

CHAPTER SEVEN

The Descendants of King Māndhātā

In this chapter the descendants of King Māndhātā are described, and in this connection the histories of Purukutsa and Hariścandra are also given.

The most prominent son of Māndhātā was Ambarīṣa, his son was Yauvanāśva, and Yauvanāśva's son was Hārīta. These three personalities were the best in the dynasty of Māndhātā. Purukutsa, another son of Māndhātā, married the sister of the snakes (sarpa-gaṇa) named Narmadā. The son of Purukutsa was Trasaddasyu, whose son was Anaraṇya. Anaraṇya's son was Haryaśva, Haryaśva's son was Prāruṇa, Prāruṇa's son was Tribandhana, and Tribandhana's son was Satyavrata, also known as Triśaṅku. When Triśaṅku kidnapped the daughter of a brāhmaṇa, his father cursed him for this sinful act, and Triśaṅku became a caṇḍāla, worse than a śūdra. Later, by the influence of Viśvāmitra, he was brought to the heavenly planets, but by the influence of the demigods he fell back downward. He was stopped in his fall, however, by the influence of Viśvāmitra. The son of Triśaṅku was Hariścandra. Hariścandra once performed a Rājasūya-yajña, but Viśvāmitra cunningly took all of Hariścandra's possessions as a dakṣiṇa contribution and chastised Hariścandra in various ways. Because of this, a quarrel arose between Viśvāmitra and Vasiṣṭha. Hariścandra had no sons, but on the advice of Nārada he worshiped Varuṇa and in this way got a son named Rohita. Hariścandra promised that Rohita would be used to perform a Varuṇa-yajña. Varuṇa reminded Hariścandra repeatedly about this yajña, but the King, because of affection for his son, gave various arguments to avoid sacrificing him. Thus time passed, and gradually the son grew up. To safeguard his life, the boy then took bow and arrows in hand and went to the forest. Meanwhile, at home, Hariścandra suffered from dropsy because of an attack from Varuṇa. When Rohita received the news that his father was suffering, he wanted to return to the capital, but King Indra prevented him from doing so. Following the instructions of Indra, Rohita lived in the forest for six years and then returned home. Rohita purchased Śunaḥśepha, the second son of Ajīgarta, and gave him to his father, Hariścandra, as the sacrificial animal. In this way, the sacrifice was performed, Varuṇa and the other demigods were pacified, and Hariścandra was freed from disease. In this sacrifice, Viśvāmitra was the hotā priest, Jamadagni was the adhvaryu, Vasiṣṭha was the brahmā, and Ayāsyā was the udgātā. King Indra, being

very satisfied by the sacrifice, gave Hariścandra a golden chariot, and Viśvāmitra gave him transcendental knowledge. Thus Śukadeva Gosvāmī describes how Hariścandra achieved perfection.

Text 1:

Śukadeva Gosvāmī said: The most prominent among the sons of Māndhātā was he who is celebrated as Ambarīṣa. Ambarīṣa was accepted as son by his grandfather Yuvanāśva. Ambarīṣa's son was Yauvanāśva, and Yauvanāśva's son was Hārīta. In Māndhātā's dynasty, Ambarīṣa, Hārīta and Yauvanāśva were very prominent.

Text 2:

The serpent brothers of Narmadā gave Narmadā to Purukutsa. Being sent by Vāsuki, she took Purukutsa to the lower region of the universe.

Text 3:

There in Rasātala, the lower region of the universe, Purukutsa, being empowered by Lord Viṣṇu, was able to kill all the Gandharvas who deserved to be killed. Purukutsa received the benediction from the serpents that anyone who remembers this history of his being brought by Narmadā to the lower region of the universe will be assured of safety from the attack of snakes.

Text 4:

The son of Purukutsa was Trasaddasyu, who was the father of Anaraṇya. Anaraṇya's son was Haryaśva, the father of Prāruṇa. Prāruṇa was the father of Tribandhana.

Texts 5-6:

The son of Tribandhana was Satyavrata, who is celebrated by the name Triśaṅku. Because he kidnapped the daughter of a brāhmaṇa when she was being married, his father cursed him to become a caṇḍāla, lower than a śūdra. Thereafter, by the influence of Viśvāmitra, he went to the higher planetary system, the heavenly planets, in his material body, but because of the prowess of the demigods he fell back downward. Nonetheless, by the power of Viśvāmitra, he did not fall all the way down; even today he can still be seen hanging in the sky, head downward.

Text 7:

The son of Triśaṅku was Hariścandra. Because of Hariścandra there was a quarrel between Viśvāmitra and Vasiṣṭha, who for many years fought one another, having been transformed into birds.

