a son of Māna. Only once is there a reference³ to the legend prevalent in later times that he was a son of the gods Mitra and Varuna. A variant of, the word Agastya, 'Agasti' occurs once in the Atharvaveda,⁴ where he appears as a favourite of Mitra and Varuna. In the Mahābhārata, the parentage of Agastya is repeated as the same from earlier sources, and he is referred to as Maitravaruṇi, as well as Kumbhayoni ("born in a Jar").

The earliest reference to a rsi of the Agastya clan is found in the Ādiparva of the Mahābhārata. The rsi Agastya's skill in the science of arms is alluded to when it is said that Drona's teacher Agniveśya was a pupil of Agastya in the Dhanurveda.

1. Rv. vii. 33, 10 (Agastya), 13 (Mana)

2. Rv. i. 189,8; 117,11.

3. Rv. vii. 33, 13.

4. Av. iv. 9,3.

The next mention of an Agastya muni is in the Vanaparva. It is said the ṛṣi once saw his ancestors hanging in a cave. They urged Agastya to give up a life of celibacy and to procure progeny, in order to deliver their souls from eternal perdition. Ṛṣi Agastya, then created a woman, Lopāmudrā from the most beautiful parts of all the animals and let her become the daughter of the king of Vidarbha, ~~he~~^{and}, then married her. She became the mother of his son, Dr̥dhasyu. The epics narrative goes on to say that the place where Lopāmudrā, chose Agastya as her husband came to be revered as a great tīrtha⁵ (which was visited by the Pāṇḍavas in exile).

The epic myth concerning the union of Agastya with Lopāmudrā finds an antecedant in the Ṛgveda. In the Ṛgveda,⁶ Agastya appears in a strange dialogue with Lopāmudrā, which appears to show him as an ascetic who finally yields to temptation.

Comparing the two myths, we find that the epic myth is an elaborate and modified version of the Ṛgvedic one. In the latter, we are explicitly told, about the creation of Lopāmudrā by Agastya himself, about her being made the

5. Mbh. III. 130.6.

6. Rv. i. 179.

princess of Vidarbha, about her refusal to consummate the marriage until Agastya was able to secure worldly comforts for her. Agastya's compliance with his wife's wishes, and the birth of their son, Dr̥dhasyu. The later myth also enables us to form an idea about the probable geographical location of the Agastya clan i.e. around the region of Vidarbha, though rsis of this clan are said to have travelled to as far off areas as the southern part of India.

The Mahābhārata narrates a few feats of the sages of this clan. A rsi Agastya is shown to be a fiery ascetic, who prevailed upon the Vindhya mountain to cease to increase in height, "till he had returned from the south", and drunk up the sea (and digested it), in order that the gods might overcome the Kālakeyas (the anti-gods).

However, the earlier literature recounts different accomplishments of Agastya rsis, which are not mentioned in the Mahābhārata. His greatest feat ^{is} ~~was~~ shown to be the reconciliation of Indra and the Maruts, after Indra had been annoyed at his proposing to give the maruts an offering to the exclusion of Indra. This feat is the subject of three hymns of the Ṛgveda, and is often referred to in the Brāhmanas.

In another passage of the Ṛgveda,⁷ an Agastya ṛṣi appears as helping in the Aśvins gift of a leg to Viśpalā.

By examining these different legends associated with the Agastya ṛṣi, we find that the legends have knit up stories to portray these ṛṣis as men capable of performing difficult and extraordinary tasks. These legends inspire awe for these sages, who are shown accomplishing near improbable tasks - viz drinking up the ocean, ordering the mountain to stop increasing its height, and placating the angry gods !

While examining the brāhmaṇa clan of Agastya, in the Mahābhārata, we are struck by the occurrence of a theme which seems to be a favourite one for the epic bards - that of the traditional hostility between the kings and munis. A sage Agastya is said to have cursed king Nahuṣa to become a serpent for ten thousand years, as Nahuṣa had insulted the ṛṣi. The king's misconduct invited the sage's wrath which spelt doom for the king. This story appears first in the Vanaparva, and later in the Udyoga parva of the Mahābhārata.⁸ The intended lesson of such passages in the epic is the imminent danger of ill-treating a brāhmaṇa. A brāhmaṇa's anger and curse were always to be avoided.

7. Rv. i. 117, 11

8. Mbh. III. 179. 14. V. 17. 1-22.

The next reference to an Agastya muni is seen in the Anusāsana parva. Here the sage is seen advising that invincible warrior Paraśurāma, to purify himself by liberally donating gold, after the latter had caused the whole some destruction of the Kṣatriya race.

Further, in the Pavan Arjuna Samvāda of this parva, we are once again reminded of the extraordinary powers of the rsi called Agastya. The passage talks of a time when the gods, harassed by Asuras and Dānavas, and robbed of their sacrifices, were wondering over the earth, when they met the brāhmaṇa Agastya, who at their request burnt the Dānavas. However he spared those Dānavas and Asuras who had taken shelter under the earth. They were not burned Agastya could not destroy them, lest his penances should suffer an diminution. The narrative ends with the typical line "Name though a Kṣatriya that is superior to Agastya" and seems to have been introduced in the epic to emphasize the martial skills of the sage.

It has already been pointed out that not only in the Mahābhārata, but also in the Vedic literature Agastya is depicted as the offspring of Mitra and Varuṇa. Another myth which has continued from earlier times is the one which shows Agastya as the brother of Vaśiṣṭha—both being

miraculous sons of Mitra and Varuna. In the R̥gveda,⁹ Agastya as brother of Vaśiṣṭha is shown introducing Vaśiṣṭha to the Tr̥tsus (a people). The Mahābhārata too, repeats the idea of the two being brothers.

After a perusal of the Agastya clan in the Mahābhārata, we find that the clan is in no way directly related to the actual activities of the dynasties of Kauravas and Pāṇḍavas. A narration of the exploits feats of its sages are brought in by way of digression and do not actually have a bearing on the political events of the epic. The Agastya sage, however, is always seen to be present, along with a host of other such personages, on important occasions and events in the epic's narrative. Hence we find him appearing on the scene at the time of Arjuna's birth; in the Sabhaparva when Yudhiṣṭhira is shown entering his palace, or he is present in ~~the~~^{the} palace of Indra or of Brāhman, when that heavenly palace is being described; or among the r̥sis who escorted Yudhiṣṭhira on his pilgrimage (tīrthayātrā); even among the sages who came to see Bhīṣma when the latter lay on a bed of arrows in the battlefield of Kurukṣetra.

The seers of the Agastya clan are, therefore, portrayed as tough, powerful and haughty seers in the epic. They are

9. Rv. vii. 33, 10.13.

shown as ever ready to help the troubled gods, and it seems they symbolise the triumph of good over evil for the epic bards. Yet they are feared by their royal patrons for their wrath for they are deemed capable of throwing any one to a life of eternal damnation for any act of disrespect towards them.

Some myths concerning the Agastyas in the Mahābhārata seem to be contribution from earlier times such as his being the son of Mitra and Varuṇa, his being the brother of Vaśiṣṭha, and even his association with Lopāmudrā seem to find earlier references though in the myth related to Lopāmudrā, the Mahābhārata account is more detailed and modified.

The sage is shown performing extraordinary tasks and humbling the gods (Indra) and kings (Nahusa) alike. The great yogic and spiritual excellence attained by the ṛṣi is brought out vividly through the various myths associated with him.

THE ATRIS

This is an important brāhmaṇa clan. In the Mahābhārat, Atri is mentioned among Brāhman's spiritual sons. He is a sage who is said to have accepted the eternal religion laid down in the Vedas. In the first important reference to this clan, the Mahābhārat says that Atri had many sons, all of whom were 'siddhāh' and maharṣis. They were deeply learned in the Vedas and were great rsis of 'serene soul and ascetic fulfilment'.¹

It is further stated that Vidura (the son of the ṛṣi Vyasa by a śūdra woman) was 'the most virtuous of virtuous men, a man like the god of justice himself and was the excellent fortune favoured son of Atri'.²

The above passage affords a description of the sages of this brāhmaṇa clan. Though Atri's sons are not named, we are nevertheless informed that all of them were maharṣis and of deep learning and wisdom.

It should be be remembered that Atri is a mythical sage. Neither Atri himself nor the Atris can claim any historical reality;³, beyond the fact that in the earliest

1. Mbh. I. 66.6.

2. Mbh. I. 67.87.

3. AV. ii. 32.3; iv. 29,3.

references to this clan, we find that Mandala Vth of the R̥g Veda is attributed to the family of the Atris.⁴

The references to the sage are not very frequent in the epic. Where ever Atri is invoked, or mentioned in the Mahābhārata, it is very often, as part of a mythical story, which has been introduced in the epic as a digression to the main narrative.

For instance, in the Vana Parva occurs a story of Atri and king Vainya. Mārkaṇḍeya⁵ narrates the tale of Atri. It is said that once the rājarsi Vainya was performing the horse-sacrifice. Atri desired to ask for wealth from the king, but felt hesitant to do so. Nevertheless persuaded by his wife, he went to Vainya and praised him as the foremost of sovereigns and the ruler of their destinies. At this, the rsi Gautama blamed Atri for flattering the monarch, and said that it was Indra who was the foremost of sovereigns and the ruler of their destinies. The matter was referred to pious Kaśyapa, who together with Sanatkumāra (another rsi), said that the brāhmaṇa and Kṣatriya ought to act together and that the king might rightly be styled as Atri had done. King Vainya, then, richly rewarded Atri - a thousand maid

4. Rv. V. 39, 5; 67,5.

5. Mbh. III. 185

servants, hundred millions of gold (coins), and ten Bhāras of gold. Having given this wealth to his sons, Atri retired to the forest.

This myth highlights some important issues related to the Atris. Firstly, Atri is seen discoursing with Gautama as to who is to be styled the foremost of sovereigns. Ultimately, he has his say in the argument, since even Kaśyapa opines that it was the ruler of the earth (in this case rājaṁsi Vainya) and not lord Indra, who was the foremost of monarchs. Secondly it is significant to note that the underlying idea behind this discourse is to stress the unity of brāhmaṇas with Kṣatriyas. They should hact together, it is emphasized. For this reason, it is necessary to regard the king as the master of the subjects destinies, the purpose being to promote due regard for kings. Further, amity between the two higher classes, the brāhmaṇas and Kṣatriya was imperative for the growth of social harmony.

Also, in this section of the narrative, Atri is seen to cultivate the friendship of king Vainya. Though we cannot ascertain the historicity of the story, yet what is important is to note that the sages often found it difficult to live in isolation. Poverty, or some other personal need compelled them to approach kings and ask for the latter's favour. The myth of Atri and king Vainya seems to be new to

the epic and we do not find it mentioned earlier.

In the Vedic literature, the Atris as a family probably stood in close relations with the Priyamedhas⁶ and Kaṇvas⁷, perhaps also with Gotamas⁸ and Kāksīvatas⁹.

Further, in a R̥gvedic hymn of the fifth Maṇḍala, the rivers Paruṣṇī and the Yamunā are mentioned in connection with the Atris - a contention which leads us to presume that the family was spread over a wide extent of territory.

To return to the Mahābhārata, in the Pavan-Arjuna-Sāmvāda of the Anuśāsana Parva is a legend about Atri is narrated, where he is seen playing a crucial role in a battle between the Gods and the Dānavas.

