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Mahabharata



C. RAJAGOPALACHARI



Bhavan's
Bhavan

MAHABHARATA retold by C. Rajagopalachari (Edited by Jay Mazo,
International Gita Society) **Contents**

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AUTHOR'S PREFACE

closely related to life, so long as the human family is divided into nations,

IT is not an exaggeration to say that the literature cannot escape the effects of such persons and incidents portrayed in the division.

great literature of a people influence But the highest literature transcends

national character no less potently than regionalism and through it, when we are the actual heroes and events enshrined in properly attuned, we realise the essential its history. It may be claimed that the oneness of the

human family. The

former play an even more important part Mahabharata is of this class. It belongs to in the formation of ideals, which give to the world and not only to India. To the character its impulse of growth.

people of India, indeed, this epic has been In the moving history of our land, from an unfailing and perennial source of

time immemorial great minds have been

spiritual strength. Learnt at the mother's knee and nourished and touched to

knee with reverence and love, it has

heroic deeds by the Ramayana and the

inspired great men to heroic deeds as well Mahabharata. In most Indian homes,

as enabled the humble to face their trials children formerly learnt these immortal with fortitude and faith.

stories as they learnt their mother tongue The Mahabharata was composed many

at the mother's knee. And the sweetness thousand years ago. But generations of joys and sorrows of Sita and Draupadi, the

gifted reciters have added to Vyasa's

heroic fortitude of Rama and Arjuna and original a great mass of material. All the the loving fidelity of Lakshmana and

floating literature that was thought to be Hanuman became the stuff of their young worth preserving, historical, geographical, philosophy of life.

legendary political, theological and

The growing complexity of life has

philosophical, of nearly thirty centuries, changed the simple pattern of early home found a place in it.

life. Still, there are few in our land who do In those days, when there was no printing, not know the Ramayana and the

interpolation in a recognised classic

Mahabharata. Though the stories come to seem to correspond to inclusion in the them so embroidered with the garish

national library. Divested of these

fancies of the Kalakshepam (devotional accretions, the Mahabharata is a noble meeting where an expert scholar and

poem possessing in a supreme degree the singer tells a story to his audience) and the characteristics of a true epic, great and cinema as to retain but little of the dignity fateful movement, heroic characters and and approach to truth of Vyasa or

stately diction.

Valmiki. Vyasa's Mahabharata is one of The characters in the epic move with the our noblest heritages. And it is my

vitality of real life. It is difficult to find cherished belief that to hear it faithfully anywhere such vivid portraiture on so

told is to love it and come under its

ample a canvas. Bhishma, the perfect

elevating influence. It strengthens the soul knight; the venerable Drona; the vain but and drives home, as nothing else does, the chivalrous Karna; Duryodhana, whose

vanity of ambition and the evil and futility perverse pride is redeemed by great

of anger and hatred.

courage in adversity; the high souled

The realities of life are idealised by genius Pandavas with godlike strength as well as and given the form that makes drama,

power of suffering; Draupadi, most

poetry or great prose. Since literature is unfortunate of queens; Kunti, the worthy

mother of heroes; Gandhari, the devoted and their household and staff. There were wife and sad mother of the wicked sons of beautiful palaces and gardens and the

Dhritarashtra, these are some of the

lives led were cultured and luxurious.

immortal figures on that crowded, but

There was trade in the cities, but the mass never confused, canvas.

of the people were agriculturists.

Then there is great Krishna himself, most Besides this urban and rural life, there was energetic of men, whose divinity

a very highly cultured life in the seclusion scintillates through a cloud of very human of forest recesses, centered round ascetic characteristics. His high purposefulness teachers. These ashramas kept alive the pervades the whole epic. One can read

bright fires of learning and spiritual even a translation and feel the over

thought. Young men of noble birth

whelming power of the incomparable

eagerly sought education at these

vastness and sublimity of the poem.

ashramas. World-weary aged went there

The Mahabharata discloses a rich

for peace. These centers of culture were civilisation and a highly evolved society, cherished by the rulers of the land and not which though of an older world, strangely the proudest of them would dare to treat resembles the India of our own time, with the members of the hermitages otherwise the same values and ideals. India was

than with respect and consideration.

divided into a number of independent

Women were highly honored and entered

kingdoms.

largely in the lives of their husbands and Occasionally, one king, more

sons. The caste system prevailed, but

distinguished or ambitious than the rest, intercaste marriages were not unknown.

would assume the title of emperor,

Some of the greatest warriors in the

securing the acquiescence of other

Mahabharata were brahmanas. The

royalties, and signalised it by a great Mahabharata has moulded the character

sacrificial feast. The adherence was

and civilisation of one of the most

generally voluntary. The assumption of numerous of the world's people.

imperial title conferred no overlordship.

How did it fulfil, how is it still continuing The emperor was only first among his

to fulfil, this function? By its gospel of peers.

dharma, which like a golden thread runs The art of war was highly developed and through all the complex movements in the military prowess and skill were held in epic. By its lesson that hatred breeds high esteem. We read in the Mahabharata hatred, that covetousness and violence of standardised phalanxes and of various lead inevitably to ruin, that the only real tactical movements. There was an

conquest is in the battle against one's accepted code of honorable warfare, lower nature.

deviations from which met with reproof **1. GANAPATI, THE SCRIBE**

among Kshatriyas. The advent of the Kali BHAGAVAN VYASA, the celebrated

age is marked by many breaches of these compiler of the Vedas, was the son of the conventions in the Kurukshetra battle, on great sage Parasara. It was he who gave to account of the bitterness of conflict, the world the divine epic of the

frustration and bereavements. Some of the Mahabharata.

most impressive passages in the epic

Having conceived the Mahabharata he

center round these breaches of dharma.

thought of the means of giving the sacred The population lived in cities and villages.

story to the world. He meditated on

The cities were the headquarters of kings Brahma, the Creator, who manifested

himself before him. Vyasa saluted him known that the virtuous and learned with bowed head and folded hands and

Vaisampayana, one of the chief disciples prayed:

of Vyasa, revealed the epic for the benefit

"Lord, I have conceived an excellent of humanity.

work, but cannot think of one who can

Janamejaya, the son of the great King

take it down to my dictation."

Parikshit, conducted a great sacrifice in Brahma extolled Vyasa and said: "O sage, the course of which Vaisampayana

invoke Ganapati and beg him to be your narrated the story at the request of the amanuensis." Having said these words he former. Afterwards, this story, as told by disappeared. The sage Vyasa meditated on Vaisampayana, was recited by Suta in the Ganapati who appeared before him. Vyasa forest of Naimisa to an assembly of sages received him with due respect and sought under the lead of the Rishi Saunaka.

his aid.

Suta addressed the assembly: "I had the

"Lord Ganapati, I shall dictate the story of good fortune to hear the story of the

the Mahabharata and I pray you to be

Mahabharata composed by Vyasa to teach graciously pleased to write it down."

humanity dharma and the other ends of

Ganapati replied: "Very well. I shall do as life. I should like to narrate it to you." At you wish. But my pen must not stop while these words the ascetics eagerly gathered I am writing. So you must dictate without round him.

pause or hesitation. I can only write on Suta continued: "I heard the main story of this condition?"

the Mahabharata and the episodic tales Vyasa agreed, guarding himself, however, contained therein told by Vaisampayana at with a counter stipulation: "Be it so, but the sacrifice conducted by King

you must first grasp the meaning of what I Janamejaya. Afterwards, I made an

dictate before you write it down."

extensive pilgrimage to various sacred Ganapati smiled and agreed to the

places and also visited the battlefield condition. Then the sage began to sing the where the great battle described in the story of the Mahabharata. He would

epic was fought. I have now come here to occasionally compose some complex

meet you all." He then proceeded to tell stanzas which would make Ganapati

the whole story of the Mahabharata in the pause a while to get at the meaning and grand assembly.

Vyasa would avail himself of this interval After the death of the great King Santanu, to compose many stanzas in his mind.

Chitrangada became King of Hastinapura Thus the Mahabharata came to be written and he was succeeded by Vichitravirya.

by Ganapati to the dictation of Vyasa.

The latter had two sons, Dhritarashtra and It was before the days of printing, when Pandu. The elder of the two being born the memory of the learned was the sole blind, Pandu, the younger brother,

repository of books. Vyasa first taught the ascended the throne. In the course of his great epic to his son, the sage Suka. Later, reign, Pandu committed a certain offence he expounded it to many other disciples.

and had to resort to the forest with his two Were it not so, the book might have been wives where he spent many years in

lost to future generations.

penance.

Tradition has it that Narada told the story During their stay in the forest, the two of the Mahabharata to the devas while

wives of Pandu, Kunti and Madri gave

Suka taught it to the Gandharvas, the

birth to five sons who became well known Rakshasas and the Yakshas. It is well

as the five Pandavas. Pandu passed away

while they were still living in the forest.

This is the substance of the story of the The sages brought up the five Pandavas Mahabharata. In this ancient and

during their early years.

wonderful epic of our land there are many When Yudhishtira, the eldest, attained illustrative tales and sublime teachings, the age of sixteen the rishis led them all besides the narrative of the fortunes of the back to Hastinapura and entrusted them to Pandavas.

the old grandsire Bhishma. In a short time The Mahabharata is in fact a veritable the Pandavas gained mastery over the

ocean containing countless pearls and

Vedas and the Vedanta as well as over the gems. It is, with the Ramayana, a living various arts, especially pertaining to the fountain of the ethics and culture of our Kshatriyas. The Kauravas, the sons of the Motherland.

blind Dhritarashtra, became jealous of the **2. DEVAVRATA**

Pandavas and tried to injure them in

"You must certainly become my wife, various ways.

whoever you may be." Thus said the great Finally Bhishma, the head of the family, King Santanu to the goddess Ganga who

intervened to bring about mutual

stood before him in human form,

understanding and peace between them.

intoxicating his senses with her

Accordingly the Pandavas and the

superhuman loveliness.

Kauravas began to rule separately from The king earnestly offered for her love his their respective capitals, Indraprastha and kingdom, his wealth, his all, his very life.

Hastinapura.

Ganga replied: "O king, I shall become Some time later, there was a game of dice your wife. But on certain conditions that between the Kauravas and the Pandavas

neither you nor anyone else should ever according to the then prevailing Kshatriya ask me who I am, or whence I come. You code of honor. Sakuni, who played on

must also not stand in the way of

behalf of the Kauravas, defeated

whatever I do, good or bad, nor must you Yudhishthira. As a result, the Pandavas ever be wroth with me on any account

had to be in exile for a period of thirteen whatsoever. You must not say anything

years. They left the kingdom and went to displeasing to me. If you act otherwise, I the forest with their devoted wife

shall leave you then and there. Do you Draupadi.

agree?"

According to the conditions of the game, The infatuated king vowed his assent, and the Pandavas spent twelve years in the she became his wife and lived with him.

forest and the thirteenth year incognito.

The heart of the king was captivated by When they returned and demanded of

her modesty and grace and the steady love Duryodhana their paternal heritage, the she bore him. King Santanu and Ganga

latter, who had in the meanwhile usurped lived a life of perfect happiness, oblivious their kingdom, refused to return it. War of the passage of time.

followed as a consequence.

She gave birth to many children; each

The Pandavas defeated Duryodhana and

newborn babe she took to the Ganges and regained their patrimony. The Pandavas cast into the river, and then returned to the ruled the kingdom for thirty-six years.

king with a smiling face.

Afterwards, they transferred the crown to Santanu was filled with horror and

their grandson, Parikshit, and repaired to anguish at such fiendish conduct, but

the forest with Draupadi, all clad humbly suffered it all in silence, mindful of the in barks of trees.

promise he had made. Often he wondered

who she was, wherefrom she had come belongs to the sage Vasishtha who is the and why she acted like a murderous witch.

master of the whole place. Man will

Still bound by his word, and his all-

certainly become immortal by drinking its mastering love for her, he uttered no word milk. But this is no gain to us, who are of blame or remonstrance.

already immortal. Is it worth our while Thus she killed seven children. When the incurring Vasishtha's wrath merely to

eighth child was born and she was about satisfy a whim?"

to throw it into the Ganges, Santanu could But she was not thus to be put off. "I have not bear it any longer.

a dear companion in the mortal world. It is He cried: "Stop, stop, why are you bent on for her sake that I make this request.

this horrid and unnatural murder of your Before Vasishtha returns we shall have own innocent babes?" With this outburst escaped with the cow. You must certainly the king restrained her.

do this for my sake, for it is my dearest

"O great king," she replied, "you have wish." Finally her husband yielded. All forgotten your promise, for your heart is the Vasus joined together and took the set on your child, and you do not need me cow and its calf away with them.

any more. I go. I shall not kill this child, When Vasishtha returned to his ashrama, but listen to my story before you judge he missed the cow and the calf, because me. I, who am constrained to play this they were indispensable for his daily

hateful role by the curse of Vasishtha, am rituals.

the goddess Ganga, adored of gods and

Very soon he came to know by his yogic men. Vasishtha cursed the eight Vasus to insight all that had taken place. Anger be born in the world of men, and moved seized him and he uttered a curse against by their supplications said, I was to be the Vasus. The sage, whose sole wealth their mother. I bore them to you, and well was his austerity, willed that they should is it for you that it was so. For you will go be born into the world of men. When the to higher regions for this service you have Vasus came to know of the curse,

done to the eight Vasus. I shall bring up repentant too late, they threw themselves this last child of yours for some time and on the sage's mercy and implored

then return it to you as my gift."

forgiveness.

