AILA DYNASTY

ILA

ILA, is interpreted as earth and wealth — ‘paṣu-paśavo vā Īlā’ etc. and is counted amongst goddesses Sarasvati, Mahi and Bharati too. Ila was a historical personage also. She was the founding ancestress of ‘AILA Dynasty’. The very fact that her son Pururavas, a human being, has always been designated as ‘AILA’ in the Veda confirms her identity as a human being too.

Her place and probably her dominion has been given the name ‘ilāspada’ or ‘ILAYASPADE’ in the Veda many a times to the region of Drşadvati (modern Citangū, Āpaya and Sarasvati). The area roughly constituted the Kurukṣetra of later days named after Kuru.

1 She is stated to be a daughter of Manu (SB., I.8.1.7; Taitt.Br., I.1.4.4) as well as Maitrī-Vārūṇi (SB., XIV.9.4.27). Skandavani suggests that she was daughter of Mitra-Varuna adopted by Manu (Rgv).
2 Rg., III.27.10.
3 J.B., I.125.
4 Rg., I.142.9.
5 P.L.Bhargava (IIVA., P.90-95), on the basis of Purīnas, considers the origin of family from Atri. Soma was son of Atri and Soma’s son Budha was husband of Ila. But Vedic texts do not confirm the above statements. Budha is nowhere stated to be husband of Ila and Soma as son of Atri. Otherwise too Atri himself says in the Rg., V.27 that he received hundred golden coins, cows, horses and chariots from Triarūṇa and Āśvamedha, sons of Bharata when he performed a Yajña for them. There is a gap of so many generations between Atri and Bharata according to the Purīnas. So it is certain that Atri was not the ancestor of AILA dynasty.
6 X.91.1-4 Griffith also expressed same view.
7 ‘ni tvā dadhe vara ā prthivyā ilāyāspade sudinatve ahnām/ drśadvatāḥ mānuṣa āpāyām sarasvatīḥ revad agne didhi’ Rg.,III.23.4 (He sat thee in the earth’s most lovely station, in Ila’s place, in days of rain bright weather. On man, on Āpaya, Agni! on the rivers Drśadvati, Sarasvatī, shine richly).
8 ilāspada must be the name of region of Kurukṣetra — Pischel(VINS., I.169 cf., Vediche Studien, 2, 218).
The commentators have missed its historical importance while commenting upon the following mantra of the Rgveda - "tvam agne prathamam āyam Āyave devā akrovan Nahusasya viśpatim/ Ilām akrovan manuṣasya sājanīm pituryat putro mamakasya jāyate". It clearly states that 'Ilā was made the ruler of the people - 'Ilām akrovan manuṣasya sājanīm' and 'O agni, in the form of Āyu devas appointed you the Viśpati (Commander-in-chief) of Nahuṣa's forces - "Nahusasya viśpatim" 'for the sake of Āyu' (probably minor son of Pururavas).

The above interpretation raises a question, why Ilā came to be appointed as ruler in place of Nahuṣa. Vedas are quite silent about it. Mahabharata gives a hint that Nahuṣa, though an ideal king in the beginning happened to make signs towards Śaci, the wife of Indra who offended him and the devas dethroned him.

Ilā's qualities as a bold administrator, a dominant lady and a bountiful mistress have been described in various mantras of the Vedas. On account of these very qualities of her character she was known as the mother of Maruts, the violent ones, and the devas installed her as a ruler of the Ilāyaspada. Vāmadeva and Vasistha sought her protection. She enjoyed long span of life and must have lived for a hundred years as she is described as

10 Rg., I.31.11.
11 Sayana interpreted 'sājanīm' as 'sājyate anaya iti' i.e., a teacher. But we have interpreted it as a ruler.
12 Rṣi of the above mantra is Hiranyastūpa, the grandson of Āgni. He is invoking his grandfather Āgni or Aṅgirasa who was born as a son to him. Skandavāmi interpreting 'yat putraḥ mamakasya jāyate' says that when Pururavas was born Ilā was made the ruler. Venkata, Mudgala and Sayana says that the incident happened when a son was born to the father of author Hiranyastūpa, perhaps indicating towards his own birth (RgV.).
13 Skandavāmi commenting on Rg., I.31.11 (RgV).
14 Āyu was the son of Pururavas from Urvasī.
15 V.49.17.1-20.
16 Rg., I.40.8; IV.50.8; VII.16.8.
17 Rg., IV.41.19.
18 Rg., IV.50.8.
19 Rg., VII.47.1.
Pururavas

Pururavas known as Ailā, a prominent figure of the Vedas appears to be the Duḥṣanta of the Purāṇas and the Mahābhārata. In Satapatha Brahmana21 Bharata, the son of Duḥṣanta and Śakuntala has been designated as Dauḥsanti and Saudyumni. Though Sudyumna also has been identified variously22 yet in our view it was the name of Pururavas or Bharata’s father Duḥṣanta. Kūraṇa Purāṇa23 confirms it by identifying Pururavas with Sudyumna24.

This identification of Pururavas with Duḥṣanta has solved a lot of problems of chronology regarding the contemporary personalities. Indra was contemporary of Vṛtra, Aśvins, Tvaṣṭr etc. on one hand, and of Divodāsa, Sudāsa and Kṣatra on the other according to the statements in the Vedas (See Ch.III). There was a gap of approximately 40 generations between Indra and Sudāsa according to the Purāṇas thus making the Vedic statements unreliable but accepting the above identification the statements in the Vedas are quite justified (See table at P.138).

