

CHAPTER 18

TOUCHABLES V/S UNTOUCHABLES

I

A relationship of touchables against untouchables may cause surprise. Such a surprise will not be altogether without reason. The touchables are not one uniform body of people. They are themselves divided into innumerable castes. Each Hindu is conscious of the caste to which he belongs. Given this heterogeneity it does seem that to include all the touchable castes into one group and put them as forming a block against the untouchables is to create a division which can have no meaning. But although this division of touchables against untouchables may require explanation, the division so far as modern India is concerned is real and substantial.

The explanation of how the touchables have now become one block and are conscious of their being different from the untouchables means nothing but recounting the mutual relationship of the four Varnas.

At the outset it must be borne in mind that those who like Mr. Gandhi accept the Chaturvarna as an ideal form of society, either do not know the history of the mutual relations of the four Varnas or are cherishing an illusion or conjuring up a vision for purposes which they are out to serve. For, the fact is that the four Varnas never formed a society based on loving brotherhood or on economic organization based on cooperative effort. The four Varnas were animated by nothing but a spirit of animosity towards one another. There would not be the slightest exaggeration to say that the social history of the Hindus is a history not merely of class struggle but class war fought with such bitterness that even the Marxist will find it difficult to cite parallel cases to match.

It seems that the first class-struggle took place between the Brahmins, Kshatriyas and Vaishyas on the one hand and the Shudras on the other.

In Katyayana's Srauta Sutras, it is said, that "men with the exception of those whose members are defective, who have not read the Veda, eunuchs, and Shudras, have a right to sacrifice. It is Brahmanas,

Rajanyas and Vaishyas (only who) according to the Veda (possess this privilege)".

We are told by Manu that (*Quotation not given in the MS.*).*

Manu also says that (*Quotation not given in the MS.*).

Compare with this the following instances and statements relating to the status of the Shudra occurring in the Vedic literature of a period earlier than Manu and even earlier than Katyayana.

Prof. Max Muller calls attention to two instances showing that Shudras were admitted to great sacrifices such as "*gavedhukacharu*". One is that of Rathakara and the other of Nishadasthapati, both Shudras.

It might however be supposed that this was a concession made to the exceptional men from the Shudras. That it was not a mere concession but a right enjoyed by the Shudras is beyond question. In the Satapatha Brahmana which is a part of the Veda, the formula for the Brahmin Priest to call the sacrificer to come and make the oblation is given. He is asked to say *ehi*, come, in the case of a Brahman; *Agahi* 'come hither', in the case of a Vaishya; *Adrava*, 'hasten hither' in the case of a Kshatriya and *Adhava*, 'run hither' in the case of a Shudra.

This passage is of very great importance. It shows that the Shudra had at one time the right to sacrifice. Otherwise a form of address for a Shudra sacrificer could not have found a place in the Vedic precept. If the Shudra had a right to sacrifice, they also must have had a right to study the Vedas.

For, according to Katyayana, only those who had the right to read the Vedas were entitled to perform the sacrifice. That the Shudras were at one time entitled to read the Vedas is a fact which is well supported by tradition which is referred to in the Shanti Parva of the Mahabharat, where the sage Bhrigu answers the question "How is Varna to be determined?" in the following terms:

"There is no difference of castes; this world, having been at first created by Brahma entirely Brahmanic, became (afterwards) separated into castes in consequence of works. 6940. Those Brahmans (lit. twice born men), who were fond of sensual pleasure, fiery, irascible, prone to violence, who had forsaken their duty, and were red-limbed, fell into the condition of Kshatriyas. Those Brahmans, who derived their livelihood from kine, who were yellow, who subsisted by agriculture, and who neglected to practise their duties, entered into the state of Vaisyas. Those Brahmans, who were addicted to mischief and falsehood, who were covetous, who lived

* Attention of the reader is however, drawn to Chapter 16 of Vol. 3 of the present series which deals with Laws of Manu relating to the degradation of the Shudras and which seems relevant at this place.—Ed.

by all kinds of works, who were black and had fallen from purity, sank into the condition of Sudras. Being separated from each other by these (works, the Brahmins became divided into different castes. Duty and the rites of sacrifice have not been always forbidden to (any of) them. Such are four classes for whom the Brahmanic Sarasvati was at first designed by Brahma, but who through their cupidity fell into ignorance.”

Interpreting the word “Brahmanic Sarasvati” the Commentator says:

“Sarasvati, consisting of the Veda, was formerly designed by Brahma for all the four castes; but the Shudras having through cupidity fallen into ‘ignorance i.e. of darkness,’ lost their right to the Veda.”

After the Shudra was reduced came the turn of the Vaishya.

The bitterest class war took place between the Brahmins and the Kashatriyas. The classical literature of the Hindus abounds in reference to class wars between these two Varnas.

First was the conflict between the Brahmins and King Vena.