It is said that once the gods and the Dānavas were fighting each other in the dark. Rāhu pierced both Sūrya (the sun) and Soma (the moon) with his arrows. The gods repaired to the brahmaṛṣi Atri, who becoming the moon and the sun, dispelled the darkness and burnt the Asuras, who were now slain by the gods ! In this tale, the sage Atri is

6. Rv. i. 45, 3; 139,9.

7. Rv. i. 118,7, v. 41,4.

8. Rv. i, 183,5.

9. Rv. . 143,1.

shown helping the gods against the Dānavas and securing the former's victory.

To sum up the clan of Atris is shrouded in myths in the Mahābhārata and appears to lack historical certainty, a view which is reinforced by the evidence of the vedic literature where the clan is portrayed as a mythical one.

Regarding the legends associated with the Atris, the important ones have been narrated in order to point out the various traits of the sages of the clan. They are shown as following and revering the Vedas and as being pious and virtuous seers. At one place Atri is seen discoursing about the pre-eminence of the king, thereby stressing the need for everyone, including the brāhamaṇas, to respect and honour their monarch. In turn, king Vainya is shown patronising the sage by lavish gifts.

In still another section of the Mahābhārata, Atri is found accomplishing extraordinary deeds as assisting the gods in their fight against the demons. Hence, whereas in the former myth, the sage, was interacting with kings and rsis in the latter narrative, a totally different aspect of his character is discussed, viz., his relations and nearness to the gods. The former myth highlights Atri's learning argumenative skill and ideas regarding kingly power and the

latter shows him performing extra-ordinary feats. These references to Atri do not find a parallel in the earlier literature."

The Atris do not occupy a large space of the epic, neither do they seem to interact with the actual protagonists of the Mahābhārata. They are mentioned in some legends, where they are shown playing a crucial role. Such legends purport to deviate from the main narrative and show the Atris interaction with gods, Asuras, kings, and ṛṣis.

Significantly, Atri the follower of the Vedas, finds mention among the ṛṣis who are named Citrasikhaṇḍins¹⁰ in the Mahābhārata i.e. among the first persons who had composed a comprehensive code of conduct to regulate the law and maintain order in society.

10. Mbh. XII. 322. 26-27.

THE VIŚVĀMITRAS

An eminent clan of the brāhmaṇa is that of the Viśvāmitras. Viśvāmitra is the name of a rsi who is mentioned in the R̥gveda¹, and to whom the ^{third} Mandala is attributed by tradition. In one hymn² of the R̥gveda, which appears to be Viśvāmitra's own composition, he praises the rivers Vipās' (Beas) and Śutudrī (Sutlej). There he calls himself the son of Kuśika, and seems unquestionably to be the helper of the Bharatas, whom he mentions. The hymn states that the tribe, engaged in a raid, apparently came to the rivers from the east. Anxious to cross them, they found the rivers in high flood, but Viśvāmitra, by prayer, induced the waters to subside. The same feature appears to be referred to in another passage of the R̥gveda.³

The Viśvāmitras are mentioned in several other passages of the R̥gveda⁴, and are also designated as a family by the term Kuśikas.⁵

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1. As a son of Kuśika in RV. iii 33,5; as Viśvāmitra in iii. 53,7.12.
 2. iii. 33. Ludwig, Translation of the R̥g Veda, 3, 121, thinks the hymn too poetical to be a real composition of the reputed author.
 3. iii. 53, 9-11. This hymn is probably later.
 4. iii. 1,21; 18,4; 53, 3.
 5. RV. iii. 26, 1.3; 29, 15.

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Looking at the Mahābhārata, we find that the Viśvāmitra occupy a sizeable space in the epic's narrative. He is also known as Gādhija (son of Gādhi), Gādhinandana, Kuśika (the grandson of Kuśika), and a Uipraṇṣi. These different synonymous reflect the various traits of the sage Viśvāmitra - that he was the son of Gādhi, the grandson of Kuśika, and an ascetic of deep learning. The manner in which this descendant of the royal family of the Kuśikas embraced brāhmaṇism, has already been discussed (see Vaśiṣṭhas for the hostility between and Viśvāmitra and Vaśiṣṭha). Viśvāmitras had deprived Vaśiṣṭha of his children. Though born as a Kṣatriya he became a brāhmaṇa through his penances.

The Ādiparva narrates an interesting legend regarding Viśvāmitras. Viśvāmitra, after attaining brahmanhood, created the river Kauśikī for his ablutions. There, his wife, during a famine was maintained by the rājaṇṣi Mataṅga, who was living as a hunter. (It is added that Mataṅga was an ancient king who lived as a hunter in consequence of his father's curse. He maintained the wife of Viśvāmitra and Viśvāmitra became his priest). Therefore, when the famine was over, the story goes on, Viśvāmitra changed the name of the river into Pāra and performed a sacrifice for Mataṅga. It is said that Indra himself, from fear, came there to drink Soma!

The greatness of the sage is further talked of when it is said that Viśvāmitra, in anger, created another world and a series of Nakśatras, beginning with Pratiśravaṇa and gave protection to Triśaṅku (an ancient king), who was cursed by his guru. So great was his strength that he could burn the three worlds by his splendour and by a kick cause the earth to quake. He could sever Meru (the mountain) and hurl it away at any distance. He could go round the earth in a moment and even Yama, Soma, the maharṣis, the Sādhyas, the Viśvāmitras and the Vālakhilyas (short-statured ṛsis) were all afraid of his prowess. To him Indra sent the Apsara Menakā, who disturbed his penances.

Viśvāmitra begat a daughter on Menakā, whom she abandoned on the banks of the Mālinī in the valleys of Himvat. The child was found and reared by ṛsi Kaṇva who called her Śakuntalā.⁶

So, we see that there are some similarities between Vedic literature and the Mahābhārata account with regard to the Viśvāmitras. For instance in both places, Viśvāmitra mentions his ancestry by alluding to Kuśika. Further, in the Vedic account the Viśvāmitras are seen to be located near, the rivers Beas and Sutlej (Vipāś and Śutudrī) and to be in

6. Mbh. I.71.

close association with the Bharatas, helping the latter in their tribal wars.

In the legend of the Ādiparva just narrated, the greatness, might and the awe inspired by the r̥ṣi Viśvāmitra^{mitra} is referred to. We are also informed of his relations with two ancient monarchs - Matāṅga and Triśaṅku, both of whom, under a curse sought the protection of Viśvāmitra. Viśvāmitra, in turn, also acted as the priest of Matāṅga. Whether the kings were actual historical figures is not known but the Mahābhārata portrays Viśvāmitra as having cordial relations with them as well as helping them in distress.

In this legend Viśvāmitra is said to be feared by everyone including the gods for his extraordinary prowess. So much were the gods terrorised that Indra decided to lay temptations before the ascetic so as to disturb his penances and break his might.

In the Ādiparva, Viśvāmitra is called the son of Gādhi, the king of Kānyakubja, who was the son of Kuśika. He is referred to as a 'foe-subduing dharmātmā' and then the story of his hostility with Vasiṣṭha is recounted. ^{Here} In this section Viśvāmitra is associated with the place called Kānyakubja, whose king he was till he became an ascetic.

In still another passage from the Ādiparva, we see Karna being mocked by Bhīma for being a low-caste person. Duryodhana retaliates to this insult, and in anger says that even low born people were worthy of combat since the attribute of a Kṣatriya is strength. Therefore even Karna, being a brave warrior was eligible to fight. He further says that some Kṣatriyas later became brāhmaṇas and in this connection gives the example of Viśvāmitra who abandoned his kingdom and throne for a life of penances, hardships and austerities.⁷

In this case, a reference to sage Viśvāmitra is brought in indirectly in the narrative to emphasize that fighting was not the prerogative of Kṣatriyas alone. According to Duryodhana, any brave man could be a warrior, irrespective of his caste.

To proceed with Mahābhārata for references to the Viśvāmitras, the greatness of the sage is again alluded to in the Vanaparva where it is said that by bathing in the tirtha of Viśvāmitra one is said to achieve the status of a brāhmaṇa.⁸ The Kuśika āśrama of Viśvāmitra was said to destroy all evils. Bathing in its evil-erasing waters, the

8. Mbh. III. 83.139, III. 84.131.

7. Mbh. I.138. 11-14.

pilgrims obtained the merits of a great Rājasūya yajñā. This āśrama was later visited by Yudhiṣṭhira.

It is further said in the same parva that the Kauśiki was very sacred, since it was here that the great ascetic Viśvāmitra attained brahmanhood.⁹ So a deep veneration is felt for the sage by the epic bards, who regard every place associated with him as sacrosanct. The Vanaparva goes on to say that in Pāñcāla is a forest called Utpalā, where Kuśika's descendant Viśvāmitra and his son performed many Yajñas. There, seeing proofs of Viśvāmitra's superhuman powers, Jamadagni's son, Paraśurāma sang praises of his ancestor. It is also stated that In kāmyaka Kuśika's descendant Viśvāmitra drank soma with Indra, gave up Kṣatriyahood and proclaimed himself a brāhmaṇa. The idea of Viśvāmitra's association with Indra is found in the Vedic literature also, where he is called a protégé of Indra with whom he had an interview ^{according} ~~accepted~~ to the R̥gveda Āraṇyakas.¹⁰

This story points towards Viśvāmitra's association with the Pāñcāla territory, since there he and his son are supposed to have performed many sacrifices. Another region by the name of Kāmyaka is also introduced to show

9. Mbh. III. 87.13.

10. Aitareya Āraṇyaka. ii. 2,3; Śāṅkhāyana Āraṇyaka, i.5.

Viśvāmitras proximity with the king of the gods, Indra. However, the most significant aspect of the story is Paṭaśūrāmas admiration for Viśvāmitra a theme which is echoed in the earlier literature as well.

In the Vedic literature Viśvāmitra becomes, like Vaśiṣṭha, a mythical sage usually¹¹ mentioned in connection with Jamadagni.¹²

Further, the Mahābhārata says that Viśvāmitra acted as the priest of king Sudās and as the hotṛ priest at the sacrifice of Hariścandra. In Comparison the Vedic literature shows him as the hotṛ priest at the sacrifice of Śunaḥśepa, whom he adopted, it is said, and to whom he gave the name of Devarāta.¹³ Regarding Viśvāmitras relations with king Sudās, it is said that he was at one time the Purohita of Sudās.¹⁴ but he seems to have been deposed from that post, to have joined Sudās's enemies, and to have taken part in the onslaught of the kings against him, for the hymn which talks of ~~Sudās's~~^{Sudās's} triumph has reference to the ruin Viśvāmitra brought on his allies. Hence, Viśvāmitras association with king Sudās is an idea which has been taken over from the

11. RV.iii. 53,15,16; Weber, Indische Studien, 1, 117.

12. AVB.ĪV. 29,5 (Jamadagni is often associated with Viśvāmitra).

13. Aitareya Brāhmaṇa vii.16.

14. RV.iii. 33, 53.

Vedic literature and incorporated in the epic. The difference in both the accounts is regarding the patron whose priest Viśvāmitra is supposed to have been who is Hariścandra according to the Mahābhārata and Śunaḥśepa according to the Vedic account.