After saying these words the goddess

Vasishtha said: "The curse must needs disappeared with the child. It was this take its course. Prabhasa, the Vasu who child who later became famous as

seized the cow, will live long in the world Bhishma. This was how the Vasus came

in all glory, but the others will be freed to incur Vasishtha's curse. They went for a from the curse as soon as born. My words holiday with their wives to a mountain cannot prove ineffective, but I shall soften tract where stood the hermitage of

the curse to this extent."

Vasishtha: One of them saw Vasishtha's Afterwards, Vasishtha set his mind again cow, Nandini, grazing there.

on his austerities, the effect of which had Its divinely beautiful form attracted him been slightly impaired by his anger. Sages and he pointed it out to the ladies. They who perform austerities acquire the power were all loud in praise of the graceful to curse, but every exercise of this power animal, and one of them requested her reduces their store of merit.

husband to secure it for her.

The Vasus felt relieved and approached He replied: "What need have we, the the goddess Ganga and begged of her:

devas, for the milk of cows? This cow

"We pray you to become our mother. For

our sake we beseech you to descend to the boon that a divine perfume should

earth and marry a worthy man. Throw us emanate from her, and this was now

into the water as soon as we are born and pervading the whole forest.

liberate us from the curse." The goddess From the moment the goddess Ganga left granted their prayer, came to the earth and him, the king had kept his senses under became the wife of Santanu.

control, but the sight of this divinely When the goddess Ganga left Santanu and beautiful maiden burst the bonds of

disappeared with the eighth child, the king restraint and filled him with an

gave up all sensual pleasures and ruled the overmastering desire. He asked her to be kingdom in a spirit of asceticism. One day his wife.

he was wandering along the banks of the The maiden said: "I am a fisherwoman, Ganges when he saw a boy endowed with

the daughter of the chief of the fishermen.

the beauty and form of Devendra, the king May it please you to ask him and get his of the gods.

consent." Her voice was sweet as her The child was amusing himself by casting form.

a dam of arrows across the Ganges in

The father was an astute man.

flood, playing with the mighty river as a He said: "O king, there is no doubt that child with an indulgent mother. To the this maiden, like every

other, has to be king who stood transfixed with

married to someone and you are indeed

amazement at the sight, the goddess

worthy of her. Still you have to make a Ganga revealed herself and presented the promise to me before you can have her."

child as his own son.

Santanu replied: "If it is a just promise I She said: "O king, this is that eighth child shall make it."

I bore you. I have brought him up till now.

The chief of the fisherfolk said: "The child His name is Devavrata. He has mastered born of this maiden should be the king the art of arms and equals Parasurama in after you."

prowess. He has learnt the Vedas and the Though almost mad with passion, the king Vedanta from Vasishtha, and is well

could not make this promise, as it meant versed in the arts and sciences known to setting aside the godlike Devavrata, the Sukra. Take back with you this child who son of Ganga, who was entitled to the

is a great archer and hero as well as a crown.

master in statecraft."

It was a price that could not be thought of Then she blessed the boy, handed him to without shame. He therefore returned to his father, the king, and disappeared.

his capital, Hastinapura, sick with baffled **3. BHISHMA'S VOW**

desire. He did not reveal the matter to WITH joy the king received to his heart anyone and languished in silence.

and his kingdom the resplendent and

One day Devavrata asked his father: "My youthful prince Devavrata and crowned

father, you have all that your heart could him as the Yuvaraja, the heir apparent.

wish. Why then are you so unhappy? How Four years went by. One day as the king is it that you are like one pining away with was wandering on the banks of the

a secret sorrow?"

Yamuna, the air was suddenly filled with The king replied: "Dear son, what you say a fragrance so divinely sweet that the king is true. I am indeed tortured with mental sought for its cause, and he traced it to a pain and anxiety. You are my only son

maiden so lovely that she seemed a

and you are always preoccupied with

goddess. A sage had conferred on her the military ambitions. Life in the world is

uncertain and wars are incessant. If seek to seize the kingdom by force. This is anything untoward befalls you our family the doubt that torments me."

will become extinct. Of course, you are When he heard this knotty question posed equal to a hundred sons. Still, those who by the girl's father, Devavrata, who was are well read in the scriptures say that in bent on fulfilling the king's desire, made this transitory world having but one son is his supreme renunciation. He vowed with the same as having no son at all. It is, not upraised arm to the father of the maiden: proper that the perpetuation of our family

"I shall never marry and I dedicate myself should depends on a single life, and above to a life of unbroken chastity."

all things I desire the perpetuation of our And as he uttered these words of family. This is the cause of my anguish."

renunciation the gods showered flowers The father prevaricated, being ashamed to on his head, and cries of "Bhishma,"

reveal the whole story to his son.

"Bhishma" resounded in the air.

Thewise Devavrata realised that there

"Bhishma" means one who undertakes a must be a secret cause for the mental

terrible vow and fulfils it. That name condition of his father, and questioning became the celebrated epithet of

the king's charioteer came to know of his Devavrata from that time. Then the son of meeting with the fishermaid on the

Ganga led the maiden Satyawati to his

banks of the Yamuna. He went to the

father.

chief of the fishermen and besought his Two sons were born of Satyawati to

daughter's hand on his father's behalf.

Santanu, Chitrangada and Vichitravirya, The fisherman was respectful, but firm: who ascended the throne one after the

"My daughter is indeed fit to be the king's other. Vichitravirya had two sons,

spouse. Then should not her son become Dhritarashtra and Pandu, born

king? But you have been crowned as the respectively of his two queens, Ambika heir apparent and will naturally succeed and Ambalika.

your father. It is this that stands in the The sons of Dhritarashtra, a hundred in way."

number, were known as the Kauravas.

Devavrata replied: "I give you my word Pandu had five sons who became famous

that the son born of this maiden shall be as the Pandavas. Bhishma lived long,

king. And I renounce in his favor my right honored by all as the grandsire until the as heir apparent," and he took a vow to end of the famous battle of Kurukshetra.

that effect.

The Family Tree

The chief of the fishermen said: "O best of the Bharata race, you have done what no Santanu

one else born of royal blood has you have (by Ganga)

done till now. You are indeed a hero. You (by Satyawati)

can yourself conduct my daughter to the Bhishma

king, your father. Still, hear with patience Chitrangada&Vichitravirya

these words of mine which I say as the (by Ambika) (by Ambalika)

father of the girl.

"I have no doubt you will keep your word, Dhritarashtra Pandu

but how can I hope that the children born

?

of you will renounce their birthright?

?

Your sons will naturally be mighty heroes The Kauravas The Pandavas

like you, and will be hard to resist if they **4. AMBA AND BHISHMA**

CHITRANGADA, the son of Satyawati, But before he had gone far, Salva, the was killed in battle with a Gandharva. As king of the Saubala country who was

he died childless, his brother,

attached to Amba, intercepted and

Vichitravirya, was the rightful heir and opposed him. For that princess had

was duly crowned king. And as he was a mentally chosen Salva as her husband.

minor, Bhishma governed the kingdom in After a bitter fight Salva was worsted, and his name till he came of age.

no wonder, as Bhishma was a peerless

When Vichitravirya reached adolescence bowman. But at the request of the

Bhishma cast about for a bride for him.

princesses Bhishma spared his life.

And as he heard that the daughters of the Arriving in Hastinapura with the king of Kasi were to choose their husbands princesses, Bhishma made preparations

according to the ancient Kshatriya

for their marriage to Vichitravirya. When practice he went there to secure them for all were assembled for the marriage,

his brother.

Amba smiled mockingly at Bhishma and

The rulers of Kosla, Vanga, Pundra,

addressed him as follows: "O son of Kalinga and other princes and potentates Ganga, you are aware of what is enjoined had also repaired to Kasi for the

in the scriptures. I have mentally chosen swayamvara, attired in their best. The Salva, the king of Saubala, as my

princesses were so far-famed for beauty husband. You have brought me here by

and accomplishments that there was fierce force. Knowing this, do what you, learned competition to win them.

in the scriptures, should do."

Bhishma was famous among the

Bhishma admitted the force of her

Kshatriyas as a mighty man-at-arms. At objection and sent her to Salva with

first everyone thought that the redoubtable proper escort. The marriage of Ambika

hero had come merely to witness the

and Ambalika, the two younger sisters, festivities of the swayamvara. But when with Vichitravirya was duly solemnised.

they found that he was also a suitor, the Amba went rejoicing to Salva and told

young princes felt themselves let down him what had happened: "I have mentally and were full of chagrin. They did not chosen you as my husband from the very know that he had really come for the sake start. Bhishma has sent me to you. Marry of his brother, Vichitravirya.

me according to the sastras."

The princes began to cast affronts at

Salva replied: "Bhishma defeated me in Bhishma: "This most excellent and wise sight of all, and carried you away. I have descendant of the Bharata race forgets that been disgraced. So, I cannot receive you he is too old and forgets also his vow of now as my wife. Return to him and do as celibacy. What has this old man to do with he commands." With these words Salva this swayamvara? Fie on him!" The sent her back to Bhishma.

princesses who were to choose their

She returned to Hastinapura and told

husbands barely glanced at the old man Bhishma of what had taken place. The

and looked away.

grandsire tried to induce Vichitravirya to Bhishma's wrath flamed up. He

marry her. But Vichitravirya roundly

challenged the assembled princes to a trial refused to marry a maiden
whose heart

of their manhood and defeated them all.

had already been given to another.

And taking the three princesses in his arms she then turned to Bhishma and
she

chariot he set out for Hastinapura.

sought him to marry her himself as there was no other recourse. It was
impossible

for Bhishma to break his vow, sorry as he was. There is now but one
thing in his mind for Amba. And after some vain

life for me, revenge on Bhishma. The only attempt to make Vichitravirya
change his boon I seek is the death of Bhishma."

mind, he told her there was no way left to Parasurama moved as much by
her

her but to go again to Salva and seek to anguish as by his abiding hatred of
the persuade him.

Kshatriya race, espoused her cause and This at first she was too proud to
do, and fought with Bhishma. It was a long and for long years she abode in
Hastinapura.

equal combat between the two greatest

Finally, in sheer desperation, she went to men-at-arms of the age. But in
the end Salva and found him adamant in refusal.

Parasurama had to acknowledge defeat.

The lotus-eyed Amba spent six bitter

He told Amba: "I have done all that I years in sorrow and baffled hope. And her could and I have failed. Throw yourself heart was seared with suffering and all the on the mercy of Bhishma. That is the only sweetness in her turned to gall and fierce course left to you."

hatred towards Bhishma as the cause of Consumed with grief and rage, and kept her blighted life.

alive only by the passion for revenge, She sought in vain for a champion among Amba went to the Himalayas and

the princes to fight and kill Bhishma and practised rigorous austerities to get the thus avenge her wrongs but even the

grace of Siva, now that all human aid had foremost warriors were afraid of Bhishma failed her. Siva appeared before her and and paid no heed to her appeal.

granted her a boon, that in her next birth At last, she resorted to hard austerities to she would slay Bhishma.

get the grace of Lord Subrahmanya. He

Amba was impatient for that rebirth which graciously appeared before her and gave would give her heart's desire. She made a her a garland of ever-fresh lotuses, saying pyre and plunged into the fire pouring out that the wearer of that garland would

the flame in her heart into the scarcely become the enemy of Bhishma.

hotter blaze of the pyre.