“There was formerly a Prajapati (lord of creatures), a protector of righteousness, called Anga, of the race of Atri, and resembling him in power. His son was the Prajapati Vena, who was but indifferently skilled in duty, and was born of Sunitha, the daughter of Mritya. This son of the daughter of Kala (death), owing to the taint derived from his maternal grandfather, threw his duties behind his back and lived in covetousness under the unfluence of desire. This king established an irreligious system of conduct; transsgresing the ordinances of the Veda, he was devoted to lawlessness. In his reign men lived without study of the sacred books and without the vashatkara, and the gods had no Soma-libations to drink at sacrifices. ‘I’, he declared, ‘am the object, and the performer of sacrifice, and the sacrifice itself, it is to me that sacrifice should be presented, and oblations offered.’ This transgressor of the rules of duty, who arrogated to himself what was not his due, was then addressed by all the great rishis, headed by Marichi: ‘We are about to consecrate ourselves for a ceremony which shall last for many years, practice not unrighteousness, o Vena; this is not the eternal rule of duty. Thou art in very deed a Prajapati of Atri’s race, and thou hast engaged to protect thy subjects.’ The foolish Vena, ignorant of what was right, laughingly answered those great rishis who had so addressed him: ‘Who but myself is the ordainer of duty? or whom ought I to obey? Who on earth equals me in sacred

knowledge, in prowess, in austere fervour, in truth? Ye who are deluded and senseless know not that I am the source of all beings and duties. Hesitate not to believe that I, if I willed, could burn up the earth, or deluge it with water, or close up heaven and earth'. When owing to his delusion and arrogance Vena could not be governed, then the mighty rishis becoming incensed, seized the vigorous and struggling king, and rubbed his left thigh. From this thigh, so rubbed, was produced a black man, very short in stature, who, being alarmed, stood with joined hands. Seeing that he was agitated, Atri said to him 'Sit down' (nishida). He became the founder of the race of the Nishadas, and also progenitor of the Dhivaras (fisherman), who sprang from the corruption of Vena. So too were produced from him the other inhabitants of the Vindhya range, the Tukharas and Tumburas, who are prone to lawlessness. Then the mighty sages, excited and incensed, again rubbed the right hand of Vena, as men do the Arani wood, and from it arose Pritha, respondent in body, glowing like the manifested Agni."

"The son of Vena (Prithu) then, with joined hands, addressed the great rishis: 'A very slender understanding for perceiving the principles of duty has been given to me by nature; tell me truly how I must employ it. Doubt not that I shall perform whatever you shall declare to me as my duty, and its object.' Then those gods and great rishis said to him: 'Whatever duty is enjoined perform it, without hesitation, disregarding what thou mayest like or dislike, looking on all creatures with an equal eye, putting far from the lust, anger, cupidity, and pride. Restrain by the strength of thine arm all those men who swerve from righteousness, having a constant regard to duty. And in thought, act, and word take upon thyself, and continually renew, the engagement to protect the terrestrial Brahman (Veda or Brahmans?)..... And promise that thou wilt exempt the Brahmans from punishment, and preserve society from the confusion of Castes'. The son of Vena then replied to the gods, headed by the rishis: 'The great Brahmans, the chief of men, shall be revered by me'. 'So be it,' rejoined those declares of the Veda. Sukra, the depository of divine knowledge, became his purohita; the Balakhilyas and Sarasvetyas his ministers; and the venerable Garga, the great rishi, his astrologer."

The second conflict took place between the Brahmins and the Kshatriya king Pururavas. A brief reference to it occurs in the Adiparva of the Mahabharat.

“Subsequently the wise Pururavas was born of 11, who, as we have heard, was both his father and his mother. Ruling over thirteen islands of the ocean, and surrounded by being who were all superhuman, himself a man of great renown, Pururavas, intoxicated by his prowess, engaged in a conflict with the Brahmans, and robbed them of their jewels, although they loudly remonstrated. Sanatkumara came from Brahma’s heaven, and addressed to him an admonition, which, however, he did not regard. Being then straightway cursed by the incensed rishis, he perished, this covetous monarch, who, through pride of power, had lost his understanding. This glorious being (virat), accompanied by Urvasi, brought down for the performance of sacred rites the fires which existed in the heaven of the Gandharvas, properly distributed into three.”

A third collision is reported to have occurred between the Brahmins and King Nahusha. The story is given in great details in the Udyogaparva of the Mahabharata. It is there recorded:

“After his slaughter of the demon Vrittra, Indra became alarmed at the idea of having taken the life of a Brahmin (for Vrittra was regarded as such), and hid himself in waters. In consequence of the disappearance of the king of gods, all affairs, celestial as well as terrestrial, fell into confusion. The rishis and gods then applied to Nahusha to be their king. After at first excusing himself on the plea of want of power, Nahusha at length, in compliance with their solicitations, accepted the high function. Up to the period of his elevation he had led a virtuous life, but he now became addicted to amusement and sensual pleasure; and even aspired to the possession of Indrani, Indra’s wife, whom he had happened to see. The queen resorted to the Angiras Vrihaspati, the preceptor of the gods, who engaged to protect her. Nahusha was greatly incensed on hearing of this interference; but the gods endeavoured to pacify him, and pointed out the immorality of—appropriating another person’s wife. Nahusha, however, would listen to no remonstrance, and insisted that in his adulterous designs he was no worse than Indra himself; 373. The renowned Ahalya, a rishi’s wife, was formerly corrupted by Indra in her husband’s lifetime; Why was he not prevented by you? 374. And many barbarous acts, and unrighteous deeds, and frauds, were perpetrated of old by Indra; Why was he not prevented by you? The gods, urged by Nahusha, then went to bring Indrani; but Vrihaspati would not give her up. At his recommendation, however, she solicited Nahusha for some delay, till she should