The purpose of this discussion is to highlight those passages in the Mahābhārata where the clan of Viśvāmitras is mentioned. Therefore, the attempt is to focus on their activities, their claims as seers their teachings as well as the importance of the myths related to them. In this connection, it would be useful to cite a section from the Udyoga parva. In this passage, entitled 'Gālavacharita, Viśvāmitra is once again juxtaposed with his traditional rival, Vaśiṣṭha.

It is said that in order to try Viśvāmitra, who was then engaged in ascetic austerities, Dharma, in the form of ṛṣi Vaśiṣṭha, came to his hermitage, feigning himself hungry. Viśvāmitra prepared the food and upon being told by Dharma to wait for him, bore that food on his head, himself subsisting on air. He waited in this manner for a hundred years. Ultimately Dharma accepted that food which was still warm and fresh and called Viśvāmitra a Vipra ṛṣi whereby he became a brāhamaṇ!¹⁵

15. Mbh. V. 106.1-27.

In this myth, Viśvāmitras claim to being a Vipra rsi is justified and his fortitude and patience is praised. Even Dharma had to relent before the sage's pre-severance.

The greatness of rsi Viśvāmitra is emphasized repeatedly through myths and stories in the epic. The Śāṭaparva sets forth several stories regarding the struggles of Viśvāmitra to attain brahmanhood. Their intended lesson is that brahmanhood was held to be a privilege of birth, except when superhuman efforts were made by the favour of the gods to obtain its advantages.

One of the stories¹⁶ of ~~Saṭ~~^{Śāṭya}aparva narrates the enmity of Viśvāmitra with Vaśiṣṭha, and shows the acute hatred which Viśvāmitra felt for his rival and peer. It is said that a great enmity arose between Viśvāmitra and Vaśiṣṭha, due to their rivalry in respect of ascetic austerities. Vaśiṣṭha's hermitage was in Sthāṇutīrtha, on the bank of Sarasvatī; and on the opposite bank was Viśvāmitra's holy place. In the days of yore Sthāṇu had practised penances, and having performed a sacrifice and worshipped the Sarasvatī he had established that tīrtha and there the gods in days of yore had installed Skanda. In that tirtha on the Sarasvatī, the ~~the~~^{rsi} Viśvāmitra by his penances, disturbed

16. Mbh. IX. 41,42 (Vasiṣṭhāparvāha - 'The carrying away of Vaśiṣṭha').

Vaśiṣṭha. Everyday both challenged each other in respect of the superiority of their penances. Then, Viśvāmitra ordered the Sarasvatī to bring Vaśiṣṭha into his presence that he might say him. The river washed away one of her banks and bore Vaśiṣṭha away and informed Kauśika about his arrival but while the latter was looking for a weapon, she quickly bore Vaśiṣṭha back to the bank. As a result Viśvāmitra cursed her, saying that her current should be changed into blood which is acceptable only to the Rākśasas!

Due to Viśvāmitras curse, we are further told, Sarasvatī flowed for a whole year, bearing blood mixed with water. However, Sarasvatī once more got back her own proper condition when some munis, on a tīrthayātrā (pilgrimage) to the Sarasvatī seeing the water mixed with blood and having learnt the cause worshipped the ~~Sarasvatī~~.

Mahādeva with penances and purified the sarasvatī

The purpose of this myth appears to be two fold - to highlight the conflicts between Viśvāmitra and Vaśiṣṭha, and to point out the potential force of Viśvāmitras words. He was a seer who had achieved greatness through severe penances. Hence the power of his words is demonstrated when as a consequence of his curse the river Sarasvatī flowed with blood mixed in her waters. Viśvāmitra's curse had rendered her impure and defiled the sanctity of that tīrthaa. The curse could be revoked only by the pious munis

who propitiated Mahādeva and purified the river.

An interesting anecdote comes to light in relation to the various activities of Viśvāmitra as seen in the Mahābhārata. The underlying theme of the tale is the injunction of how a brāhmaṇa should live when there is terrible distress around (Śāntiparva). Bhīṣma cites the story of the discourse between ṛṣi Viśvāmitra and a Cāṇḍāla in a hamlet inhabited by Cāṇḍālas.

Once, during a famine and afflicted by hunger Viśvāmitra ate up the haunch of a dog's meat, despite repeated protests from the Cāṇḍāla. However, he justified his action by saying that even the most prohibited of acts (like theft, eating of unclean and impure food) were allowed to a brāhmaṇa during a period of crisis. Viśvāmitra said in his defense that it is the duty of brāhmaṇato behave like Agni, that the Vedas are fire, and at times, the fire becomes a consumer of everything. He mentioned that ṛṣi Agastya, when hungry ate up the Asura Vātāpi. Viśvāmitra further elaborates that a brāhmaṇa who behaves thus, could afterwards destroy all his sins by his penances and acquire success.

In this legend, Viśvāmitra is seen giving a free hand to the brāhmaṇas to do as they pleased in times of distress. He feels that they would never be censored by the gods if

they committed a sinful act, out of a need or compulsion.

To move further in the epic, a section of the Anusāsana parva states the merits acquired by fasts. It is said that there is no penance superior to fast; by fasts the gods became denizens of heaven and the rsis attained to the highest success. To illustrate this point the examples of two esteemed seers are given—that of Viśvāmitra and the Bhārgava Cyavana, sages who are said to have attained to heaven through fasts.

Similarly, in the Aśvamedhika parva it is said abstention from injury, contentment, proper conduct, sincerity, penances, self-restraint, truthfulness and gifts are each equal in point of merit to sacrifice. Having made gifts of articles lawfully acquired, Visvamitras have attained to high success. Therefore, people should try to emulate the great sages like Viśvāmitra. Those among brāhmanas, Kṣatriyas, Vaiśyas and Śūdras who betake themselves to penances and who purify themselves by gifts and other acts of righteousness, proceed to heaven.

It is clearly brone out by the two passages cited above that the Mahābhārata often indulges in imparting teachings to its readers by giving the examples of eminent brāhmanas. Through this medium, general rules of conduct were laid down for the people to follow and thus foster social harmony.

While discussing the brāhmaṇa clan of Viśvāmitra^ś~~mitra~~ in the Mahābhārata, we are struck by the occurrence of a detailed genealogy of the sage in the Anuśāsanaparva. This section of the narrative not only gives a genealogical history of the Viśvāmitra clan, it also talks of the legends surrounding Viśvāmitra^ś~~mitra~~'s birth.

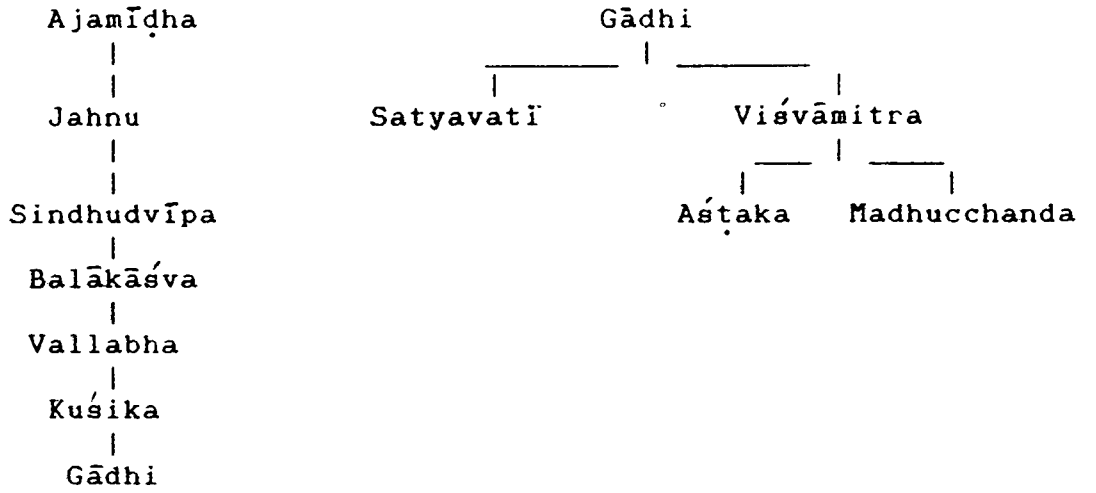
It is said in this parva that king Ajamy^ś~~dha~~ was succeeded by his son, Jahnu. (Jahnu is a significant king in this royal line since legends show him as one who got Gaṅgā for his daughter). Jahnu's son was Sindhudvīpa, who was followed by Balākāśva. After him Vallabha became the king. Vallabha was succeeded by the famous Kuśika whose son was the illustrious Gādhi. Gadhi, being childless desired a son, and repaired to the forest where the beautiful Satyavatī was born to him.

The legend goes on to state that Bhārgava Cyavana's son Ṛcīka, asked for Satyavatī's hand in marriage. But as he was poor, Gādhi required of him as a dower one thousand white horses, having one black ear. Ṛcīka obtained these from Varuṇa and gave them to Gādhi.

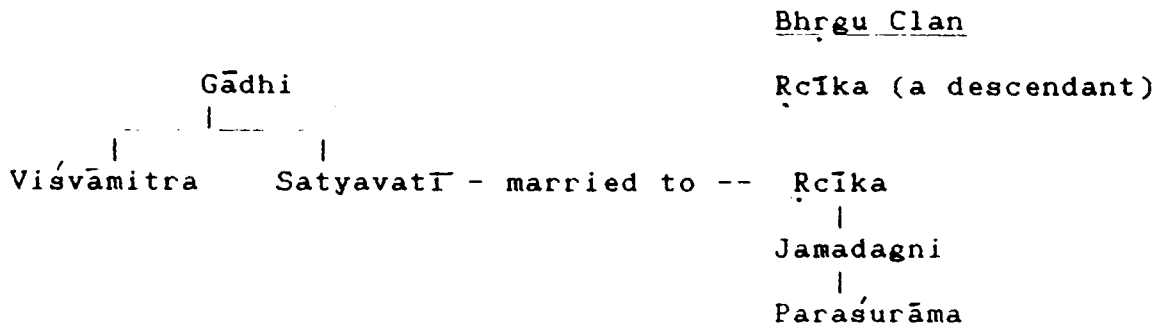
Afterwards, Ṛcīka granted a boon to his wife Satyavatī that she should have a son. Satyavatī related this to her mother (Gādhi's queen), who prevailed upon her to obtain a

son for her too. Having promised them both a son each, Ṛcīka told the mother to embrace an ^{'asvattha'} ~~asvattha~~ tree, and Satyavatī an 'udumbara' tree, and each of them to eat a certain 'caru' (sacrificial offering), consecrated with hymns. Now, it so happened that Satyavatī's mother exchanged both the trees and the carus. Ṛcīka had placed the entire brāhmaṇa energy in Satyavatī's caru, and the Kṣatriya energy in that of her mother. But when he learnt of the exchange effected by Satyavatī's mother, he prophesied that the mother would give birth to an excellent brāhmaṇa, and Satyavatī to a 'terrible' Kṣatriya. However, Satyavatī begged her husband to let, not her son, but her son's son, be such. She prevailed upon him to transfer the Kṣatriyahood to her grandson. As a result, by the favour of Ṛcīka, she gave birth to Jamadagni, and the wife of Gādhi to the Brahmarṣi Viśvāmitra, versed in the Vedas. Viśvāmitra attained to the state of a brāhmaṇa, and became the founder of a race of brāhmaṇas. Regarding the progeny of Viśvāmitra, it is said that he begot Aśtaka on Mādhavī, the daughter of the legendary king Yayati (Udyogaparva). Later in the epic, a Madhucchanda is referred to as a son of Viśvāmitra (Anuśāsanparva).

