

Pāṇḍavas agree that if any brother should set eyes upon another brother with Draupadī, he must be exiled for twelve years of celibate life in the forest.

[205] One day, a Brahmin whose cattle have been stolen comes to the Pāṇḍavas for assistance. Arjuna knows that the weapon-room is also the room where Yudhiṣṭhīra is with Draupadī, but realizing that dharma comes before all else he enters and takes up a bow. He slays the robbers, returns the Brahmin's cattle to him, and then prepares to go into exile for twelve years. Yudhiṣṭhīra tries to dissuade him, but he insists on strict adherence to dharma.

[206] Accompanied by many Brahmins, Arjuna travels to Gaṅgādvāra and remains there. Bathing in the Gaṅgā, he is abducted by Ulūpī, daughter of the king of the serpents, who has fallen in love with him. She implores him to lie with her; he explains his vow of celibacy; she argues that the vow applies only to relations with Draupadī, and that even if he incurs a small fault it will be outweighed by the merit of saving her life, for if she cannot have him she will die. Arjuna grants her wish.

[207] Now he travels eastwards, visiting many sacred places along the way. When he reaches Maṇalūra, he sees Citrāṅgadā, daughter of King Citravāhana, and desires her. The king explains that in his family only one child is born in each generation: Arjuna may have her, so long as he begets on her a son to continue the line. Arjuna agrees, and lives there with her for three years.

[208] Next Arjuna travels south, where he finds that five of the holy bathing-places are being shunned because of crocodiles. He enters the bathing-place named Saubhadra and is at once attacked by a crocodile; he pulls it out of the water and it turns into a beautiful Apsaras. She explains that she and her four friends had disrupted a Brahmin's austerities, and that he had cursed them to become crocodiles for a hundred years. [209] She and her friends had begged for mercy, and the Brahmin had conceded that the curse would end when they were pulled out of the water by a man of the highest character. Shortly after leaving the Brahmin they had encountered the seer Nārada, who had advised them to make their way to the southern bathing-places, as Arjuna would soon be visiting them. Having heard this story, Arjuna grants the Apsaras's request and frees her four friends. Then he

revisits Mañalūra to see Citrāṅgadā and Babhruvāhana, the son she has born him.

[210] Now Arjuna travels to the west to visit the sacred places there. In Prabhāsa Kṛṣṇa arrives to meet him, and they pass some time enjoying themselves together there and on Mount Raivataka. Then Arjuna travels with Kṛṣṇa to Dvārakā, where he is greeted with the greatest honour. He stays there with Kṛṣṇa for a long time.

## THE ABDUCTION OF SUBHADRĀ

[211] At a great festival, Arjuna sees and falls in love with Kṛṣṇa's sister Subhadrā. He asks Kṛṣṇa how he may get her as his wife; Kṛṣṇa replies that, given the uncertain outcome of a svayamvara, the best course of action would be marriage by abduction. Arjuna sends messengers to Yudhiṣṭhira at Indraprastha to inform him of his plan, and Yudhiṣṭhira agrees to it. [212] Arjuna now drives in his excellent chariot to Raivataka, where Subhadrā is just completing her worship, seizes her, and makes for Indraprastha. Her drunken kinsmen prepare to pursue him, but Kṛṣṇa remains silent; Balarāma belligerently challenges him to state his mind, for it was he who brought Arjuna among them.

## THE WEDDING GIFT

[213] Kṛṣṇa persuades his kinsmen that Arjuna has acted properly, and that the match is a worthy one. Arjuna now returns to Dvārakā and weds Subhadrā; after completing his term of exile in Puṣkara, he re-enters Indraprastha. At first Draupadī is jealous of Arjuna's new wife, but when she sees Subhadrā she is won over. Now Kṛṣṇa arrives with Balarāma and all the Vṛṣṇi, Bhoja and Andhaka chiefs. They give great wealth as their wedding gift: chariots, cattle, mares, mules, maidservants, gold, and a thousand elephants. Then they settle down to enjoyment and drinking. In the course of time, Subhadrā gives birth to Abhimanyu, who is greatly loved by Kṛṣṇa and by all the Pāṇḍavas. Draupadī bears five sons: Prativindhya, son of Yudhiṣṭhira; Sutasoma, son of Bhīma; Śrutakarman, son of Arjuna; Śatāñka, son of Nakula; and Śrutasena, son of Sahadeva.

[214] The Pāñdavas live happily in Indraprastha. One hot day, Arjuna suggests a river trip to Kṛṣṇa, and the two of them set out with a group of friends. While they are all enjoying themselves, Arjuna and Kṛṣṇa are approached by a Brahmin with a blazing appearance. [215] The strange Brahmin requests food for his insatiable appetite; when they ask him what sort of food he eats, he explains that he is Fire. He wishes to devour the Khāṇḍava forest, but Indra always washes it with rain to protect his friend Taksaka, king of the serpents. Arjuna tells Fire that he is willing to do what he can to overcome Indra, but he and Kṛṣṇa are in need of weapons adequate to the task.

[216] The Fire now invokes Varuṇa, lord of the waters, and tells him to give to Arjuna the bow Gāṇḍīva with two inexhaustible arrow-cases, and a chariot with a monkey for its emblem, and to Kṛṣṇa a discus. Varuṇa does as asked: Arjuna's new weapons and chariot are glorious and invincible, and Kṛṣṇa's discus will always triumph and always return to his hand. Now that the heroes are prepared, they call on the Fire to begin consuming the forest, and he does so.

[217] Thousands of creatures perish in the conflagration, and Arjuna and Kṛṣṇa pursue any that attempt to flee. The Fire reaches into the sky and troubles the very gods, who approach Indra and ask him what is happening. Indra rains heavily on the Fire, but the rain is dried up by the heat of the Fire before it can reach the ground. Furious, Indra redoubles his efforts, [218] but Arjuna covers the forest with his arrows, warding off the rainfall.

Taksaka himself is elsewhere, but his son Aśvasena is unable to escape the Fire, until his mother rescues him by swallowing him and fleeing into the air. However, she is killed by Arjuna's arrows, and Aśvasena is cursed by Arjuna, Kṛṣṇa and the Fire. Arjuna continues to battle against Indra, overcoming his clouds and thunderbolts. Birds, serpents, even the gods and other immortals join in the attack, but Arjuna defeats them, while Kṛṣṇa slaughters demons with his discus. Indra leads a force of gods against the two warriors, but to no avail; finally he breaks off the summit of Mount Mandara and hurls it at Arjuna, but Arjuna shatters it with his arrows.

[219] The killing continues. A voice from the air announces to Indra that his friend Taksaka is safe, and that Arjuna and Kṛṣṇa are the invincible Nara and

Nārāyaṇa; he should let the forest burn, for this is ordained. Indra withdraws to heaven, and the Fire continues to consume the inhabitants of the forest, while the two warriors kill all who attempt to flee. However, the demon Maya appeals to Arjuna for help and is spared. The only survivors are Aśvasena, Maya, and four Šārṅgaka birds.

## THE ŠĀRṄGAKA BIRDS

[220] — Janamejaya asks to hear how the Šārṅgaka birds survived the Fire, and Vaiśampāyana narrates the story. — The seer Mandapāla performs supreme austerities and reaches the world of the ancestors, but does not receive the reward he expects. The gods' explanation is his lack of a son. Anxious to gain sons without delay, he becomes a Šārṅgaka bird and mates with the female bird Jaritā, but then abandons her and his four unhatched sons for another female, Lapitā. When he sees the Fire, he praises it and receives a boon in return; he chooses that his sons should be spared.

[221] When the Fire approaches, Jaritā wonders what to do to save her newly hatched sons. She proposes to cover them with her own body, but they urge her to fly away: she can have further sons, and Mandapāla's intention must not be frustrated. She tells them to hide in a rat-hole; they prefer death by burning to death in the jaws of a rat. [222] Jaritā tells her sons that the rat has already been killed by a hawk; they prefer to take their chances with the Fire. She attempts to persuade them, but they will not change their minds. Finally, she leaves them and flies to safety. [223] The four young birds praise the Fire; the Fire assures them that it will honour its promise to their father, and offers them a boon; they request it to burn cats.

[224] Meanwhile, Mandapāla worries about his sons. When the Fire has passed, Jaritā returns to find them unscathed; then Mandapāla arrives. At first neither Jaritā nor his sons will acknowledge him, but he warns her against jealousy, and is then properly received. [225] Mandapāla now takes his family and leaves for another place.

— The Fire is finally satisfied. Indra offers Arjuna and Kṛṣṇa boons: Arjuna chooses celestial weapons, and Kṛṣṇa chooses Indra's friendship. The Fire grants them leave to depart: Arjuna, Kṛṣṇa and Maya sit down together on the bank of a river.

# THE HALL

## THE HALL

[1] *The demon Maya, who is a mighty craftsman, wishes to make something for Arjuna by way of thanks for rescuing him. At first Arjuna demurs; then, when Maya insists, he entrusts the choice of gift to Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa specifies a hall for Yudhiṣṭhira and the Pāṇḍavas. Delighted, Maya carries out his preparations for the task.*

[2] *Now Kṛṣṇa determines to visit his father in Dvārakā. He bids farewell to the Pāṇḍavas and to Kuntī, Subhadrā, Draupadī and Dhaumya. Then he sets out; the Pāṇḍavas accompany him part-way before returning to their own city.*

Vaiśampāyana spoke:

[3] Then Maya addressed Kuntī's son Arjuna, best of victors: 'With your leave I shall now depart, but I shall soon return. At the time when all the demons were preparing for a sacrifice near Mount Maināka to the north of Kailāsa, I left a treasure of jewels by the lovely Lake Bindu, in the hall of Vṛṣaparvan,<sup>1</sup> keeper of his word. I shall go and fetch it if it is still there, O heir of Bharata, and then I shall build a hall for Pāṇḍu's famous son Yudhiṣṭhira. It will be adorned with every kind of gem, and so beautiful as to gladden the heart. And in that same Lake Bindu, O Kaurava, there is an excellent club that King Yauvanāśva left there after slaying his enemies in battle. It is decked with gold markings, massive and strong, capable of withstanding a heavy blow, the equal of a hundred thousand ordinary clubs, dealing death to all. It is worthy of

<sup>1</sup> The king of the demons.

Bhīma, as your bow Gāndīva is worthy of you. There is also Varuṇa's great conch Devadatta, which makes a mighty sound. All this I shall bestow upon you, make no doubt!' With these words to Kuntī's son Arjuna, the demon then set off towards the north-east.

Now near Mount Maināka to the north of Kailāsa is great Hiranyāśīṅga, a holy mountain rich in gems, and lovely Lake Bindu. There King Bhagīratha lived for many years watching the Gaṅgā, known as 'Bhagīratha's river'. There noble Indra, lord of all beings, performed a hundred great sacrifices, heir of Bharata; there he set up sacrificial posts studded with jewels, and altars of gold, to beautify the site, not to set a standard; there the thousand-eyed god, Śaci's husband, attained success through his sacrifice. There the eternal Śiva, lord of beings and creator of all worlds, is worshipped in his fiery energy, surrounded by thousands of spirit beings. There Nara and Nārāyaṇa, Brahmā, Yama and Śiva attend a sacrificial session at the end of every thousand ages. There faithful Kṛṣṇa Vāsudeva sacrificed for the permanent benefit of the virtuous in sessions lasting a thousand years; and there he set up, in thousands and millions, gold-wreathed sacrificial posts and altars of surpassing splendour.

