

The Iksvaku Dynasty: An Expanded Genealogy of the Kings of Mithila

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Abstract

The ancient Indian texts 'Puranas' are voluminous compendiums of information and have been passed down through the ages – sometimes being split into sub-volumes, sometimes getting combined or appended with additional content. Over time, large portions of the original text have been lost to antiquity. While there is much published on the genealogy and lineage of the branch of the Iksvaku dynasty of which Lord Rama is the most famous son, there is very little known about the ancestry and lineage of that branch of the Iksvaku dynasty of which Sita, the illustrious wife of Lord Rama is the most famous daughter. In the current study, a portion of the lineage of the kings of Mithila, including the ancestors and successors of King Janaka (father of Sita), are elaborated. The study of this text yields the names of nearly 40 kings of the dynasty of Iksvaku descended from Nemi.

Keywords: Iksvaku dynasty, Lineage, Kings, Janaka, Mithila, Sita

Introduction

The ancient Indian texts 'Puranas' are voluminous compendiums of information and have been passed down through the ages – sometimes being split into sub-volumes, sometimes getting combined or appended with additional content. One popular definition of Purana often quoted in some of the Puranas like Visnu, Matsya and Vayu is

सर्गश्चप्रतसिर्गश्चवंशोमन्वन्तराणचि ।
वंशानुचरतिचैवपुराणंपंचलक्षणं ॥

Translation: An account of primary creation, secondary creation, reigns of the Manus, periods called Manvantaras, chronology and genealogy of gods and patriarchs are the five essential characteristics of a purana.

Of the various Puranas, generally, the Vayu Purana is regarded as among the oldest. The Vayu Purana is said to have been communicated by Vayu or the deity of the wind to the sages. Sage Krishna Dvaipayana Vyasa later taught it to Lomaharshana who asks his son Ugrasravas to repeat it to the ascetics at Naimisaranya.

In the chapter titled सोमोत्पत्तविरणन (Somotpattivarnana) of Vayu Purana the following verses describe the kings of the dynasty of Iksvaku..

योऽसौनविशयामासपुन्रदेवपुरोपमम् ॥
जयन्तमतिविख्यातगौतमस्याश्रमाभतिः ।
यस्वान्ववायेयज्जेवैजनकादृषसित्तमात् ॥
नेमिनामसुधर्मात्मासरवसत्वनमसकृतः ।
आसीत्पुत्रोमहाप्राज्ञइक्ष्वाकोर्भूरतिजसः ॥
सशापेनवसपिठस्यवदिहःसमपद्यत ।
तस्यपुत्रोमथिर्नामजननिःपरवभसित्त्रभिः ॥
अरण्यामथ्यमानायांप्रादुरभतोमहायशाः ।
नाम्नामथिरितिख्यातोजननाज्जनकोऽभवत् ॥
मथिर्नाममहावीर्योयेनासौमथिलिाभवत् ।
राजासौजनकोनामजनकाच्चापयुदावसुः ॥
उदावसोःसुधर्मात्माजनतिनन्दविरद्धनः ।

नन्दविरुद्धनतःशूरःसुकेतुरनामधारमकिः ॥
सुकेतोरपधिरमात्मादेवरातोमहाबलः ।
देवरातस्यधरमात्माबृहदुच्छइतिशिरुतिः ॥

Translation by Author: Suta says - Please listen to the lineage of Nimi, the younger brother of Vikukshi who built a city equal to the city of the gods near the asram of Gautama. He was well known by the name Jayanta. In this sacred race of Janaka and the illustrious Risis there was Nemi who was of good conduct and saluted by the noble people. He was extremely bright, a son of Iksvaku. He was rightfully revered by all the beings, held in respect and was extremely scholarly. His end came because of the curse of Sage Vasista. His son was by name Mithi who was famous and he appeared when the Arani (wood of the Sami tree used for kindling the sacred fire by attrition) was rubbed in the forest. His name was Mithi and by being born, he was famously known as Janaka. Based on his name Mithi, who was very brave, this place Mithila was founded. From this king, Janaka came noble soul Nandivarddhana, from Nandivarddhana, came brave Suketu who was dharmic. From Suketu of noble character came Devarato who was very strong, from Devarato, Brhaduccha of noble character, it is heard.

Further the Text Reads

बृहदुच्छस्य तनयो महावीर्यः प्रतापवान् ।
महावीर्यस्य धृतामिन् सुधृतसितस्य चातमजः ॥
सुधृतेरपि धरमात्मा धृष्टकेतुः परन्तपः ।
धृष्टकेतु सुतश्चापि हर्यश्वो नाम वशि्रुतः ॥
हर्यश्वस्य मरुः पुत्रो मरोः पुत्रेः परतविकः ।
परतविकस्य धरमात्मा राजा कीर्त्तरिथः सुतः ॥
पुत्रः कीर्त्तरिथस्यापि देवमीढ इति शरुतः ।
देवमीढस्य वबुधो वबुधस्य सुतो धृतिः ॥
महाधृतसितो राजा कीर्त्तरिजः प्रतापवान् ।
कीर्त्तरिजात्मजो वद्वान् महारोमेति वशि्रुतः ॥
महारोमणस्तु वखियातः स्वर्णरोमा व्यजायत ।
स्वर्णरोमात्मजश्चापि हरस्वरोमाभवन्नृपः ॥

Translation by Author: Brhaduccha's son was valorous Mahavirya. Mahavirya's son was Dhrtiman. Sudhrti was his son. It is known that of Sudhrti came Dhrtaketu who was a hero and conqueror. Dhrtaketu's son Haryasvo by name was well known. Haryasvo's son was Maruh and his son was Pratitvakah, whose son was an honored king by the name Kirtirathah. That Kirtirathah's son was Devamidha. It is known Devamidha's son was

Vibudha and Vibudha's son was Dhrtih. The son of Mahadhrtih was king Kirtiraja, who was valorous. The son of Kirtiraja was a scholarly Maharoma who became very famous. To Maharoma was born Swarnaroma. The son of Swarnaroma, Hrasvaroma became king.