ascertain what had become of her husband. This request was granted. The gods next applied to Vishnu on behalf of Indra; and Vishnu promised that if Indra would sacrifice to him, he should be purged from his guilt, and recover his dominion, while Nahusha would be destroyed. Indra sacrificed accordingly; and the result is thus told; "Having divided the guilt of Brahmanicide among trees, rivers, mountains, the earth, women, and the elements, Vasava (Indra), lord of the gods, became freed from suffering and sin, and self-governed." Nahusha was by this means, shaken from his place. But (unless this is said by way of prelepsis, or there is some confusion in the narrative) he must have speedily regained his position, as we are told that Indra was again ruined, and became invisible. Indrani now went in search of her husband; and by the help of Upasruti (the goddess of night and revealer of secrets) discovered him existing in a very subtle form in the stem of a lotus growing in a lake situated in a continent within an ocean north of the Himalaya. She made known to him the wicked intention of Nahusha, and entreated him to exert his power, rescue her from danger, and resume his dominion. Indra declined any immediate interposition on the plea of Nahusha's superior strength; but suggested to his wife a device by which the usurper might be hurled from his position. She was recommended to say to Nahusha that "if he would visit her on a celestial vehicle borne by rishis, she would with pleasure submit herself to him". The question of the gods accordingly went to Nahusha, by whom she was graciously received, and made this proposal: "I desire for thee, king of the gods, a vehicle hitherto unknown, such as neither Vishnu, nor Rudra, nor the asuras, nor the rakshases employ. Let the eminent rishis, all united, bear thee, lord, in a car: this idea pleases me". Nahusha receives favourably this appeal to his vanity, and in the course of his reply thus gives utterance to his self-congratulation: "He is a personage of no mean prowess who makes the munis his bearers. I am a fervid devotee of great might, lord of the past, the future and the present. If I were angry the world would no longer stand; on me everything depends.... Wherefore, O goddess, I shall, without doubt, carry out what you propose. The seven rishis, and all the Brahman-rishis, shall carry me. Behold beautiful goddess, my majesty, and my prosperity.." The narrative goes on: "Accordingly this wicked being, irreligious, violent, intoxicated by the force of conceit, and arbitrary in his conduct, attached to his car the rishis, who submitted to his commands, and compelled them to bear him". Indrani then again resorts to Vrihaspati, who assures her that

vengeance will soon overtake Nahusha for his presumption; and promises that he will himself perform a sacrifice with a view to the destruction of the oppressor, and the discovery of Indra's lurking place. Agni is then sent to discover and bring Indra to Vrihaspati; and the latter, on Indra's arrival, informs him of all that had occurred during his absence. While Indra with Kuvera, Yama, Soma, and Varuna, was devising means for the destruction of Nahusha, the sage Agastya came up, congratulated Indra on the fall of his rival, and proceeded to relate how it had occurred: Wearied with carrying the sinner Nahusha, the eminent divine rishis, and the spotless brahman-rishis asked that divine personage Nahusha (to solve) a difficulty; 'Dost thou, a Vasava, most excellent of conquerors, regard as authoritative or not those Brahmana texts which are recited at the immolation of kine?' 'No', replied Nahusha, whose understanding was enveloped in darkness. The rishis rejoined: 'Engaged in unrighteousness, thou attainest not unto righteousness: these texts, which were formerly uttered by great rishis, are regarded by us as authoritative.' The (proceeds Agastya) disputing with the munis, Nahusha, impelled by unrighteousness, touched me on the head with his foot. In consequence of this the king's glory was smitten and his prosperity departed. When he had instantly become agitated and oppressed with fear, I said to him, 'Since thou, O fool, contemnest that sacred text, always held in honour, which has been composed by former sages, and employed by brahman-rishis, and hast touched my head with thy foot, and employest the Brahma—like and irresistible rishis as bearers to carry thee,—therefore, shorn of thy lustre and all thy merit exhausted, sink down, sinner, degraded from heaven to earth. For then thousand years thou shalt crawl in the form of a huge serpent. When that period is completed, thou shalt again ascend to heaven'. So fell that wicked wretch from the sovereignty of the gods."

Next there is reference to the conflict between King Nimi and the Brahmins. The Vishnu Puran relates the story as follows:

"Nimi had requested the Brahman-rishi Vashishtha to officiate at a sacrifice, which was to last a thousand years, Vashishtha in reply pleaded a pre-engagement to Indra for five hundred years, but promised to return at the end of that period. The king made no remark, and Vashishtha went away, supposing that he had assented to this arrangement. On his return, however, the priest discovered that Nimi had retained Gautama (who was, equally with Vashishtha a Brahman-rishi) and others to perform the sacrifice; and being

incensed at the neglect to give him notice of what was intended, he cursed the king, who was then asleep, to lose his corporeal form. When Nimi awoke and learnt that he had been cursed without any previous warning, he retorted, by uttering a similar curse on Vashishtha, and then died. "In consequence of this curse" (proceeds Vishnu Purana, iv. 5, 6) "the vigour of Vashishtha entered into the vigour of Mitra and Varuna. Vashishtha, however, received from them another body when their seed had fallen from them at the sight of Urvashi". Nimi's body was emblamed. At the close of the sacrifice which he had begun, the gods were willing, on the intercession of the priests, to restore him to life, but he declined the offer, and was placed by the deities, according to his desire, in the eyes of all living creatures. It is in consequence of this fact that they are always opening the shutting (Nimishas means "the twinkling of the eye")".