To that place now went Maya. He took the club and conch, O heir of Bharata, and the crystal treasure from Vṛṣaparvan's hall, and with the aid of the Kimpaka Rākṣasas carried it all back to Indraprastha. Now the demon built a matchless hall, studded with jewels, famed throughout the three worlds for its heavenly beauty. Then he presented that finest of clubs to Bhīma, and gave Kuntī's son Arjuna the incomparable conch Devadatta.

Great king, the very trees in that hall were made of gold! It extended ten thousand cubits in every direction; wonderful in form, it shone with a heavenly light like that of fire, or the sun or moon; indeed, its brilliance seemed to outshine the brilliant splendour of the sun as it blazed forth with a divine radiance. It stood obscuring the sky, like a mountain or a cloud, long and broad and smooth, dispelling sin and weariness. Built of the finest materials, it wore its jewelled walls like a garland; it was rich in gems and in wealth, a masterwork of a master architect. The matchless hall that Maya built was more beautiful than Sudharmā, the divine hall of the Daśārhas, or even that of Brahmā

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5 himself. At Maya's command, it was guarded and supported by eight thousand terrible Kimpaka Rākṣasas, sky-roaming fighters, mighty of body and mighty of strength, with shell-like ears and red or orange eyes.

Within the hall, Maya built an incomparable pool covered with multicoloured lotuses with beryl leaves and jewelled stems, thronged with birds of many kinds, bright with lotus-flowers, full of lovely turtles and fish. A beautiful stairway led down into the clear water of the pool, which never dried up whatever the season, and was shaded by jasmine bushes that trembled in the breeze. It was adorned so richly with jewels that a number of princes who arrived there did not recognize it for what it was, despite the evidence of their eyes, and fell straight in.

30 All round the hall were great trees of various sorts, always in blossom, and delightful for their dark, cool shade. Everywhere there were fragrant groves, and lotus-pools stocked with geese, ducks and *cakravāka* birds; and the breeze wafted to the Pāṇḍavas the scent of the flowers that grew all round, on land and in water. Such was the hall that Maya built in the space of fourteen months; and then he reported to Yudhiṣṭhira lord of *dharma* that it was complete.

[4] Now King Yudhiṣṭhira took possession of the hall with a feast for ten thousand Brahmins: there were buttered rice, honey, and delicious roots and fruits, as well as brand new clothes and garlands of many kinds; to each one of them the king gave a thousand cattle, till the sound of their benedictions seemed to reach heaven itself, O heir of Bharata. Yudhiṣṭhira, best of Kurus, now worshipped the deities with musical instruments, a variety of songs, and perfumes of various kinds, and installed them in their shrines; after which wrestlers, actors, prizefighters, bards and heralds attended on the noble king for seven nights. After thus honouring the lovely hall, he lived there with his brothers, happy as Indra in his heaven.

*Seers and princes from all over the world attend, and the music is performed by Gandharvas and Apsarases.*

[5] The great seer Nārada now visits Yudhiṣṭhira, and proceeds to ask him a long series of questions about the manner of his rule over the kingdom. Yudhiṣṭhira promises to abide by the instruction implicit in Nārada's words, [6] then replies to him point by point. Next he asks Nārada whether in his travels he has ever

seen so fine a hall. Nārada answers that no mortal's hall can compare with it; but he offers to tell of the halls of the world-guardian gods, an offer which is eagerly accepted.

[7] Nārada describes Indra's hall, which he built for himself. It is enormous, beautiful, and travels through the air; throngs of divine seers, among them King Hariścandra, attend on Indra there, while Gandharvas and Apsarases make music.

[8] In Yama's great hall all human woes are banished, and everything one could desire is to be found; there are all the ancestor kings, including Pāṇḍu, yet despite their great numbers there is no crush.

[9] Varuṇa's hall stands in water, and is surrounded by beautiful trees and flowers, while lovely birds fly about inside; in attendance are serpents and demons, oceans, rivers and mountains.

[10] Kubera's brilliant white hall floats in the air, and is full of hosts of Apsarases and Gandharvas; Kubera's friend Śiva too is there, with his consort Umā and his ghoulish attendants.

[11] Now Nārada relates how once, long ago, the Sun god had visited earth and described to him the wonders of Brahmā's heavenly hall. Nārada expressed a desire to see it, and the Sun conducted him there. It is indescribable, ever-changing in form; it grants ease; high in the heavens, it shines with its own light as if to illuminate the sun. There Brahmā is attended by seers, gods, planets, the Vedas, the seasons: by everything that exists in the three worlds.

Vaiśampāyana spoke:

Yudhiṣṭhira now once again addressed Nārada: 'As you describe it, best of all those who speak, the kings are mostly to be found within the hall of Yama. You said, O lord, that the serpents are in Varuṇa's hall, together with most of the foremost demons, the rivers and the oceans; in the hall of Kubera lord of wealth are Yaksas, Guhyakas, Rākṣasas, Gandharvas and Apsarases, as well as blessed Śiva whose emblem is the bull; you said that the great seers dwell in Grandfather Brahmā's hall with all the hosts of the gods and all learning; and in the hall of Indra of a hundred sacrifices you mentioned by name certain gods, Gandharvas and great seers. But, mighty sage, you said that, alone among royal seers, Hariścandra dwells for ever in the hall of noble Indra, lord of the gods. What deed did he do, or what austerities did he unswervingly perform,

50 that that renowned king should now rival Indra himself? And how, O priest, did you come to meet my father, the blessed Pāṇḍu, in the realm of the ancestors? What did he say, holy sir? I wish to know this; I have the strongest curiosity to hear you tell the whole story!'

Nārada answered, 'Lord of kings, since you ask me about Hariścandra, I shall expound to you the greatness of that wise man. He was a mighty king, an emperor over all the world's kings; all the lords of the earth always acknowledged his authority. Mounted on a single gold-adorned chariot of victory, he conquered the seven continents of the earth with 55 the prowess of his sword, lord of men; and after conquering the whole of the earth with its mountains and forests and groves, he performed the great sacrifice of the royal consecration. At his command all the lords of the earth brought to him their wealth, and waited upon the Brahmins at that sacrifice. And that lord of men gladly bestowed riches upon the sacrificial priests, five times greater than they had asked for; when the time came to enter the sacrificial enclosure, he gratified the Brahmins who had assembled from many quarters with valuable gifts of every kind. Honoured to their heart's content with a variety of foodstuffs, and sated with mounds of gems, those Brahmins proclaimed in delight that he excelled over all other kings in ardour and in renown.

50 'Bull-like son of Kuntī, you should know that this is why Hariścandra of mighty energy now outshines those thousands of kings. When he had completed that great sacrifice he was consecrated in glory as emperor, lord of men; and so too any other king who performs the great sacrifice of the royal consecration dwells in joy with great Indra. Likewise the man who meets his death unfleeing in battle will find joy in Indra's dwelling, O bull-like heir of Bharata, and he who quits his body through keen asceticism will also blaze in glory there forever.

65 'As for your father Pāṇḍu, O son of Kuntī, this is what that heir of Kuru said to you after seeing the astonishing glory of King Hariścandra: "You are capable of conquering the earth, and your brothers are under your authority: perform the most excellent sacrifice, the royal consecration, heir of Bharata!" Tiger-like hero, you should carry out his wishes, and then you will come to share in great Indra's world, together with your forebears.

'It is true, O king, that this great sacrifice is known to be subject to many obstacles, for Brahmin Rākṣasas will search for weak points to destroy the rite. War, too, follows behind it, capable of destroying the earth; indeed, in this case there is a portent of such destruction. Think on this, lord of kings, and then do what is proper. Be always ready and alert to protect the four classes of men; thrive; rejoice; and gratify the Brahmins with your gifts.'

'I have told you in full what you asked me. With your leave I shall now depart for the Daśārha city of Dvārakā.'

After speaking thus to the Pāṇḍavas, O Janamejaya, Nārada left amidst the seers with whom he had come. And after his departure, heir of Kuru, Kuntī's son Yudhiṣṭhira discussed that most excellent sacrifice, the royal consecration, with his brothers.

## CONSULTATIONS

Vaiśampāyana spoke:

[12] When Yudhiṣṭhira heard the words of Nārada the seer, he sighed, O heir of Bharata: he could find no peace for worrying over the performance of the royal consecration. Knowing the greatness of noble royal seers, and considering how sacrificers attained the blessed realms through their virtuous deeds, and thinking in particular of the glorious royal seer and sacrificer Hariścandra, he longed to perform the sacrifice of the royal consecration. He paid honour to all his courtiers, and, honoured by them all in return, he turned his thoughts towards the royal consecration; lord among kings, the bull of the Kurus reflected over and over again as he directed his mind towards performing the sacrifice of the royal consecration. Moreover, that king of astonishing power and heroism who maintained purest *dharma* considered what would confer benefit on all people; best of all experts in *dharma*, Yudhiṣṭhira showed kindness to all his subjects and worked for the benefit of all, with no discrimination. So the people flourished under his paternal care, and no one hated him; hence he was known as Ajātaśatru, 'Man without enemies'.

Yudhiṣṭhira, best of all those who speak, summoned his ministers

and his brothers, and questioned them repeatedly about the royal consecration. His ministers answered his questions fittingly and with one voice, telling wise Yudhiṣṭhīra, who wished to perform the sacrifice, 'A king who is consecrated by that rite attains the status of Varuṇa;<sup>1</sup> one who is already king seeks to gain by that rite the full status of an emperor. Your friends believe that you are worthy of that imperial status, Kuru lord, and that the time has come for your royal consecration. Thanks to your successes as a Kṣatriya, you may choose when to perform that sacrifice, in which Brahmins of keen vows pile up six fires while the Sāmaveda is sung. He who performs the ladled oblations therein accomplishes all sacrifices, and also attains his consecration at the end of the rite; and he is therefore known as a universal conqueror. Strong-armed king, you are capable of this, and we are all obedient to you; so do not hesitate, but fix your mind upon the royal consecration!'

*Yudhiṣṭhīra wishes to hear Kṛṣṇa's views, and sends a messenger to Dvārakā to summon him; Kṛṣṇa arrives, and Yudhiṣṭhīra asks for his opinion.*

Vaiśampāyana spoke:

[13] Kṛṣṇa answered, 'Great king, with all your qualities you are worthy to perform the royal consecration. However, though you know everything, I shall mention something to you, heir of Bharata. They who are known today in this world as Kṣatriyas are descended from those earlier Kṣatriyas who survived the attacks of Rāma son of Jamadagni. You know, bull-like lord of the earth, that they have stated the lines of their descent in authoritative terms: the kings, and the other Kṣatriya lineages on earth, claim origin from the dynasties sprung from Ilā and Iksvāku. Kings descended from Ilā and Iksvāku number a hundred and one royal lines, bull-like heir of Bharata; but there has also been an extraordinarily wide expansion of the lines of Yayāti and the Bhojas,

<sup>1</sup> In the Vedic period Varuṇa was regarded as sovereign lord (*samrāj*, the same word here translated 'emperor') among the gods. Later he dwindled to become god of the ocean and one of the eight world-guardian deities, ruling over the western quarter; clearly this passage invokes his earlier grandeur.

reaching in every direction, great king, and the Kṣatriyas as a body honour their royal rank equally with the rest.<sup>1</sup>

‘But lately the ruler of the central lands, King Jarāsaṃdha Caturyu, to whom the hundred and first royal line has descended, has determined to break away from the rest; and he holds imperial rank by birth. Now, wise king, it seems that King Śiśupāla of great energy supports him fully and has become his general. Vakra the mighty lord of Karuṣa, who fights by illusory power, has joined him like a disciple, great king; and the noble heroes Haṇsa and Dibhaka have also both joined the heroic Jarāsaṃdha, along with Dantavakra, Karuṣa, Kalabha and Meghavāhana.

