



## The Eternal Bhargava-Haihaya Enmity Part 1: Ekavira

January 16, 2022

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During the times of ancient lore, Bharatvarsha was home to dozens of kingdoms and tribes. Just like any land, these kingdoms constantly fought for supremacy. Throughout the Puranas and Itihasa, we saw great kingdoms rise and fall. The Rigveda mentions the epic “Battle of Ten Kings”. The Mahabharata ends with the Kurukshetra War, the deadliest conflict to ever rock the face of Earth. But a conflict that is not as well-known but just as important is the eternal enmity of the Haihaya kings and the Bhargavas (the descendants of Bhrigu). I am writing a whole series of posts on this conflict, which ranges multiple generations. Starting from the origin of the Haihayas, we are going to go through the hidden treasures of the Bhargavas, the campaigns of Parshuram, the great war of rishis and Kshatriyas, and the birth of King Sagara.

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## The Origin of the Haihayas

The main focus of this series is the Haihayas, but who were the Haihayas? Why do they come up time after time in the Puranas and the Itihasa? To answer these questions, we have to first understand where they came from. The Vishnu Purana provides good insight into the origin of the Haihayas. According to Book 4, Chapter 11 of the Vishnu Purana, the Haihayas originated from the Chandravansha of kings. We all know that **Chandra**'s son **Budha** married the androgynous **Ila** and their son Pururavas ruled the entirety of Bharatavarsha. Pururavas's son the famed **Nahusha** then took the throne, followed by the latter's son **Yayati**. Yayati's eldest son Yadu had four sons: Raghu, Nala, **Sahasrajit**, and Kroshti. Sahasrajit had one son named **Satajit**. Satajit began a long penance to obtain a powerful son.

## Uchchaihshravas the Divine Horse

*This story is in the Devi Bhagavata Purana, Skandha 6*

Once, Revanta, the son of **Surya**, was traveling on the horse Uchchaihshravas to go see Lord Vishnu in Vaikuntha. As he arrived at Vaikuntha, Lakshmi saw him from a distance and was captivated by the beauty of the divine horse. Meanwhile, Vishnu also saw the horse in the distance and asked Lakshmi, "Who is the handsome man on horseback coming our way?"



Still entranced by the horse, Lakshmi ignored her husband and continued staring at the horse. Vishnu repeatedly tried to get her attention, but she ignored him. Frustrated, Vishnu erupted, "Lakshmi! Why are you ignoring me just because of a horse! If you like this horse so much, then may you be born as a mare on Earth." Lakshmi was shocked by this sudden curse, and started fearfully sobbing. "Why would you do this! Why would you curse me over such a small mistake. What happened to all of the love and affection that you have towards me. How will I live on Earth among men, separated from you. Please free me from this curse as soon as possible," Lakshmi requested. Vishnu realized his mistake and said, "When you will have a son like me on Earth, you will rejoin me in Vaikuntha and be free from your birth on Earth." Revanta witnessed this scene with horror. Frightened by Vishnu's curse, he quickly bowed down to Vishnu and left.

## The Birth of Ekavira

Meanwhile, as per the curse, Lakshmi descended onto Earth in the form of a mare. She went to the confluence of the rivers Kalindi and Tamasa and meditated on Lord Shiva. After a thousand years, Shiva appeared and said, "Why are you meditating on me? Your husband is the Preserver of the entire universe, yet you are thinking of me."

Lakshmi replied, "My husband cursed me and sent me to Earth. But he said that I will be liberated from this curse once I have a son. But how can I have a son with my husband! I don't know what to do. Please help me," Lakshmi pleaded. Shiva was pleased and said, "Don't worry. You will be free soon. I will send your husband down onto this Earth as a horse. With this, you will have a son and you will be freed from this curse. This son will be

known as Ekavira, and from him will propagate the Haihaya dynasty. He will become a famous king revered by all." Saying this, Shiva vanished.