With the help of this legend we can reconstruct the genealogical chart of the Viśvāmitras.



This legend regarding the birth of Viśvāmitra is a very important one in the Mahābhārata, for it traces the origin of Viśvāmitra, tells about the unusual circumstances in which he, and a scion of the Bhṛgu race, Jamadgni were born, and also how the Kṣatriya attributes were transferred to Jamadagni's son Paraśurāma. The legend enables us to draw a connection bet^{ween} the two eminent brāhmaṇa clans of the Bhṛgus and the Viśvāmitras. The following chart illustrates this contention.



To sum up, it has been seen that Viśvāmitra is a common figure, from the Vedic literature onwards to the Mahābhārata. He is also often mentioned as a ṛṣi.¹⁷

In the epic Viśvāmitra is represented as a king, who becomes a brāhmaṇa. There is no trace of his kingship in the R̥gveda. Elsewhere, his father, Kuśika is called a king. The Aitareya Brāhmaṇa¹⁸ refers to Śunaḥśeṣa as succeeding to the lordship of the Jahnuṣ, as well as the 'divine lore' (daiva veda) of the Gāthins. (Gāthins are descendants of Viśvāmitras) The Pañcaviṃśa Brāhmaṇa¹⁹ mentions Viśvāmitra as a king. However, there is a view that there is no real trace of the kingship of Viśvāmitra it may just be a legend, with no more foundation at most than that Viśvāmitra was of a family which once had been royal!

In the epic accounts, Viśvāmitra emerges as a kṣatriya, belonging to the royal house of the Kuśikas, centred at Kānyakubja. In another reference to this clan, it is said that in a forest of the Pāñcāla territory, Viśvāmitra and

17. Aitareya Āraṇyaka, ii.2,1.

Aitareya Brāhmaṇa, vi.18, 1; 20, 3.

Taittirīya Saṃhitā, ii, 2,1,2.

18. vii. 18,9.

19. xxi. 12,2, Ludwig, Translation of the R̥g Veda 3,121.

his son performed many sacrifices. In contrast, the Ṛg Vedic hymns show Viśvāmitra's proximity with the region ground the rivers Beas and Sutlej.

Moreover, in the Vedic literature Viśvāmitra is associated with the Bharatas, and seems to be their helper in the various tribal raids. The Vedic literature also shows him as the hotṛ priest at the sacrifice of Śunaḥśepa, whom he later adopted and named Devarāta. On the other hand the Mahābhārata says that Viśvāmitra acted as the priest of king Sudās, and as the hotṛ priest at the sacrifice of Hariścandra. Other legends in the epic link him to kings like Mataṅga and Triśaṅku — whose historicity cannot be established.

There are some myths in the Mahābhārata regarding the Viśvāmitras which are simply borrowed from earlier times. For instance, Viśvāmitra's reference to himself as Kauśika (a descendent of Kuśika) is found repeated in the Mahābhārata, as it was in the Vedic literature. In both places, this synonym is applied to Viśvāmitra, to emphasize his association with the royal family of Kuśikas.

Further, the myths regarding Viśvāmitra's relations with king Sudās also appear to be developments of earlier stories. The Vedic evidence points towards the sage's being the Purohita of king Sudās, and to have aided him in times

of war. The same idea is found reflected in the Mahābhārata, for the latter, too, shows Viśvāmitra acting as the priest of king Śudās!

Viśvāmitra's association with Jamadagni and his son Parāsurāma is talked of in the Mahābhārata and appears to have been influenced by the Vedic narratives. In the Vedic literature, Viśvāmitra very often is mentioned, in connection, with Jamadagni. Similarly in a passage of the Vanapaśva, it is said that Jamadagni's son, Parāsurāma, was an ardent admirer of his ancestor Viśvāmitra. That the two were related to each other has been proved by a legend contained, in the Anuśāsanaparva, where Viśvāmitra's sister, Satyavatī, is shown to have been the mother of Jamadagni, whose son Parāsurāma was.

Viśvāmitra is portrayed as a venerable ṛṣi in the Mahābhārata. This idea is echoed in the earlier literature also, where the sage's learning and penances are talked of: However the Vedic literature is not very certain regarding the kingship of Viśvāmitra. There are certain passages which express the view that Viśvāmitra may not have been a king himself, although he may have hailed from a family which once had been royal. Nevertheless, the Mahābhārata legends emphatically state that ṛṣi Viśvāmitra was a Kṣatriya turned brāhmaṇa. Being a powerful king, commanding a large army, he

came into conflict with the sage Vaśiṣṭha. Viśvāmitra realised that Vaśiṣṭha's spiritual knowledge and yogic presence were much superior to his ^{own} ~~own~~ physical prowess as a king. Consequently, becoming disenchanted with Kṣatriya-hood, he renounced his kingdom to lead the life of an ascetic.

The sage Viśvāmitra is portrayed in the Mahābhārata to wield immense power both spiritual and physical. His words had acquired a potent force, and his curse was capable of leading to eternal damnation. There are several myths in the epic who show that not only men, but maharṣis, gods and the Asuras, were afraid of Viśvāmitra's powers. He performed extraordinary feats and baffled the entire creation. Such was the terror instilled by him, that even Indra could not remain unaffected - he sent the nymph Menakā to disturb Viśvāmitra's penances; and at one place in the Mahābhārata, it is said that Indra himself came to attend Viśvāmitra's sacrifice, and drank soma with the ṛṣi!! (Ādiparva).

The myths regarding Viśvāmitra's association with Indra have continued from the Vedic times. In the Vedic literature, Viśvāmitra is referred to as Indra's protege, and as being on cordial terms with the god.

Viśvāmitra is seen engaged in various activities in the epic. At some places he is shown performing religious sacrifices, with his sons, at others he claims to be a vipraṛṣi and a legend is narrated to show how he obeyed the command of Dharma, with patience and forbearance and earned adulation from that deity, His greatness as a seer is stressed repeatedly through out the epic. It is said that Viśvāmitra is among the sages who reached heaven by practising righteousness, penances, keeping fasts, and adhering to Dharma and truthfulness. Frequently in the Mahābhārata, moral lessons are imparted to the readers by adducing the examples of high souls such as Viśvāmitra, and the people are advised to emulate their lives, and thus lead a pure and sin-free life.

So the Viśvāmitras seem to occupy a considerable space in the epic. The sage is mentioned on several important occasions. There are also a number of myths attached to this clan, which highlight various traits of the ṛṣi, reflect his spiritual excellence and show him in action with men as well as divinities.

THE VĪTAHAVYAS

The VĪtahavyas is another brahmana clan. But in the Mahābhārata, the VĪtahavyas do not appear as a clan. Rather we find an individual, king VĪtahavya, being talked of. It is significant to note that king VĪtahavya later became a brāhmaṇa and gave up kṣatriyahood. Hence, the Mahābhārata does not consider the VĪtahavyas as a proper clan, but it discusses the activities of a king of that name.

Before taking up the evidence provided by the epic in this connection, let us go back to the earlier literature to find any clue regarding VĪtahavyas.

Interestingly, VĪtahavya appears as the name of a prince who is mentioned in the R̥gveda,¹ along with Bharadvāja, and as a contemporary of Sudās.² VĪtahavya figures in this section of the R̥gveda as closely connected with the Bhrgus.

In the Atharvaveda,³ VĪtahavya appears as connected with Jamadagni and Asita, but it is clear that the legend there has no value. It is possible, though not certain, that

1. Rv. vi. 15, 2.3.

2. vii. 19,3.

3. vi. 137, 1.

he was the king of the ^{Srinayao} ~~Srinayao~~.⁴ In the Yajurveda Samhitās⁵ a Vītahavya Srayāśa appears as a king, he may be identical with the Vītahavya of the R̥gveda, or belong to the same line.

So Vītahavya is a prince in the early Vedic literature, who is said to have been a contemporary of Sudās, and is associated with the Bhṛgus and the sage Bharadvāja.

We will now turn to the Mahābhārata to see what the epic has to say regarding the Vītahavyas.

The Mahābhārata narrates the rivalry between the Haihaya and the Kaśi kingdom, and the legend about how Vītahavya became a brāhmaṇa. (Anuśāsanaparva, Chapter 30)

In this section of the epic, Bhīśma is seen telling Yudhiṣṭhira that long back, Manu while righteously ruling his subjects, obtained a son Śaryāti, in whose race were born the sons of Vatsa—the kings Haihaya and Tālajaṅgha. Haihaya or Vītahavya had a hundred heroic sons and all had studied the Vedas and the Dhanurveda.

Simultaneously, we are informed about the kingdom of kaśi, which was a powerful rival of the Haihayas. In Kaśi,

4. Hille brandt, Vedische Mythologie, I, 105.

5. Taittirīya Samhitā, V.6,5,3.

king Haryaśva was in power (he was the grandfather of Divodāsa). The sons of king Haihaya invaded kaśi and slew king Haryaśva. After him, his son Sudeva, was made the king of kaśi. The hundreded sons of Vītahavya once again attacked and defeated him in battle.

After Sudeva's defeat his son Divodāsa came to the throne of Kaśi. It is said that he was a powerful king, and at Indra's command, he built the city of Vārānasi between Gaṅgā, and the Southern bank of the Gomāti. However, the Haihayas again attacked Divodāsa, who fought valiantly, but lost, and fled to the retreat of ṛṣi Bharadvāja. The sage performed a sacrifice for Divodāsa in consequence of which an illustrious son Pratardana, was born to him. The latter was a brilliant child, who had mastered the Vedas, as well as the Dhanurveda.