‘King Bhagadatta of boundless might, who bears on his head the celestial gem known as the jewel of all creation, who punished the Greek rulers Mura and Naraka, who rules like Varuṇa in the West, your father’s old friend, great king – he submits to Jarāsaṃdha in both word and deed, though in his heart he is devoted to you like a father, for he is tied by affection. Only brave King Kuntibhoja Purujit, glory of the Kunti line, afflicter of his enemies, your mother’s brother who rules the south-western region of the earth, submits to you in his affection for you.

‘Jarāsaṃdha has also been joined by Vāsudeva of Puṇḍra, that villain whom I have not yet killed, who is known as highest lord in Cedi and believes himself the highest lord in this world, thus claiming my own title in his endless folly; he is king over the Vāṅgas, Puṇḍras and Kirātas, and is renowned for his might throughout the three worlds.

‘And Bhīṣmaka Caturyu, mighty Bhoja king and friend of Indra, the slayer of enemy heroes who defeated the Pāṇḍyas, Krathas and Kaiśikas through the power of his learning, whose brother Āhṛti is a hero equal in battle to Rāma son of Jamadagni, is devoted to Jarāsaṃdha of Magadha. We are his kin, great king, always respectful to him; we show him kindness and affection, but he has no affection for us and treats us with resolute unkindness. So though he does not recognize his own lineage

<sup>1</sup> The mythology of Ila is confused, but some accounts (see 1.70) make him the father of Purūravas, who was the grandson of the moon; Iksvāku was directly descended from the sun. The major Kṣatriya dynasties were thus all ‘solar’ or ‘lunar’. For Yayāti and the Bhojas, see 1.80.

or its might, O king, he has seen Jarāsāmṛdha's blaze of glory, and has gone over to him.

‘Therefore the northern Bhojas and the eighteen junior lines have taken refuge in the West, lord, from fear of Jarāsāmṛdha, as have the Śūrasenas, Bhadrakāras, Bodhas, Śālvās and Paṭaccaras, the Sustharas, Sukūṭas and the Kuṇīndas with the Kuntis, the kings of the Śālveyas with their kinsfolk and followers, the southern Pāñcālas and the eastern Kośalas among the Kuntis. The Matsyas and Saṃnyastapādas have likewise left the northern country in their fear and taken refuge in the South, and in the same way all the Pāñcālas in their fear of Jarāsāmṛdha have abandoned their own kingdom and fled in every direction.

‘As for Kāṃsa,<sup>1</sup> after oppressing his relatives for some time the fool then took Jarāsāmṛdha's two daughters to be his queens: they were named Asti and Prāpti, and were the younger sisters of Sahadeva. Foolish Kāṃsa used the power they brought him to overcome his kinsmen and attain mastery over them. The villain committed dreadful wickedness until, in their affliction at his hands, the seniormost Bhoja Kṣatriyas entered into an alliance with us for the protection of their people. Once I had concluded the marriage of Āhuka's daughter Sutānu to Akrūra, I then took up my kinsmen's cause, together with Balarāma: the two of us slew both Kāṃsa and his brother Sunāman.

‘But danger now approached, for Jarāsāmṛdha made ready for war. The eighteen junior lines therefore reached a decision, O king: even if we were to strike unceasingly with mighty hundred-slaying weapons, we could not slay his force within three hundred years, for he had two excellent warriors named Hāṃsa and Dībhaka, mightiest of the mighty, comparable in strength to the gods. In my judgement the three of them – these two heroes together with heroic Jarāsāmṛdha – were a match for the three worlds; nor was this my view alone, for all the other princes were of just the same opinion, O foremost of the wise.

‘Now as for that great ruler named Hāṃsa, as he fought in battle with the eighteen junior lines, O king, someone proclaimed that he had been killed; and on hearing this, heir of Bharata, Dībhaka drowned himself in the waters of the Yamunā. Dībhaka believed he could not

<sup>1</sup> Formerly king of Mathurā and Kṛṣṇa's particular enemy.

bear to live in this world without Hāṃsa, and so went to his death. In the same way when Hāṃsa, the conqueror of enemy fortresses, heard of Dībhaka's fate, he too made his way to the Yamunā and drowned himself there. And when King Jarāśaṃdha learnt that they had both met their death in the waters of the river, he set out for his own city of Śūrasena, O bull-like heir of Bharata.

'Enemy-slayer, when that king turned back we all lived joyfully once more in Mathurā. But when Jarāśaṃdha's daughter, Kāṃsa's lotus-eyed widow, approached her father the king of Magadha, and in her grief at her husband's loss urged him again and again, "Kill my lord's killer!", then, great king, we remembered the decision we had previously reached, and fled in distress: we each gathered up our greatest riches, O king, and ran headlong with our wealth and our kinsfolk in fear of Jarāśaṃdha. Our worries led us all to travel to the western region and the lovely city of Dvārakā, adorned by Mount Raivata. There, O king, we settled once more; and we so perfected our fortifications as to make them invincible to the very gods. Enemy-slayer, that is where we are now living in confidence of our safety, for it is a place which even women could defend, never mind the bull-like Vṛṣṇi heroes! Those heirs of Madhu are filled with the highest joy, tiger-like Kuru, when they see the great mountain and the Mādhavī ford.

'Thus we have been wronged by Jarāśaṃdha from the start; and so kinship prompts us to turn to you. We have great strength: our fort extends three leagues, with a triple division of men at every league; at intervals of a league are hundreds of gates, arched and valiantly manned; and the whole is ringed by Kṣatriyas of the eighteen junior lines, mad for battle. In our own line there are eighteen thousand troops; Āhuka has a hundred sons, each of whom has three hundred followers. There is my own son Cīrudeśna and his brother Pradyumna, as well as Cakradeva and Sātyaki, myself and Balarāma, and Sāmba, Balarāma's equal in battle: these seven are champion warriors. Let me tell you of others, O king: Kṛtavarman, Anādhṛsti, Samika, Samitijaya, Kahva, Śāṅku and Nidinta are seven great chariot-fighters; the two sons of Andhakabhoja and the old king bring their number to ten. These brave, mighty heroes, strong as any in the world, live untroubled amongst the Vṛṣṇis, remembering the central lands where they once dwelt.

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‘Now you, O truest heir of Bharata, have always been endowed with imperial qualities, and it is right for you to establish yourself as emperor over the Kṣatriyas. But my belief is that it will not be possible for you to accomplish the royal consecration while mighty Jarāsāndha lives, O king, for in Girivraja his capital he is holding prisoner all the kings whom he defeated, like a lion holding mighty elephants captive in a cave on Mount Himālaya. King Jarāsāndha intends to sacrifice those lords of the earth, for it was after worshipping the great god Śiva that he defeated all the princes: every time that he defeated a prince in battle, he brought him, bound, to his fortress and penned him up there. We ourselves, great king, fled Mathurā in fear of Jarāsāndha, and travelled to the city of Dvārakā. If you wish to accomplish your ritual, you should strive to rescue those kings and to slay Jarāsāndha; otherwise this mission of yours to perform the royal consecration in its entirety cannot be achieved, wisest heir of Kuru! This is my opinion, sinless king. But let it be as you yourself consider; so decide for yourself on the basis of all these considerations, and tell me your decision.’

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[14] *Yudhiṣṭhīra still doubts whether he can achieve success. Bhīma encourages him, and Kṛṣṇa insists that Jarāsāndha's wickedness must be stopped: he has eighty-six kings in captivity, and when he has captured fourteen more he will undertake his dreadful sacrifice. The one who defeats him will win both glory and empire.* [15] *Yudhiṣṭhīra is not persuaded; the risk is too great. Now Arjuna urges him on: as a Kṣatriya he should act decisively against Jarāsāndha.* [16] *Kṛṣṇa too favours an attack on Jarāsāndha, which he is sure will succeed. At Yudhiṣṭhīra's request he relates Jarāsāndha's story.*

The mighty king Br̥hadratha of Magadha had married the twin daughters of the king of Kāśī, but no son was born to either of them. Offered a boon by the ascetic Caṇḍakauśika, Br̥hadratha declined it, saying that nothing was of value to a king without heir. Caṇḍakauśika recited a mantra over a mango and gave it to him, telling him it would give him what he desired; Br̥hadratha split it in two and gave a half to each of his wives, and both became pregnant. But when their time came, each gave birth to half of a child. The two half-children were abandoned; however, they were rescued by a Rākṣasa woman named Jarā, who put them together so that they became a single, mighty boy. Then she returned the child to the king and his wives. [17] After explaining to Br̥hadratha

what had happened, the Rākṣasa woman vanished; Bṛhadratha named his son Jarāsamdhā, 'Joined by Jarā'. After some time, Caṇḍakauśika returned, and predicted that the boy would become lord over all the earth's kings, and would see Śiva. Bṛhadratha now consecrated his son as king and retired to the forest to practise austerities. Jarāsamdhā brought all the kings under his sway.

### THE KILLING OF JARĀSAMDHĀ

[18] Now Kṛṣṇa proposes that he himself should accompany Bhūma and Arjuna in an attack on Jarāsamdhā. Delighted, Yudhiṣṭhīra agrees to this, and the three set out, disguised as Brahmins. They travel across country and arrive at the capital of Magadha.

Vaiśāṇīpāyana spoke:

[19] 'Son of Kuntī,' said Kṛṣṇa, 'here we are at the great city of Magadha: charming, rich in livestock and well supplied with water, it is a lovely place, healthy and full of fine houses. It has five huge and beautiful hills, sir: Vaihāra, Varāha, Vṛṣabha, R̥ṣigiri and Caitya; and these five mountains, with their great peaks and their cool trees, stand so close together that they seem to combine in protecting the city of Girivraja. Forests of *lodhra* trees – the delightful haunt of lovers – almost hide them from view, with branches thick with perfumed flowers.

'It was here that the noble Gautama, that seer of keen vows, fathered Kāksīvat and other sons upon the daughter of Uśinara the Śūdra; Gautama loved the royal line of Magadha because its kings showed him such favour in allowing him to live here in this house, and the mightiest kings, from Āṅga, Vāṅga and elsewhere, used to enjoy staying in Gautama's dwelling at that time, O Arjuna. See these delightful groves of *priyāla* trees, son of Kuntī, and these fine *lodhras* growing next to Gautama's house.

'The serpents Arbuda and Śakravāpin, afflicters of their enemies, lived here, and the wonderful dwellings of the serpents Svastika and Maṇi were here also. It is because of Maṇi that this country of Magadha is never shunned by the rain-clouds; and Kauśika and Maṇimat too

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showed it great favour. Jarāsāmṛtha believes that he has unceasing success in achieving his aims; so let us today lay low his pride in his accomplishments!'

At this the three brothers of mighty power – the two Pāṇḍavas and the Viṣṇu – set out for the city of Magadha. And so they came to Girivraja, full of happy and prosperous people of every class, rich in festivals, unassailable. Passing straight by the city gate, they rushed at lofty Mount Caitya, much loved by the people of Magadha, while members of the royal line and ordinary citizens were paying it reverence, as if in their eagerness to slay Jarāsāmṛtha they intended to strike at his head. This was where Brhadratha had come upon the bull-demon Māṣāda; he killed him, fashioned three kettledrums from his horns and throat, tied hides to them, and set them up in his own city, where those drums resounded whenever divine flowers pounded them.<sup>1</sup>

The mighty peak of Mount Caitya was firm and huge and old, decked with reverential garlands, fixed in its place for ever; those heroes struck it with their powerful arms and broke it off. Only then did they look upon the city of Magadha, and enter it.