Similarly Bharadvaja and his sons were contemporary of Indra25 as well as Bharata26, Bharata’s son Devavāta, grandson Sṛnjaya27 and Sṛnjaya’s son Divodāsa28 according to Vedas (See Ch.VIII). Similar are the cases with Viśvāmitra and Vasiṣṭha (See Ch.IV and XIV). They both were contemporary of Indra on one side, and

20 Rg.,VI.10.7.
21 SB.,XIII.5.4.11-14.
22 According to P.L.Bhargava (IIVA., P. 95) Sudyumna was son of Manu. In his opinion Sudyumna might have adopted Pururavas. But the descendants of Pururavas are no where known as descending from Manu.
23 Purva,XIX.7-8.
24 Purāṇas are very much uncertain about the parentage of Bharata. They give different versions. Pargiter agrees to this uncertainty in the Purāṇas (AIHT., P.111).
25 Rg.,VI.47.22-25.
26 Rg.,VI.16.4.
27 Rg.,VI.27.7.
28 Rg.,VI.31.4.
descendants of Bharata on the other. Similarly Atri was a contemporary of Aśvins\(^{29}\) on one hand, and of Triarūṇa and Aśvamedha, sons of Bharata\(^{30}\), on the other. There were 21–22 generations between Indra, Bharadvāja, Viśvāmitra, Vasishtha, and Atri to Bharata according to the Purāṇas. But accepting our identification they were contemporary.

Gotama was a priest of Kuru-Srījayas\(^{31}\). He was contemporary of Aśvins\(^{32}\), Maruts\(^{33}\) and Atri\(^{34}\) on one side and Mudgāl\(^{35}\) and Purumāḷa\(^{36}\) on the other. Again Purāṇic genealogies can not justify the above statements.

Purāṇas connect the dynasty of Bharata to 'Puru' but according to the Yajurveda Bharata overthrew Puru (See Ch.VIII P.107) which was impossible if he happened to be a descendant of Puru, and that too after 13–14 generations.

Scholars have tried to solve all these problems by considering extraordinary long ages for rsis\(^{37}\) or they thought that there were several Indras. Pargiter duplicated Divodāsa and Sudāsa to solve the problem of gap of so many generations\(^{38}\) but the above identification has solved all this ambiguity.

He was a noble and valiant king. Even devas sought his help in wars\(^{39}\). But he became weak on account of his intense love for Urvasī, the Apsaras, who left him\(^{40}\). The legend\(^{41}\) goes that Pururavas loved Urvasī and she lived with him for four years and

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29 Rg.,I.116.8.
30 Rg.,V.27.2,5.
31 Sayana commenting on Rg.,I.81.3 quoting Vājaseyas.
32 Rg.,I.116.9.
33 Rg.,Rg.,I.85.1.
34 Rg.,I.183.5.
35 Ath.,IV.27.6.
36 Rg.,I.183.5.
37 Bhagvaddatta, BVI.,VI,.,P.138.
38 AIHT.,P.133–134,169–70.
39 Rg.,X.95.18.
40 Rg.,X.95.2; Kath.S.,VIII.10; SB.,XI.5.1.
41 Rg.,X.95.
gave birth to Ayu. The Gandharvas getting jealous of her sojourn with Pururavas manipulated to call her back. They managed to steal away the pet lambs of Urvasī. Pururavas chased them to bring back the lambs without covering his body. Gandharvas produced a flash of lightening and she beheld him naked. She abandoned him according to the terms settled between them. Veda describes his bevailings for Urvasī. He once discovered her in a tank known as Anyatapalakṣa in those days and tried to persuade her to come back. But Urvasī did not relent saying - 'ladies are always such and that their friendship is never reliable'. She took the son Ayu with her with a promise that she would return him later on. But he kept on insisting. At last her heart melted and she told him the way to become one of the Gandharvas. He performed the yajñas prescribed by the Gandharvas and became one of them. Probably he went to Gandhāra.

Before meeting Urvasī he kept company with other Apsaras like Sujurnī, Śrenī, Sumnaāpir, Caranyu, Granthinī and Hradecaksu also.

Mahābhārata states that he (Duḥṣanta) married Śakuntalā in the hermitage of Kaṇva. Śakuntalā had a contract with Duḥṣanta before going into the bond of marriage that her progeny would succeed him as a king. She gave birth to Bharata at Nāḍpīta.

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42 Gandharvas were the residents of Gāndhara and Urvasī was a lady of that land (See Ch.II P.13).
43 Scholars have interpreted the myth variously. Romila Thapar (Ancient Indian Social History: Some Interpretations, Hyderabad. 1984 P. 304-305) interprets the legend as 'Cupid and Psyche' story and states that the legend represent the transitional phase to patrilineal society. D.D.Kosambi ('Myth and Reality' P.47 ff) sees the sacrifice of Pururavas in the myth. Maxmuller states that it was a solar myth with Pururavas representing the sun and Urvasī, the vanishing dawn. (Chips P.109 ff)
44 Rg.,X.95.6,8.
45 I.7.65.20-25.
46 SB.,XIII.5.4.13.
Puranas mention several sons of Pururavas from Urvāśī but the Vedic texts record only two:-

1. Āyu
2. Amāvasu

Sayana names one son Viśvāyu also.

Āyu

Āyu, the son of Pururavas and Urvāśī was also titled as ‘Agni’. Indra lent a protecting hand to Āyu so many times. For Āyu’s sake he subjugated Veśa. But in the battle against Suśravas, a protege of Indra, Āyu sided with Kutsa and Atithigva and was subdued by Indra (See Ch.XIII Pp.183-84).

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47 SB.,III.4.1.22.
48 Baudh.S.S.,XVIII.44.
49 Rg.,X.22.14.
50 Rg.,X.95.12.
51 Rg.,VI.18.13; II.14.7.
52 Rg.,X.49.5.