Amba took the garland and again be

By the grace of Lord Siva, Amba was

sought every Kshatriya to accept the

born as the daughter of King Drupada. A garland gift of the six-faced Lord and to few years after her birth, she saw the champion her cause. But no one had the garland of never-fading flowers that still hardihood to antagonise Bhishma.

hung at the palace gate and had remained Finally, she went to King Drupada who

there untouched by anyone through fear.

also refused to grant her prayer. She then She put it round her neck. Her father

hung the garland at Drupada's palace gate Drupada was in consternation at her

and went away to the forest. Some

temerity which he feared would draw on ascetics whom she met there and to whom his head the wrath of Bhishma.

she told her sorrowful tale advised her to He sent his daughter in exile out of the go to Parasurama as a suppliant. She

capital to the forest. She practised

followed their advice.

austerities in the forest and in time was On hearing her sad story, Parasurama was transformed into a male and became

moved with compassion and said: "Dear known as the warrior Sikhandin.

child, what do you want? I can ask Salva With Sikhandin as his charioteer, Arjuna to marry you if you wish it."

attacked Bhishma on the battlefield of Amba said: "No, I do not wish it. I no Kurukshetra. Bhishma knew that

longer desire marriage or home or

Sikhandin was born as female, and true to

his code of chivalry he would not fight sage Angiras and the son of Brihaspati. I him under any circumstance.

am a brahmacharin seeking knowledge

So it was that Arjuna could fight screened under your tutelage."

by Sikhandin and conquer Bhishma,

It was the law that the wise teacher should especially because Bhishma knew that his not refuse a worthy pupil who sought

long and weary probation on earth was

knowledge of him. So Sukra acceded and finished and consented to be vanquished.

said: "Kacha, you belong to a good As the arrows struck Bhishma in his last family. I accept you as my pupil, the more fight, he singled out those which had

willingly, that by doing so I shall also be pierced him deepest and said: "This is showing my respect for Brihaspati."

Arjuna's arrow and not Sikhandin's." So Kacha spent many years under fell this great warrior.

Sukracharya, rendering to perfection the **5. DEVAYANI AND KACHA**

prescribed duties in the household of his IN ancient times, there was a bitter

master. Sukracharya had a lovely daughter, struggle between the devas or gods and Devayani, of whom he was extremely

the asuras or demons for the lordship of the world. Kacha devoted himself to pleasing the three worlds. Both belligerents had and serving her with song and dance and illustrious preceptors. Brihaspati who was pastime and succeeded in winning her

pre-eminent in the knowledge of the

affection, without detriment however to Vedas was the guiding spirit of the devas, the vows of brahmacharya.

while the asuras relied on Sukracharya's When the asuras came to know of this,

profound wisdom.

they became anxious as they suspected

The asuras had the formidable advantage that Kacha's object was somehow to

that Sukracharya alone possessed the

wheel out of Sukracharya the secret of secret of Sanjivini which could recall the Sanjivini. They naturally sought to

dead to life. Thus the asuras who had

prevent such a calamity.

fallen in the battle were brought back to One day, as Kacha was engaged in

life, time and again, and continued their grazing the cattle of his master the asuras fight with the devas. The devas were thus seized him, tore him to pieces and cast his at a great disadvantage in their long

flesh to the dogs. When the cattle returned drawn-out war with their natural foes.

without Kacha, Devayani was filled with They went to Kacha, the son of

anxiety, and ran to her father with loud Brihaspati, and besought his aid. They lamentations: "The sun has set," she begged him to win his way into the good wailed, "and your nightly fire sacrifice has graces of Sukracharya and persuade him been performed; still Kacha has not

to take him as a pupil. Once admitted to returned home. The cattle have come back intimacy and confidence, he was to

by themselves. I fear some mishap has

acquire, by fair means or foul, the secret befallen Kacha. I cannot live without

of Sanjivini and remove the great

him."

handicap under which the devas suffered.

The fond father employed the art of

Kacha acceded to their request and set out Sanjivini and invoked the dead youth to to meet Sukracharya who lived in the

appear. At once Kacha came back to life capital city of Vrishaparva, the king of the and greeted the master with smiles. Asked asuras. Kacha went to the house of Sukra, by Devayani the reason for his delay, he and after due salutation, addressed him told her that as he was grazing the cattle thus: "I am Kacha, the grandson of the the asuras came suddenly on him and slew

him. How he came back to life he knew He employed the Sanjivini art and called not, but come back to life he did, and upon Kacha to appear. By the power of

there he was.

the Sanjivini Kacha dispersed as he was in On another occasion Kacha went to the

the wine which was inside Sukracharya's forest to pluck flowers for Devayani, and body at the time, regained life, but

again the asuras seized and killed him, prevented by the peculiarity of his

and pounding his body to a paste, mixed it location from coming out, he could only up in sea-water. As he did not return even answer to his name from where he was.

after a long time Devayani went as before Sukracharya exclaimed in angry

to her father who brought Kacha back to amazement: "O brahmacharin, how did life by his Sanjivini, and heard from him you get into me? Is this also the work of all that had taken place.

the asuras? This is really too bad and For the third time again, the Asuras killed makes me feel like killing the asuras

Kacha and very cleverly as they thought, immediately and joining the devas. But burnt his body, mixed the ashes in wine tell me the whole story."

and served it to Sukracharya who drank it, Kacha narrated it all, in spite of the suspecting nothing. Once more the cows inconvenience imposed by his position.

returned home without their keeper, and Vaisampayana continued: "The high-once again Devayani approached her

souled and austere Sukracharya of

father with her distressful appeal for immeasurable greatness, became angry at Kacha.

the deceit practised on him in his wine, Sukracharya tried in vain to console his and proclaimed for the benefit of

daughter. "Though I have again and again humanity: 'Virtue will desert the man who brought back Kacha to life," said he, "the through lack of

wisdom drinks wine. He asuras seem bent upon killing him. Well, will be an object of scorn to all, This is death is the common lot, and it is not my message to humanity, which should be proper for a wise soul like you to sorrow regarded as an imperative scriptural

at it. Your life is all before you to enjoy, injunction.' Then he turned to his daughter with youth and beauty and the goodwill of Devayani and said: Dear daughter, here is the world."

a problem for you. For Kacha to live, he Devayani deeply loved Kacha, and since must rend my stomach and come out of it, the world began, wise words have never and that means death to me. His life can cured the ache of bereavement. She said: only be bought by my death."

"Kacha, the grandson of Angiras and the Devayani began to weep and said: "Alas!

son of Brihaspati, was a blameless boy, It is death to me either way. For if either who was devoted and tireless in our

of you perish, I shall not survive."

service. I loved him dearly, and now that Sukracharya sought a way out of the

he has been killed, life to me has become difficulty. The real explanation of it all bleak and insupportable. I shall therefore flashed on him.

follow in his path." And Devayani began He said to Kacha: "O son of Brihaspati, I to fast. Sukracharya, heart-stricken by his now see with what object you came and

daughter's sorrow, became very angry

verily you have secured it! I must bring with the asuras, and felt that the heinous you out to life for the sake of Devayani, sin of killing a brahmana would weigh

but equally for her sake I must not die heavily on their fortunes.

either. The only way is to initiate you in the art of Sanjivini so that you can bring

me back to life after I shall have died Devayani sought in vain to persuade him.

when a way is torn out through my

"You are the son of Brihaspati," said she, entrails for you. You should employ the

"and not of my father. If I have been the knowledge I am going to impart to you

cause of your coming back to life, it was and revive me, so that Devayani need not because I loved you as indeed I have

grieve for either of us."

always loved you as my husband. It is not Accordingly Sukracharya imparted the art fit that you should give up one like me of Sanjivini to Kacha. Immediately Kacha sinless and devoted to you."

came forth from Sukracharya's body,

Kacha replied: "Do not seek to persuade emerging like the full moon from a cloud, me to unrighteousness. You are

while the great preceptor fell down

enchancing more so now than ever,

mangled and dead.

flushed as you are with anger. But I am But Kacha at once brought Sukracharya

your brother. Pray bid me adieu. Serve back to life by means of his newly

unto perfection, ever and always, my

acquired Sanjivini. Kacha bowed down to master Sukracharya."

Sukracharya and said: "The teacher who With these words Kacha gently imparts wisdom to the ignorant is a father.

disengaged himself and proceeded to the Besides, as I have issued from your body abode of Indra, the king of gods.

you are my mother too."

Sukracharya consoled his daughter.

Kacha remained for many more years

6. THE MARRIAGE OF DEVAYANI

under the tutelage of Sukracharya. When ONE warm afternoon, pleasantly tired

the period of his vow ended, he took leave with sporting in the woods Devayani and of his master to return to the world of the the daughters of Vrishaparva, king of the gods.

asuras, went to bathe in the cool waters of As he was about to depart Devayani

a sylvan pool, depositing their garlands on humbly addressed him

thus: "O,

the bank before they entered its waters.

grandchild of Angiras, you have won my A strong breeze blew their clothes

heart by your blameless life, your great together into a huddled heap and when

attainments and nobility of birth. I have they came to take them up again, some

loved you long and tenderly, even while mistakes naturally occurred. It so

you were faithfully following your vows happened that princess Sarmishtha, the of a brahmacharin. You should now

daughter of the king, clad herself in

reciprocate my love and make me happy

Devayani's clothes. The latter was vexed by marrying me. Brihaspati as well as

and exclaimed half in jest at the

yourself are fully worthy of being honored impropriety of the daughter of a disciple by me. "

wearing the clothes of the master's

In those days, it was no uncommon thing daughter.

for wise and learned brahmana ladies to These words were spoken half in jest, but speak out their mind with honorable

the princess Sarmishtha became very

frankness. But Kacha said:

angry and said arrogantly: "Do you not

"O faultless one, you are my master's know that your father humbly bows in

daughter and ever worthy of my respect. I reverence to my royal father every day?

got back my life by being born out of your Are you not the daughter of a beggar who father's body. Hence I am your brother. It lives on my father's bounty? You forget I is not proper for you, my sister, to ask me am of the royal race which proudly gives, to wed you."

while you come of a race which begs and

receives, and you dare to speak thus to A kshatriya maiden could marry a me."

brahmana, according to the ancient

Sarmishtha went on, getting angrier and angrier, but it was considered wrong for her to be angrier as she spoke till, working herself a brahmana maiden to marry a kshatriya.

Up into a fit of anger, she finally slapped The important thing was to keep the racial Devayani on the cheek and pushed her

status of women unlowered. Hence

into a dry well. The asura maidens

anuloma or the practice of marrying men thought that Devayani had lost her life and of higher castes was legitimate and she returned to the palace.

reverse practice, known as pratiloma, i.e.

Devayani had not been killed by the fall marrying men of a lower caste, was

into the well but was in a sad plight

prohibited by the sastras.

because she could not climb up the steep Devayani had no mind to return home.

sides. Emperor Yayati of the Bharata race She remained sunk in sorrow in the shade who was hunting in the forest by a happy of a tree in forest. Sukracharya loved chance came to this spot in search of

Devayani more than his life. After waiting water to slake his thirst. When he glanced long in vain for the return of his daughter into the well, he saw something bright, who had gone to play with her

and looking closer, he was surprised to companions, he sent a woman in search of find a beautiful maiden lying in the well.

her.

He asked: "Who are you, O beautiful The messenger after a weary search came maiden with bright earrings and ruddy

on her at last near the tree where she was nails? Who is your father? What is your sitting in dejection, her eyes red with ancestry? How did you fall into the well?"

anger and grief. And she asked her what She replied: "I am the daughter of had happened.

Sukracharya. He does not know that I

Devayani said: "Friend, go at once and tell have fallen into the well. Lift me up" and my father that I will not set my foot in the she held forth her hands. Yayati seized her capital of Vrishaparva" and she sent her hand and helped her out of the well.

back to Sukracharya.

Devayani did not wish to return to the Extremely grieved at the sad plight of his capital of the king of the asuras. She did daughter Sukracharya hurried to her.

not feel it safe to go there, as she

Caressing her, he said: "It is by their own pondered again and again on Sarmishtha's actions, good or bad, that men are happy conduct. She told Yayati: "You have held or miserable. The virtues or vices of a maiden by her right hand, and you must others will not affect us in the least." With marry her. I feel that you are in every way these words of wisdom, he tried to

worthy to be my husband."

console her.

Yayati replied: "Loving soul, I am a She replied in sorrow and anger: "Father, kshatriya and you are a brahmana maiden.

leave alone my merits and faults, which How can I marry you? How can the

are after all my own concern. But tell me daughter of Sukracharya, who is worthy to this, was Sarmishtha, the daughter of

be the preceptor of the whole world,

Vrishaparva, right when she told me you submit to be the wife of a kshatriya like were but a minstrel singing the praises of myself? Revered lady, return home."

kings? She called me the daughter of a Having said these words Yayati went back mendicant living on the doles won by

to his capital.

flattery. Not content with this arrogant contumely, she slapped me and threw me

into a pit which was nearby. I cannot stay chandalas outside the pale of caste. The in any place within her father's territory."

virtuous should not mix with them. My

And Devayani began to weep.

mind is ablaze with the anger roused by Sukracharya drew himself up proudly:

the taunts of Vrishaparva's daughter. The

"Devayani," he said with dignity, "you are wounds inflicted by weapons may close in not the daughter of a court minstrel. Your time; scalds may heal gradually; but

father does not live on the wages of

wounds inflicted by words remain painful flattery. You are the daughter of one who as long as one lives."

is revered by all the world. Indra, the Sukracharya went to Vrishaparva and

king of the gods, knows this, and

fixing his eyes on him gravely said:

Vrishaparva is not ignorant of his debt to

"O king, though one's sins may not bring me. But no worthy man extols his own

immediate punishment they are sure,

merits, and I shall say no more about

sooner or later, to destroy the very germ myself. Arise, you are a peerless gem

of prosperity. Kacha, the son of

among women, bringing prosperity to

Brihaspati, was a brahmacharin who had your family. Be patient. Let us go home."

conquered his senses and never committed In this context Bhagavan Vyasa advises any sin. He served me with fidelity and humanity in general in the following

never strayed from the path of virtue.

words of counsel addressed by

Your attendants tried to kill him. I bore it.