Now at that moment Jarāsāmṛtha's household priests were honouring the king by passing a fire around him as he sat upon an elephant. The heroes entered the city, longing to do battle against Jarāsāmṛtha, but in the guise of pious householders, bearing no weapons, armed only with their arms. There they saw the vast, wonderful wealth of the food- and flower-markets, full of all good things, yielding prosperity in every way one might desire. Seeing all that wealth there in the street as they travelled along the royal highway, Kṛṣṇa, Bhīma and wealth-winner Arjuna, those best of mighty men, forcibly seized garlands from a garland-maker. Now, wearing multicoloured clothes, garlands and gleaming earrings, they all entered the dwelling of wise Jarāsāmṛtha, like Himalayan lions gazing at a cow-pen. Great king, the arms of those strong-armed heroes, decked with sandal and aloe, shone like pillars of rock. When the people of Magadha saw them, mighty as elephants, tall as the trunk of a sāla tree and broad-chested, they were astonished. The mighty bull-like heroes passed straight through three crowded chambers

<sup>1</sup> The exact meaning of this very puzzling sentence is uncertain.

and arrogantly approached the king; and Jarāsamādha duly rose to greet with hospitality these guests who merited the honour of water for the feet and a honey drink. 'Welcome to you!' said that lordly king. For this was the vow he had taken, famous throughout the earth, O king: whenever he learnt that pious Brahmin householders had arrived, that king, triumphant in combat, would rise to greet them even in the middle of the night, heir of Bharata.

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But now Jarāsamādha, truest of kings, saw their extraordinary dress as he approached them, and he was astonished. As soon as those bull-like heroes, enemy-slayers all, saw King Jarāsamādha, they said these words, O truest heir of Bharata: 'Welfare and good health, O king!' Then they stood, tiger-like king, looking at the king of Magadha and at one another. Jarāsamādha next addressed the Yādava and the two Pāṇḍavas who were dressed as Brahmins, lord of kings: 'Be seated!' All three bull-like heroes sat down, blazing with good fortune like fires in a great sacrifice.

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Now King Jarāsamādha, keeper of his word, spoke to them once more, heir of Kuru, reproaching them for the guise in which he saw them: 'As far as I am aware, O priests, nowhere in the world of men do pious Brahmin householders deck their bodies with garlands and perfumes, and yet you are covered with flowers, and your arms show the scars of the bowstring. You display the power of Kṣatriyas while laying claim to that of Brahmins, and you wear multicoloured clothes and deck your bodies with garlands and perfumes. Speak the truth: who are you? Among kings, truth is an ornament. Why did you break the peak of Mount Caitya? Why did you enter my dwelling through an improper route? Have you no fear of offending a king? This was the deed of someone travelling under false colours. What is your purpose here today? Speak! For the Brahmin, courage lies above all in speech. After approaching me in this fashion, why do you not accept the honour duly offered you? What is your reason for coming to me?' 40

When high-minded Kṛṣṇa heard these words, he replied with an eloquent speech in a voice tender yet solemn: 'Pious householders, O king, may be Brahmins or Kṣatriyas or Vaiśyas: the rules for them are both specific and general. A Kṣatriya who always maintains the specific Kṣatriya rules gains good fortune; we have covered ourselves

with flowers because good fortune always attends those who do so. A Kṣatriya's courage lies in his arms, not his speech, and so, O son of Brhadratha, his speech is never considered arrogant. The creator placed the Kṣatriya's courage in his arms; if you wish to see it, O king, you shall do so today, make no doubt! We shunned your door because the virtuous always enter a friend's house though the proper door, but an enemy's house improperly. When we come to a house on hostile business we never accept any honour there; you should know that this is our eternal vow.'

[20] Jarāsāmṛda answered, 'I do not recall having ever offended you, and even on careful reflection I do not see that I have shown you enmity. Now if there is no enmity, why do you consider me your foe when I have done no wrong? Tell me this, priests, for this is the rule among the virtuous! Even a Kṣatriya who injures an innocent person suffers mental torture for his violation of *dharma*, make no doubt. And so if a man who knows *dharma* and maintains mighty vows goes astray in this world, he goes the way of the wicked and destroys his own fortunes. You are aware that I am foremost among the virtuous of the three worlds for my adherence to the Kṣatriya *dharma*, and that I have done no wrong, and yet you talk such nonsense!'

Kṛṣṇa Vāsudeva said, 'Great king, there is a certain heir to a great line who is carrying out his duty to that line; it is at his command that we three have risen against you. You have gathered up many of the world's Kṣatriyas, O king; how can you consider yourself to have done no wrong after such a cruel and wicked act? Truest of rulers, how could a king harm other virtuous kings? Yet you have seized them to offer them to Śiva! The wrong you have done, son of Brhadratha, should come before us, for we practise *dharma* and are strong in *dharma*'s defence. To sacrifice men is something never heard of; how can you wish to sacrifice men to Śiva? You aim to designate your fellow Kṣatriyas as sacrificial victims: is anyone else such a fool as you, Jarāsāmṛda? This is why we have come here to prevent you from destroying our kin, for we wish our kinsmen's welfare and have sought them out in their distress. You believe that among all the Kṣatriyas in the world there is none other to equal you. That, O king, is a very grave error of judgement! What Kṣatriya, knowing his own high birth, would fail to enter the

incomparable, eternal heaven that is his after death in battle? You should 15  
 know it is for heaven that Kṣatriyas receive initiation for the battle-sacrifice, ruler of Magadha, and make their offering to all the worlds. Heaven comes from victory, O king, heaven comes from great fame, heaven comes from the pain of battle: this is the unfailing way. This was the source of Indra's triumph; ever intent on this, the god of a hundred sacrifices defeated the demons and now rules over the universe. And for the heaven-bent Kṣatriya, whose enmity could be better than yours, with your vast Magadha armies that glory in their size and strength?

'Do not despise your enemies, O king! Is there not valour in every man, and ardour to equal even yours? Lord of men, it is only while 20  
 others' valour and ardour remain unknown that you may stake sole claim. And we can match you. That is why, O king, I spoke to you as I did.'

'Ruler of Magadha, cast off your arrogant pride towards those who are your equals! Do not set out for the realm of Yama king of the dead with your sons and ministers and troops! The kings Dambhodbhava, Kārtavīrya, Uttara and Bṛhadratha despised their betters, and so perished here with their troops. We do not pretend to be Brahmins; we are here to rescue your captives. I am Kṛṣṇa Vāsudeva lord of the senses, and these two heroic men are Pāṇḍu's sons. We challenge you, king of Magadha: stand firm and fight, or else release all the kings! Do not set out for Yama's realm!'

To this Jarāsamādha replied, 'I seize no king whom I have not defeated. Once defeated, who will stand against me? And who is there who has not been defeated by me? This is precisely the mode of life that is said to accord with the Kṣatriya *dharma*, Kṛṣṇa: to act at will, showing valour and gaining mastery over others. And since I observe the vows of a Kṣatriya, how can I now timidly release the kings whom I have procured for the sake of a god? I shall fight you: army against massed army, one against one, or one against two or three, separately or together!'

With these words, King Jarāsamādha now ordered the consecration of his son Sahadeva as ruler, for he intended to fight with those heroes of terrible deeds. But as the time of battle drew near, O bull-like heir of 30  
 Bharata, the king remembered Kauśika and Citrasena, his two generals, who had once been spoken of amongst men as Hamṣa and Dībhaka

and paid great honour. Great Kṛṣṇa Vāsudeva too recalled that King Jarāsāṃdha was the mightiest of the mighty, with valour to match a tiger, O tiger-like king; but invincible King Kṛṣṇa, keeper of his word, knew too that Jarāsāṃdha of terrible valour was destined to be killed by another. Therefore the slayer of Madhu, Balarāma's younger brother, foremost of self-possessed men, did not himself seek to kill Jarāsāṃdha, but respected Brahmā's command.

[21] Now Yadu's heir, the eloquent Kṛṣṇa, spoke to King Jarāsāṃdha, who was determined to fight: 'With which of the three of us does your heart yearn to fight, O king? Which one of us is to prepare for combat?'

When the radiant Jarāsāṃdha of Magadha heard Kṛṣṇa's words, he chose to do battle with Bhīma, O king. As he stood there ready to fight he was attended by his household priest, who bore sovereign remedies and treatments for pain and unconsciousness. Learned Jarāsāṃdha had a blessing performed by a Brahmin of good repute; then, in keeping with his Kṣatriya vows, he tied on his armour, removed his diadem, combed his hair, and rose like an ocean in flood. The wise king addressed Bhīma of terrible valour: 'Bhīma, I shall fight with you: may the better man win!' And with these words foe-taming Jarāsāṃdha of mighty ardour attacked Bhīma, like the demon Bali attacking Indra. Mighty Bhīma had taken counsel with Kṛṣṇa and had had a blessing performed by him; now in his eagerness to fight he closed with Jarāsāṃdha.

Armed only with their arms, the two tiger-like heroes met in battle, full of the greatest exultation and longing to defeat each other. The sound of their smashes, arm-locks and neck-locks was most terrible, like thunderbolts striking a mountain. Both men were full of the greatest exultation; both men were strong to excess; each longed to defeat the other, and each sought the other's weak spots. The terrible battle of two mighty heroes forced people in the vicinity to move out of the way, like the battle of Indra and Vṛtra. They grappled each other backwards and forwards, they beat their breasts and threw each other; and as they grappled they struck each other with their knees. Loudly they reviled each other, and they dealt each other blows that fell like rocks. Both broad of chest and long of arm, both skilled at close combat, they fought each other with their arms like iron bars. The encounter between the two noble heroes began on the first day

of the month of Kārttika, and continued day and night without pause or respite until the thirteenth day. But on the night of the fourteenth, the king of Magadha grew weary and stopped fighting. When Kṛṣṇa the stirrer of men saw how weary King Jarāsamādha had become, he spoke to Bhīma of terrible deeds as if to counsel him: 'Son of Kuntī, it is not permitted to press a weary enemy in battle, for if he is pressed hard he may give up his life — so you should definitely not press the king, son of Kuntī. Now continue to wrestle with him, bull-like heir of Bharata!' Pāṇḍu's son Bhīma, slayer of enemy heroes, heard Kṛṣṇa's words and understood what was Jarāsamādha's weak spot; and he determined to kill him. Then Kuru's heir the wolf-belly, mightiest of the mighty, seized the undefeated Jarāsamādha in a wrestling hold to defeat him.

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[22] Now that Bhīma had firmly resolved to kill Jarāsamādha, he said to Kṛṣṇa, Yadu's heir, 'It would not be right for me to spare the life of this wicked man, O tiger-like Yadu, now that I have tied my loin-cloth to do battle!'

Hearing the wolf-belly's words, tiger-like Kṛṣṇa answered him, urging him to hasten in his longing for Jarāsamādha's death: 'Bhīma, yours is the supreme mettle of the god of Wind: today let us see you swiftly display that mettle against Jarāsamādha!'

Then, O king, foe-taming Bhīma of great might tossed mighty Jarāsamādha in the air and whirled him round; with his arms he whirled him round a hundred times, O bull-like heir of Bharata, then dashed him down, breaking his back, and roared as he trampled him. The terrible combined cry of the trampled Jarāsamādha and the roaring Pāṇḍava struck fear into every living thing: all the people of Magadha were afraid, and women miscarried when they heard the cries of Bhīma and Jarāsamādha. Indeed, the sound that Bhīma made convinced the Magadhas that Mount Himālaya had been broken in two, or the earth split open.