Manu mentions another conflict between the Brahmins and King Sumukha. But of this no details are available.

These are instances of conflict between the Brahmins and the Kshatriya Kings. From this it must not be supposed that the Brahmins and the Kshatriyas as two classes did not clash. That there were clashes between these two classes as distinguished from conflicts with kings is abundantly proved by material the historic value of which cannot be doubted. Reference may be made to three events.

First is the contest between the Vishvamitra the Kshatriya and Vashishtha the Brahmin. The issue between the two was whether a Kshatriya can claim Brahminhood.

The story is told in Ramayana and is as follows :

"There was formerly, we are told, a king called Kusa, son of Prajapati, who had a son called Kushanabha, who was father of Gadhi, the father of Vishvamitra. The latter ruled the earth for many thousand years. On one occasion, when he was making a circuit of the earth, he came to Vashistha's hermitage, the pleasant abode of many saints, sages, and holy devotees, where, after at first declining he allowed himself to be hospitably entertained with his followers by the son of Brahma. Vishvamitra, however, coveting the wondrous cow, which had supplied all the dainties of the feast, first of all asked that she should be given to him in exchange for a hundred thousand common cows, adding that "she was a gem, that gems were the property of the king, and that, therefore, the cow was his by right". On this price being refused the king advances immensely in his offers, but all without effect. He then proceeds—very ungratefully and tyrannically, it must be allowed—to have the

cow removed by force, but she breaks away from his attendants, and rushes back to her master, complaining that he was deserting her. He replies that he was not deserting her, but that the king was much more powerful than he. She answers, "Men do not ascribe strength to a Kshatriya: the Brahmans are stronger. The Strength of Brahmans is divine, and superior to that of Kshatriya. Thy strength is immeasurable. Vishvamitra, though of great vigour, is not more powerful than thou. Thy energy is invincible. Commission me, who have been acquired by thy Brahmanical power, and I will destroy the pride, and force, and attempt of this wicked prince". She accordingly by her bellowing creates hundreds of Pahalvas, who destroy the entire host of Vishvamitra, but are slain by him in their turn. Sakas and Yavans, of great power and valour, and well armed, were then produced, who consumed the king's soldiers, but were routed by him. The cow then calls into existence by her bellowing, and from different parts of her body, other warriors of various tribes, who again destroyed Vishvamitra's entire army, foot soldiers, elephants, horses, chariots, and all. A hundred of the monarch's sons, armed with various weapons, then rushed in great fury on Vashishtha, but were all reduced to ashes in a moment by the blast of that sage's mouth. Vishvamitra, being thus utterly vanquished and humbled, appointed one of his son to be regent, and travelled to the Himalaya, where he betook himself to austerities, and thereby obtained a vision of Mahadeva, who at his desire revealed to him the science of arms in all its branches, and gave him celestial weapons with which, elated and full of pride, he consumed the hermitage of Vashishtha, and put its inhabitants to flight. Vashishtha then threatens Vishvamitra and uplifts his Brahmanical mace. Vishvamitra too, raises his fiery weapon and calls out to his adversary to stand. Vashishtha bids him to show his strength, and boasts that he will soon humble his pride. He asks: "What comparison is there between a Kshatriya's might, and the great might of a Brahman? Behold, thou contemptible Kshatriya, my divine Brahmanical power. The dreadful fiery weapon uplifted by the son of Gadhi was then quenched by the rod of the Brahman, as fire is by water." Many and various other celestial missiles, as the nooses of Brahma, Kala (time), and Varuna, the discus of Vishnu, and the trident of Siva, were hurled by Vishvamitra at his antagonist, but the son of Brahma swallowed them up in his all-devouring mace. Finally, to the intense consternation of all the gods, the warrior shot off the terrific weapon of Brahma (brahmastra); but this was equally ineffectual against the Brahmanical sage.

Vashishtha had now assumed a direful appearance: "Jets of fire mingled with smoke darted from the pores of his body; the Brahmanical mace blazed in his hand like a smokeless mundane conflagration, or a second sceptre of Yama." Being appeased, however by the munis, who proclaimed his superiority to his rival, the sage stayed his vengeance; and Vishvamitra exclaimed with a groan: "Shame on a Kshatriya's strength: the strength of a Brahman's might alone is strength: by the single Brahmanical mace all my weapons have been destroyed." No alternative now remains, to the humiliated monarch, but either to acquiesce in this helpless inferiority, or to work out his own elevation to the Brahmanical order. He embraces the latter alternative: "Having pondered well this defeat, I shall betake myself, with composed senses and mind, to strenuous austere fervour, which shall exalt me to the rank of a Brahman". Intensely vexed and mortified, groaning and full of hatred against his enemy, he travelled with his queen to the south, and carried his resolution into effect; and we are first of all told that three sons Havishyanda, Madhusyanda, and Dridhanetra were born to him. At the end of a thousands years Brahma appeared, and announced that he had conquered the heaven of royal sages (rajarshis); and, in consequence of his austere fervour, he was recognised as having attained that rank. Vishvamitra, however, was ashamed, grieved, and incensed at the offer of so very inadequate a reward, and exclaimed; "I have practised intense austerity, and the gods and rishis regard me only as a rajarshi. Austerities, it appears, are altogether fruitless". Notwithstanding this disappointment, he had ascended one grade, and forthwith recommenced his work of mortification.