Sukracharya to his daughter:

My daughter, who holds her honor high,

"He conquers the world, who patiently had to hear dishonoring words uttered by puts up with the abuse of his neighbors.

your daughter. Besides, she was pushed He who, controls his anger, as a horseman into a well by your daughter. She cannot breaks an unruly horse, is indeed a

any more stay in your kingdom. Without charioteer and not he who merely holds her I cannot live here either. So, I am the reins, but lets the horse go whither it going out of your kingdom."

would. He who sheds his anger just as a At these words the king of the asuras was snake its slough, is a real hero. He who is sorely troubled and said: "I am ignorant of not moved despite the greatest torments the charges laid at my door. If you

inflicted by others, will realise his aim. He abandon me, I shall enter fire and die."

who never gets angry is superior to the Sukracharya replied: "I care more for the ritualist who faith fully performs for a happiness of my daughter than for the fate hundred years the sacrifices ordained by of you and your asuras, for she is the one scripture. Servants, friends, brothers, wife, thing I have and dearer to me than life children, virtue and truth abandon the man itself. If you can appease her, it is well who gives way to anger. The wise will not and good. Otherwise I go."

take to heart the words of boys and girls."

Vrishaparva and his retinue went to the Devayani humbly told her father: "I am tree under which Devayani stood and they indeed a little girl, but, I hope, not too threw themselves at her feet in

young to benefit by the great truth taught supplication.

by you. Yet, it is not proper to live with Devayani was stubborn and said:

persons who have no sense of decency or

"Sarmishtha who told me that I was the decorum. The wise will not keep company daughter of a beggar, should become my with those who speak ill of their family.

handmaiden and attend on me in the house However rich they may be, the ill-into which my father gives me in

mannered are really the veritable

marriage."

Vrishaparva consented and asked his **7. YAYATI**

attendants to fetch his daughter

EMPEROR Yayati was one of the

Sarmishtha.

ancestors of the Pandavas. He had never Sarmishtha admitted her fault and bowed known defeat. He followed the dictates of in submission. She said: "Let it be as my the sastras, adored the gods and venerated companion Devayani desires. My father

his ancestors with intense devotion. He shall not lose his preceptor for a fault became famous as a ruler devoted to the committed by me. I will be her attendant,"

welfare of his subjects.

Devayani was pacified and returned to her But as has already been told, he became house with her father.

prematurely old by the curse of

On another occasion also Devayani came Sukracharya for having wronged his wife across Yayati. She repeated her request Devayani. In the words of the poet of the that he should take her as his wife since he Mahabharata:

had clasped her right hand. Yayati again

"Yayati attained that old age which repeated his objection that he, a kshatriya, destroys beauty and brings on miseries." It could not lawfully marry a brahmana.

is needless to describe the misery of youth Finally they both went to Sukracharya and suddenly blighted into age, where the

got his assent to their marriage. This is an horrors of loss are accentuated by pangs instance of the pratiloma marriage which of recollection.

was resorted to on exceptional occasions.

Yayati, who found himself suddenly an

The sastras, no doubt, prescribe what is old man, was still haunted by the desire right and forbid what is wrong but a

for sensual enjoyment. He had five

marriage once effected cannot be made

beautiful sons, all virtuous and

invalid.

accomplished. Yayati called them and

Yayati and Devayani spent many days in appealed piteously to their affection: happiness. Sarmishtha remained with her

"The curse of your grandfather

as an attendant. One day Sarmishtha met Sukracharya has made me unexpectedly

Yayati in secret and earnestly prayed to and prematurely old. I have not had my betaken also as his wife. He yielded to her fill of the joys of life. For, not knowing prayer and married her without the

what was in store for me I lived a life of knowledge of Devayani.

restraint, denying myself even lawful

But Devayani came to know of it and was pleasures. One of you ought to bear the naturally very angry, She complained to burden of my old age and give his youth her father and Sukracharya in his rage in return. He who agrees to this and

cursed Yayati with premature old age.

bestows his youth on me will be the ruler Yayati, thus suddenly stricken with age in of my kingdom. I desire to enjoy life in the very prime of his manhood, begged so the full vigor of youth."

humbly for forgiveness that Sukracharya, He first asked his eldest son. That son who had not forgotten Devayani's rescue replied: "O great king, women and from the well, at last relented.

servants will mock at me if I were to take He said: "O king, you have lost the glory upon myself your old age. I cannot do go.

which is youth. The curse cannot be

Ask of my younger brothers who are

recalled, but if you can persuade anyone dearer to you than myself."

to exchange his youth for your age the When the second son was approached, he exchange will take effect." Thus he gently refused with the words: "Father, blessed Yayati and bade him farewell.

you ask me to take up old age that

destroys not only strength and beauty but Kubera and spent many years with an

also as I see wisdom. I am not strong

Apsara maiden.

enough to do so."

After long years spent in vain efforts to The third son replied: "An old man cannot quench desire by indulgence, the truth ride a horse or an elephant. His speech dawned on him.

will falter. What can I do in such a

Returning to Puru, he said: "Dear son, helpless plight? I cannot agree."

sensual desire is never quenched by

The king was angry and disappointed that indulgence any more than fire is by

his three sons had declined to do as he pouring ghee in it. I had heard and read wished, but he hoped for better from his this, but till now I had not realised it. No fourth son, to whom he said: "You should object of desire, corn, gold, cattle or take up my old age. If you exchange your women, nothing can ever satisfy the desire youth with me, I shall give it back to you of man, We can reach peace only by a

after some time and take back the old age mental poise beyond likes and dislikes.

with which I have been cursed."

Such is the state of Brahman. Take back The fourth son begged to be forgiven as your youth and rule the kingdom wisely this was a thing he could by no means

and well."

consent to. An old man had to seek the With these words Yayati took his old age.

help of others even to keep his body clean, Puru, who regained his youth, was made a most pitiful plight. No, much as he

king by Yayati who retired to the forest.

loved his father he could not do it.

He spent his time there in austerities and, Yayati was struck with sorrow at the

in due course, attained heaven.

refusal of the four sons. Still, hoping **8. VIDURA**

against hope, he supplicated his last son THE sage Mandavya who had acquired

who had never yet opposed his wishes:

strength of mind and knowledge of the

"You must save me. I am afflicted with scriptures, spent his days in penance and this old age with its wrinkles, debility and the practice of truth.

grey hairs as a result of the curse of He lived in a hermitage in the forests on Sukracharya. It is too hard a trial! If you the outskirts of the city. One day while he will take upon yourself these infirmities, I was immersed in silent contemplation

shall enjoy life for just a while more and under the shade of a tree outside his hut of then give you back your youth and resume leaves, a band of robbers fled through the my old age and all its sorrows. Pray, do woods

with officers of the king in hot not refuse as your elder brothers have pursuit.

done."

The fugitives entered the ashrama

Puru, the youngest son, moved by filial thinking that it would be a convenient love, said: "Father, I gladly give you my place to hide themselves in. They placed youth and relieve you of the sorrows of their booty in a corner and hid themselves.

old age and cares of state. Be happy."

The soldiers of the king came to the

Hearing these words Yayati embraced

ashrama tracking their footsteps.

him. As soon as he touched his son,

The commander of the soldiers asked

Yayati became a youth. Puru, who

Mandavya,

who was rapt in deep

accepted the old age of his father, ruled meditation in a tone of peremptory

the kingdom and acquired great renown.

command: "Did you see the robbers pass Yayati enjoyed life for long, and not by? Where did they go? Reply at once so satisfied, went later to the garden of

that we may give chase and capture from the spear. Then he prostrated at his them."

feet and prayed humbly to be forgiven for The sage, who was absorbed in yoga,

the offence unwittingly committed.

remained silent. The commander repeated Mandavya was not angry with the king.

the question insolently. But the sage did He went straight to Dharma, the divine not hear anything. In the meantime some dispenser of justice, who was seated on of the attendants entered the ashrama and his throne, and asked him: "What crime discovered the stolen goods lying there.

have I committed to deserve this torture?"

They reported this to their commander.

Lord Dharma, who knew the great power

All of them went in and found the stolen of the sage, replied in all humility: "O

goods and the robbers who were in hiding.

sage, you have tortured birds and bees.

The commander thought: "Now I know Are you not aware that all deeds, good or the reason why the brahmana pretended to bad, however small, inevitably produce be a silent sage. He is indeed the chief of their results, good or evil?"

these robbers. He has inspired this

Mandavya was surprised at this reply of robbery." Then he ordered his soldiers to Lord Dharma and asked: "When did I guard the place, went to the king and told commit this offence?"

him that the sage Mandavya had been

Lord Dharma replied: "When you were caught with the stolen goods.
child."

The king was very angry at the audacity Mandavya then pronounced a
curse on

of the chief of the robbers who had put on Dharma: "This punishment you
have the garb of a brahmana sage, the better to decreed is far in excess of
the deserts of a deceive the world. Without pausing to

mistake committed by a child in

verify the facts, he ordered the wicked ignorance. Be born, therefore, as a
mortal criminal, as he thought him, to be

in the world."

impaled.

Lord Dharma who was thus cursed by the The commander returned to the

sage Mandavya incarnated as Vidura and hermitage, impaled Mandavya on
a spear was born of the servant-maid of

and handed over the stolen things to the Ambalika, the wife of
Vichitravirya.

king.

This story is intended to show that Vidura The virtuous sage, though
impaled on the was the incarnation of Dharma. The great spear, did not
die. Since he was in yoga men of the world regarded Vidura as a

when he was impaled he remained alive

mahatma who was unparalleled in his

by the power of yoga. Sages who lived in knowledge of dharma, sastras and

other parts of the forest came to his

statesmanship and was totally devoid of hermitage and asked Mandavya how he

attachment and anger. Bhishma appointed came to be in that terrible pass.

him, while he was still in his teens, as the Mandavya replied: "Whom shall I blame?

chief counsellor of king Dhritarashtra.

The servants of the king, who protect the Vyasa has it that no one in the three

world, have inflicted this punishment."

worlds could equal Vidura in virtue and The king was surprised and frightened

knowledge. When Dhritarashtra gave his, when he heard that the impaled sage was permission for the game of dice, Vidura still alive and that he was surrounded by fell at his feet and protested solemnly: "O

the other sages of the forest. He hastened king and lord, I cannot approve of this to the forest with his attendants and at action. Strife will set in among your sons once ordered the sage to be taken down as a result. Pray, do not allow this."

Dhritarashtra also tried in manly ways to divine visitor, asked: "O god, who art dissuade his wicked son. He said to him: thou?"

"Do not proceed with this game. Vidura The Sun replied: "Dear maiden, I am the does not approve of it, the wise Vidura of Sun. I have been drawn to you by the spell lofty intellect who is ever intent on our of the son-giving mantra that you have welfare. He says the game is bound to

uttered."

result in a fierceness of hate which will Kunti was aghast and said: "I am
an consume us and our kingdom."

unwedded girl dependent on my father. I But Duryodhana did not heed this
advice.

am not fit for motherhood and do not

Carried away by his doting fondness for desire it. I merely wished to test
the power his son, Dhritarashtra surrendered his of the boon granted by the
sage Durvasa.

better judgment and sent to Yudhishtira Go back and forgive this childish
folly of the fateful invitation to the game.

mine." But the Sun god could not thus **9. KUNTI DEVI**

return because the power of the mantra SURA, the grandfather of Sri
Krishna,

held him. She for her part was mortally was a worthy scion of the Yadava
race.

afraid of being blamed by the world. The His daughter Pritha was noted
for her

Sun god however reassured her:

beauty and virtues. Since his cousin

"No blame shall attach to you. After Kuntibhoja was childless, Sura gave
his bearing my son, you will regain virginity."

daughter Pritha in adoption to him. From Kunti conceived by the grace of
the Sun, that time she was known by the name of the giver of light and life
to all the world.