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Now the foe-taming heroes left the dead king at his palace gate as if he were sleeping there, and set off by night. Kṛṣṇa yoked Jarāsamādha's banner-emblazoned chariot, and took the two brothers up into it; then he released his royal kinsmen. When those kings, lords of the earth, saw jewel-worthy Kṛṣṇa, they bestowed jewels upon him, for he had freed

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Unwounded, well-armed, triumphant over his enemy, Kṛṣṇa now mounted that heavenly chariot and set out with the rescued kings from Girivraja. With Kṛṣṇa for charioteer, and accompanied by his brother Bhīma, the ambidextrous warrior Arjuna, handsome and skilled at slaying, was invincible to all kings. As for that excellent chariot, with Bhīma and Arjuna for the warriors within it and Kṛṣṇa for charioteer, it shone, invincible to all bowmen. This was the very chariot in which Indra and Viṣṇu had ridden in the battle for Tārā, wife of Bṛhaspati; now Kṛṣṇa mounted it and rode forth. Bright with refined gold, decked with clusters of tinkling bells, victory-granting and enemy-slaying, with its roar like thunderclouds, this was the chariot in which Indra had slain nine times ninety demons; and the bull-like heroes were delighted to have won it.

The people of Magadha were astonished to see strong-armed Kṛṣṇa riding in that chariot with the two brothers; and, ridden by Kṛṣṇa, the chariot – swift as the wind and yoked to heavenly horses – shone all the brighter. Over that excellent chariot was raised a standard; it had been made by the gods, and was not attached in any way. Glorious and rainbow-bright, it could be seen at a distance of a league. Now Kṛṣṇa thought of Garuḍa, and at once he approached; beneath him, the standard seemed like a lofty sacred column.<sup>1</sup> Along with other gaping, roaring creatures that took their places on the standard, Garuḍa the eater of snakes remained on that excellent chariot, whose wonderful standard shone with such brilliance that people could hardly bear to look at it, like the thousand-rayed sun at noon. It never caught on trees and was never harmed by weapons; both gods and men could see that it was divine.

O king. Invincible Kṛṣṇa, the tiger-like hero, mounted that heavenly chariot with its roar like thunderclouds, and set out with the two Pāṇḍavas. King Vasu had obtained it from Indra,<sup>2</sup> and Bṛhadratha from him, and in due course it had passed from Bṛhadratha to his son Jarāsāṃḍha.

Now strong-armed, lotus-eyed Kṛṣṇa of great renown set out from Girivraja and halted on the plain beyond. There all the townsfolk, led by the Brahmins, came to do him honour in the manner prescribed

<sup>1</sup> See 1.29.

<sup>2</sup> See 1.57.13–14.

by rule, O king; and the kings whom he had released from bondage also honoured the slayer of Madhu, and addressed him with gratifying words: 'Strong-armed son of Devakī, such protection of *dharma* is no wonder coming from you, with the might of Bhīma and Arjuna to aid you! Today you have rescued us kings as we sank in Jarāsamdha's terrible swamp with its mire of grief! We were languishing in Jarāsamdha's dreadful mountain fortress, O highest lord Viṣṇu; but — praise be! — you have gained a blaze of glory by freeing us. Tell us kings what we may do for you, tiger-like hero: you should know that, however difficult, it is as good as done!' 30

High-minded Kṛṣṇa, lord of the senses, answered them soothingly: 'Yudhiṣṭhīra wishes to perform the sacrifice of the royal consecration. He practises *dharma* and is seeking sovereignty, so all of you should give him aid in accomplishing the rite!' 35

Then, O bull-like heir of Bharata, those kings rejoiced in their hearts; they gave their assent, and promised what Kṛṣṇa had asked. And those lords of the earth bestowed jewels upon Kṛṣṇa Govinda, prince of Daśarha, who reluctantly accepted out of kindness towards them.

Jarāsamdha's son, the mighty chariot-fighter Sahadeva, also came out with a group of his kinsmen and ministers, headed by his household priest: bowing low he approached Kṛṣṇa Vāsudeva, god among men, with many jewels. To that fearful prince Kṛṣṇa then granted indemnity, and there and then he consecrated Jarāsamdha's son as king; then, after swearing friendship with Kṛṣṇa and receiving honour from the two Pāṇḍavas, wise King Sahadeva re-entered Bṛhadratha's city. Lotus-eyed Kṛṣṇa himself, blazing with the greatest glory, took the many jewels he had been given and set forth together with the two sons of Kuntī. 40

Approaching Indraprastha with the two Pāṇḍava brothers, invincible Kṛṣṇa met Yudhiṣṭhīra lord of *dharma* and joyfully said to him, 'Truest of kings, by good fortune Bhīma has laid low the mighty Jarāsamdha, and the kings have been released from their bondage; and by good fortune Bhīma and wealth-winner Arjuna here are well, and have returned unharmed to their city, heir of Bharata.' 45

Now Yudhiṣṭhīra paid due honour to Kṛṣṇa, and joyfully embraced Bhīma and Arjuna; and he and his brothers rejoiced at the death of Jarāsamdha and the victory gained for them by the two brothers. Then

50 Pāṇḍu's son met the rescued kings, and after paying them respect and honour according to age, he gave them leave to depart, and the kings took their leave and, with joyful hearts, hurried back to their own lands by various different roads.

Thus did Kṛṣṇa the stirrer of men, the tiger-like hero of mighty wisdom, bring about the enemy Jarāsaṅḍha's death at the hands of the Pāṇḍavas. Having deliberately brought about his death, the foe-tamer now took his leave of Yudhiṣṭhira lord of *dharma*, and of Kuntī and Draupadī, O heir of Bharata, and also from Subhadrā, Bhīma, Arjuna and the twins; then, after bidding farewell to Dhaumya, he set out for his own city in that same excellent chariot that Yudhiṣṭhira lord of *dharma* had bestowed upon him, divine, brilliant as the morning sun, filling the horizon with its roar.

55 Bull-like heir of Bharata, the Pāṇḍavas headed by Yudhiṣṭhira respectfully circumambulated the unwearying Kṛṣṇa; and when Devakī's blessed son had left, their mighty victory and gift of indemnity to the kings rendered them yet more powerful, heir of Bharata. During that time King Yudhiṣṭhira, who was renowned for his protection of the kingdom, followed *dharma* and did whatever was proper to promote *dharma*, the gaining of wealth, and pleasure.<sup>1</sup>

## THE CONQUEST OF THE WORLD

[23] With Yudhiṣṭhira's agreement, Arjuna rides forth to conquer the north; similarly, Bhīma goes to the east, Sahadeva to the south and Nakula to the west.

Arjuna defeats numerous peoples, then does battle with Bhagadatta, king of Prāgjyotiṣa; after eight days of fighting, Bhagadatta concedes that Arjuna has the better of him, and agrees to pay tribute to Yudhiṣṭhira. [24] Next Arjuna travels further north into the mountains, where he makes many conquests, including the Trigartas, Bāhlikas and Kāmbojas. [25] Further north still, Arjuna defeats the celestial Kimpuruṣas and Guhyakas, and at Lake Mānasa he receives tribute of horses from the Gandharvas. Finally he reaches Harivarṣa, the land of the northern Kurus. He is told that, as a mortal, he may not enter; he agrees to

<sup>1</sup> See note to 1.56.16.

this, but requests tribute for Yudhiṣṭhira, which is duly given. Now he returns to Indraprastha with everything he has won.

[26] In the East, Bhūma secures the support of the Pāñcālas, and conquers the lands of Gaṇḍakī and Videha. In Daśārṇa he is so impressed by the valour of King Sudharman, who fights him bare-handed, that he appoints him his general. Further east he gains more victories, then approaches Śiśupāla, king of Cedi; Śiśupāla greets him warmly and accedes to Yudhiṣṭhira's wishes. Bhūma stays thirty days with him. [27] Now Bhūma conquers kingdom after kingdom, including Kosala, Ayodhyā, Kāśi, Matsya, Vatsa, Niṣāda, Videha, Magadha and Vāṅga. Then he returns to Indraprastha with the wealth he has amassed.

[28] In the South, Sahadeva's conquests include Śūrasena, Matsya and Niṣāda; King Kuntibhoja, Kuntī's adoptive father, also acknowledges his command. He defeats Vinda and Anuvinda of Avanti; then, as he does battle against Nīla of Mahiṣmatī, his army bursts into flame. — Janamejaya asks why this should have happened, and Vaiśampāyana relates. — The god Fire was once caught committing adultery in Mahiṣmatī, and was taken before Nīla. Nīla started to tell him off, but when Fire blazed up in anger he bowed before him, and was rewarded with a boon; Nīla chose security for his army. To the women of Mahiṣmatī, Fire granted the right to act as they pleased. — Sahadeva propitiates the Fire, which agrees not to hinder him; Nīla now welcomes him and pays tribute. Next Sahadeva continues south, conquering Tripura and Surāṣṭra, and many other fabulous realms. Finally he receives the tribute of Vibhīṣaṇa of Lankā, and then returns to Indraprastha.

[29] In the West, Nakula conquers many kingdoms, including Śibi, Trigarta, Ambastha and Mālava; he also sends an embassy to Kṛṣṇa Vāsudeva, who acknowledges his command. He goes to Madra, whose ruler, Śalya, is the brother of his mother Mādrī; Śalya welcomes him and gives him much wealth. He conquers many barbarian lands in the far West, and returns at last to Indraprastha with ten thousand camels that can barely carry all the treasure he has won.

## THE ROYAL CONSECRATION

Vaiśampāyana spoke:

[30] Yudhiṣṭhira lord of dharma afforded protection, maintained truth and destroyed his enemies; thus his subjects engaged happily in their

daily tasks. Taxes were properly collected, and his government was just, and so with generous monsoons the people prospered. Every kind of enterprise fared well – cattle-keeping, agriculture, trade – and all this came about specifically because of the king's actions. No false words were heard, O king; not amongst thieves and deceivers, nor even from the king's favourites. There was neither drought nor flood then, no raging of disease or fire, in the reign of Yudhiṣṭhira constant in *dharma*.

Kings visited Yudhiṣṭhira to perform favours, to wait upon him or to make unsolicited offerings; none of them had any other motive. His treasury grew so great from the just accumulation of wealth that it could not be expended even in hundreds of years; and when Kuntī's son King Yudhiṣṭhira understood the extent of his wealth and his possessions, he determined upon a sacrifice. All his friends, separately and together, told him, 'Now is the time for your sacrifice, lord! Perform it here and now!'

They were in the midst of speaking so when Hari Kṛṣṇa arrived, the ancient seer, essence of the Veda, visible to the wise, best of what moves and what stays still, origin and end of all things, lord of past, present and future, Kṛṣṇa, slayer of the demon Keśin, bulwark of all the Vṛṣnis, protector in times of trouble, slayer of enemies. He had placed his father Vasudeva Ānakadundubhi in charge of his combined troops, and now, surrounded by a mighty force, the tiger-like hero, heir of Madhu, carried a great mass of wealth of every kind for Yudhiṣṭhira lord of *dharma*. That torrent of wealth was like an ocean of jewels, boundless and inexhaustible, and as he entered the splendid city, the thunder of his chariot seemed to set that ocean roaring. The city of the Bhāratas rejoiced at Kṛṣṇa's arrival, like a sunless place at the coming of the sun or a windless place at the stirring of a breeze.