Text 8:

Hariścandra had no son and was therefore extremely morose. Once, therefore, following the advice of Nārada, he took shelter of Varuṇa and said to him, “My lord, I have no son. Would you kindly give me one?”

Text 9:

O King Parīkṣit, Hariścandra begged Varuṇa, “My lord, if a son is born to me, with that son I shall perform a sacrifice for your satisfaction.” When Hariścandra said this, Varuṇa replied, “Let it be so.” Because of Varuṇa’s benediction, Hariścandra begot a son named Rohita.

Text 10:

Thereafter, when the child was born, Varuṇa approached Hariścandra and said, “Now you have a son. With this son you can offer me a sacrifice.” In answer to this, Hariścandra said, “After ten days have passed since an animal’s birth, the animal becomes fit to be sacrificed.”

Text 11:

After ten days, Varuṇa came again and said to Hariścandra, “Now you can perform the sacrifice.” Hariścandra replied, “When an animal grows teeth, then it becomes pure enough to be sacrificed.”

Text 12:

When the teeth grew, Varuṇa came and said to Hariścandra, “Now the animal has grown teeth, and you can perform the sacrifice.” Hariścandra replied, “When all its teeth have fallen out, then it will be fit for sacrifice.”

Text 13:

When the teeth had fallen out, Varuṇa returned and said to Hariścandra, “Now the animal’s teeth have fallen out, and you can perform the sacrifice.” But Hariścandra replied, “When the animal’s teeth grow in again, then he will be pure enough to be sacrificed.”

Text 14:

When the teeth grew in again, Varuṇa came and said to Hariścandra, “Now you can perform the sacrifice.” But Hariścandra then said, “O King, when the sacrificial animal becomes a kṣatriya and is able to shield himself to fight with the enemy, then he will be purified.”

Text 15:

Hariścandra was certainly very much attached to his son. Because of this affection, he asked the demigod Varuṇa to wait. Thus Varuṇa waited and waited for the time to come.

Text 16:

Rohita could understand that his father intended to offer him as the animal for sacrifice. Therefore, just to save himself from death, he equipped himself with bow and arrows and went to the forest.

Text 17:

When Rohita heard that his father had been attacked by dropsy due to Varuṇa and that his abdomen had grown very large, he wanted to return to the capital, but King Indra forbade him to do so.

Text 18:

King Indra advised Rohita to travel to different pilgrimage sites and holy places, for such activities are pious indeed. Following this instruction, Rohita went to the forest for one year.

Text 19:

In this way, at the end of the second, third, fourth and fifth years, when Rohita wanted to return to his capital, the King of heaven, Indra, approached him as an old brāhmaṇa and forbade him to return, repeating the same words as in the previous year.

Text 20:

Thereafter, in the sixth year, after wandering in the forest, Rohita returned to the capital of his father. He purchased from Ajīgarta his second son, named Śunaḥśepha. Then he offered Śunaḥśepha to his father, Hariścandra, to be used as the sacrificial animal and offered Hariścandra his respectful obeisances.

Text 21:

Thereafter, the famous King Hariścandra, one of the exalted persons in history, performed grand sacrifices by sacrificing a man and pleased all the demigods. In this way his dropsy created by Varuṇa was cured.

Text 22:

In that great human sacrifice, Viśvāmitra was the chief priest to offer oblations, the perfectly self-realized Jamadagni had the responsibility for chanting the mantras from the Yajur Veda, Vasiṣṭha was the chief brahminical priest, and the sage Ayāśya was the reciter of the hymns of the Sāma Veda.

Text 23:

King Indra, being very pleased with Hariścandra, offered him a gift of a golden chariot. Śunaḥśepha's glories will be presented along with the description of the son of Viśvāmitra.

Text 24:

The great sage Viśvāmitra saw that Mahārāja Hariścandra, along with his wife, was truthful, forbearing and concerned with the essence. Thus he gave them imperishable knowledge for fulfillment of the human mission.

Texts 25-26:

Mahārāja Hariścandra first purified his mind, which was full of material enjoyment, by amalgamating it with the earth. Then he amalgamated the earth with water, the water with fire, the fire with the air, and the air with the sky. Thereafter, he amalgamated the sky with the total material energy, and the total material energy with spiritual knowledge. This spiritual knowledge is realization of one's self as part of the Supreme Lord. When the self-realized spiritual soul is engaged in service to the Lord, he is eternally imperceptible and inconceivable. Thus established in spiritual knowledge, he is completely freed from material bondage.