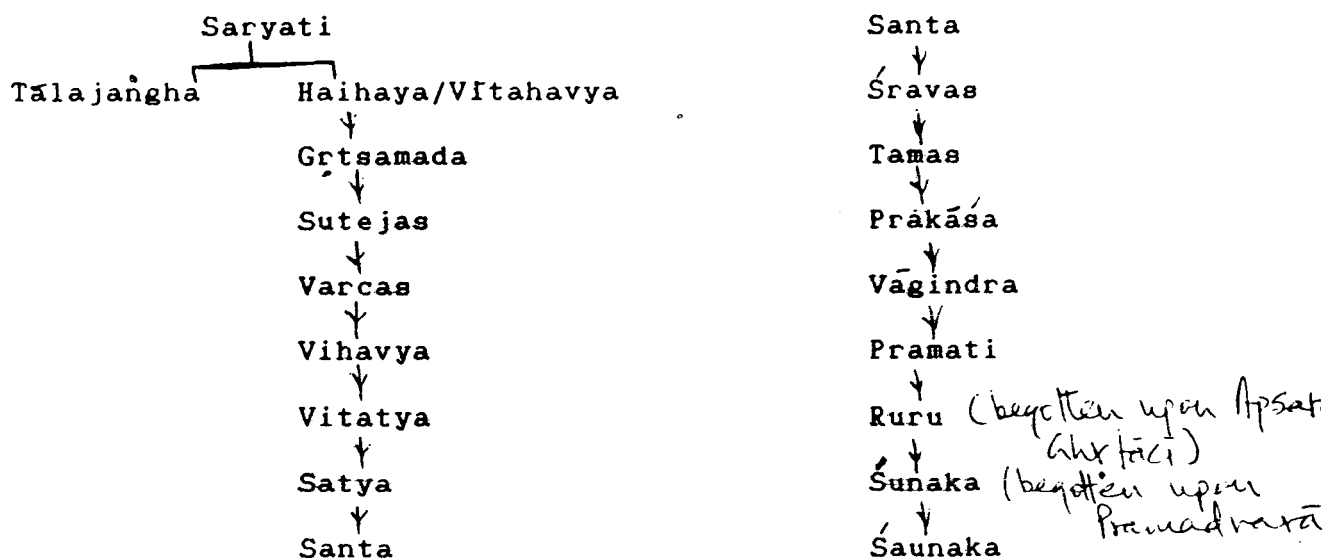
The legend goes to say that Divodāsa ordered his son to march against the sons of Vītahavya. Pratardana slew all the sons of Vītahavya. King Vītahavya fled to the retreat of the sage Bhṛgu, and was followed by Pratardana. The latter ordered Bhṛgu to surrender king Vītahavya. Bhṛgu replied, tactfully, that there was no Kṣatriya in his hermitage that only brāhmaṇas were present there ! Vītahavya therefore became a brāhmaṇa in consequence of Bhṛgu's statement and

Pratardana returned, having satisfied that he had forced his enemy to abandon Kṣatriyahood.

Hence, we notice that the legend regarding the Kṣatriya Vītahavya's association with the Bhṛguṣ, has continued from the Vedic times into the Mahābhārata. In the Vedic literature, Vītahavyas figures as being on intimate terms with the Bhṛguṣ, a theme who is repeated in the epic. In the epic, the myth regarding Vītahavya and the Bhṛguṣ is further developed firstly to give a detailed background of the Haihaya dynasty and the royal house of kaśi and we are then told how, pursued by his enemy Vītahavyas was forced to become a brāhmaṇa. In other words the strange circumstances are highlighted, in the epic myth, which made Vītahavya, renounce his kingship and accept brahmanhood.⁶

The myth in the ^{epic} elaborates to give a genealogy of the race of Vītahavyas, and mentions some of his prominent descendants. The following is a chart of the members of Vītahavyas' family.

6. Mahābhārata XIII. 30.1-67 (Rajasir durlabham prapto brahmanyān).



Therefore, Vītahavya is the name of a mythical king in the Mahābhārata and the legend concerning him shows the manner in which he became a brāhmaṇa. As yet Vītahavya had not developed into a proper brāhmaṇa clan. So the myth related to the king Vītahavya focuses on his dynastic rivalry with the kings of kaśī, and his ultimate acceptance of brahmanhood, which was brought about by the exigencies of time i.e. his transformation from a king to a ṛṣi.

Some of the well-known brāhmaṇas who were Vītahavya's descendants were, Pramati who had mastered the Vedas and Vedangas, Ruru, Śunaka (the son of Ruru and Pramadvarā), and the ṛṣi Śaunaka.

THE VENAS

Among the brāhmaṇa gotras there are names of mythical Kṣatriyas and kings, like Vītahavya and Veṇa. These figures later became the founders of brāhmaṇa clans. However, in the Mahābhārata they are encountered as individuals and the focus of the narrative is on their political and social activities. We are informed, through various myths, how a certain king had to give up his Kṣatriya profession, and embrace brahmanhood. Hence when we are discussing the Veṇas or the Vītahavyas in the Mahābhārata, it is an individual who is being studied, for the clan by such name was formed later.

The first reference to Vena is found in the Anukramaṇika parva of the Ādiparva. Sañjaya, while consoling Dhṛtarāṣṭra who was grieving for the loss of his sons in war, mentions several kings, of the past who died leaving behind huge wealth and lifetimes of pleasure. Veṇa is among the kings mentioned by Sañjaya.¹

Another reference to Veṇa is found in the Ādiparva itself. The narrator Vaiśampāyana, is talking about the birth of creatures from Manu the primeval being. He says that all human beings, the brāhmaṇas, Kṣatriyas and others had sprung from Manu. The brāhmaṇa sons of Manu devoted

1. Mahabharata I. 1.232.

themselves to a study of the Vedas. Others, like Vena, Ikṣvāku, Śaryāti became Kṣatriyas.²

From these passages, we infer that Vena was a king of considerable repute he was powerful as well as wealthy. This contention is further confirmed, by the evidence of the next parva.

Here, Nārada is seen describing the hall of Yama to Yudhiṣṭhira. While discussing the grandeur of the celestial assembly, and the host of powerful personages who attended on Yama, Nārada mentions king Vena.³

If we look at the Vedic literature, we will find that Vena occurs in one passage of the R̥gveda⁴ as a generous patron. Pr̥thavana, found in the same passage, ~~might be a~~ ^{might be a} synonym, and Parthya in the following stanza of the hymn, is perhaps his patronymic.

Compared to the Vedic tradition, the Mahābhārata gives a more detailed account of the activities of this king. Both the Vedic and the Mahābhārata account are agreed on one aspect rearding Vena that he was a king exercising

2. Mahābhārata I. 75.14-16.

3. Mahābhārata II. 8.14.

4. X. 93, 14, Ludwig, Translation of the R̥g Veda, 3, 166.

considerable power. In the Śāntiparva of the epic emerges the true picture of the king. He is described as a slave of wrath and malice. Due to his arrogance, he was slain by the ṛṣis. The legend elaborates to say that the maharṣis bored the right thigh of Vena - from where emerged a terrible creature, who was the progenitor of the race of the Niṣadās. The sages then bored Vena's right hand; thence sprang a person who was a second Indra in form and was acquainted with the Vedas. This was Pṛṥthu, the son of Vena. In contrast to his father, Pṛṥthu ruled the country with fairness and justice and was much praised by the people, the ṛṣis and the gods.

Hence, Vena, the haughty monarch, was punished by the sages; who put an end to his arbitrary rule, and installed his son on the throne.

So the Mahābhārata projects Vena as a king. The transformation of Vena from an individual to a proper clan must have been effected at a later date, when people would have started using the name of their patron king, as their gotra name.

THE ŚUNAKAS

A brāhmaṇa clan is that of the Śunakas. In the Vedic literature we find that the term 'Śaunaka' is applied to Indrota,¹ and a Śaunaka-Yajña or Śaunaka-sacrifice occurs in the Kauṣītaki Brāhmaṇa.² In the Chāndogya upaniṣad,³ an Atidhanvan Śaunaka appears as a teacher. So in the Vedic tradition, Śaunaka (descendant of Śunaka) appears as a great authority on grammatical, ritual and other matters.

In the Mahābhārata, Śunaka figures as a ṛṣi - a follower of Bṛgu. He is said to be the son of Ruru and Pramadvārā.⁴ In the Sabha parva,⁵ Śunaka is mentioned among the ṛṣis who were present in the palace of Yudhiṣṭhira, when, the latter entered the palace, after having fed ten thousand brāhmaṇas.

Hence, the brāhmaṇa clan of Śaunakas seems to have attained the form of a clan later than the composition of the Mahābhārata; since in the epic, the Śaunakas do not emerge as a group or a family of seers. ~~Rather~~ ^{Rather}, it is an individual ṛṣi, Śunaka, who is talked of; and here too the reference is very brief.

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1. Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, xiii 5,3,5; 4,1.
 2. iv. 7.
 3. i. 9,3
 4. Mahābhārata I. 5.10
 5. Mahābhārata II, 4, 15.

THE MUDGALAS

Another, significant brāhmaṇa clan is that of the Mudgalas. In the Vedic literature, Mudgala figures in an obscure hymn of the Ṛgveda,¹ variously interpreted by Pischel² and Geldner,³ as telling of a real chariot race in which, despite difficulties Mudgala won by his wife's aid. But the tradition seems to be merely a guess at the meaning of an obscure hymn.

The scholar Bloomfield has interpreted this legend as one of heavenly, not of human, events. Mudgala, probably a variant form of Mudgara,⁴ who in the later language means a hammer like Weapon, may be meant as a personification of the thunderbolt of Indra, rather than a real man. Later,⁵ Mudgala appears as a mythical sage.

The Mahābhāratadoes not have to say much regarding the Mudgalas, except that in the Vanaparva, the story of a pious rsi of that name is narrated.

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1. X. 102.
 2. Vedische studien, 1, 124.
 3. Ibid, 1, 138, 2,1-22.
 4. According to Geldner, Vedische Studien, 2,1 Indrasena in X. 102, 2 is the name of Mudgalani but it sense, 'Indra's bolt rather indicates the mythical character of the passage.
 5. Atharvaveda i.v 29, 6.
Ludwig, Translation of Ṛgveda, 3, 166, 167.

In this section of the epic, ṛṣi Vyāsa pays a visit to the Pāṇḍavas in exile, and tells them the story of Mudgala.⁶

Mudgala was a dharmātmā, who lived in Kurukṣetra. He was a truthful and self-controlled sage. He lived very humbly, subsisting on the left overs of grain of the other people. Yet he always entertained his guests very lavishly. Mudgala diligently performed all the sacred rituals too, like the Darśa and the Paurṇamaśa sacrifices, wherein, it is said, that Indra himself, including the other gods, partook of the food offered. Mudgala generously fed hundreds of brāhmaṇas, while himself, he lived on the food that remained after the gods and the guests had eaten.

Durvāsas, the wrathful ṛṣi, heard of Mudgala's fame and came to test the brāhmaṇa, uttering insults and abuses. However, Durvāsa's harsh behaviour could not agitate Mudgala who remained courteous and hospitable, not giving in to anger. Durvāsas was pleased, and rewarded Mudgala with a place in heaven for his charitable disposition !

The legend continues to say that Mudgala, however, decided against going to heaven. A philosophical discourse unfolds itself, and we are told that the heaven has certain disadvantages also. In heaven, while reaping the fruits of -----

6. Mahābhārata. III 260.1-36.

one's acts, a person cannot be engaged in any other act, for this world is one of acts, and the other of fruition.⁷ After a person has entirely exhausted one's merit in heaven, he is subject to a fall. He is then agitated by emotions. But by the reason of their merit, such people take birth among men, then they attain to high fortune and happiness, while, if one cannot acquire knowledge here in heaven he comes by an inferior birth. The purpose of the philosophy is to impress upon the reader the fact that even heaven suffers from certain defects; and that a person who never gets agitated, attains to heaven through his own knowledge and good deeds. Hence, Mudgala retires to the retreat of Viṣṇu, for a quiet life of contemplation and yoga. It is said that engaging in meditation, he, at last, attained to the supreme state of perfection, through the use of ^{Jñāna}~~Jhāna~~-Yoga.

The aim of the ṛṣi Vyāsa by narrating the story of Mudgala was, apparently, to comfort Yudhiṣṭhira who was grieving for his lost kingdom. Vyāsa explains that sorrow follows joy, and joy follows sorrow in a man's life. Hence the sage was confident that after the expiry of the thirteenth year of exile, Yudhiṣṭhira would get back his kingdom.