Yudhiṣṭhira met Kṛṣṇa joyfully and paid him due honour; the bull-like hero gave him a comfortable seat, asked after his welfare, and then, in the company of Bhīma, Arjuna and the twins, and of priests led by Dhaumya and Dvaiḍāyana Vyāsa, he addressed him: 'Kṛṣṇa, it is thanks to you that the whole earth lies under my authority, and it is through your grace that I have accumulated such great wealth. I wish to devote it all as is proper, son of Devakī, to the foremost Brahmins and the sacrificial fire. Therefore, strong-armed prince of Daśārha, I wish

to perform a sacrifice together with you and my brothers; please give me your assent! Allow yourself, Kṛṣṇa Govinda, to be initiated for the ritual, for if you sacrifice, prince of Daśarha, I shall be freed from sin. Or else permit me, lord, to undertake it with these my brothers: with your permission, Kṛṣṇa, I shall accomplish the highest sacrifice!'

Now Kṛṣṇa replied to him, praising his virtues at length: 'Tiger-like king, you yourself are worthy to be emperor. Accomplish this great sacrifice, and when you have done so, we too shall be blessed with success! Perform the ritual that you desire, while I work for your welfare; if you employ me in this task I shall obey your every word.'

Yudhiṣṭhira said, 'My plans will bear fruit, and success is guaranteed for me, lord of the senses, if you will be at my side as I desire!' 25

Now with Kṛṣṇa's agreement Pāṇḍu's son Yudhiṣṭhira and his brothers began to put in place the arrangements for the royal consecration. The foe-crushing Pāṇḍava commanded Sahadeva, best of warriors, and all his ministers: 'The sacrificial implements specified by Brahmins for this rite, and all the necessary gear and auspicious items, and the materials for sacrifice that Dhaumya requests: let servants swiftly fetch them in due order as required. Indrasena, Viśoka, and Arjuna's charioteer Pūru<sup>1</sup> are to be engaged in fetching such food as shall please me: every taste is to be catered for in matters of savour and scent, truest of the Kurus, to gratify and delight the Brahmins.' 30

Noble Yudhiṣṭhira, lord of *dharma*, had barely finished speaking when Sahadeva, best of warriors, informed him that all his instructions had been carried out. Then, O king, Kṛṣṇa Dvaipāyana Vyāsa fetched ritual priests, blessed Brahmins like visible manifestations of the Vedas. Satyavatī's son himself acted as *brahman*<sup>2</sup> for the rite; the *udgātr* was Susāman, bull of the Dhananjayas; Yājñavalkya, holiest of Brahmins, was appointed a most excellent *adhvaryu*; Vasu's son Paila, aided by Dhaumya, became the *hotr*; and their many pupils and sons, all expert in

<sup>1</sup> Indrasena and Viśoka are the charioteers of Yudhiṣṭhira and Bhīma respectively.

<sup>2</sup> The four chief priests at a Vedic sacrifice are the *hotr*, who offers the oblation and recites hymns from the R̥gveda; the *adhvaryu*, who performs most of the other numerous complex rituals and chants formulae from the Yajurveda; the *udgātr*, who sings hymns from the Sāmaveda; and the *brahman*, who oversees the entire event and makes good any ritual errors.

the Vedas and their branches, attended the sacrifice, O bull-like heir of Bharata. They pronounced a benediction and made arrangements for the ritual, and then set in order the great sacrificial site as prescribed in learned texts. There craftsmen were given leave to erect shelters: they were huge and studded with jewels, like the dwellings of the gods.

At once King Yudhiṣṭhira, truest of Kuru kings, commanded Sahadeva as his minister, 'Make haste to send swift envoys to issue invitations!' So on the king's instruction Sahadeva now dispatched envoys, telling them: 'Invite Brahmins and Kṣatriya rulers in every land, and all Vaiśyas and worthy Śūdras, and bring them here!' At the command of Pāṇḍu's son they invited all the lords of the earth, while he continued to send out more and more envoys.

Now, at the chosen moment, the priests initiated Kuntī's son Yudhiṣṭhira for the royal consecration, O heir of Bharata. Once he had received the initiation, righteous Yudhiṣṭhira, lord of *dharma*, set out for the sacrificial site; surrounded by priests in their thousands, and by his brothers and kinsmen, his friends and aides, Kṣatriyas from lands of every sort, and his ministers, that best of kings seemed like Dharma incarnate, O prince of men. Brahmins too arrived there from every region, skilled in all fields of learning, expert in the Vedas and their branches. At the command of Yudhiṣṭhira lord of *dharma*, craftsmen made thousands of individual dwellings for them and their followers, well equipped with food and bedding, pleasant in every season; and those Brahmins, lavishly honoured, settled there, O king, telling many tales and watching actors and dancers perform. Indeed, the mighty clamour of noble priests cheerfully eating and conversing could be heard there day and night, as they constantly called out, 'Give, give!', 'Eat, eat!' The lord of *dharma* gave to each of them cows, beds, gold and women in hundreds of thousands, heir of Bharata.

Thus began the sacrifice of Pāṇḍu's noble son, the one hero on earth as is Indra in his heaven. And now King Yudhiṣṭhira sent Nakula the Pāṇḍava to Hāstинapura, O bull-like heir of Bharata, to invite Bhīṣma, Drona, Dhṛtarāṣṭra, Vidura and Kṛpa, and those among all the Kaurava brothers who bore him some affection.

[31] Pāṇḍu's son Nakula, triumphant in combat, travelled to Hāstинapura, and invited Bhīṣma and Dhṛtarāṣṭra; and when they heard

of the sacrifice of Yudhiṣṭhīra lord of *dharma*, they set out for it with joyful hearts, led by Brahmins, for they knew about sacrifices. And others in hundreds were also delighted to come, bull-like hero, for they wished to see the hall and Pāṇḍu's son the lord of *dharma*. All the princes gathered there from every direction, heir of Bharata, carrying many great jewels of every kind. Headed by Drona the Teacher, those princes were all welcomed with honour: Dhṛtarāṣṭra, Bhīṣma and sagacious Vidura; all the hundred Kaurava brothers under Duryodhana's leadership; Subala king of Gāndhāra and his mighty son Śakuni; Acala, Vṛṣaka and Karna best of chariot-fighters; Rta, Śalya king of Madra, and the mighty chariot-fighter Bāhlika; Somadatta the descendant of Kuru; Bhūri, Bhūriśravas and Śala; Aśvatthāman, Kṛpa, Drona, and Jayadratha king of Sindhu; Drupada and his son Dhṛṣṭadyumna; Śālva lord of the earth; Bhagadatta of great renown, the king of Prāgjyotiṣa, together with all the barbarian tribes living along the ocean's edge; the kings of the mountain lands, and King Br̥hadbala; Vāsudeva king of Pundra, Vāṅga and Kaliṅga; Ākarṣa and Kuntala, the Vānavāsyas and Andhras; the Tamils and Sinhalas, and the king of Kashmir; Kuntibhoja of great ardour, and mighty Suhma; all the other brave Bāhlika kings; Virāṭa with his sons, and the great chariot-fighter Mācella; and other kings and princes, rulers of many different kingdoms.

Śiśupāla the mighty hero, mad for battle, came with his son to the sacrifice of Pāṇḍu's son, O heir of Bharata; and Balarāma, Aniruddha, Babhru and Sāraṇa all came there, as did Gada, Pradyumna, Sāmba and the brave Cārudeṣṇa; Ulmuka, Niṣṭha and Pradyumna's heroic son; and all the other Vṛṣṇis, mighty chariot-fighters all. These and many other kings, natives of the central lands, came to the great sacrifice of the Pāṇḍava's royal consecration.

At the command of Yudhiṣṭhīra lord of *dharma*, they were provided with dwellings, O king, containing many rooms and ornamented with ponds and with trees; the son of Dharma honoured those kings most highly, and they, after receiving his respects, went to the dwellings assigned them. These were tall as the peak of Mount Kailāsa, charming and richly ornamented, and enclosed all round by well-built, high white walls; they had lattices of gold, and were embellished with jewelled floors; their stairs were easy to climb, and their seats and other

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furnishings large; they were decked with garlands and wreaths, scented with the finest fragrance of aloes, and white as geese; their beauty could be seen a league off; they were spacious, with well-hung doors and many other merits; they contained so much metal that they looked like Himālayan peaks.

When the lords of the earth had taken their rest, they went to see 25 Yudhiṣṭhira lord of *dharma*, so generous to Brahmins, surrounded by many sacrificial priests. The sacrificial enclosure was thronged with princes and noble Brahmins, and it shone like highest heaven thronged with immortals, O king.

[32] Yudhiṣṭhira rose and greeted the revered grandfather Bhīṣma, O king, and then spoke these words to Bhīṣma, Drona, Kṛpa, Aśvatthāman and Vivimśati:<sup>1</sup> 'Good sirs, you must all favour me in this sacrifice. Whatever wealth I have here is yours, and so am I myself: act freely as you will to please me, good sirs!'

With these words, Pāṇḍu's firstborn son, already initiated for the ritual, now lost no time in appointing each of them to a fitting duty. King Yudhiṣṭhira put Duḥśāsana in charge of foodstuffs of every kind, and told Aśvatthāman to welcome the Brahmins; he instructed Sanjaya to honour the kings, and Bhīṣma and Drona to determine what should and should not be done, for they were sagacious; he charged Kṛpa with overseeing the gold and jewels and with giving the Brahmins their gifts. Likewise he appointed other tiger-like heroes to various occupations: Bāhlika, Dhṛtarāṣṭra, Somadatta and Jayadratha, brought together by Nakula, lived there like lords, whilst Vidura the chamberlain, being expert in *dharma*, acted as paymaster, and Duryodhana received all the tributary gifts.

The whole world was assembled, longing to gratify Yudhiṣṭhira with the greatest of attainments; longing too to see the hall and the Pāṇḍava lord of *dharma*. No one there brought tribute of less than a thousand, and everyone there showered jewels in profusion upon the lord of *dharma*; the kings vied with each other to bestow their wealth, each hoping that it would be through his gift of jewels that the heir of Kuru brought his sacrifice to completion. The sacrificial enclosure of Kuntī's noble

<sup>1</sup> One of the hundred sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra.

son was resplendent with the assembled kings in all their wealth and glory, with terraced, tower-capped mansions guarded by troops, and with palaces for worldly kings and dwellings for Brahmins that were built in the image of celestial flying chariots, studded with jewels of every kind and furnished in the richest style.

Yudhiṣṭhira, rivalling the god Varuṇa in riches, now performed the sacrifice of the six fires, giving many gifts to Brahmins and satisfying all the people in all their richest desires. The gathering was provided with foodstuffs of every kind, so that everyone was well fed, and it was busy with making offerings of jewels. The very gods were satisfied with the many oblations of milk and butter, accompanied by well-pronounced *mantras*, at that sacrifice performed by great seers. The priests were as satisfied as the gods with the rich gifts and food that they received; indeed, people of all classes were filled with joy at that sacrifice.

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### THE PRESENTATION OF THE GUEST-OFFERINGS

Vaiśampāyana spoke:

[33] On the day of the consecration, Brahmin seers together with kings entered the sacrificial ground to honour Yudhiṣṭhira. Seated within that ground, the noble Brahmins led by Nārada, and also the royal seers, shone like the gods and divine seers assembled in Brahmā's mansion. Boundlessly powerful, they conversed in the intervals between rituals: 'This is so!' – 'Indeed, it is not so!' – 'It is so, it cannot be otherwise!' Some gave substance to slender arguments, and whittled down substantial arguments, with reasoning sanctioned by learned texts; some in their wisdom tore apart the arguments established by others like hawks tearing apart a piece of meat in the sky; some, keepers of mighty vows and best of all those who know the Veda, regaled themselves with discourse on *dharma* and the proper making of wealth. Thronged with gods, Brahmins and great seers learned in the Veda, the sacrificial ground seemed like a clear sky thronged with stars. No Śūdra or vow-breaker could approach within that ground in Yudhiṣṭhira's dwelling. O king.