"At this point of time his austerities were interrupted by the following occurrences: King Trisanku, one of Ikshvaku's descendants, had conceived the design of celebrating a sacrifice by virtue of which he should ascend bodily to heaven. As Vashishtha, on being summoned, declared that the thing was impossible (asakyam), Trisanku travelled to the south, where the sage's hundred sons were engaged in austerities, and applied to them to do what their father had declined. Though he addressed them with the greatest reverence and humility, and added that "the Ikshvaku regarded their family-priests as their highest resource in difficulties, and that, after their father, he himself looked to them as his tutelary deities" he received from the haughty priests the following rebuke for his presumption: "Asakyam" "Fool, thou hast been refused by thy truth speaking preceptor. How is it that, disregarding his

authority, thou hast resorted to another school (sakha). The family priest is the highest oracle of all the Ikshvakus; and the command of that veracious personages cannot be transgressed. Vashishtha, the. divine rishi, has declared that 'the thing cannot be'; and how can we undertake thy sacrifice? Thou art foolish king; return to thy capital. The divine (Vashishtha) is competent to act as priest of the three worlds; how can we shew him disrespect? " Trisanku then gave them to understand, that as his preceptor and "his preceptor's sons had declined compliance with his requests, he should think of some other expedient." In consequence of his venturing to express this presumptuous intention, they condemned him by their imprecation to become a Chandala. As this curse soon took effect, and the unhappy king's form was changed into that of a degraded outcast, he resorted to Vishvamitra (who, as we have seen, was also dwelling at this period in the south), enlarging on his own virtues and piety, and bewailing his fate. Vishvamitra commiserated his condition, and promised to sacrifice on his behalf, and exalt him to heaven in the same Chandala-form to which he had been condemned by his preceptor's curse. "Heaven is now as good as in thy possession, since thou hast resorted to the son of Kusika". He then directed that preparations should be made for the sacrifice, and that all the rishis, including the family of Vashishtha, should be invited to the ceremony. The disciples of Vishvamitra, who had conveyed his message, reported the result on their return in these words: "Having heard your message, all the Brahmans are assembling in all the countries, and have arrived, excepting Mahodaya (Vashishtha). Hear what dreadful words those hundred Vashishthas, their voices quivering with rage, have uttered: 'How can the gods and rishis consume the oblation at the sacrifice of that man, especially if he be a Chandala, for whom a Kshatriya is officiating priest? How can illustrious Brahmans ascend to heaven, after eating the food of a Chandala, and being entertained by Vishvamitra?' "These ruthless words all Vashisthas, together with Mahodaya, uttered, their eyes inflamed with anger. Vishvamitra, who was greatly incensed on receiving this message, by a curse doomed the sons of Vashishtha to be reduced to ashes, and reborn as degraded outcasts (mritapah) for seven hundred births, and Mahodaya to become a Nishada. Knowing that this curse had taken effect, Vishvamitra thereafter eulogizing Trisanku, proposed to the assembled rishis that the sacrifice should be celebrated. To this they assented, being actuated by fear of the terrible sage's wrath. Vishvamitra himself officiated at the sacrifice as yajakas; and the other rishis as priests (ritvijah) with

other functions performed all the ceremonies. Vishvamitra next invited the gods to partake of the oblations: "When, however, the deities did not come to receive their portions, Vishvamitra became full of wrath, and raising aloft the sacrificial ladle, thus addressed Trisanku: 'Behold, O monarch, the power of austere fervour acquired by my own efforts. I myself, by my own energy, will conduct thee to heaven. Ascend to that celestial region which is so arduous to attain in an earthly body. I have surely earned some reward of my austerity'." Trisanku ascended instantly to heaven in the sight of munis. Indra, however, ordered him to be gone, as person who, having incurred the curse of his spiritual preceptors, was unfit for the abode of the celestials;—and to fall down headlong to earth. He accordingly began to descend, invoking loudly, as he fell, the help of his spiritual patron. Vishvamitra, greatly incensed, called out to him to stop: "Then by the power of his divine knowledge and austere fervour created, like another Prajapati, other Seven Rishis (a constellation so called) in the southern part of the sky. Having proceeded to this quarter of the heavens, the renowned sage, in the midst of the rishis, formed another garland of stars, being overcome with fury. Exclaiming, 'I will create another Indra, or the world shall have no Indra at all,' he began, in his rage, to call gods also into being. The rishis, gods (Suras), and Asuras now became seriously alarmed and said to Vishvamitra, in a conciliatory tone, that Trisanku, "as he had been cursed by his preceptors, should not be admitted bodily into heaven, until he had undergone some lustration". The sage replied that he had given a promise to Trisanku, and appealed to the gods to permit his protege to remain bodily in heaven, and the newly created stars to retain their places in perpetuity. The gods agreed that "these numerous stars should remain, but beyond the Sun's path, and that Trisanku, like an immortal, with his head downwards should shine among them, and be followed by them," adding "that his object would be thus attained, and his renown secured, and he would be like a dweller in heaven". Thus was this great dispute adjusted by a compromise, which Vishvamitra accepted.

"This story of Trisanku, it will have been observed, differs materially from the one quoted above from the Harivamsa; but brings out more distinctly the character of the conflict between Vashishtha and Vishvamitra.