7. Mahābhārata. III. 261.1-52.

Moreover, it is important to note that Mudgala is as yet talked of as an individual rsi. He is a mythical character, who seems to be introduced in the epic so as to provide a deviation to the actual narrative. Mudgala's story is brought in to serve a purpose - it affords an opportunity to rsi Vyāsa to relate a philosophical discourse, and also to console the distressed Pāndava. There could have been no better way to dispel Yudhisthira's gloom than to cite a story which had a moral to it - that good men and good deeds never go unrewarded. As Mudgala attained supreme bliss for his charity and generosity, so would Pāndavas win back their kingdom, at the end of the period of exile.

The legend surrounding Mudgala appears to be new to the epic. It finds no parallel in the earlier literature, where Mudgala and his wife, are seen engaged in a chariot race. The only association, if any, with the former legend, could be the relations drawn with Indra in both the cases. Some scholars on the Vedic literature have interpreted the legend (of the chariot race) as one of heavenly events, and have likened Mudgalas to a personification of the thunderbolt of Indra. In the Mahābhārata legend also, it is said that Indra himself came to attend the sacrifices performed by Mudgala and partook of the offerings. Hence, we see that in both the versions, vedic and the epic, Indra is somehow brought into the myth, and associated with rsi Mudgala.

THE KANVAS

An important brāhmaṇa clan is that of the Kanvas. The Mahābhārata gives some information in this connection but first let us examine the vedic evidence with regard to the Kanvas.

Kanva is the name of an ancient ṛṣi, repeatedly referred to in the Ṛg Veda and later.¹ His son and descendants,² the Kanvas, are also often mentioned, especially in the eighth book of the Ṛgveda, the authorship of that book as well as part of the first, being attributed to this family. The kanva family appears to have been connected with the Atri family, but not to have been of great importance.³ In one passage of the Atharvaveda,⁴ they seem to be definitely regarded with hostility.

In the Mahābhārata, Kanva seems to have been a ṛṣi of some importance. In the Ādiparva, we are told that Duṣyanta entered the hermitage of Kanva, a great ṛṣi of Kaśyapa's race. Kanva is here referred to as an "all-virtue-possessor".⁵ In the same parva we see Śakuntalā telling

1. Ṛgveda. i. 36, 8.10, 11, 17, 19.

2. As Kānvah' (in the plural), Ṛgveda, i. 14, 2.5.

3. Hillebrandt, Vedische mythologie, 3, 285.

4. Av. ii. 25.

5. Mahābhārata I. 70, 30.

Duṣyanta about her father Kaṇva - a virtuous and a wise mahatma ascetic.⁶ The story of Śakuntalā's birth (she was the daughter of the sage Viśvāmitra and the apsara Menakā), and her subsequent adoption by sage Kaṇva is narrated in the next chapters.⁷

The sage Kaṇva is shown later as the priest of Bharata⁸ (Śakuntalā's son by Duṣyanta, and the founder of the Kuru dynasty). He presided at the yajña which Bharata performed. The king gave one thousand gold coins as Kaṇva's daksina (this is repeated in the Droṇa Parva later).

Not much is known about the sage Kaṇva after this, except that he is mentioned among the ṛṣis who come to see Yudhiṣṭhira after the war was over; or among the ṛṣis, who paid their respect to Bhīṣma, when the latter lay on a bed of arrows in the battlefield.

Hence, in the Mahābhārata, Kaṇva is portrayed as a venerable ṛṣi-a tradition who has continued from the Vedic literature. However, in the earlier literature, the Kaṇva family appears to be associated with the Atris, whereas in

6. Mbh I. 71, 14.

7. Mbh. I. 71.18-41, I. 72.1-19.

8. Mbh. I. 74. 129.

the Mahābhārata, the Kaṇvas are shown to be intimately related to the progenitor of the Kuru royal family, Bharata. R̥ṣi Kaṇva was the preceptor of king Bharata, who was the famous ancestor of the Pāṇdavas and Kauravas.

Besides, there are some more brāhmaṇa clans like the Hāritas, Viṣṇuvridhdhas, Virūpas, Vadhryaśvas and Saṃkṛtis. The Mahābhārata provides no, or very scanty information, about these brāhmaṇa clans.

Hārīta is mentioned as a muni, in the Mokṣadharmaparva of the Sāntiparva. There is no mention of the Viṣṇuvridhdhas in the epic. Virūpa is mentioned as a r̥ṣi, a son of Aṅgiras. Interestingly Virūpa figures as an Aṅgiras in the Ṛgveda⁹ also. He is mentioned twice in the Rv, and certain hymns are also attributed to him. The Mahābhārata does not divulge anything more than portraying Virūpa as an Aṅgirasa. The next brāhmaṇa clan, that of the Vadhryaśvas, also does not seem to emerge as a clan or a family of seers in the Mahābhārata. Vadhryaśvas is the name, in the Ṛgveda,¹⁰ of a prince, who is called the father of Divodāsa and an energetic supporter of the firecult, as was his son after him. He is also mentioned in a long list of names in the Atharvaveda.¹¹

9. i. 45,3; viii. 75,6.

10. vi. 61,1 x. 69,1.

11. iv. 29,4, Hillebrandt, Vedische Mythologie, 1,97.

The myth of a Vadhryaśva being a prince in the Vedic literature, continues down to the Mahābhārata, where we are told that Vadhryaśva was an ancient king. He is said to be present in the palace of Yama, when that celestial mansion is being described (Sabha parva). We do not gather any more detail regarding the Vadhryaśvas from the Mahābhārata.

Lastly, the brāhmaṇa clan called the saṁkṛtis does not figure in the epic.

There is only a passing ref^{erence} to a king called Rantideva, who is said to be the son of Saṁkṛiti and who is supposed to have attained to heaven by his liberal gift giving and generosity.

Regarding these brāhmaṇa clans, it should be remembered that they developed into full-fledged clans much later. The Mahābhārata focuses on them as individuals. However, it is possible that the followers of these sages, would have adopted the name of their patron king and placed it as their clan or gotra name at a later date.

Chapter II

THE BRĀHAMANA CLANS IN RELATION WITH-
KSATRIYAS IN THE MAHĀBHĀRATA

Chapter II

THE BRĀHMAṆA CLANS IN RELATION WITH KṢATRIYAS IN THE MAHĀBHĀRATA

The Brāhmanas occupy an important place in the society as depicted in the Mahābhārata. Traditionally, the superiormost caste of the caste of the Hindu society, the Brahmanas are seen to exercise considerable influence on the course of developments in the epic.

The Mahābhārata repeats the Vedic myth of the origin of castes. Yet, it does conceive a state of society when no caste existed. It is said that people fell from penance and righteousness, and were therefore distributed into castes.

In a passage in the Mahābhārata where the learned seers Bhṛgu and Bharadvāja are engaged in a discourse on religions and philosophy, it is stated that there is no fundamental distinction between the four orders the whole world, at first, consisted only of brāhmanas, who were created even before gods and demons. Then, those endowed with courage, severity, wrath, and unmindful of piety and worship became Kṣatriyas. Those who combined goodness with passion, and took to agriculture and cattle-rearing became Vaisyas. Those who had fallen from purity of conduct, who were addicted to untruth, cupidity and malevolence, and engaged in all kinds of occupations became Śūdras. The

different castes were enjoined to follow different practices. A brāhmana should study, officiate at sacrifices, practise self-restraint and live in poverty. In the Mahābhārata, teaching is one of the principal duties of the brahmanic order. In the epic they are shown teaching the military arts to the Kṣatriya princes. The Kṣatriyas, on the other hand, should engage in warfare, display their prowess and ceaselessly protect the people!

These were the injunctions laid down in the Mahābhārata, with regard to the behaviour and occupation of each caste. It should be noted that the society as depicted in the epic, appears to be dominated by the two elite groups - viz, the brāhmanas and Kṣatriyas - or the 'twice-born' ones, one forming an aristocracy of learning and religion, and another of arms.

In this chapter, an attempt is being made to study the brāhmana clans in relation with the Kṣatriyas. In the previous chapter, the eighteen clans of the brāhmanas have been examined. It has been seen how they figure in the Mahābhārata, the activities and claims of the seers of each clan, their teachings and the myths surrounding them have been studied. The effort has also been to focus on the visibility of the different clans in the Mahābhārata.

The social order being hierarchical in the Mahābhārata, the state had to see that the four varṇas observed their Dharma. The brāhmanas, belonging to the different clans were by all means a privileged class.¹ They were always to be protected.² One who does so earns glory³ and merit⁴ and goes to heaven.⁵ It was the king's duty to make arrangements for their livelihood.⁶ The Mahābhārata asks the people to respect⁷ the brāhmanas, the never to kill them.⁸ The Mahābhārata wants a king to pay special attention to them, because if annoyed, they could prove to be dangerous to the state.

The practical side of the problem shows that the Kṣatriyas actually paid special attention to the brāhmanas

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1. Mbh. XII. 73. 31-32.
XIII. 159. 8-11.
 2. Mbh. XII. 212. 16-17.
XII. 189.36.
XIV. 43.17-19.
 3. Mbh. XII. 74. 21.
 4. Mbh. XII. 78. 28-30.
XII. 77.32.
 5. Mbh. XII. 71.23.
 6. Mbh. XIII. 61.14-16.
XIII. 159. 8-11.
 7. Mbh. XII. 142. 36.38.
 8. Mbh. XII. 27. 3-7.
V. 82.17.

(though exceptions in this regard are also present) king Śibi is said to have killed his son because a brāhmaṇa wanted to eat him, and because it was considered incumbent upon a king to do whatever a brāhmaṇa desired.⁹ Similarly, Jarasandha is shown to have cordially received and welcomed some brāhmaṇas even if they came in the midnight.¹⁰ But this behaviour was to be meted out to the deserving brāhmaṇas only, and not to the undutiful ones.¹¹ !

These were certain rules and norms of behaviour which were formulated in the epic, to serve as a guide to the people. All the classes in society and specially Kṣatriyas, were enjoined to respect the brāhmaṇas. As compared to the other castes of the Vaiśyas and Śūdras, the Kṣatriyas held more power, prestige and authority. Very often, the king proved to be so strong, so as to overshadow the greatness and sanctity of even his royal priests. Hence, the Kṣatriyas wielding enough power, and being in a position to take action and decisions regarding the affairs of the state, were instructed by the epic bards to look well after the brāhmaṇas and to arrange for their livelihood. To desist any

9. III. 198.

10. II. 21.36.

11. XII. 56. 26-30; 77.33.

monarch from doing otherwise, it was stated that if the Kṣatriyas protect the brāhmaṇas they earn fame in this world and merit in the hereafter.

It would now be useful to discuss some rules of connubium and commensality of the brāhmaṇas with regard to other Varṇas.

In examining the Mahābhārata, we find a very decided social and poetical exaltation of the brāhmaṇa Varṇa, in relation to the others. Various fabrications were meant to secure to the brāhmaṇa veneration and awe.

The society having become rigid in matters of caste, it was but natural to see that the highest varṇa enjoyed the maximum esteem and privilege in society. The brāhmaṇa was considered the 'first-born' by nature (agra janma), the 'twice-born' - dvija, the 'deity-on-earth' (Bhudeva) by his divine status and the intelligent one - vipra, by his innate comprehensions. Such is the exaltation of this caste that we find suicide being declared a less heinous crime than Brahmicide (killing of a brāhmaṇa), for which there is no atonement.