Nārada was delighted to see the glory that the performance of

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the sacrifice conferred upon the glorious Yudhiṣṭhira, the wise lord of *dharma*. The sage, seeing all the Kṣatriyas assembled there, fell to thinking, O lord of men, and he remembered the tale, told long ago in Brahmā's mansion, concerning the partial incarnations,<sup>1</sup> bull-like heir of Bharata. So, knowing as he did that this was an assembly of gods, O heir of Kuru, Nārada directed his thoughts towards lotus-eyed Hari Kṛṣṇa. The lord Nārāyaṇa, slayer of the foes of the gods, wise conqueror of enemy fortresses, the creator himself, had taken birth among Kṣatriyas in accordance with his promise; long ago he had told the gods, 'You will only regain the realms of heaven after killing one another!' And after instructing all of them so, blessed Nārāyaṇa, the benevolent lord of the world, had been born on earth in the race of Yadu, in the line of the Andhakas and Vṛṣnis, as the best of patriarchs, shining in his great glory like the moon among the stars. That foe-crusher, the might of whose arm was venerated by the very gods under Indra, was now living as Hari Kṛṣṇa, a mortal man.

'Alas! The mighty one, self-born Nārāyaṇa, will take back to heaven the Kṣatriya class that has become so powerful!' – this was the thought of righteous Nārada, for he knew Hari to be Nārāyaṇa, the lord who merits worship with sacrifices. Best of experts in *dharma*, Nārada of mighty wisdom remained respectfully at the great sacrifice of Yudhiṣṭhira, wise lord of *dharma*.

Now Bhīṣma addressed the lord of *dharma*, O king: 'Let due honour be shown to the kings, Yudhiṣṭhira heir of Bharata, for it is said that the six who deserve the guest-offering are a teacher, a priest, a relative, a pious householder, a friend and a king; they are said to deserve it when they come to stay for a year. Now these kings have been staying with us for a long time, so let a guest-offering be brought for each one of them, O king; and let it be brought first for the one among them who is best and most powerful!'

Yudhiṣṭhira answered him, 'Heir of Kuru, for which one of them do you think it right to bring the guest-offering first? Tell me, grandfather!' Then Bhīṣma son of Śamtanu decided in his mind, O heir of Bharata, and ruled that Kṛṣṇa the Vṛṣṇi was the most deserving man on earth:

<sup>1</sup> See I.61.

‘For in the midst of these assembled kings, he blazes with ardour, strength and valour like a sun blazing among stars. Like a sunless place at the coming of the sun or a windless place at the stirring of a breeze, this sacrificial enclosure of ours is brightened and gladdened by Kṛṣṇa.’ Now Sahadeva of mighty energy, with Bhīṣma’s approval, offered in the proper manner the finest guest-offering to the Vṛṣṇi hero, and Kṛṣṇa accepted it with the rite prescribed in learned texts.

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But Śiśupāla could not bear to see Kṛṣṇa Vāsudeva receive such honour. The mighty king of Cedi denounced both Bhīṣma and Yudhiṣṭhira lord of *dharma* in the assembly, and then he reviled Vāsudeva. [34] ‘This Vṛṣṇi does not merit princely honour as if he were a king, while all these noble lords of the earth are standing here! O Pāṇḍava, your conduct does not befit the noble Pāṇḍavas, for you have shown honour to lotus-eyed Kṛṣṇa because of your partiality towards him! You are mere children, you Pāṇḍavas; you do not understand that *dharma* is subtle. Gaṅgā’s son Bhīṣma here so lacks discernment that he has transgressed *dharma*. Bhīṣma, who adheres to *dharma* as you do yourself, now acts to show favour, and in doing so he has earned the utter contempt of virtuous folk throughout the three worlds. How can this man of Daśārha, who is not even a king, so merit honour that you pay him your respects in the midst of all these lords of the earth?’

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‘Perhaps, bull-like heir of Bharata, it is because you regard him as an elder – but while old Vasudeva stands here, how can his son merit this? Or perhaps you think that Kṛṣṇa Vāsudeva is your benevolent supporter – but while Drupada stands here, how can Madhu’s heir deserve such honour? Or perhaps, bull-like Kuru, you consider Kṛṣṇa your teacher – but while Drona stands here, why pay such respect to the Vṛṣṇi? Or perhaps, heir of Kuru, you regard him as your priest – but while the priest Dvaipāyana stands here, why honour Kṛṣṇa? The slayer of Madhu is not a priest, not a teacher, not a king; why else did you pay him such respect, best of Kurus, except to show favour? Or perhaps Madhu’s slayer really deserves your honour – but then why show disrespect to all the kings by bringing them here, heir of Bharata?’

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‘We do not offer our tribute to Kuntī’s noble son from fear or greed, or to ingratiate ourselves! We offer him our tribute because he practises *dharma* and is seeking sovereignty; yet he pays us no respect! Why else

but to show disrespect to this assembly of kings did you honour with the  
 15 guest-offering this Kṛṣṇa, who bears none of the marks of royalty? The  
 reputation for *dharma* of Dharma's son Yudhiṣṭhira has suddenly been  
 lost, for who would pay proper honour to a man lapsed from *dharma*,  
 a man born in the Vṛṣṇi line who has already killed a king?<sup>1</sup> Today  
 Yudhiṣṭhira's adherence to *dharma* has been stripped away, and instead  
 he is filled with meanness of spirit, for he presented the guest-offering  
 to Kṛṣṇa.

'If the sons of Kuntī are so frightened, so mean-spirited and wretched,  
 should you yourself not have told them, Kṛṣṇa, just what respect the  
 heir of Madhu merits? And why, stirrer of men, did you accept the  
 honour that the wretches offered you, knowing yourself unworthy of  
 it? What is more, you prize their honour, though it is not rightfully  
 yours, like a dog that grabs a morsel of an oblation to eat in secret.  
 Indeed, no disrespect has been shown to these lords among princes, for  
 it is clearly you yourself whom the Kurus have fooled, you stirrer of  
 men! Bestowing royal honour upon your unroyal self is like marrying  
 a eunuch or showing a blind man a beautiful scene, slayer of Madhu.  
 We have seen King Yudhiṣṭhira for what he is; we have seen Bhīṣma for  
 what he is; and we have also seen Kṛṣṇa Vāsudeva here for what he is:  
 all is now truly known!'

With these words Śiśupāla rose from his splendid throne and left the  
 sacrificial enclosure with the other kings.

[35] King Yudhiṣṭhira now hurried to Śiśupāla and addressed him in  
 sweet and conciliatory tones: 'Lord of the earth, it was not right to speak  
 as you have done; it was an extreme breach of *dharma*, and needlessly  
 harsh, for Bhīṣma son of Śaṃtanu certainly understands the highest  
*dharma*, O prince; do not treat him with unjust disrespect! See, too, these  
 5 many lords of the earth who are your seniors: they bear with the honour  
 shown to Kṛṣṇa, and you should do likewise. Lord of Cedi, Bhīṣma  
 knows Kṛṣṇa truly and fully: you do not know him as the Kaurava does.'

<sup>1</sup> Many manuscripts here insert an extra line identifying the king as Śiśupāla's former  
 ally Jarāsandha (see 2.18–22), and at 2.39 Śiśupāla again denounces Kṛṣṇa for killing  
 Jarāsandha unfairly. But Kṛṣṇa had also previously killed another king, Jarāsandha's  
 son-in-law Kaṁsa (see 2.13.29–33).

But Bhīṣma said, 'This man should receive neither courtesy nor conciliation, for he objects to the honour shown to Kṛṣṇa, who is seniormost in all the world. If a Kṣatriya is so expert a warrior that he defeats another Kṣatriya, and then, after overpowering him, sets him free, then he deserves that man's veneration; and in this assembly of kings I do not see a single lord of the earth who has not been defeated in battle by Kṛṣṇa's ardour! It is not only we who should show great respect to invincible Kṛṣṇa: all the three worlds should respect the stirrer of men! Many bull-like Kṣatriyas have been defeated in battle by Kṛṣṇa, and the whole world is completely founded upon the Vṛṣṇi prince; therefore, even if more senior kings are present, it is Kṛṣṇa and no other whom we honour. You should not speak as you did; you should not think thus!'

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'O king, I have waited upon many who are senior in learning, and from them as they talked I have heard of the many virtues of virtuous Kṛṣṇa, highly regarded by those assemblies of good men. I have often, too, heard men speak at length of the deeds that this wise man performed from the day of his birth. It is not from mere partiality, king of Cedi, that we honour the stirrer of men, nor because of our friendship for him, or because he has favoured us in any way; he is honoured by good men throughout the earth, and brings every earthly joy, and we pay him honour because we know of his fame, his heroism and his victory.'

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'We did not overlook anyone here, not even the youngest, and our judgement was that Hari Kṛṣṇa is the most deserving of respect, surpassing the very elders in his virtues. Among Brahmins he is seniormost in learning, among Kṣatriyas greatest in might. These are two settled reasons for Kṛṣṇa Govinda to be honoured, for who but Keśava amongst men in this world is so distinguished for his learning in the Veda and its branches, and likewise his boundless power? Generosity, skill, Vedic learning, heroism, modesty, renown, the highest intelligence, humility, glory, steadfastness, happiness and well-being: all these are contained in invincible Kṛṣṇa; and so all of you should agree to honour him, your most excellent teacher, father and elder, who both deserves and receives honour! Priest, elder, worthy relative by marriage, pious householder, king and friend: Kṛṣṇa lord of the senses is all of these, and therefore the invincible one is honoured. Kṛṣṇa alone is the origin and dissolution of

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the three worlds; for Kṛṣṇa's sake this whole universe was put in place; sun and moon, stars and planets, the cardinal and minor points of the compass, all is founded upon Kṛṣṇa!

‘But the man Śiśupāla here is a mere child, and does not know that Kṛṣṇa is everywhere and always; this is why he speaks as he does. For the wise man who strives after the highest *dharma* will see all according to *dharma*, but not so this Cedi king. Indeed, who among all these noble princes, both young and old, thinks Kṛṣṇa unworthy? Who would not honour him? Yet Śiśupāla has concluded that our honour was wrongly bestowed; in that case let him act to right that wrong!’

[36] *Sahadeva in turn threatens to place his foot upon the head of any king who disputes Kṛṣṇa's right to the honour: no one does, and Sahadeva is rewarded with celestial praise and a shower of flowers. But Śiśupāla and his allies are furious, and plan to wreck Yudhiṣṭhira's sacrifice.*

## THE KILLING OF ŚIŚUPĀLA

[37] *Seeing that there is going to be trouble, Yudhiṣṭhira asks Bhīṣma for advice, but Bhīṣma is dismissive. He states that for Śiśupāla and his allies to plot against Kṛṣṇa is like a pack of dogs barking at a sleeping lion; the result will be their death. [38] Śiśupāla replies furiously, insulting Bhīṣma. He belittles Kṛṣṇa's achievements and accuses Bhīṣma of feigning virtue for his own ends. [39] He concludes by denouncing Kṛṣṇa for wrongdoing in bringing about Jarāsandha's death by underhand means. Hearing all this, Bhīma is enraged: he rises to attack Śiśupāla. Bhīṣma restrains him, but he continues to seethe with anger; Śiśupāla mockingly urges Bhīṣma to let Bhīma go so that he may meet his death.*

[40] Now Bhīṣma tells Bhīma about Śiśupāla: when he was born he had three eyes and four arms, and he brayed like an ass. Appalled, his parents proposed to abandon their son, but a voice told them that they should look after him, and added that his extra eye and arms would vanish when he sat on the lap of the man who was destined to kill him. Many kings came to see the extraordinary child, and he was placed in the lap of each, to no effect; then Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma arrived, and as soon as the boy sat in Kṛṣṇa's lap his extra eye and arms vanished. His griefstricken mother asked Kṛṣṇa for a boon,

and, when he agreed, requested that he should forgive her son's sins; Kṛṣṇa promised to do so one hundred times. That, says Bhīṣma, is why Śiśupāla can now make his challenge. [41] Finally, Bhīṣma suggests that Śiśupāla's actions must be prompted, not by his own volition, but by Kṛṣṇa, who now wishes to reclaim that portion of his own fiery energy that is Śiśupāla.