Kunti after her adoptive father.

Divine births take place immediately

When Kunti was a little girl, the sage without the nine months weary course of Durvasa stayed for a time as a guest in her mortal gestation.

father's house and she served the sage for She gave birth to Karna who was born

a year with all care, patience and

with divine armor and earrings and was devotion. He was so pleased with her that bright and beautiful like the Sun. In time, he gave her a divine mantra. He said:

he became one of the world's greatest

"If you call upon any god repeating this heroes. After the birth of the child, Kunti mantra, he will manifest himself to you once again became a virgin as a result of and bless you with a son equal to him in the boon granted by the Sun.

glory." He granted her this boon because She wondered what she should do with

he foresaw by his yogic power the

the child. To hide her fault she placed the misfortune that was in store for her future child in a sealed box and set it afloat in a husband.

river. A childless charioteer happened to The impatient curiosity of youth made

see the floating case, and taking it, was Kunti test then and there the efficacy of surprised and delighted to see within it a the mantra by repeating it and invoking gorgeously beautiful child.

the Sun whom she saw shining in the

He handed it over to his wife who

heavens. At once the sky grew dark with lavished a mother's love on it.
Thus

clouds, and under cover of them the Sun Karna, the son of the Sun god,
came to be god approached the beautiful princess

brought up as a charioteer's child. When Kunti and stood gazing at her
with ardent the time came for giving Kunti in

soul scorching admiration. Kunti,

marriage, Kuntibhoja invited all the

overpowered by the glorious vision of her neighboring princes and held a

swayamvara for her to choose her day Pandu and Madri forgot their
sorrows husband.

in the rapture of sympathy with the

Many eager suitors flocked to the

throbbing life around them, the happy

swayamvara as the princess was widely

flowers, creepers, birds and other

famed for her great beauty and virtue.

creatures of the forest.

Kunti placed the garland on the neck of In spite of Madri's earnest and
repeated King Pandu, the bright representative of protests Pandu's
resolution broke down the Bharata race, whose personality

under the exhilarating influence of the eclipsed the lustre of all the other princes season, and at once the curse of the sage assembled there. The marriage was duly took effect and Pandu fell, dead.

solemnised and she accompanied her

Madri could not contain her sorrow. Since husband to his capital Hastinapur.

she felt that she was responsible for the On the advice of Bhishma and in death of the king. She burnt herself on the accordance with the prevailing custom, pyre of her husband entreating Kunti to Pandu took a second wife Madri, the sister remain and be a mother to her doubly

of the king of Madra. In the old days the orphaned children.

kings took two or three wives for making The sages of the forest took the bereaved sure of progeny and not for mere sensual and grief-stricken Kunti and the Pandavas desire.

to Hastinapura and entrusted them to

10. DEATH OF PANDU

Bhishma.

ONE day King Pandu was out hunting. A

Yudhishtira was but sixteen years old at sage and his wife were also sporting in the that time. When the sages came to

forest in the guise of deer. Pandu shot the Hastinapura and reported the death of

male with an arrow, in ignorance of the Pandu in the forest, the whole kingdom fact that it was a sage in disguise. Stricken was plunged in sorrow. Vidura, Bhishma, to death the rishi thus cursed Pandu:

Vyasa, Dhritarashtra and others performed

"Sinner, you will meet with death the the funeral rites.

moment you taste the pleasures of the

All the people in the kingdom lamented as bed."

at a personal loss. Vyasa said to Satyawati, Pandu was heartbroken at this curse and the grandmother: "The past has gone by retreated to the forest with his wives after pleasantly, but the future has many

entrusting his kingdom to Bhishma and

sorrows in store. The world has passed its Vidura and lived there a life of perfect youth like a happy dream and it is now abstinence.

entering on disillusionment, sin, sorrow Seeing that Pandu was desirous of

and suffering. Time is inexorable. You offspring, which the rishi's curse had need not wait to see the miseries and

denied him, Kunti confided to him the

misfortunes that will befall this race. It story of the mantra she had received from will be good for you to leave the city and Durvasa. He urged Kunti and Madri to use spend the rest of your days in a hermitage the mantra and thus it was that the five in the forest." Satyawati agreed and went Pandavas were born of the gods to Kunti to the forest with Ambika and Ambalika.

and Madri.

These three aged queens passed through They were born and brought up in the

holy asceticism to the higher regions of forest among ascetics. King Pandu lived bliss and spared themselves the sorrows of for many years in the forest with his wives their children.

and children. It was springtime. And one **11. BHIMA**

THE five sons of Pandu and the hundred After the sports they slept in their tents sons of Dhritarashtra grew up in mirth and being exhausted. Bhima had exerted

merriment at Hastinapura. Bhima excelled himself more than the others and as his them all in physical prowess. He used to food had been poisoned, he felt drowsy bully Duryodhana and the other Kauravas and lay down on the bank of the river.

by dragging them by the hair and beating Duryodhana bound him with wild

them.

creepers and threw him into the river.

A great swimmer, he would dive, into

The evil Duryodhana had already caused pools, with one or more of them clasped sharp spikes to be planted on the spot.

helpless in his arms, and remain under This was done purposely so that Bhima

water till they were almost drowned.

might in falling be impaled on the spikes, Whenever they climbed up on a tree he and lose his life. Fortunately there was no would stand on the ground and kick at the spike in the place where Bhima fell.

tree and shake them down like ripe fruits.

Poisonous water-snakes bit his body.

The bodies of the sons of Dhritarashtra The poisonous food he had taken was

would be ever sore with bruises as a result counteracted by the snake poison and

of Bhima's practical jokes. Small wonder Bhima came to no harm, and presently,

that the sons of Dhritarashtra nursed a the river washed him to a bank.

deep hatred for Bhima from their very

Duryodhana thought that Bhima must

infancy.

have died as he had been thrown in the As the princes grew up. Kripacharya

river infested with poisonous snakes and taught them archery and the practice of planted with spikes. So he returned to the arms and other things that princes should city with the rest of the party in great joy.

learn. Duryodhana's jealousy towards

When Yudhishtira inquired about the

Bhima warped his mind and made him

whereabouts of Bhima, Duryodhana

commit many improper acts.

informed him that he had preceded them Duryodhana was very much worried. His

to the city.

father being blind, the kingdom was ruled Yudhishtira believed Duryodhana and as by Pandu. After his death Yudhishtira, soon as he returned home, asked his

the heir-apparent, would in course of time mother whether Bhima had returned

become king. Duryodhana thought that as home.

his blind father was quite helpless he His anxious question brought forth the must, to prevent Yudhishtira's accession reply that Bhima had not yet returned, to the throne, contrive a way of killing which made Yudhishtira suspect some

Bhima.

foul play against his brother. And he went He made arrangements to carry out his

again with his brothers to the forest and resolve since he thought that the powers searched everywhere. But Bhima could

of the Pandavas would decline with the not be found. They went back in great

death of Bhima.

sorrow.

Duryodhana and his brothers planned to Sometime later Bhima awoke and trudged throw Bhima into the Ganges, imprison

wearily back home. Kunti and

Arjuna and Yudhishtira, and then seize Yudhishtira welcomed him and

the kingdom and rule it. So Duryodhana embraced him in great joy. By the poison went with his brothers and the Pandavas that had entered his system Bhima became for a swim in the Ganges.

stronger than before.

Kunti sent for Vidura and told him in bitter irony of fate, of their common secret:

blood, faced one another; for it was

"Duryodhana is wicked and cruel. He Karna.

seeks to kill Bhima since he wants to rule Karna addressed Arjuna in a voice deep as the kingdom. I am worried."

rumbling thunder: "Arjuna, I shall show Vidura replied: "What you say is true, but greater skill than you have displayed."

keep your thoughts to yourself. For if the With Drona's leave, Karna the lover of wicked Duryodhana is accused or blamed, battle, then and there duplicated all of his anger and hatred will only increase.

Arjuna's feats with careless ease. Great Your sons are blessed with long life. You was Duryodhana's exultation. He threw

need have no fear on that account."

his arms round Karna and said:

Yudhishthira also warned Bhima and said:

"Welcome, O thou with mighty arms,

"Be silent over the matter. Hereafter, we whom good fortune has sent to us. I and have to be careful and help one another this kingdom of the Kurus are at your

and protect ourselves."

command."

Duryodhana was surprised to see Bhima

Said Karna: "I, Karna, am grateful, O

come back alive. His jealousy and hatred king. Only two things I seek, your love increased. He heaved a deep sigh and

and single combat with Partha."

pined away in sorrow.

Duryodhana clasped Karna again to his

12. KARNA

bosom and said: "My prosperity is all THE Pandavas and the Kauravas learnt

thine to enjoy."

the practice of arms first from

As love flooded Duryodhana's heart, even Kripacharya and later from Drona. A day so did blazing wrath fill Arjuna, who felt was fixed for a test and exhibition of their affronted. And glaring fiercely at Karna proficiency in the use of arms in the

who stood, stately as a mountain peak, presence of the royal family and as the receiving the greetings of the Kaurava public had also been invited to witness the brothers, he said: "O Karna, slain by me performance of their beloved princes.

thou shalt presently go to the hell

There was a large and enthusiastic crowd.

appointed for those who intrude uninvited Arjuna displayed superhuman skill with and prate unbidden."

his weapons and the vast assemblage was Karna laughed in scorn: "This arena is lost in wonder and admiration.

open to all, O Arjuna, and not to you

Duryodhana's brow was dark with envy

alone. Might is the sanction of sovereignty and hate.

and the law is based on it. But what is the At the close of the day, there came

use of mere talk which is the weapon of suddenly from the entrance of the arena a the weak? Shoot arrows instead of words."

sound, loud and compelling like thunder Thus challenged, Arjuna, with Drona's

the sound made by the slapping of mighty permission, hastily embraced his brothers arms in challenge. All eyes turned in that and stood ready for combat. While Karna, direction. They saw enter through the

taking leave of the Kuru brothers,

crowd, which made way in awed silence, confronted him weapon in hand.

a godlike youth from whom light and

And, as though the divine parents of the power seemed to emanate. He looked

heroes sought to encourage their offspring proudly round him, cast a negligent salute and witness this fateful battle, Indra, the to Drona and Kripa, and strode up to

lord of the thunderclouds, and Bhaskara of Arjuna. The brothers, all unaware, by the

the in finite rays, simultaneously appeared of love his head already moistened by the in the heavens.

water of the coronation.

When she saw Karna, Kunti knew him as

At this sight, Bhima roared with laughter her first born and fainted away. Vidura and said: "O he is after all only the son of instructed the maidservant to attend upon a charioteer! Take up the driving whip her and she revived. She stood stupefied then as befits thy parentage. Thou art not with anguish not knowing what to do.

worthy of death at the hands of Arjuna.

As they were about to join in battle,

Nor shouldst thou reign in Anga as a

Kripa, well-versed in the rules of single king."

combat, stepped between them and

At this outrageous speech, Karna's lips addressed Karna:

trembled with anguish and he speechlessly

"This prince, who is ready to fight with looked up at the setting sun with a deep thee, is the son of Pritha and Pandu and a sigh.

scion of the Kuru race. Reveal O mighty But Duryodhana broke in indignantly:

armed thy parentage and the race rendered

"It is unworthy of you, O Vrikodara, to illustrious by thy birth. It is only after speak thus. Valor is the hallmark of a knowing thy lineage that Partha can fight kshatriya. Nor is there much sense in

with thee, for high-born princes cannot tracing great heroes and mighty rivers to engage in single combat with unknown

their sources. I could give you hundreds adventurers."

of instances of great men of humble birth When he heard these words, Karna bent

and I know awkward questions might be

down his head like a lotus under the

asked of your own origin. Look at this weight of rainwater.

warrior, his godlike form and bearing, his Duryodhana stood up and said:
"If the armor and earrings, and his skill with combat cannot take place
merely because weapons. Surely there is some mystery

Karna is not a prince, why, that is easily about him. For how could a tiger
be born remedied. I crown Karna as the king of of an antelope? Unworthy
of being king of Anga." He then obtained the assent of Anga, didst thou
say? I verily hold him Bhishma and Dhritarashtra, performed all worthy to
rule the whole world."

the necessary rites and invested Karna In generous wrath, Duryodhana
took

with the sovereignty of the kingdom of Karna in his chariot and drove
away.