While studying the epic with a view to understanding the relations of the superiormost class of the society, with the lower varṇas, we come upon many interesting facts. At

some places, the brāhmaṇas are found to adjust with them amicably, at others, to insist and impress upon them their distinctness and uniqueness.

In the Vanaparva, we get an example of the brāhmaṇa peacefully co-existing with the lower varṇas. It is said that all the varṇas strictly observed the institutes of their own castes. Sacrificing (for one's self), giving of gifts, learning the Vedas, are said to be common to the brāhmaṇas, Kṣatriyas and the Vaiśyas, while sacrificing for others, teaching, and taking alms belong to the brāhmaṇa, protection of the people was the duty of the Kṣatriyas.

In the same parva we find another episode which is the illustrative of the relations of brāhmaṇas with the Kṣatriyas. King Nahuṣa had been turned into a serpent by the curse of ṛṣi Agastya, for his haughtiness towards the sage. Nahuṣa, who was then a serpent, was found by Yudhiṣṭhira, and in the conversation that followed between the two some of the principles of caste, as affected by the progress of Indian society are brought forward.¹² Yudhiṣṭhira answers the serpent's queries regarding who is a brāhmaṇa and what is knowledge. He says that a brāhmaṇas is one in whom there are the virtues of truth, liberality,

12. John Wilson - Indian Caste, Vol. 1.

forgiveness, innocence, austere-devotion, compassion and wrathlessness. But if these virtues are found in a śūdra, and not in a brāhmaṇa, then that śūdra is worthy of honour. Yudhiṣṭhira says very emphatically that a person in whom the mark of virtue is seen is a brāhmaṇa, and the person in whom the mark of virtue is not seen, is a śūdra !!

The king-turned-serpent due to a brāhmaṇa's curse, further goes to say that if virtue is most important in a man and only he is a brāhmaṇa whom his conduct makes such then caste is on no avail, until deeds are superadded to it. Yudhiṣṭhira further confirms this idea by saying that a brāhmaṇa is one who aims at purity of conduct. So, we find that at some places in the epic, certain forms of objections to the superiority of the brāhmaṇa and the elevation of caste by birth are raised. This passage shows an enlightened attitude towards humanity - that person should be respected who deserves to be respected due to his deeds (karma) and not because he is born a brāhmaṇa.

In direct contrast, we find the Bhagavadgita emphasising the maintenance of caste barriers and denouncing varṇa-sankara (mixture of classes).

As brāhmaṇas were supreme in the sphere of religion and philosophy, the kṣatriyas were considered masters in polity and administration. Therefore the king, who, in

Hindu political speculation, means the government, or even the state, was no ordinary mortal it was said that 'the king is the foremost among men, as Agnihotra is the foremost among Vedic sacrifices, as Gāyatrī is the foremost among metres and the ocean foremost among waters ! However, even the best of kings need the great intelligence and sound counsels of a well-born brāh^{mana}, endowed with wisdom and humility, to guide the king in every matter and lead him to prosperity. The brāhmaṇa points out the duties which the king is to observe it is said in the Mahābhārata that if the Kṣatriya and brāhmaṇa fight each other, ruin overtakes the kingdom. If brāhmaṇa abandon kṣatriyas, education, prosperity and sacrifices disappear. Kṣatriyas who abandon brāhmaṇas become impure in blood. Both are complementary to one another, the Mahābh^{ra}tata stresses, and augment each others growth.

The king was enjoined to perform sacrifices¹³, since its performance liberates a king from his sins.¹⁴ In a passage in the Śānti parva¹⁵, Arjuna, recognising the importance of yajñas, tells Yudhiṣṭhira that if a king does

13. XII. 20.5.

14. III. 33.78.

15. XII. 8. 35-36.

not perform a sacrifice, then the sins of the kingdom become his, whereas if he performs a horsesacrifice with lavish presents his subjects, become cleansed of their sins and are sanctified. Such a king gains immense merit in this world and in the next. He also earns fame and attains salvation by performing a sacrifice. Else where too, the Mahābhārata presents many examples of the performances of yajñas by kings, like, Yudhiṣṭhira¹⁶, Gaya¹⁷, Mahābhīṣa¹⁸, Srñjaya¹⁹, Soma²⁰, and Yayāti²¹.

The sacrifices were often performed on the advice of and with the assistance of the brāhmaṇa priests. Apart from acquiring religious merit and fame, those like Rājasūya and Aśvamedha were actually aimed at the attainment of political supremacy. Hence, in the Anuśāsana parva, Bhīṣma is seen advising Yudhiṣṭhira to perform Yajña and offer dana²².

16. I. 1. 130.

17. III. 95. 19-20.

18. I. 96. 1-2.

19. VII. 69.10.

20. IX. 43.47.

21. I. 75.41.

22. XIII. 59. 20-21.

From the legends preserved in the epic, it will be seen that the brāhmaṇa clans, very often, entered in matrimonial relations with the Kṣatriya families. For instance, the Bhārgava Cyavana is said to have married, Sukanyā the daughter of king Śaryāti. In an interesting legend we are told how youth was restored to the old and decrepit Cyavana by the grace of Aśvins, and how he performed a sacrifice for the latter where, despite the stiff opposition of Indra, Aśvins were allowed the promised libation of Soma juice.

The sage Rīcka had married Satyavatī, the daughter of king Gādhi of Kānya kubja and the sister of the famous Viśvāmitra. In a legend which is very often repeated in the Mahābhārata, we are told how it came about that Viśvāmitra who was of mingled brāhmaṇa and Kṣatriya parentage was born in the Kṣatriya family, though endowed with brahmanic qualities, while his nephew Jamadagni, under similar conditions was born in the brāhmaṇa caste with Kṣatriyan qualities. Similarly Jamadagni's wife Reṇukā, was, likewise, said to have been a princess by birth, being a daughter of king Prasenajit of Ayodhya. Hence the brāhmaṇa clan of the Bhrgus was definitely associated, matrimonially, with the Kṣatriya families of Śaryāta, with that of Kuśika, as well as with the kingdom of Ayodhya.

Further, the Mahābhārata mentions some Kṣatriyas who came into contact with brāhmaṇas, and became brāhmaṇas themselves. For instance, king Vītahavya belonged to the Kṣatriya family of the Haihayas. Circumstances forced him to take shelter in the hermitage of the sage Bhṛgu. He was adopted and made a brāhmaṇa by the Bhṛgu seer, and thus his descendants became Bhāragvas.

In this connection, mention may be made of a brāhmaṇa woman, who came into contact with a Kṣatriya. She was the Bhāragvī Devayānī, the daughter of Śukra, who was the preceptor of the Asuras. The epic narrates the interesting myth regarding her meeting, and subsequent marriage with the illustrious king Yayāti and her bearing the sons Yadu and Turvasu.

hence in the Mahābhārata, several brāhmaṇas of prominent families are seen associated with the Kṣatriyas -either by ties of matrimony, or in a patron-priest relationship. Similar several activities of the Kṣatriya rulers seem to be tied up with those of the brāhmaṇas and the latter very frequently appear to be the recipients of their rulers benefactions and liberal donations. In this connection, it would serve the purpose to point out that in case of a default or error on the part of the king, for which there is public condemnation, it is the priest who is

seen helping the king to regain his lost respect in the eyes of the people. The Santiparva contains a story of king Janamejaya, who, assisted by the sage Indrota (probably, a Saunaka) went on a pilgrimage, in order to be purified from the sins incurred by killing a brahmana.²³

The brahmanas, belonging to the various clans, regarded themselves as superior to the Ksatriya because they were superior in spiritual knowledge, while the latter was strong in physical power.²⁴ The epic asserts that the Tapa (penance) of the brahmana was more powerful than the Tejas of the Ksatriya.²⁵ Therefore the brahmana is considered to be the king-maker. That person becomes a king, says the epic, whom the brahmanas wish to be so. The brahmana is considered to be the political asylum to the Ksatriya.²⁶

However it is not to be supposed that the attainment of the supreme position by the brahmanas was an affair of plain sailing. Sometimes Ksatriyas claimed higher status and also

23. XII. 146-148.

24. XIII. 34.15; 58.24; 34.35.

25. XIII. 8.26.

26. XII. 79. 12-16.

paid scant respect to the brāhmaṇas. The epic informs us that the Ksatryas are like herdsmen to the brāhmaṇas, whose protection and well-being are based on them.²⁷ To cite an example king Arjuna Kārtavīrya did not accept the supremacy of the brāhmaṇa, because for protection and support they depended upon the Kṣatriyas.²⁸ Hence, he, highhandedly, carried off the cow of the Bhārāgava Jamadagni.

Further, the Śāntiparva says that the king should control those brāhmaṇas with the help of Daṇḍa (Chastisement) who are destructive to society.²⁹ Hence, despite the traditional claim of the brāh^{māṇ} to social preēminence, the rulers reserved the authority to exercise curbs on their activities and to reprimand them for any act of misdemeanour.

In another passage of the epic, when Śarmiṣṭhā, the daughter of king Vṛaṣaparava, is talking to her friend Devayānī, the daughter of the brāhmaṇa Śukra, we find brāhmaṇas superiority mocked at and made to appear very hollow. She says, "sitting in a humble place your (Devayānī's) father goes on flattering my father (the king),

27. XIII. 8.26.

28. XIII. 137. 15-16.

29. XII. 56. 22-27.

day, and night. You are the daughter of him, who begs and flatters (i.e. the brāhmaṇa). I am the daughter of him who donates and is praised.³⁰ (i.e. the Kṣatriya, the king).

The Mahābhārata contains a number of instances when the brāhmaṇa sages came into conflict with the Kṣatriyas. There are references to armed conflicts between them as, for example, the massacre of the Kṣatriyas for twenty one times by Parasurāma. This act was not motivated by any consideration, other than the desire to avenge the gruesome killing of Parasurama's³¹ father, Jamadagni, by the Haihaya Kṣatriyas.

The Mahābhārata mentions at least five different versions of the causes of the massacre - to take revenge from the Haihayas who had killed the Bhārgavas for realising wealth from them,³¹ disunion or differences of opinion between the two,³² traditional enmity between them,³³ showing that there were old quarrels about presogative between brāh^{manas} and Kṣatriyas, - its intended lesson being the danger of Kṣatriyas trifling with

30. XII. 73. 9-10.

31. I. 169 & 171.

32. XIII. 56.2.

33. XIII. 56. 4-9;
III. 117. 5-15.

brāhmaṇas, theft of the cow of Jamodagni by the sons of Kārtavīrya, murder of this sage by them,³⁴ and lastly the ego of king Kārtavīrya of his power.³⁵

The annihilation of the Kṣatriyas by Rāma Jāmadaghyā was motivated by a desire to capture political power. The non-political nature of the conflict is apparent from the fact that after massacring the Kṣatriyas, he did not start a dynasty after his name, neither did he occupy their territory, but offered these to Kasyapa, who later on, coronated the remaining Kṣatriyas on the thrones³⁶ to rule over the earth.

Sāntiparva mentions another strong-headed king who was chastised by the brāhmaṇas, king Veṇa ruled arbitrarily. Neglecting Dharma, he was motivated by the vices like *vāga* (attachment) and *dvesa* (prejudice). The murder of Veṇa by the brāhmaṇas was also not inspired by any selfish motive to gain power, as they enthroned his son Pṛthu as king. Further, Droṇa's armed conflict with king Drupada of Pāñcāla was based on personal grounds. After the fight, king Drupada had to yield half of his territory to the former.