## The Son of Two Horses

When Shiva went back to Kailash, he sent his attendant Chitrarupa to Vaikuntha to go speak to Vishnu. When he arrived at Vaikuntha, Chitrarupa saw Jaya and Vijaya, Vishnu's gatekeepers, guarding the entrance. He told them that he was a messenger from Shiva. Jaya conveyed this information to Vishnu, who told him to let the messenger enter. Chitrarupa bowed down to Vishnu and said, "Please bring back your dear wife Lakshmi. She is unhappy on Earth and your enemies are happy because of your separation from her. You should go to Earth in the form of a horse and have a child with her. That way, you can bring her back."

Vishnu agreed to Chitrarupa's request and descended onto Earth as a horse. When Lakshmi the mare saw him, she immediately recognized him. Lakshmi soon became pregnant and they had a baby child. Vishnu then said, "Leave this mare form and go back to your normal form. We can now go back to Vaikuntha. Don't worry about the child. He will become a great king named Ekavira"



## Satajit Adopts Ekavira

Meanwhile, after Vishnu and Lakshmi had gone, a Vidhyadhara named Champaka came there with his wife Madanalasa. Seeing the mysterious child lying helplessly in the forest, they took him to Devaloka and presented him to **Indra**. Indra recognized the child as the son of Vishnu and Lakshmi and said, "This child is meant to be given to King Satajit. He will come to that spot and look for the child. So quickly go put the child back where you found it." Champaka put the child back where he found it. At this moment, Vishnu appeared before Satajit, who asked him for a son. Vishnu told Satajit to go to the confluence of the rivers Kalinda and Tamasa. There, he

would find a child lying on the ground. Satajit had tears in his eyes as he picked up his new son and praised Lord Vishnu and Lakshmi. Ecstatic, he took the son back to his palace and showed it to his queen. **They named the son “Ekavira”**. However, because the son was born from a horse, he was also known as “**Haihaya**”.

## Ekavira and Ekavali

*This story is in the Devi Bhagavata Purana, Skandha 6*

When Ekavira grew up, Satajit crowned him as the king and then went to the forest with his wife to take the spiritual path. Similar to how the Suryavanshi kings made Vashishta Rishi their Guru, Ekavira made the Bhargava rishis his Guru. Meanwhile, King Ekavira once went for a pleasure trip to the banks of the Ganga with his minister's son. It was spring and the king was enjoying the beautiful nature around him. But suddenly, Ekavira saw a beautiful damsel weeping. The king approached her and asked her why she was weeping.

The damsel said, “There is a king named Raibhya and he has a beautiful wife named Rukmarekha. However, they remained depressed because they had no children. Raibhya initiated a *yagna* and from the fire, a lovely girl emerged. The king named her Ekavali and raised her as his own daughter. My name is Yasovati, and I am the daughter of the king's minister. I was asked to live with her as her companion. She used to love lotuses, so she travelled to distant lotus lakes. Hearing about this, the king constructed a big lake with lotuses in his own palace. Yet she still went to other lakes in search of lotuses. Once, we went to Ganga River to play accompanied by the king's guards. At that time, a Danava named Kalaketu kidnapped her. He defeated the king's soldiers and took her away to Patala. Helplessly, I followed them. Kalaketu is in love with her and repeatedly asks her to marry him. But every time, she rejects him, because she wants to marry King Ekavira.”

Ekavira was puzzled. He had numerous questions. He asked, “How were you able to escape Patala and reach here? Does her father know about her kidnapping? Why isn't he doing anything?” Yashovati responded, “When I was young, I had obtained the Devi Bhagwati mantra. So when I was in Patala, I prayed to Goddess Chandika with the mantra. Chandika appeared to me in my dreams and said, 'Quickly go to the banks of the Ganga River. King Ekavira will come there and help you. He will kill the Danava and rescue Ekavali.' The Goddess gave me the strength and intelligence to find my way to you.”