Anga giving him the crown, jewels and

The sun set and the crowd dispersed in other royal insignia.

tumult. There were groups loud in talk At that moment, as the combat
between

under the light of the lamps, some

the youthful heroes seemed about to

glorifying Arjuna, others Karna, and

commence, the old charioteer Adhiratha, others again Duryodhana
according to

who was the foster-father of Karna,

their predilection.

entered the assembly, staff in hand and Indra foresaw that a supreme
contest was quaking with fear.

inevitable between his son Arjuna and

No sooner did he see him, that Karna, the Karna. And he put on the garb of a

newly crowned king of Anga, bowed his

brahmana and came to Karna, who was

head and did humble obeisance in all filial reputed for his charity and begged of him reverence. The old man called him son, his earrings and armor. The Sun god had embraced him with his thin and trembling already warned Karna in a dream that

arms, and wept with joy wetting with tears Indra would try to deceive him in this manner.

Still, Karna could not bring himself to unable to recall the invocatory mantra refuse any gift that was asked of him.

when your hour comes."

Hence he cut off the earrings and armor It was because of this curse that at the with which he was born and gave them to crisis of his last fight with Arjuna, Karna the brahmana.

was not able to recall the Brahmastra

Indra, the king of gods, was filled with spell, though he had remembered it till surprise and joy. After accepting the gift, then. Karna was the faithful friend of he praised Karna as having done what no Duryodhana and remained loyally with

one else would do, and, shamed into

the Kauravas until the end.

generosity, bade Karna ask for any boon After the fall of Bhishma and Drona,

he wanted.

Karna became the leader of the Kaurava Karna replied: "I desire to get your army and fought brilliantly for two days.

weapon, the Sakti, which has the power to In the end, the wheel of his chariot stuck kill enemies." Indra granted the boon, but in the ground and he was not able to lift it with a fateful proviso. He said: "You can free and drive the chariot along. While he use this weapon against but one enemy, was in this predicament, Arjuna killed and it will kill him whosoever he may be.

him. Kunti was sunk in sorrow, all the But this killing done, this weapon will no more poignant because she had, at that longer be available to you but will return time, to conceal it.

to me." With these words Indra

13. DRONA

disappeared.

DRONA, the son of a brahmana named

Karna went to Parasurama and became his Bharadwaja, after completing his study of disciple by representing to him that he the Vedas and the Vedangas, devoted

was a brahmana. He learnt of Parasurama himself to the art of archery and became a the mantra for using the master weapon great master.

known as Brahmastra.

Drupada, the son of the king of Panchala, One day Parasurama was reclining with

who was a friend of Bharadwaja, was a

the head on Karna's lap when a stinging fellow-student of Drona in the hermitage worm burrowed into Karna's thigh. Blood and there grew up between them the

began to flow and the pain was terrible.

generous intimacy of youth.

But Karna bore it without tremor lest he Drupada, in his boyish enthusiasm, used should disturb the master's sleep.

often to tell Drona that he would give him Parasurama awoke and saw the blood that half his kingdom when he ascended the

had poured from the wound.

throne. After completing his studies,

He said: "Dear pupil, you are not a Drona married the sister of Kripa, and a brahmana. A kshatriya alone can remain son Aswatthama was born to them.

unmoved under all bodily torments. Tell Drona was passionately attached to his me the truth."

wife and son, and, for their sake, desired Karna confessed that he had told a lie in to acquire wealth, a thing that he had presenting himself as a brahmana and that never cared for before. Learning that

he was in fact the son of a charioteer.

Parasurama was distributing his riches Parasurama in his anger pronounced this among the brahmanas, he first went to

curse on him: "Since you deceived your him. But he was too late as Parasurama guru, the Brahmastra you have learnt shall had already given away all his wealth and fail you at the fated moment. You will be was about to retire to the forest.

But, anxious to do something for Drona, One day, the princes were playing with a Parasurama offered to teach him the use ball outside the precincts of the city, and of weapons, of which he was supreme

in the course of the game, the ball as well master.

as Yudhishtira's ring fell into a well. The Drona joyfully agreed, and great archer as princes had gathered round the well and he already was, he became unrivalled

saw the ring shining from the bottom

master of the military art, worthy of eager through the clear water. But could see no welcome as preceptor in any princely

way of getting it out. They did not

house in that warlike age.

however, notice that a brahmana of dark complexion stood nearby watching them

ascended the throne of Panchala on the death of his father. Remembering their early intimacy

Drupada had a smile.

Drupada's expressions of readiness to

"Princes," he surprised them by saying, and Drupada's expressions of readiness to

"you are the descendants of the heroic Bharata race. Why cannot you take out the his kingdom, Drona went to him in the

ball as anyone skilled in arms should

confident hope of being treated

know how to do? Shall I do it for you?"

generously.

Yudhishtira laughed and said in fun: "O

But he found the king very different from brahmana, if you take out the ball, we will the student. When he introduced himself see that you have a good meal in the

as an old friend, Drupada, far from being house of Kripacharya." Then Drona the glad to see him, felt it an intolerable brahmana stranger, took a blade of grass presumption.

and sent it forth into the well after reciting Drunk with power and wealth, Drupada

certain words of power for propelling it as said: "O brahmana, how dare you address an arrow.

me familiarly as your friend? What

The blade of grass straightway sped and friendship can there be between a throned stuck into the ball. Afterwards he sent a king and a wandering beggar? What a fool number of similar blades in succession must you be to presume on some long past which clinging together formed a chain, acquaintance to claim friend ship with a wherewith Drona took out the ball.

king who rules a kingdom? How can a

The princes were lost in amazement and pauper be the friend of a wealthy man, or delight and begged of him to get the ring an ignorant boor of a learned scholar, or a also. Drona borrowed a bow, fixed an

coward of a hero? Friendship can exist arrow on the string and sent it right into only between equals. A vagrant beggar

the ring. The arrow rebounding brought cannot be the friend of a sovereign."

up the ring and the brahmana handed it to Drona was turned out of the palace with the prince with a smile.

scorn in his ears and a blazing wrath in his Seeing these feats, the princes were

heart.

astonished and said: "We salute you, O

He made a mental vow to punish the

brahmana. Who are you? Is there anything arrogant king for this insult and his

we can do for you?" and they bowed to repudiation of the sacred claims of early him.

friendship. His next move in search of He said: "O princes, go to Bhishma and employment was to go to Hastinapura,

learn from him who I am."

where he spent a few days, in retirement, From the description given by the princes, in the house of his brother-in-law

Bhishma knew that the brahmana was

Kripacharya.

none other than the famous master Drona.

He decided that Drona was the fittest His efforts were crowned with success

person to impart further instruction to the with the birth of Dhrishtadyumna who

Pandavas and the Kauravas. So, Bhishma commanded the Pandava army at received him with special honor and

Kurukshetra and, helped by a strange

employed him to instruct the princes in combination of circumstances, slew the the use of arms.

otherwise unconquerable Drona, and birth As soon as the Kauravas and the Pandavas of Draupadi, the consort of the Pandavas.

had acquired mastery in the science of **14. THE WAX PALACE**

arms, Drona sent Karna and Duryodhana

THE jealousy of Duryodhana began to

to seize Drupada and bring him alive, in grow at the sight of the physical strength discharge of the duty they owed to him as of Bhima and the dexterity of Arjuna.

their master.

Karna and Sakuni became Duryodhana's

They went as ordered by him, but could evil counsellors in planning wily not accomplish their task. Then the master stratagems.

sent forth Arjuna on the same errand. He As for poor Dhritarashtra, he was a wise defeated Drupada in battle and brought man no doubt and he also loved his

him and his minister captives to Drona.

brother's sons, but he was weak of will Then Drona smilingly addressed Drupada: and dotingly attached to his own children.

"Great king, do not fear for your life. In For his children's sake the worse became our boyhood we were companions but you the better reason, and he would sometimes were pleased to forget it and dishonor me.

even knowingly follow the wrong path.

You told me that a king alone could be Duryodhana sought in various ways to kill friend to a king. Now I am a king, having the Pandavas. It was by means of the

conquered your kingdom. Still I seek to secret help rendered by Vidura who

regain my friendship with you, and so I wanted to save the family from a great sin, give you half of your kingdom that has that the Pandavas escaped with their lives.

become mine by conquest. Your creed is One unforgivable offence of the Pandavas that friendship is possible only between in the eyes of Duryodhana was that the equals. And we shall now be equals, each people of the city used to praise them owning a half of your kingdom."

openly and declare in season and out of Drona thought this sufficient revenge for season that Yudhishtira alone was fit to the insult he had suffered, set Drupada at be the king.

liberty and treated him with honor.

They would flock together and argue:

Drupada's pride was thus humbled but,

"Dhritarashtra could never be king for he since hate is never extinguished by

was born blind. It is not proper that he retaliation, and few things are harder to should now hold the kingdom in his

bear than the pangs of wounded vanity, hands. Bhishma cannot be king either,

hatred of Drona and a wish to be revenged because he is devoted to truth and to his on him became the ruling passion of

vow that he would not be a king. Hence Drupada's life.

Yudhishtira alone should be crowned as The king performed tapas, underwent

king. He alone can rule the Kuru race and fasts and conducted sacrifices in order to the kingdom with justice." Thus people win the gratified gods to bless him with a talked everywhere. These words were

son who should slay Drona and a daughter poison to Duryodhana's ears, and made

who should wed Arjuna.

him writhe and burn with jealousy.

He went to Dhritarashtra and complained of the torment. After sending the Pandavas to the bitter end of the public talk: "Father, the Varanavata we shall try to strengthen our citizens' babble irrelevant nonsense. They party."

have no respect even for such venerable. Later, some politicians were prevailed upon by persons as Bhishma and yourself. They

upon to join Duryodhana's party and

say that Yudhishtira should be

advise the king in the matter. Kanika, the immediately crowned king. This would

minister of Sakuni, was their leader. "O

bring disaster on us. You were set aside king," he said, "guard yourselves against because of your blindness, and your

the sons of Pandu, for their goodness and brother became the king. If Yudhishtira's influence are a menace to you and yours.

is to succeed his father, where do we

The Pandavas are the sons of your

come? What chance has our progeny?

brother, but the nearer the kin, the closer. After Yudhishtira his son, and his son's and deadlier the danger. They are very sons, and then his son will be the kings.

strong."

We will sink into poor relations dependent Sakuni's minister continued:
"Be not on them even for our food. To live in hell wroth with me if I say a king should be would be better than that!"

mighty in action as in name, for nobody At these words, Dhritarashtra began to will believe in strength which is never ponder and said: "Son, what you say is displayed. State affairs should be kept true. Still Yudhishtira will not stray from secret and the earliest indication to the the path of virtue. He loves all. He has public, of a wise plan, should be its

truly inherited all the excellent virtues of execution. Also, evils must be eradicated his deceased father. People praise him and promptly for a thorn which has been

will support him, and all the ministers of allowed to remain in the body may cause the State and commanders of armies, to a festering wound. Powerful enemies

whom Pandu had endeared himself by his should be destroyed and even a weak foe nobility of character, will surely espouse should not be neglected since a mere

his cause. As for the people, they idolise spark, if over looked, may cause a forest the Pandavas. We cannot oppose them

fire. A strong enemy should be destroyed with any chance of success. If we do

by means of stratagem and it would be

injustice, the citizens will rise in

folly to show mercy to him. O king, guard insurrection and either kill us or expel us.

yourself against the sons of Pandu. They We shall only cover ourselves with

are very powerful."

ignominy."

Duryodhana told Dhritarashtra of his

Duryodhana replied: "Your fears are success in securing adherents: "I have baseless. Bhishma will at worst be neutral, bought the goodwill of the king's

while Ashwatthama is devoted to me,

attendants with gifts of wealth and honor.

which means that his father Drona and

I have won over his ministers to our

uncle Kripa will also be on our side.

cause. If you will adroitly prevail upon the Vidura cannot openly oppose us, if for no Pandavas to go to Varanavata, the city and other reason, because he has not the

the whole kingdom will take our side.

strength. Send the Pandavas immediately They will not have a friend left here. Once to Varanavata. I tell you the solemn truth the kingdom has become ours, there will that my cup of suffering is full and I can be no power for harm left in them, and it bear no more. It pierces my heart and

may even be possible to let them come

renders me sleepless and makes my life a back."

When many began to say what he himself The ostentatious love and solicitude with wished to believe, Dhritarashtra's mind which the Pandavas had been received

was shaken and he yielded to his sons'

and treated would obviate all suspicion counsels. It only remained to give effect and the fire would be taken as a sad case to the plot.

of pure accident. No one would dream of The ministers began to praise the beauty blaming the Kauravas.

of Varanavata in the hearing of the

15. THE ESCAPE OF THE

Pandavas and made mention of the fact

PANDAVAS

that a great festival in honor of Siva AFTER taking reverential leave of the would be conducted there with all pomp elders and embracing their comrades, the and splendor.