"When all the gods and rishis had departed at the conclusion of the sacrifice, Vishvamitra said to his attendant devotees; "This has been a great interruption (to our austerities) which has occurred in

the southern region: we must proceed in another direction to continue our penances". He accordingly went to a forest in the west, and began his austerities anew. Here the narrative is again interrupted by the introduction of another story, that of king Ambarisha, king of Ayodhya, who was, according to the Ramayana, the twentyeighth in descent from Ikshvaku, and the twentysecond from Trisanku. Vishvamitra is nevertheless represented as flourishing contemporaneously with both of these princes. The story relates that Ambarisha was engaged in performing a sacrifice, when Indra carried away the victim. The priest said that this ill-omened event had occurred owing to the king's bad administration; and would call for a great expiation, unless a human victim could be produced. After a long search the royal rishi (Ambarisha) came upon the Brahman-rishi Richika, a descendant of Bhrigu, and asked him to sell one of his sons for a victim, at the price of a hundred thousand cows. Richika answered that he would not sell his eldest son; and his wife added that she would not sell the youngest: "eldest sons," she observed, "being generally the favourites of their fathers, and youngest sons of their mothers". The second son, Sunassepa, then said that in that case he regarded himself as the one who was to be sold, and desired the king to remove him. The hundred thousand cows, with the millions of gold-pieces and heaps of jewels, were paid down, and Sunassepa carried away. As they were passing through Puskara Sunassepa beheld his maternal uncle Vishvamitra who was engaged in austerities there with other rishis, threw himself into his arms, and implored his assistance, urging his orphan, friendless, and helpless state, as claims on the sage's benevolence. Vishvamitra soothed him; and pressed his own sons to offer themselves as victims in the room of Sunassepa. This proposition met with no favour from Madhushyanda and the other sons of the royal hermit, who answered with haughtiness and derision: "How is it that thou sacrificest thine own sons, and seekest to rescue those of others? We look upon this as wrong, and like the eating of one's own flesh". The sage was exceedingly wroth at this disregard of his injunction, and doomed his sons to be born in the most degraded classes, like Vasishtha's sons, and to eat dog's flesh, for a thousand years. He then said to Sunassepa: "When thou art bound with hallowed cords, decked with a red garland, and annointed with unguents, and fastened to the sacrificial post of Vishnu, then address thyself to Agni, and sing these two divine verses (gathas), at the sacrifice of Ambarisha; then shall thou attain the fulfilment (of thy desire)".

Being furnished with the two gathas, Sunassepa proposed at once to king Ambarisha that they should set out for their destination. When bound at the stake to be immolated, dressed in a red garment, "he celebrated the two gods, Indra and his younger brother (Vishnu), with the excellent verses. The thousand-eyed (Indra) was pleased with the secret hymn, and bestowed long life on Sunassepa". King Ambarisha also received great benefits from this sacrifice. Visvamitra meanwhile proceeded with his austerities, which he prolonged for a thousand years.

"At the end of this time the gods came to allot his reward; and Brahma announced that he had attained the rank of a rishi, thus apparently advancing an additional step. Dissatisfied, as it would seem, with this, the sage commenced his task of penance anew. After a length of time he beheld the nymph (Apsara) Menka, who had come to bathe in the lake of Pushkara. She flashed on his view, unequalled in her radiant beauty, like lightning in a cloud. He was smitten by her charms, invited her to be his companion in his hermitage, and for ten years remained a slave to her witchery, to the great prejudice of his austerities. At length he became ashamed of this ignoble subjection, and full of indignation at what he believed to be a device of the gods to disturb his devotion; and, dismissing the nymph with gentle accents, he departed for the northern mountains, where he practised severe austerities for a thousand years on the banks of the Kausiki river. The gods became alarmed at the progress he was making, and decided that he should be dignified with the appellation of great rishi (maharshi); and Brahma, giving effect to the general opinion of the deities, announced that he had conferred that rank upon him. Joining his hands and bowing his head, Visvamitra replied that he should consider himself to have indeed completely subdued his senses, if the incomparable title of Brahman-rishi were conferred upon him. Brahma informed him in answer, that he had not yet acquired the power of perfectly controlling his senses; but should make further efforts with that view. The sage then began to put himself through a yet more rigorous course of austerities, standing with his arms erect, without support, feeding on air, in summer exposed to five fires (i.e. one on each of four sides, and the sun overhead), in the rainy season remaining unsheltered from the wet, and in winter lying on a watery couch night and day. This he continued for a thousand years. At last Indra and the other deities became greatly distressed at the idea of the merit he was storing up, and the power which he was thereby acquiring; and the chief of the celestials desired the nymph Rambha