## Ekavira vs. Kalaketu

Ekavira responded, “I am that King Ekavira that you are looking for. I want to rescue this woman who wants to marry me. But I don't know where this demon's palace is. Quickly show me where this demon resides, so that I can slay him and rescue the princess.” Yashovati was relieved. Her friend would finally be rescued. She gave Ekavira the Trilokitilaka Mantra, which allowed him to travel anywhere at lightning-fast speeds. Ekavira called his army and together, they went to Patala. As Ekavira's huge army approached Kalaketu's city, the guards warned Kalaketu of his arrival. More messengers hurried in and told Kalaketu to fight the advancing army.

Kalaketu mounted his chariot and confronted Ekavira. A dramatic fight ensued, but after a long time, Ekavira

gained the upper hand. He swung his mace at Kalaketu in a fatal blow. Kalaketu collapsed on the ground and his men fled. Seeing the Danava lying dead, Yashovati rejoiced and found Ekavali in Kalaketu's palace. "Dear princess, come, come! The great king Ekavira has come! He has killed Kalaketu and he is expecting you. The love of your life is here!" But at this moment, Ekavali grew shy. She didn't want to see King Ekavira before their marriage. So she mounted a covered palanquin carried by her attendants and went with Yashovati into the city. As they approached Ekavira and his army, the king said, "Princess, I have been anxious to see you, to lay sight on your beauty. Please show yourself to me." But Yashovati, expressing Ekavali's wish, said, "The princess will only see you once she is returned to her father's palace. There, she will marry you and you will then be able to see her." Ekavira agreed and the entire group returned to King Raibhya's palace. The king rejoiced upon hearing of his daughter's safe return. He thanked the king and soon, Ekavira and Ekavali were married in a grand ceremony. From the union of Ekavira and Ekavali, the great Haihaya line of kings was created. They were known as Haihaya because of their progenitor Ekavira's name "Haihaya".

## Ekavira's Descendants

Going back to Book 4 Chapter 11 of the Vishnu Purana, Ekavira and Ekavali's son was known as **Dharmanetra**. He is often referred to as simply "Dharma". The next few generations of the Haihaya dynasty are pretty insignificant. The wealth and the power of the Haihayas grew like any empire, and they often rivaled other groups such as the Yadavas that inhabited the western coasts. By this point, the Haihayas dominated most of the South Malwa Region, which today consists of Central India (Madhya Pradesh and Vindhya Mountains). Dharmanetra's son was Kunti, and his son was Sahanji. Chapter 3 of Book 1 of the Harivamsha mentions that Sahanji constructed the city of Sahanjani. This city became an important trading city in the kingdom of the Haihayas. Sahanji's son was Mahishmat, who founded another famous city: **Mahishmati**. This city is located in modern-day Maheshwar, Madhya Pradesh. Mahishmati soon became the capital of the extensive Haihaya Empire. This city is also mentioned numerous times in the Mahabharata. During the Mahabharata, it was ruled by a king named Nila.

## The Fight Over Varanasi

*This story is in the Harivamsa, Book 1, Chapter 29 and the Brahma Purana, Chapter 9*

Mahishmat's son was **Bhadrasena** (Bhadrasrenya), a king who finds mention across many Puranas for his various exploits. Bhadrasena was a great king, and he significantly expanded the power of the Haihayas northward and eastward into the Gangetic Plain. As I said, Bhadrasena has many stories associated with him, such as his abduction of a reborn celestial woman and his conflicts with the king of Ayodhya. Maybe I will tell these stories in a separate post on him. One of the many important cities that Bhadrasena ruled was the holy city of Varanasi. However, the great King Divodasa invaded Varanasi. He slaughtered Bhadrasena and 99 of Bhadrasena's sons. He only spared the youngest son, Durmada, because Durmada was a mere boy. Thus, Divodasa conquered a large part of the Haihaya territories in the north. Shortly after Divodasa won Varanasi, a sage named Nikumbha cursed Varanasi that it would be desolate and uninhabited for a thousand years. This is another interesting story that you can read about [here](#). Due to Nikumbha's curse, a Rakshasa named Kshemaka invaded Varanasi and made it

uninhabited. It was only during King Alarka's reign that Kshemaka was defeated and Varanasi was restored to its past glory.