Śiśupāla answers that if Bhīṣma wishes to offer praise, he should offer it to any of the kings and other mighty men who are present; Bhīṣma resembles the bhūliṅga bird, which preaches caution but chooses to feed on scraps of meat from the teeth of a lion. To this Bhīṣma replies that the kings of whom Śiśupāla speaks are worth no more than straw. The furious kings gather to attack him, but Bhīṣma defies them and tells them to challenge Kṛṣṇa instead.

Vaiśampāyana spoke:

[42] As soon as the Cedi king, Śiśupāla of mighty valour, heard Bhīṣma's words, he was filled with longing to fight Kṛṣṇa Vāsudeva, and spoke thus to him: 'I challenge you! Do battle with me, you stirrer of men, so that I may today slay you together with the Pāṇḍavas! For the Pāṇḍavas, like you, Kṛṣṇa, thoroughly merit death at my hands, in that they passed over kings to pay honour to your unroyal self. They were childish enough to pay honour to you – an undeserving wicked slave, not a king – as if you deserved it; and so in my judgement, Kṛṣṇa, they merit death!' Having spoken thus, the tiger-like king stood there, roaring angrily.

When he had finished speaking, Kṛṣṇa then softly addressed all the kings, and the Pāṇḍavas who were with them: 'Princes, this man is our greatest enemy. He is the son of a Sātvata woman,<sup>1</sup> and yet in his cruelty he opposes the Sātvatas, though they have done him no harm. When he heard that I had left for the city of Prāgjyotiṣa, lords of men, this vicious man set Dvārakā ablaze, though he is sister's son to my father. Once when the Bhoja Kṣatriyas were at play on Mount Raivataka, he slew many of them, and took all the rest captive back to his own city. At my father's horse sacrifice this malevolent man stole the sacrificial horse that had been released under heavy guard, in order to frustrate

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<sup>1</sup> The Sātvatas are a Yādava people, of whom Kṛṣṇa himself is one: Śiśupāla is the son of Kṛṣṇa's paternal aunt.

10 the rite. Against her will the fool abducted the wife of famous Babhrū as she travelled hence on business to the Sauvīras. And he resorted to magic disguise to abduct for the king of Karūṣa poor Bhadrā, princess of Viśāla. In everything he injures his mother's brother!

15 'I have borne this great grief for my father's sister's sake; but today by good fortune this is happening in the presence of all the kings. Sirs, all of you have seen his dreadful offence against me today; bear in mind also the deeds he has done behind my back. I can no longer tolerate this offence of a man whose arrogance before this council of all kings renders him worthy of death. The fool has a death-wish; he once paid suit to Rukmiṇī,<sup>1</sup> though he could no more gain her than a Śūdra could aspire to hear a recitation of the Veda!'

Thus and more spoke Kṛṣṇa Vāsudeva. The assembled lords of men all heard what he had to say, and they reproached the Cedi king; but Kṛṣṇa's words Śiśupāla of mighty energy burst into peals of mirth, and laughingly said, 'Kṛṣṇa, how can you shamelessly speak of Rukmini, particularly before these assembled princes, when she was formerly mine? Apart from you, slayer of Madhu, what man with any self-respect could ever speak in virtuous company of a wife who formerly belonged to another? Pardon me, Kṛṣṇa, if you wish, or else pardon me not—whether you are angry or well disposed, what have I to fear from you?'

Even as he spoke these words, blessed Kṛṣṇa, the slayer of Madhu, tormentor of his enemies, furiously severed his head with his discus, and that strong-armed hero fell, like a mountain-peak struck by a thunderbolt. And then the kings saw a wonderful fiery energy rise from the lord of Cedi's body, like the sun rising through the sky, great king, & greeted lotus-eyed Kṛṣṇa, honoured by all the world, and then entered him, lord of men. When all the lords of the earth saw this, they thought a great wonder that that fiery energy should enter strong-armed Kṛṣṇa, the highest lord. Cloudless, the sky poured down rain and blazing thunderbolts, and the earth trembled, when Kṛṣṇa slew the Cedi king. Some kings were speechless, for the time defied speech; they merely stared at Kṛṣṇa. Some wrung their hands in their anger, while others

<sup>1</sup> Kṛṣṇa's wife.

nearly swooning with rage, bit their lips. There were some kings who privately applauded the Vṛṣṇi prince, while others were infuriated, and yet others caught between different emotions. But the great seers were delighted, and approached Kṛṣṇa Keśava to praise him along with noble Brahmins and mighty kings.

Pāṇḍu's son Yudhiṣṭhīra now told his brothers to waste no time in performing the observances for brave King Śiśupāla, son of Damaghoṣa, and they carried out their brother's command. Then Yudhiṣṭhīra, together with the other lords of the earth, consecrated his son as king and sovereign over the Cedis. 30

And now, O king, the sacrifice of the Kuru king of mighty power shone forth in all its opulence, to the delight of the young men: under the protection of Kṛṣṇa Keśava, it was free from impediments, properly performed, and rich in wealth, grain and foodstuffs of every kind. Strong-armed Kṛṣṇa, stirrer of men, brought the mighty sacrificial rite of the royal consecration to its conclusion, protecting it with bow, discus and club. Then when Yudhiṣṭhīra lord of *dharma* had taken the final ritual bath, he was approached by all the Kṣatriya princes, who addressed him thus: 'We felicitate you on your attainment of imperial rank, righteous lord! You have increased the renown of all your lineage through this rite, prince of kings, and acquired great merit also! Now, tiger-like hero, honoured in every way we could desire, we ask you for leave: please permit us to return to our own lands.' 35

When Yudhiṣṭhīra lord of *dharma* heard the kings' words, he paid them all due honour, and then instructed his brothers: 'Every one of these kings came to me in affection; now, enemy-afflicters all, they have asked for leave and are setting out for their own lands. Therefore, good sirs, accompany these most excellent monarchs to the borders of our domain.' The virtuous Pāṇḍavas obeyed their brother's command and accompanied each of those foremost kings according to merit. Dhṛṣṭadyumna of mighty energy set out at once with Virāṭa, and wealth-winner Arjuna, the great chariot-fighter, with noble Drupada; powerful Bhīma travelled with Bhiṣma and Dhṛtarāṣṭra, and the great chariot-fighter Sahadeva with heroic Drona and his son Aśvatthāman; Nakula went with Subala and his son Śakuni, O king, and Draupadī's

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sons, together with Abhimanyu, went with the kings of the mountain lands. In the same way bull-like Kṣatriyas accompanied each of the other Kṣatriyas; and all the priests were likewise honoured as they departed.

45 When all those lords among princes had left, O bull-like heir of Bharata, Kṛṣṇa Vāsudeva of great energy then addressed Yudhiṣṭhira: 'I too ask you for leave: I wish to return to Dvārakā, heir of Kuru. I felicitate you on your achievement of the royal consecration, the most excellent of rites!'

At this, the lord of *dharma* replied to Madhu's slayer, 'Kṛṣṇa Govinda, it is through your grace that I have achieved the rite: through your grace all the Kṣatriya princes, obedient to my will, came to me bearing splendid offerings. Without you, O hero, we shall take no pleasure in dwelling here – but of course you must return to the city of Dvārakā.'

Then righteous Hari Kṛṣṇa of wide fame, accompanied by Yudhiṣṭhira, visited Kuntī and happily told her, 'Aunt, today your sons have attained imperial rank; they have achieved their aims and become wealthy. Be glad for them! As for myself, with your permission I must return to Dvārakā.' After this, Keśava also paid his respects to Subhadrā and Draupadī. Then, leaving the women's quarters with Yudhiṣṭhira, he bathed, prayed and had blessings performed by Brahmins. Dāruka<sup>1</sup> now yoked his fine chariot, lovely as a cloud, and brought it to him, O king; and, seeing that his chariot had arrived, with its beautiful Garuda banner, high-minded, lotus-eyed Kṛṣṇa respectfully circumambulated it, mounted, and set out for the city of Dvārakā. Glorious Yudhiṣṭhira lord of *dharma* accompanied mighty Vāsudeva on foot, together with his brothers.

Then, halting his wonderful chariot for a moment, lotus-eyed Hari Kṛṣṇa spoke to Kuntī's son Yudhiṣṭhira: 'Lord of the peoples, be constantly alert in the protection of your subjects! And as living creatures depend on the rain-cloud, birds on the mighty tree, and the immortal gods on thousand-eyed Indra, may your kinsmen depend on you.' When they had done conversing, Kṛṣṇa and Pāṇḍu's son Yudhiṣṭhira took leave of each other, and returned to their own homes.

1 Kṛṣṇa's charioteer.

After Kṛṣṇa, best of the Sātvatas, had left for Dvārakā, King Dur-yodhana and Śakuni son of Subala were the only bull-like heroes left dwelling in Yudhiṣṭhira's heavenly hall.<sup>1</sup> 60

## THE GAMBLING MATCH

Vaiśampāyana spoke:

[43] While Duryodhana dwelt in that hall, bull-like heir of Bharata, he slowly examined the whole place with Śakuni; and in it the Kaurava saw schemes of celestial wonder that he had never seen before in Hāstinapura, the City of the Elephant. Once, in the middle of the hall, Dhṛtarāṣṭra's royal son came upon a crystal floor; fooled into thinking it water, King Duryodhana drew up his garments. After this he walked about the hall with angry heart and averted gaze. Next, seeing a pond of crystalline water adorned with crystal lotuses, he thought it was a floor, and fell, fully clothed, headlong into the water; when the servants saw that he had fallen in the pond, they laughed uproariously, before giving him clean clothes at the king's command. Then mighty Bhīma and Arjuna and the twins saw him in this state, and they too all burst out laughing. Angry Duryodhana could not bear their mirth; maintaining a dignified mien, he avoided their gaze. But now once again he drew up his garments as though for wading, to set foot on what was in fact dry land, and once again everyone laughed at him; and he bumped his forehead against a door which had seemed to him open, and then halted in front of an open door, believing it closed. Thus King Duryodhana was tricked repeatedly, lord of the peoples, before taking leave of Pāṇḍu's son Yudhiṣṭhira. 5 10

It was with a cheerless heart that he returned to the City of the Elephant, for he had seen the amazing wealth displayed at the great rite of the royal consecration; and so King Duryodhana began to think wicked thoughts as he travelled, burning with jealousy of the Pāṇḍavas' fortune, and wearied with brooding. He had seen Kuntī's sons happy, and all the princes obedient to Yudhiṣṭhira's will; he had seen the

<sup>1</sup> In verse 43 above, Śakuni was said to have travelled home with his father Subala.