to go and bewitch him by her blandishments. She expressed great reluctance to expose herself to the wrath of the formidable muni, but obeyed the repeated injunction of Indra, who promised that he and Kandarpa (the god of love) should stand by her, and assumed her most attractive aspect with the view of overcoming the sage's impassability. He, however, suspected this design, and becoming greatly incensed, he dommed the nymph by a curse to be turned into stone and to continue in that state for a thousand years. The curse took effect, and Kandarpa and Indra slunk away. In this way, though he resisted the allurements of sensual love, he lost the whole fruit of his austerities by yielding to anger; and had to begin his work over again. He resolved to check his irascibility, to remain silent, not even to breathe for hundreds of years; to dry up his body; and to fast and stop his breath till he had obtained the coveted character of a Brahman. He then left the Himalaya and travelled to the east, where he underwent a dreadful exercise, unequalled in the whole history of austerities, maintaining silence, according to a vow, for a thousand years. At the end of this time he had attained to perfection, and although thwarted by many obstacles, he remained unmoved by anger. On the expiration of this course of austerity, he prepared some food to eat; which Indra, coming in the form of a Brahman, begged that he would give him. Visvamitra did so, and though he had none left for himself, and was obliged to remain fasting, he said nothing to the Brahman, on account of his vow of silence. As he continued to suspend his breath, smoke issued from his head, to the great consternation and distress of the three worlds. The gods, rishis, etc., then addressed Brahma: "The great muni Visvamitra has been allured and provoked in various ways, but still advances in his sanctity. If his wish is not conceded, he will destroy the three worlds by the force of his austerity. All the regions of the universe are confounded, no light anywhere shines; all the oceans are tossed, and the mountains crumble, the earth quakes, and the wind blows confusedly. We cannot, O Brahma, guarantee that mankind shall not become atheistic..... Before the great and glorious sage of fiery form resolves to destroy (everything) let him be propitiated." The gods, headed by Brahma, then addressed Visvamitra: "Hail Brahman rishi, we are gratified by thy austerities; O Kausika, thou hast, through their intesity, attained to Brahmanhood. I, O Brahman, associated with the Maruts, confer on thee long life. May every blessing attend thee; depart wherever thou wilt.' The sage, delighted, made his obeisance to the gods, and said : 'If I have obtained Brahmanhood, and long life, then let the mystic

monosyllable (omkara) and the sacrificial formula (vashatkara) and the Vedas recognise me in that capacity. And let Vasishtha, the son of Brahma, the most eminent of those who are skilled in the Kshattria-veda, and the Brahma-veda (the knowledge of the Kshatriya and the Brahmanical disciplines), address me similarly.'..... Accordingly Vasishtha, being propitiated by the gods, became reconciled to Visvamitra, and recognised his claim to all the prerogatives of a Brahman rishi..... Visvamitra, too, having attained the Brahmanical rank, paid all honour to Vasishtha."

The second event has reference to the slaughter of the Brahmins by, the Kshatriyas. It is related in the Adiparva of the Mahabharat from which the following account is taken:

There was a king named Kritvirya, by whose liberality the Bhrigus, learned in the Vedas, who officiated as his priests, had been greatly enriched with corn and money. After he had gone to heaven, his descendants were in want of money, and came to beg for a supply from the Bhrigus, of whose wealth they were aware. Some of the latter hid their money under ground, others bestowed it on Brahmins, being afraid of the Kshatriyas, while others again gave these last what they wanted. It happened, however, that a Kshatriya, while digging the ground, discovered some money buried in the house of a Bhrigu. The Kshatriyas then assembled and saw this treasure, and, being incensed, slew in consequence all the Bhrigus, whom they regarded with contempt, down to the children in the womb. The widows, however, fled to the Himalaya mountains. One of them concealed her unborn child in her thigh. The Kshatriyas, hearing of its existence from a Brahmani informant, sought to kill it; but it issued forth from its mother's thigh with lustre, and blinded the persecutors. After wandering about bewildered among the mountains for a time, they humbly supplicated the mother of the child for the restoration of their sight; but she referred them to her wonderful infant Aurva into whom the whole Veda, with its veda Vyas had entered, as the person who (in requisition of the slaughter of his relatives) had robbed them of their eyesight, and who alone could restore it. They accordingly had recourse to him, and their eyesight was restored. Aurva, however, meditated the destruction of all living creatures, in revenge for the slaughter of the Bhrigus, and entered on a course of austerities which alarmed both gods, asuras, and men; but his progenitors (Pitris) themselves appeared, and sought to turn him from his purpose by saying that they had no desire to be revenged on the Kshatriyas: "It was not from weakness that the devout Bhrigus overlooked the massacre perpetrated by the

murderous Kshatriyas. When we became distressed by old age, we ourselves desired to be slaughtered by them. The money which was buried by some one in a Bhṛigu's house was placed there for the purpose of exciting hatred, by those who wished to provoke the Kshatriyas. For what had me, who were desiring heaven, to do with money?" They added that they hit upon this device because they did not wish to be guilty of suicide, and concluded by calling upon Aurva to restrain his wrath; and abstain from the sin he was meditating: "Destroy not the Kshatriyas, O son, nor the seven worlds. Suppress thy kindled anger which nullifies the power of austere-fervour." Aurva, however, replies that he cannot allow his threat to remain unexecuted. His anger, unless wreaked upon some other object, will, he says, consume himself. And he argues on grounds of justice, expediency, and duty, against the clemency which his progenitors recommend. He is, however, persuaded by the Pitris to throw the fire of his anger into the sea, where they say it will find exercise in assailing the watery element, and in this way his threat will be fulfilled."

The third event has reference to the slaughter of the Kshatriyas by the Brahmins. This story is told in several places in the Mahabharata.