Meanwhile, after Varanasi was overrun by Kshemaka, a new city appeared on the banks of the Gomati River. Divodasa abandoned Varanasi and made this his capital. In the meantime, Divodasa's past came back to bite him. He had made a grave mistake by sparing the Haihaya prince Durmada. By now, Durmada had grown up and become a potent leader. He defeated Divodasa and took back the lands snatched from his father, including the desolate city of Varanasi. But the saga doesn't end there. Pratardhana, the son of Divodasa and his wife Vrishadvati, attacked and defeated Durmada. This last invasion severely weakened the Haihayas. It was only during the time of Kartavirya Arjuna that the Haihayas would once again establish their dominance over Bharatvarsha. But for this first part of the series, we are going to stop here.

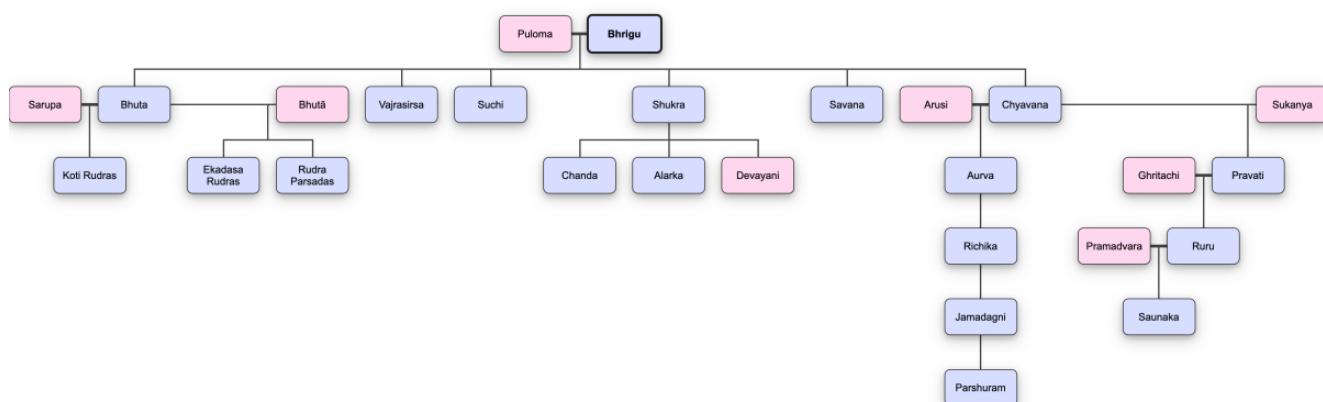
## The Bhriguvaṇsha

You're probably wondering where the Bhargavas have been. I know this series is about the conflicts between the Haihayas and the Bhargavas, but I wanted to use this first part of the series to build background on the Haihayas. In the second part, we will begin discussing the Bhargava-Haihaya conflict. Before we conclude however, I want to provide some brief background on the Bhargavas. The Bhargavas descended from the great rishi Bhrigu in his second birth, **when he was born from the Brahmayagna**.



Rishi Bhrigu

Bhrigu married Puloma, a daughter of Kashyapa Rishi. They had six sons named Bhuta, Chyavana, Vajrasirsa, Suchi, Shukra, and Savana. Bhuta and his first wife, also named Bhutā, gave birth to the Ekadasa Rudras (eleven Rudras) and the Rudra Parsadas (attendants of Shiva). Bhuta's second wife Sarupa gave birth to ten million Rudras. Meanwhile, Chyavana, who became a famous rishi, had two wives: Sukanya and Arusi. Arusi's son Aurva gave birth to Richika, who's son Jamadagni was the father of the famous Parshuram. Meanwhile, Sukanya's son was Pravati. Pravati's son **Ruru** married Pramadvara, and his son was Saunaka. Bhrigu's other son Shukra had two sons named Chanda and Alarka, and a daughter Devayani. Shukra became the guru of the Asuras. We will see many of these characters in this post series.


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