Pandavas proceeded to Varanavata. The

The unsuspecting Pandavas were easily

citizens accompanied them a part of their persuaded, especially when Dhritarashtra way and returned unwillingly to the city.

also told them in tones of great affection Vidura pointedly warned Yudhishtira in that they should certainly go and witness words intelligible only to the prince: the festivities, not only because they were

"He alone will escape from danger who worth seeing but because the people of the forestalls the intentions of an astute place were eager to welcome them.

enemy. There are weapons sharper than

The Pandavas took leave of Bhishma and those made of steel. And the wise man

other elders and went to Varanavata.

who would escape destruction must know Duryodhana was elated. He plotted with the means to guard against them. The

Karna and Sakuni to kill Kunti and her conflagration that devastates a forest sons at Varanavata. They sent for

cannot hurt a rat which shelters itself in a Purochana, a minister, and gave him

hole or a porcupine which burrows in the secret instructions which he bound

earth. The wise man knows his bearings himself to carry out faithfully.

by looking at the stars."

Before the Pandavas proceeded to

Though they had started on their journey Varanavata, Purochana, true to his

in sunshine of joy, they now proceeded in instructions, hastened to the spot well in a dark cloud of sorrow and anxiety.

advance and had a beautiful palace built The people of Varanavata were very

for their reception. Combustible materials happy to learn of the coming of the

like jute, lac, ghee, oil, and fat were used Pandavas to their city and welcomed

in the construction of the palace. The them. After a brief stay in other houses materials for the plastering of the walls while the palace specially meant for them were also inflammable. He skilfully filled was being got ready, they moved into it up various parts of the building with dry under Purochana's guidance.

things that could catch fire easily, and had It was named "Sivam" which means inviting seats and bedsteads disposed at prosperity, and that was the name which, the most combustible places.

in ghastly irony, was given to the

Every convenience was furnished for the deathtrap. Yudhishtira diligently

Pandavas to dwell in the city without fear, examined the whole place bearing in mind until the palace was built. When the

Vidura's warning and verified that the Pandavas had settled down in the wax

building was without a shadow of doubt house, the idea was to set fire to it at night constructed with combustible material.

when they were sound asleep.

Yudhishtira told Bhima: "Though we know very well that the palace is a trap of

death, we should not make Purochana Kuntidevi arranged a sumptuous feast for suspect that we know his plot. We should the attendants that day. Her idea was to get away at the right moment but escape lull them to well-fed sleep at night.

would be difficult if we gave room for any At midnight, Bhima set fire to the palace suspicion."

in several places. Kuntidevi and the

So they stayed in that house to all

Pandava brothers hurried out through the appearance free from care. Meanwhile,

subterranean passage, groping their way Vidura had sent an expert miner who met out in the darkness. Presently, there was a them in secret and said: "My password is roaring fire all over the palace and a fast the veiled warning Vidura gave you. I

swelling crowd of frightened citizens all have been sent to help you for your

around in loud and helpless lamentation.

protection."

Some bustled aimlessly in futile efforts to This was meant to indicate to put out the conflagration and all joined in Yudhishtira and to him alone, the cry: "Alas! Alas! This surely is Duryodhana's hideous plot and the means Duryodhana's work, and he is killing the of escape from danger. Yudhishtira

sinless Pandavas!"

answered that he had grasped Vidura's

The palace was reduced to ashes.

meaning, and later he communicated it to Purochana's residence was enveloped in Kuntidevi.

flames before he could escape and he fell Henceforward the miner worked for many an unpitied victim to his own wicked plot.

days in secret, unknown to Purochana,

The people of Varanavata, sent the

and completed a subterranean egress from following message to Hastinapura: "The the wax house right under and across the palace which was the abode of the

walls and the moat, which ran round the Pandavas has burnt down and no one in it precincts.

escaped alive."

Purochana had his quarters at the gateway Vyasa has beautifully described the then of the palace. The Pandavas kept armed mental state of Dhritarashtra: "Just as the vigil during night, but by day they used to water of a deep pool is cool at the bottom go out hunting in the forest, to all

and warm on the surface, so the heart of appearance bent on pleasure but really to Dhritarashtra was at once warm with joy make themselves familiar with the forest and chilled with sorrow."

paths.

Dhritarashtra and his sons cast off their As has already been said, they carefully royal garments in token of mourning for kept to themselves their knowledge of the the Pandavas whom they believed

wicked plot against their lives. On his side consumed in the fire. They dressed

Purochana, anxious to lull all suspicion themselves in single garments as became and make the murderous fire seem an

sorrowful kinsmen and went to the river accident, waited fully a year before

and performed the propitiatory funeral putting the plot into effect.

rites.

At last Purochana felt he had waited long No outward show of heart broken

enough. And the watchful Yudhishtira, bereavement was omitted. It was noticed knowing that the fated moment had

by some that Vidura was not so overcome arrived, called his brothers together and by sorrow as the others and this was set told them that now or never was the time down to his philosophical bent of mind.

for them to escape.

But the real reason was that he knew that the Pandavas had escaped to safety.

When he looked sad, he was in fact to injure us in these ways?" Sinless following with his mind's eye the weary himself, Bhima could not understand the wanderings of the Pandavas. Seeing that springs of sinfulness in others and was Bhishma was sunk in sorrow, Vidura lost in grief.

secretly comforted him by revealing to The Pandavas marched on, suffering

him the story of their successful escape.

many hardships and overcoming many

Bhima saw that his mother and brothers dangers. Part of the way, they would carry were exhausted by their nightly vigils as their mother to make better speed.

well as by fear and anxiety. He therefore Sometimes, tired beyond even heroic

carried his mother on his shoulders and endurance, they would pause and rest.

took Nakula and Sahadeva on his hips,

Sometimes, full of life and the glorious supporting Yudhishtira and Arjuna with strength of youth, they would race with his two hands.

each other.

Thus heavily laden, he strode effortlessly They met Bhagavan Vyasa on the way.

like a lordly elephant forcing his way All of them bowed before him and

through the forest and pushing aside the received encouragement and wise counsel shrubs and trees that obstructed his path.

from him.

When they reached the Ganges, there was When Kunti told him of the sorrows that a boat ready for them in charge of a

had befallen them, Vyasa consoled her

boatman who knew their secret. They

with these words: "No virtuous man is crossed the river in the darkness, and strong enough to live in virtue at all times, entering a mighty forest they went on at nor is any sinner bad enough to exist in night in darkness that wrapped them like a one welter of sin. Life is a tangled web shroud and in a silence broken hideously and there is no one in the world who has by the frightful noises of wild animals.

not done both good and evil. Each and

At last, quite fordone by toil, they sat everyone has to bear the consequence of down unable to bear the pangs of thirst his actions. Do not give way to sorrow."

and overcome by the drowsiness of sheer Then they put on the garb of brahmanas, fatigue. Kuntidevi said: "I do not care as advised by Vyasa, went to the city of even if the sons of Dhritarashtra are here Ekachakra and stayed there in a

to seize me, but I must stretch my legs."

brahmana's house, waiting for better days.

She forthwith laid herself down and was **16. THE SLAYING OF BAKASURA**

sunk in sleep.

IN the city of Ekachakra, the Pandavas Bhima forced his way about the tangled stayed in the guise of brahmanas, begging forest in search of water in the darkness.

their food in the brahmana streets and And finding a pool, he wetted his upper bringing what they got to their mother, garment, made cups of lotus leaves and who would wait anxiously till their return.

brought water to his mother and brothers If they did not come back in time, she who were perishing with thirst.

would be worried, fearing that some evil Then, while the others slept in merciful might have befallen them.

forgetfulness of their woes, Bhima alone Kunti would divide the food they brought sat awake absorbed in deep thought. "Do in two equal portions. One half would go not the plants and the creepers of the to Bhima. The other half would be shared forest mutually help each other and live in by the other brothers and the mother.

peace?" he reflected; "why should the Bhima, being born of the Wind god had

wicked Dhritarashtra and Duryodhana try great strength and a mighty appetite.

Vrikodara, one of the names of Bhima, to my words, and this is the deadly fruit of means wolf-bellied, and a wolf, you

your perversity. If I give up my life, this know, looks always famished. And

girl and boy will surely die soon for want however much it might eat, its hunger is of a protector. What shall I do? It is best never quite satisfied.

that all of us perish together" and the Bhima's insatiable hunger and the scanty brahmana burst forth sobbing.

food he used to get at Ekachakra went ill The wife replied: "I have been a good together. And he daily grew thin, which wife to you, and done my duty by bearing caused much distress to his mother and you a daughter and

a son. You are able, brothers. Sometime later, Bhima became and I am not, to bring up and protect your acquainted with a potter for whom he

children. Just as cast out offal is pounced helped and fetched clay. The potter, in upon and seized by rapacious birds, a poor return, presented him with a big earthen widowed woman is an easy prey to

pot that became an object of merriment to wicked and dishonest people. Dogs fight the street urchins.

for a cloth wet with ghee, and in pulling it One day, when the other brothers had

hither and thither in unclean greed, tear it gone to beg for alms, Bhimasena stayed into foul rags. It would be best if I am behind with his mother, and they heard handed over to the Rakshasa. Blessed

loud lamentations from the house of their indeed is the woman who passes to the

brahmana landlord. Some great calamity other world, while her husband is alive.

surely had befallen the poor family and This, as you know, is what the scriptures Kunti went inside to learn what it was.

say. Bid me farewell. Take care of my

The brahmana and his wife could hardly children. I have been happy with you. I speak for weeping, but, at last the

have performed many meritorious actions.

brahmana said to his wife: "O unfortunate By my faithful devotion to you, I am sure and foolish woman, though time and again of heaven. Death has no terror for one I wished we should leave this city for who has been a good wife. After I am

good, you would not agree. You persisted gone, take another wife. Gladden me with in saying that you were born and bred

a brave smile, give me your blessing, and here and here you would stay where your send me to the Rakshasa."

parents and relations had lived and died.

Hearing these words of his wife, the

How can I think of losing you who have brahmana tenderly embraced her and,

been to me at once my life's mate, loving utterly overcome by her love and courage, mother, the wife who bore my children, he wept like a child. When he could find nay, my all in all? I cannot send you to his voice, he replied: "O beloved and death while I keep myself alive. This little noble one, what words are these? Can I girl has been given to us by God as a trust bear to live without you? The first duty of to be handed over in time to a worthy

a married man is to protect his wife. I man. It is unrighteous to sacrifice her who should indeed be a pitiful sinner if I lived is a gift of God to perpetuate the race. It is after giving you up to the Rakshasa,

equally impossible to allow this other, our sacrificing both love and duty."

son, to be killed. How can we live after The daughter who was hearing this

consigning to death our only solace in life piteous conversation, now interposed with and our hope for the here after? If he is sobs: "Listen to me, child though I be, and lost, who would pour libations for us and then do what is proper. It is me alone that our ancestors? Alas! You did not pay heed you can spare to the Rakshasa. By

sacrificing one soul, that is, myself, you Rakshasa formerly used to issue from his can save the others. Let me be the little cave whenever he liked and, mad with

boat to take you across this river of

hunger, indiscriminately kill and eat men, calamity. In like manner, a woman

women and children in this city. The

without a guardian becomes the sport of citizens prayed to the Rakshasa to come to wicked people who drag her hither and

some sort of stipulation in place of this thither. It is impossible for me to protect promiscuous slaughter. They prayed: 'Do two fatherless orphans and they will

not kill us wantonly at your whim and

perish miserably like fish in a waterless pleasure. Once a week we shall bring you pond. If both of you pass away, both I and sufficient meat, rice, curds and

this little baby brother of mine will soon intoxicating liquors and many other

perish unprotected in this hard world. If delicacies. We will deliver these to you in this family of ours can be saved from

a carriage drawn by two bullocks driven destruction by my single death, what a by a human being taken from each house good death mine would be! Even if you

in turn. You can make a repast of the rice, consider my welfare alone, you should

along with the bullocks and the man, but send me to the Rakshasa."

refrain from this mad orgy of slaughter.'

At these brave words of the poor child, the The Rakshasa agreed to the proposal.

parents tenderly embraced her and wept.

