

kings of the Solar dynasty. In reality it was not the hostility towards the Solar dynasty, but it was his enmity against Vasiṣṭha. Viśvāmitra did not like Vasiṣṭha's being the family-priest of the kings of the Solar dynasty. So Viśvāmitra kept up an attitude of antipathy towards them. This is the background of the quarrel between Hariścandra and Viśvāmitra.

Hariścandra took Candramatī, the daughter of Śibi, as his first wife. Besides her, he had ninety-nine wives. But they had no children. At last according to the advice of Vasiṣṭha he went to the basin of the Ganges and did penance before Varuṇa. Viśvāmitra did not like this. Varuṇa appeared and said that Hariścandra would get a son. The king had promised that he would give his son as a sacrificial animal to Varuṇa.

Candramatī became pregnant and delivered a son. He was named Rohitāśva. Even after the lapse of a month, the son was not given to Varuṇa. On several occasions Varuṇa demanded the child; and Hariścandra would give some excuses. Finally the king agreed to hand him over to Varuṇa at the age of eleven after his Upanayana (investiture with the Brahma string). The boy completed his tenth year. Preparations were being made in the palace, for Upanayana, when Varuṇa arrived. The prince, who was aware of the fact that his father would sacrifice him after his Upanayana, ran away from the palace at night. Varuṇa asked the king to hand over the boy to him. The king was in great perplexity. Varuṇa cursed the king that he would catch the disease called Jalodara (dropsy). Thus the king became a sick man. Rohitāśva heard from travellers that his father was ill. On many occasions he wanted to return to the palace. But Indra appeared before him in the form of a Brahmin and dissuaded him from going to the palace.

Hariścandra called Vasiṣṭha and asked him to suggest a remedy for this woe and misery. Vasiṣṭha advised him to fulfil somehow or other, the promise made to Varuṇa. The hermit continued. "Sons are of ten types. A son bought for price also is included in this. So it is enough if a son is bought for price and is sacrificed. Some Brahmin may be found, who will be willing to sell his son. If you please Varuṇa thus, you will be cured." The King was delighted to hear this. He instructed his minister to find out any Brahmin who was willing to sell his son. A greedy Brahmin was found out. His name was Ajigarta. He had three sons. He was prepared to sell the second son, Śunaśśepha. The minister agreed to give him hundred cows in return.

Up to this time Viśvāmitra had been waging only a shadow war against the Kings of the Solar dynasty. From this moment he entered the scene of war. The minister bought Śunaśśepha and brought him to the palace. Viśvāmitra also arrived at the palace. He sympathised with Śunaśśepha who was crying pitifully. He asked the King to release the boy, and gave a warning that if the boy was not set free, the sacrifice would be obstructed. The King said that he was doing so to get recovery from illness, that he would give Viśvāmitra a good deal of wealth, and requested him not to cause any hindrance to the sacrifice. These words and the misery of the boy kindled the anger of Viśvāmitra. He called Śunaśśepha and taught him Varuṇamantra (spell) and told him to repeat the mantra when he was lying on the slaughter-stone and that he would escape

death. Śunaśśepha did as he was told. Varuṇa became pleased with him and appearing before the King said, "Leave Śunaśśepha and perform the sacrifice. You will get recovery." Saying so Varuṇa disappeared. Immediately the King was cured of his disease. At the order of the King Śunaśśepha was set free. The sound 'Jaya Jaya' (victory) reverberated in the sacrificial hall. Śunaśśepha got up and asked. "Oh great men. Who is my father now? Some said that it was Ajigarta. Some others argued that it was Hariścandra. Some said that it was Varuṇa." At this time Vasiṣṭha stood up and said. "Oh, great men, please stop arguing. I shall give reply in accordance with the convention of Vedas. When he bargained on the price of his son and received the cost Ajigarta lost his paternity. Thenceforward Hariścandra who bought the boy became his father. From the moment he had issued orders to bind the boy and place him on the slaughter-stone, he also had lost his paternity. The claim of Varuṇa to his paternity, because the boy had been saved from death by him, does not hold good. Any god will be pleased, when praised and glorified with great laudatory mantras and will confer upon the supplicant wealth, life, cow, land, salvation etc. There is nothing unusual in this. But it was Viśvāmitra who taught him the Varuṇa-spell in his pitiable and dangerous situation. So Viśvāmitra alone has claim to the boy's paternity."

Those who were present, accepted this decision. Immediately Viśvāmitra took Śunaśśepha with him and went to his hermitage. Hearing about the recovery of the King, Rohitāśva returned to the palace from the forest. Hariścandra received him with tears of joy. The King, with his wife and son led a happy life and ruled over his subjects with justice and truth. At this time, Hariścandra (of Kakutṣtha's family) accepting Vasiṣṭha as the main priest performed the famous sacrifice of Rājasūya (Royal) consecration with ceremonies and festivities. With this the fame of Hariścandra spread far and wide.

At this point begins the next stage of confrontation between Viśvāmitra and Hariścandra. Vasiṣṭha once reached heaven. Viśvāmitra also reached there at the same time. The devas greeted both honourably. But Viśvāmitra saw that Vasiṣṭha was shown some partiality. This was unpalatable to Viśvāmitra, who asked Vasiṣṭha. "What excellence have you, more than I?" Vasiṣṭha replied. "Have you not heard about Hariścandra, the King of the Solar dynasty? It is the noblest dynasty in the world. The familypriesthood of this dynasty also is laudable. My disciple Hariścandra of that royal family has recently performed the sacrifice of Rājasūya. I was the Supreme priest of the function. This is a covetable position not attainable to many. Moreover, there is none in the world, more truthful, firm of character, more charitable and more liberal than Hariścandra. This is a fact."

Viśvāmitra got up angrily and argued that Hariścandra was not truthful. He staked all the fruits of his penance to prove this. From that day onwards Viśvāmitra began to make moves to instigate Hariścandra to deviate from the path of truth.

Once Hariścandra, while he was hunting, met a lonely woman in the forest. She was moaning. The King asked why she was lamenting. She replied, "Oh King. I am Siddhirūpiṇī (a goddess who helps people to attain