"The magnificent and mighty Kartavirya, possessing a thousand arms, was lord of this whole world, living in Mahishmati. This Haihaya of unquestioned valour ruled over the whole sea-girt earth, with its oceans and continents". He obtained boons from the muni Dattatreya, a thousand arms whenever he should go into battle power to make the conquest of the whole earth, a disposition to rule it with justice and the promise of instruction from the virtuous in the event of his going astray. "Then ascending his chariot glorious as the resplendent sun, he exclaimed in the intoxication of his prowess, 'Who is like me in fortitude, courage, fame, heroism, energy, and vigour?' At the end of this speech a bodiless voice in the sky addressed him: 'Thou knowest not, O fool, that a Brahman is better than a Kshatriya. It is with the help of the Brahman that the Kshatriya rules his subjects.' Arjuna answers: 'If I am pleased, I can create, or, if displeased, annihilate, living beings; and no Brahman is superior to me in act, thought or word. The first proposition is that the Brahmins are superior; the second that the Kshatriyas are superior; both of these thou hast stated with their grounds, but there is a difference between them (in point of force). The Brahmins are dependent on the Kshatriyas and not the Kshatriyas are beaten up by the Brahmins, who wait upon them, and only make the Vedas a pretence. Justice, the protection of the

people, has its seat in the Kshatriyas. From them the Brahmans derived their livelihood; how then can the latter be superior? I always keep in subjection to myself those Brahmans, the chief of all beings, who subsist on alms, and who have a high opinion of themselves. For truth was spoken by that female the Gayatri in the sky. I shall subdue all those unruly Brahmans clad in hides. No one in the three worlds, god or man, can hurl me from my royal authority; wherefore I am superior to any Brahman. Now shall I turn the world in which Brahmans have the upper hand into a place where Kshatriyas shall have the upper hand; for no one dares to encounter my force in battle.' Hearing this speech of Arjuna, the female roving in the night became alarmed. Then Vayu hovering in the air, said to Arjuna: 'Abandon this sinful disposition, and do obeisance to the Brahmans. If thou shalt do them wrong, thy kingdom shall be convulsed. They will subdue thee: those powerful men will humble thee, and expel thee from thy country.' The king asks him, 'Who art thou?' Vayu replies, 'I am Vayu, the messenger of the gods, and tell thee what is for thy benefit.' Arjuna rejoins, 'Oh, thou displayest today a great warmth of devotion to the Brahmans. But say that a Brahman is like (any other) earth-born creature.'

This king came into conflict with Parasuram the son of a Brahman sage Jamadagni. The history of this conflict is as follows :

"There lived a king of Kanyakubja, called Gadhi, who had a daughter named Satyavati. The marriage of this princess to the rishi Richika, and the birth of Jamadagni, are then told in nearly the same way as above narrated. Jamadagni and Satyavati had five sons, the youngest of whom was the redoubtable Parasuram. By his father's command he kills his mother (who, by the indulgence of impure desire, had fallen from her previous sanctity), after the four elder sons had refused this matricidal offence, and had in consequence been deprived of reason by their father's curse. At Parasuram's desire, however, his mother is restored by his father to life, and his brothers to reason; and he himself is absolved from all the guilt of murder; and obtains the boon of invincibility and long life from his father. His history now begins to be connected with that of king Arjuna (or Kartavirya). The latter had come to Jamadagni's hermitage, and had been respectfully received by his wife; but he had requited this honour by carrying away by force the calf of the sage's sacrificial cow, and breaking down his lofty trees. On being informed of this violence, Parasurama was filled with indignation, attacked Arjuna. cut off his thousand arms, and slew

him. Arjuna's sons, in return, slew the peaceful sage Jamadagni, in the absence of Parasurama."

"Rama, after performing, on his return, his father's funeral obsequies, vowed to destroy the whole Kshatriya race; and executed his threat by killing first Arjuna's sons and their followers. Twentyone times did he sweep away all the Kshatriyas from the earth, and formed five lakes of blood in Samantapanchaka; in which he satiated the manes of the Bhrgus, and beheld face to face (his grand-father), Richika, who addressed himself to Rama. The latter gratified Indra by offering to him a grand sacrifice, and gave the earth to the officiating priests. He bestowed also a golden altar, ten fathoms long and nine high, on the mighty Kasyapa. This, by his permission, the Brahmans divided among themselves, deriving thence the name of Khandavavanas. Having given away the earth to Kasyapa, Parasurama himself dwells on the mountain Mahendra. Thus did enmity arise between him and Kshatriyas, and thus was the earth conquered by Rama of boundless might."

The Kshatriyas who were slain by Parasuram are described in the Dronaparvan of the Mahabharat as of various provinces, viz., Kasmiras, Darads, Kuntis, Kshudrakas, Malavas, Angas, Vangas, Kalingas, Videhas, Tamraliptakas, Marttikavatas, Sivis and other Rajanyas.

The means by which the Kshattriya race was restored is also told as part of this story of annihilation of the Kshatriyas by the Brahmins. It is said:

"Having one and twenty times swept away all the Kshatriyas from the earth, the son of Jamadagni engaged in austerities on Mahendra the most excellent of mountains. After he had cleared the world of Kshatriyas, their widows came to the Brahmans, praying for offspring. The religious Brahmans, free from any impulse of lust, cohabited at the proper seasons with these women, who in consequence became pregnant, and brought forth valiant Kshatriya boys and girls, to continue the Kshatriya stock. Thus was the Kshatriya race virtuously begotten by Brahmans on Kshatriya women, and became multiplied and long-lived. Thence there arose four castes inferior to the Brahmans."