34. XII. 49. 39-43.

35. XIII. 137. 2-20.

36. XII. 49. 60-78.

There are several other accounts of struggles between the brāhmaṇa and the Kṣatriyas - a struggle aimed at establishing their respective superiority in the society. Apart from the case of king Nahuṣa - who had ordered the brāhmaṇas to bear him on a palanquin and had even misbehaved with Agastya muni as a result of which he had been transformed into a snake due to the the sage's curse; there is also the instance of Viśvāmitra, trying to seize the beloved Nandinī: (cow) of the sage Vaśiṣṭha. Viśvāmitra was a king, and on the issue of the sage's cow, he enters into a fierce fight with Vaśiṣṭha. It is only later, that Viśvāmitra gives up Kṣatriyahood to embrace the life of an ascetic.

Hence, there are numerous examples in the Mahābhārata when the brāhmaṇa and Kṣatriyas interact - either amicably or in enmity. The legend of Aurva, the Kṣatriya progeny bent on annihilating the Bhṛguṣ, is one extreme of hatred, between the two varṇas. Yet, we also come across instances, when the brāhmaṇas go out of their way to help a Kṣatṛya in distress. Sage Vaśiṣṭha delivered king Kalmā Ṣapāda from a curse the latter had been afflicted with and pardoned him for killing his (Vaśiṣṭha's) sons. He also, on the king's request, begat a son on the king's wife, queen Madayantī, so as to enable Kalmāṣapāda to continue his dynasty.

Similarly, a Bharadvāja seer is shown to have helped king ^{Divodāsa} of Kāśi, when the latter had been driven away from his kingdom by his enemies, the Haihayas. The Bharadvāja sage created, and unusally bright son, Pratardana for Divodāsa. Pratardana, eventually managed to overcome all his enemies and recap ^{ture} his lost kingdom.

To sum up, the chapter intends to focus on the relations of the different sages belonging to the different brāhmaṇa clans, with the Kṣatriyas. The rules of connubium and commensality of the brāhmaṇa clans with regard to the Kṣatriyas have been discussed. Further, it has been seen how some particular brāhmaṇas clans, like those of the Bhṛguṣ, the Bharadvājas, the Agastyas, the Viśvāmitras, the Jamadagnis are coming into contact with various Kṣatriya families - the Kuśika Gādhi, the Śaryātas, kings of Ayodhya, the Kāśi king Divodāsa, king Nahuṣa, and the Haihaya king Arjuna Kārtavīrya. We also find interesting examples of Kṣatriyas becoming brāhmaṇas - of Viśvāmitra and Vītahavya illustrate this point. An instance has also been cited to show the role of brāhmaṇa women in the epic - this is with reference to the Bhāragvī Devayānī who marries king Yayāti.

Hence, there are constant exhortations in the epic, especially to the Kṣatriyas, to respect and honour the

brāhmanas; and we find the brāhmaṇa clans juxtaposed with the Kṣatriyas in the Mahābhārata. The two are involved in a relationship of friendship as well as enmity.

CONCLUSION

In this work entitled 'Brāhmaṇa clans in the Mahābhārata' an attempt has been made to study the eighteen clans of the brāhmaṇas as they figure in the epic. The activities of the sages of the different clans have been emphasized upon. It has been seen what the claims of the various seers were, and what their teachings in the epic have been. Further, the relations of the various sages with their patrons. Kings have been analysed, and, wherever possible, an idea about their probable geographical location has been given. Also it has been the constant effort to indicate the various Parvas of the Mahābhārata, where the sages of different clans make their appearance, and to comment on their insibility in the Mahābhārata.

The brāhmaṇas claim their descent from ^{Brahmā}~~Brahma~~, the Creator. According to the legends given in the scriptures, seven Brahmaṛṣis arose from the Sacrifice instituted by Brahmā. They were Bhṛgu, Aṅgiras, Marīci, Atri, Pulaha, Pulastya and Vaśiṣṭha.¹ It is said that Pulaha and Pulastya became the orginators of Rākśasas and Piśācas, while Vaśiṣṭha died an early death to reappear again as a descendant of Marīci.

1. Thanesar Sarmah - The Bharadvajas in Ancient India, Delhi, 1991

It is said that Bhṛgu, Aṅgiras, Marīci and Atri were responsible for the existence of the seven seers (saptarṣi) and Agastya, as the eighth. These eight seers were the ancestors of many other seers.

The Bhṛgus emerge as a dominant brāhmaṇa clan in the epic. There are several myths surrounding the Bhārgavas, which are spread all through the epic, which show the sages as domineering, arrogant and revengeful - like the Bhāragava Rāma. A number of episodes relating to the Bhārgavas are found in the epic, like the Auvopākhyāna (Ādi), the Kārtavīryopākhyāna (Vana), and the Uttāṅkopākhyāna (Aśvamedha).

After examining the Bhārgava references in the epic one cannot help concluding that the epic seems to have been compiled under a strong Bhārgava influence. Since there have been constant additions and interpolations with the epic body it is possible that the Bhārgava redactors had almost come to believe in the various myths and legends surrounding the Bhāragavas, and had introduced their myths to glorify their clan.

The sage Aṅgiras is shown in the Mahābhārata as the progenitor of the race of Bharadvāja's and the Gotamas. He is depicted as the founding father from whom sprang these two eminent clans of brāhmaṇas.

The Bharadvājas clans emerges as an ancient and reputed one in Mahābhārata. Its antecedents can be traced to the Vedic literature, where Bharadvāja is known as the son of Bṛhaspati Ṃgiras - a contention which is found repeated in the Mahābhārata. There are several myths surrounding this clan in Mahābhārata; some are simply or repetition from earlier times and others seem to be a modified form of an earlier myth. The Bharadvājas association with the royal house of Kaśi, specially with king Divodāsa is one such instance of an elaborated myth in the Mahābhārata.

The Gotamas are seen to occupy a considerable space in Mahābhārata. The longest number of references are found in the Ādi Parva, while the others are scattered in the epic and are not very many. Gotama's connection with Ṃgirases find a parallel in Vedic literature. Most of the legends associated with the Gotamas in the Mahābhārata portray them as seers, enjoying a high regard and esteem of the people as result of their piety, devotion and penances.

In the Mahābhārata, ṛṣi Kaśyapa is mentioned as a maharṣi - one of the founders of the original four gotras (Bṛgu Ṃgria, Vaséṣṭha and Kaśyapa according to Mahābhārata). He is praised as master of Yoga and a progenitor of all creatures.

The Vaśiṣṭhas emerge as a powerful clan in the Mahābhārata. Their antecedents can be traced back to the Vedic literature where they are frequently mentioned.

The clan of Vaishtha's is portrayed to develop close ties with a number of Kṣatriya families - the Kurus, the Ikṣvāka king Sam Varaha, King Kalmāsapāda and the Kuśika Viśvāmitra. Very often the Vaśiṣṭhas; are shown to have developed intimate relations with their royal patrons.

Rsi Agastya is shown in the epic as a fiery sage, as the brother of Vaśiṣṭha and as the son of Mitra and Varaha. The Sages are portrayed as tough, powerful and haughty personages in the epic, feared by their royal patrons for their wrath (refer to story of Nahusa).

After studying the Agastya clan in Mahābhārata, it is seen that the clan is in no way directly related to the actual activities of the dynasties of Kauravas and Pāṇḍavas. A narration of its sages, their exploits and feats are brought in by way of digression and do not actually have a bearing on the political events in the epic.

The clan of Atris is shrouded in myths in Mahābhārata and appears to lack a historical certainty. This view is reinforced by evidence of the Vedic literature, where the clan is portrayed as a mythical one. In the Mahābhārata the

Atris are shown as followers of Vedas and as being pious, virtuous seers. At one place in Mahābhārata, a sage of the clan is shown being patronized by king Vainya and honoured for his wisdom and learning.

A very important clan in Mahābhārata is of the sage Viśvāmitra. The sage is seen as engaged in various activities in the epic. At some places he is shown performing religious sacrifices, at other he claims to be Vipraṁṣi. The Mahābhārata portrays Viśvāmitra as the priest of king Sudās. Viśvāmitra's association with Jamadagni and his son Paraśurāma is also talked of in the epic. In a passage of the Vana Parva it is said that Paraśurāma was an ardent admirer of his ancestor Viśvāmitra. The epic is replete with instances to show the greatness of Viśvāmitra and portray as a venerable ṛṣi.

Among the brāhmaṇa gotras, there are some names of mythical Kṣatriyas and kings like Vītahavya and Vena. Vītahavya figures in the Ṛg Veda as closely connected with the Bhṛguṣ. In the Mahābhārata, there is a legend about how Vītahavya became a brāhmaṇa. It should be remembered that ancient kings, learned in the Vedic lore, became famous as sages, in whose name, the fire was to be invoked to carry offerings to the gods even by brāhmaṇas, who came ages after them. Vītahavya and Vena are not his historical but mythical

figures. The brāhmaṇa clans of Śunakas, Mudgalas, the Kanvas, the Māltas, Viṣṇuvridhdhas, the Virūpas, the Vādhrayas^{ras} and the Sāmkartis do not appear as proper clans in Mahābhārata. They are shown as individuals - kings, sages, or pious rsi, who are pursuing their won activities in life. The myths related to them in the Mahābhārata, highlight their activities as individuals. Therefore we infer that the formation of a brāhmaṇa clans of this name was a development of a later date and had not been affected by the time of Mahābhārata. In all probability their followers, whether Bhārgavas or Āngirasas, adopted the name of their patron king as their gotā or class name at a late^{er} date.

In the second chapter, the relations of the sages belonging to different brāhmaṇa clans with Kṣatriyas have been discussed. It is seen that, sometimes, the brāhmaṇas and the Kṣatriyas are engaged in fierce animosity - Agastya and king Nahusa, sage Vaśiṣṭha and Viśvāmitra, and Paraśurāma and the Kṣatriyas. There are also cases when the brāhmaṇas are related matrimonially to specific Kṣatriya families, for instance, Jamadagni married the princess of Ayodhya, Reṇukā, Bhargava, Cyavana married Sukanyā (the daughter of king Śaryāti) and the sage Ṛiṣīka married Satyavatī, the daughter of king Gādhi of Kānya kubja. Hence the rules of connubium and coomensality of the brāhmaṇa

class with the regard to other Varnas, specially the Kṣatriyas, have been discussed.

Some brāhmaṇa clans, like the Kṣyapas, the Atris seem to be associated purely with legendary stories.

Though some brāhmaṇa clans like the Bharadvājas, Gotamas, Vaśiṣṭhas, Viśvāmitras occupy a larger space in the epic as compared to the others yet all the eminent sages are mentioned in important occasions in the epic. Further, the sages are shown to enjoy a close proximity not only the with the mortals but the divine figures as well. And very often the sages like Agastya and Viśvāmitra are shown performing extraordinary feats.

It is therefore amply borne out how the brāhmaṇa clans have enriched the Mahābhārata, through the various myths and legends associated with them. These serve to highlight the cosmic, spiritual and yogic traits of seers of the different brāhmaṇa clans.

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