Further, the text discusses the son of Hrasvaroma, King Siradhvaja, who is none other than King Janaka – the father of Sita. There is a significant description of him and about the circumstances surrounding the discovery of Sita in a field. The following verses enumerate the lineage after King Janaka - his descendants:

हरस्वरोमात्मजोवद्वान्सीरध्वजइतिशिरुतिः ।
उद्भनिनाकृषतायेनसीताराज्जायशस्वनि ।
रामस्यमहर्षीसाधवीसुव्रतातपितविरता ॥
कथंसीतासमुत्पन्ननाकृष्यमाणायशस्वनि ।
कमिर्थञ्चाकृषद्राजाकृषेत्रयस्मनिबभूवह ॥
अग्निकृषेत्रेकृष्यमाणेअश्वमेधमहात्मनः ।
वधिनिासुप्रयुक्तेनतस्मात्सातुसमुत्थति ॥
सीरध्वजातुजातसुतुभानुमाननाममैथलिः ।
भ्राताकुशध्वजस्तस्यसकाशयधपितरिनुपः ॥

Translation by Author: The son of Hrasvaroma was very wise and knowledgeable. Hrasvaroma's son was a scholarly Siradhvaja. While ploughing the field, Sita of great fame was found by the king. She was the consort of Rama, of pious virtue, a devoted, loyal wife, practicing great austerities. How did the acclaimed Sita arise through ploughing? And for what reason was the king tilling the location where she arose? The great soul was properly employing the plough in the Asvamedha Agniksetra where she appeared because of destiny. From Siradhvaja the effulgent son of Mithila, Bhanuman was born. His brother was Kusadhvaja who was the ruler of Kashi. His son is Bhanumatah, whose son is the valorous Pradyumnah. Son of him was sage Urjavahah. It is remembered that Sutadvajah's son is Suvarcca. From this ancestor is descendent Susrutah. Susrutah's son is Jaya whose son is Vijaya. Vijaya's son is Rtah and Rtah's son is Sunayah, it is remembered. From Sunayah Vitahavyah and Vitahavyah's son was Dhrti. From Dhrti, Bahulasva was born and his son was Krti by name.

A study of the above 18 Sanskrit verses, therefore, reveals a long list of the ancestors and descendants

of King Janaka and the Nimi lineage of the Ikshvaku Dynasty as tabulated below:

Table 1: Ikshvaku Lineage – Descendants of Nimi

S. No.	Name
1	Vikuksi
2	Nimi / Jayanta, younger brother of Vikuksi
3	Nemi, descendant of Nimi
4	Janaka / Mithi, son of Nemi, after whom Mithila was named
5	Nandivardhana, son of Janaka
6	Suketu, son of Nandivardhana
7	Devarato, son of Suketu
8	Brhaduccha, son of Devarato
9	Mahavirya, son of Brhaduccha
10	Dhrtiman, son of Mahavirya
11	Sudhrti, son of Dhrtiman
12	Dhrstaketu, son of Sudhrti
13	Haryasvo, son of Dhrstaketu
14	Maruh, son of Haryasvo
15	Pratitvakah, son of Maruh
16	Kirtirathah, son of Pratitvakah
17	Devamidha, son of Kirtirathah
18	Vibudha, son of Devamidha
19	Dhrtih, son of Vibudha
20	Kirtiraja, son of Dhrtih
21	Maharoma, son of Kirtiraja
22	Swarnaroma, son of Maharoma
23	Hrasvaroma, son of Swarnaroma
24	Siradhvaja / Janaka, son of Hrasvaroma, father of Sita
25	Bhanuman, son of Siradhvaja
26	Kusadhvaja, brother of Bhanuman, ruler of Kashi
27	Bhanumatah, son of Kusadhvaja
28	Pradyumnah, son of Bhanumatah
29	Urjavahah (sage), son of Pradyumnah
30	Sutadvajah, later descendant
31	Suvarcca, son of Sutadvajah
32	Susrutah, later descendant

33	Jaya, son of Susrutah
34	Vijaya, son of Jaya
35	Rtah, son of Vijaya
36	Sunayah, son of Rtah
37	Vitahavyah, son of Sunayah
38	Dhrti, son of Vitahavyah
39	Bahulasva, son of Dhrti
40	Krti, son of Bahulasva

Thus the text goes on to describe the descendants of Mithila in a fascinating manner. You now learn about Soma too, the text says and enumerates the lineage of Soma.

Conclusion

The lineage of King Janaka and the Ikshvaku Dynasty descended from Nemi can be constructed and established in detail. Although the puranas do not mention dates specifically, there are references to some circumstances, some legends or places which help in determining the antiquity of the work and bring up new insights into the histories of the royal dynasties and of the times.

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