From that day, this strong Rakshasa has Seeing them all in tears the boy, hardly been protecting this kingdom from foreign more than a baby, started up with glowing raids and wild beasts. This arrangement eyes, lisping: "Father, do not weep.

has been in force for many years. No hero Mother, do not weep. Sister, do not

has been found to free this country from weep," and he went to each and sat on this pest, for the Rakshasa has invariably their lap by turns.

defeated and killed all the brave men who Then he rose up took a stick of firewood tried. Mother, our legitimate sovereign is and brandishing it about, said in his sweet unable to protect us. The citizens of a childish treble: "I shall kill the Rakshasa country, whose king is weak, should not with this stick." The child's action and marry and beget children. A worthy

speech made them smile in the midst of family life, with culture and domestic their tears, but only added to their great happiness, is possible only under the rule sorrow.

of a good, strong king. Wife, wealth and Feeling this was the moment for other things are not safe, if there be no intervention, Kuntidevi entered and proper king ruling over us. And having inquired for the cause of their sorrow and long suffered with the sight of others'

whether there was anything she could do sorrow, our own turn has come now to

to help them.

send a person as prey to the Rakshasa. I The brahmana said: "Mother, this is a have not the means to purchase a

sorrow far beyond your aid. There is a substitute. None of us can bear to live cave near the city, where lives a cruel and after sending one of us to a cruel death, terribly strong Rakshasa named Bakasura.

and so I shall go with my whole family to He forcibly seized this city and kingdom him. Let the wicked glutton gorge himself thirteen years ago. Since then he has held with all of us. I have pained you with us in cruel thralldom. The kshatriya ruler these things, but you wished to know.

of this country has fled to the city of Only God can help us, but we have lost all Vetrakiya and is unable to protect us. This hope even of that."

The political truths contained in this story of this brahmana. Duty, nay, man's highest of Ekachakra are noteworthy and

virtue, is to repay the benefit he has suggestive. Kunti talked the matter over enjoyed by doing good in his turn. I know with Bhimasena and returned to the

the heroism of Bhima and have no fears.

brahmana. She said: "Good man, do not Remember who carried us from despair. God is great. I have five sons.

Varanavata and who killed the demon

One of them will take the food to the

Hidimba. It is our duty to be of service to Rakshasa."

this brahmana family."

The brahmana jumped up in amazed

After a fierce battle, the Rakshasa

surprise, but then shook his head sadly Bakasura was slain by Bhima who

and would not hear of the substituted
pretended to bring him a cartload of food.

sacrifice. Kunti said: "O brahmana, do not **17. DRAUPADI'S
SWAYAMVARAM**

be afraid. My son is endowed with

WHILE the Pandavas were living in

superhuman powers derived from mantras disguise as brahmanas at
Ekachakrapura, and will certainly kill this Rakshasa, as I news of the
swayamvara of Draupadi, the have myself seen him kill many other

daughter of Drupada, King of Panchala, such Rakshasas. But keep this a
secret, reached them.

Many brahmanas of

for, if you reveal it, his power will come Ekachakrapura planned to go to
Panchala to naught."

in the hope of receiving the customary Kunti's fear was that, if the story
got gifts and to see the festivities and pageant noised abroad,
Duryodhana's men would

of a royal wedding. Kunti, with her

see the hand of the Pandavas, and find out motherly instinct, read her sons'
desire to their where abouts. Bhima was filled with go to Panchala and win
Draupadi. So she unbounded joy and enthusiasm at the

told Yudhishtira: "We have been in this arrangement made by Kunti.

city so long that it is time to think of The other brothers returned to the
house going somewhere else. We have seen

with alms. Dharmaputra saw the face of these hills and dales till we are tired of Bhimasena radiant with joy to which it them. The alms doled out to us are

had long been a stranger and inferred that diminishing and it is not good to outstay he was resolved on some hazardous

your entertainment. Let us therefore go to adventure and questioned Kunti who told Drupada's kingdom which is reputed to be him everything.

fair and prosperous." Kunti was second to Yudhishtira said: "What is this? Is not none in worldly wisdom and sagacity and this rash and thoughtless? Relying on

could gracefully divine her sons' thoughts Bhima's strength we sleep without care or and spare them the awkwardness of

fear. It is not through Bhima's strength expressing them.

and daring that we hope to regain the

The brahmanas went in groups to witness kingdom that has been seized by our

the swayamvara and the Pandavas

deceitful enemies? Was it not through the mingled with them in the guise of

prowess of Bhima that we escaped from

brahmanas. After a long march the party the wax palace? And you are risking the reached the beautiful city of Drupada and life of Bhima who is our present

billeted themselves in the house of a

protection and future hope. I fear your potter as obscure brahmanas of no note.

many trials have clouded your judgment!"

Though Drupada and Drona were

Kuntidevi replied: "Dear sons, we have outwardly at peace, the former never

lived happily for many years in the house could forget or forgive the humiliation he

had suffered at the latter's hands.

hall, seeming to fill it with the sweetness Drupada's one wish was to give his

of her presence and perfect beauty.

daughter in marriage to Arjuna.

Garland in hand, and coyly glancing at the Drona loved Arjuna so dearly that he

valiant princes, who for their part looked could hardly look upon his pupil's father-at her in speechless admiration, she

in-law as his deadly foe. And if there were ascended the dais. The brahmanas

a war, Drupada would be all the stronger repeated the usual mantras and offered for being Arjuna's father-in-law. When he oblations in the fire. After the peace heard the news of the destruction of the invocation had been chanted and the

Pandavas at Varanavata, he was plunged flourish of music had stopped,

in sorrow but was relieved by a later Dhrishtadyumna took Draupadi by the

rumour that they had escaped.

hand and led her to the center of the hall.

The marriage hall was beautifully

Then he proclaimed in loud, clear tones: decorated and built amidst a finely laid

"Hear ye, O princes seated in state in this out group of new guest-houses designed assembly, here is the bow. There is the to accommodate the swayamvara suitors

target and here are the arrows. He who and guests. Attractive sights and sports sends five arrows in succession through had

been arranged for public

the hole of the wheel and unerringly hits entertainment and there were glorious

the target, if he also be of good family and festivities for fourteen days continuously.

presence, shall win my sister." Then he A mighty steel bow was placed in the

narrated to Draupadi the name, ancestry marriage hall. The candidate for the

and description of the several suitors princess' hand was required to string the assembled there.

bow and with it shoot a steel arrow

Many noted princes rose one after another through the central aperture of a revolving and tried in vain to string the bow. It was disk at a target placed on high.

too heavy and stiff for them, and they This required almost superhuman strength returned to their places abashed and

and skill, and Drupada proclaimed that the ashamed.

hero who would win his daughter should Sisupala, Jarasandha, Salya, and perform this feat. Many valiant princes Duryodhana were among these had gathered there from all parts of

unsuccessful aspirants. When Karna came Bharatavarsha. The sons of Dhritarashtra forward, all the assemblage expected that were there as well as Karna, Krishna,

he would be successful but he failed by Sisupala, Jarasandha, and Salya.

just a hair's breadth and the string slid Besides the competitors there was a huge back flashing and the mighty bow jumped concourse of spectators and visitors. The out of his hands like a thing of life.

noise that issued therefrom resembled the There was great clamor and angry talk, uproar of the ocean and over it all arose some even saying that it was an

the auspicious sound of festal music from impossible test put up to shame the kings.

hundreds of instruments.

Then all noises were hushed, for there Dhrishtadyumna on horseback rode in

arose from among the group of brahmanas front of his sister Draupadi seated on an a youth who advanced towards the bow.

elephant. Fresh from her auspicious bridal It was Arjuna who had come disguised as bath, and clad in flowing silk Draupadi a brahmana. When he stood up; wild

dismounted and entered the swayamvara

clamor burst forth again from the crowd.

The brahmanas themselves were divided

in opinion. Some being highly delighted streamed out of her eyes as she looked on that there should be among them a lad of Arjuna. She approached him and placed

mettle enough to compete, while others the garland on his neck. Yudhishtira, more envious or worldly wise, said what Nakula, and Sahadeva returned in haste to impudence it was for this brahmacharin to the potter's house to convey the glad news enter the lists when heroes like Karna, immediately to their mother.

Salya, and others had met with failure.

Bhima alone remained in the assembly

But there were others again who spoke

fearing that some danger might befall

differently as they noted the noble and Arjuna from the kshatriyas. As anticipated shapely proportions of the youth. They by Bhima, the princes were loud in wrath.

said: "We feel from his appearance that he They said: "The practice of swayamvara, is going to win. He looks sure of himself the choosing of a bridegroom, is not

and he certainly knows what he is about.

prevalent among the brahmanas. If this The brahmana may be physically weaker, maiden does not care to marry a prince, but is it all a matter of brute strength?

she should remain a virgin and burn

What about the power of austerities? Why herself on the pyre. How can a brahmana should he not try?" And they blessed him.

marry her? We should oppose this

Arjuna approached the place where the

marriage and prevent it so as to protect bow lay and asked
Dhrishtadyumna: "Can righteousness and save the practice of a brahmana
try to bend the bow?"

swayamvara from the peril which

Dhrishtadyumna answered: "O best of threatens it." A free fight seemed
brahmanas, my sister will become the life-imminent.

mate of any one of good family and

Bhima plucked a tree by the roots, and presence, who bends the bow and
shoots stripping it of foliage, stood armed with the target. My words stand
and there will this formidable bludgeon, by the side of be no going back on
them."

Arjuna ready for any event. Draupadi said Then Arjuna meditated on
Narayana, the nothing but stood holding on to the skirts Supreme God, and
took the bow in his

of the deer-skin in which Arjuna was clad.

hand and strung it with ease. He placed an Krishna, Balarama and others
sought to arrow on the string and looked around him appease those who
had created the

with a smile, while the crowd was lost in confusion. Arjuna proceeded to
the house spellbound silence.

of the potter accompanied by Draupadi.

Then without pause or hesitation he shot As Bhima and Arjuna were taking

five arrows in succession through the

Draupadi to their temporary abode,

revolving mechanism right into the target Dhrishtadyumna followed them at a

so that it fell down. The crowd was in distance, and, unseen by them, closely tumult and there was a blare of musical observed everything that took place there.

instruments.

He was amazed and delighted at what he The brahmanas who were seated in the

saw, and returning, he secretly told King assembly in large numbers sent forth

Drupada: "Father, I think they are the shouts of joy, waving aloft their deer-Pandavas. Draupadi accompanied them,

skins in exultation as though the whole holding to the skirts of the deer-skin of community had won Draupadi. The

that youth and she was not at all abashed.

uproar that followed was indescribable.

I also followed and I saw all five and a Draupadi shone with a fresh beauty. Her venerable and august lady who, I have no face glowed with happiness which

doubt, is Kunti herself."

Invited by Drupada Kunti and the Kuntidevi they are happy and well under Pandavas went to the palace. Dharmaputra the care of Drupada."

confided to the king that they were the At these words of Vidura,
Dhritarashtra Pandavas. He also informed him of their felt frustrated but
concealed his

decision to marry Draupadi in common.

disappointment. He said to Vidura with Drupada rejoiced at knowing that
they

apparent joy: "O Vidura, I am delighted at were the Pandavas, which set at
rest all your words. Are the dear Pandavas really anxiety regarding the
enmity of Drona.

alive? We have been mourning them as

But he was surprised and disgusted when dead! The news you have now
brought is he heard that they would jointly marry balm to my heart. So the
daughter of

Draupadi.

Drupada has become our daughter-in-law.

Drupada opposed this and said: "How Well, well, very good."

unrighteous! How did this idea get into Duryodhana's jealousy and hatred
your head, this immoral idea that goes redoubled when he found that the
against the traditional usage?"

Pandavas had somehow escaped from the

Yudhishtira answered: "O king, kindly wax palace and after spending a
year

excuse us. In a time of great peril we incognito had now become even
more

vowed that we would share all things in powerful on account of the alliance with common and we cannot break that pledge.

the mighty king of Panchala. Duryodhana Our mother has commanded us so."

and his brother Duhsasana went to their Finally Drupada yielded and the marriage uncle Sakuni and said in sorrow: "Uncle, was celebrated.

we are undone. We have been let down by **18. INDRAPRASTHA**

relying on Purochana. Our enemies, the WHEN news of the incidents that took

Pandavas, are cleverer than ourselves, and place during the swayamvara at Panchala fortune also seems to favor them.

reached Hastinapura, Vidura was happy.

Dhrishtadyumna and

Sikhandin have

He immediately went to Dhritarashtra and become their allies. What can we do?"

said: "O King, our family has become Karna and Duryodhana went to the blind stronger because the daughter of Drupada Dhritarashtra. Duryodhana said: "You told has become our daughter-in-law. Our stars Vidura that better days were ahead of us.

are good."

Is it good time for us that our natural Dhritarashtra thought in his blind

enemies, the Pandavas, have so waxed in fondness for his son that it was

strength that they will certainly destroy Duryodhana, who had also gone to take

us? We could not carry out our plot

part in the swayamvara, that had won

against them and the fact that they know Draupadi. Under this mistaken impression about it is an added danger. It has now he replied: "It is indeed, as you say, a come to this, either we must destroy them good time for us. Go at once and bring here and now or we shall ourselves perish.

Draupadi. Let us give Panchali a joyous Favor us with your counsel in this matter."

welcome."

Dhritarashtra replied: "Dear son, what you Vidura hastened to correct the mistake. He say is true. We should not, however, let said: "The blessed Pandavas are alive and Vidura know our mind. That was why I

it is Arjuna who has won the daughter of spoke to him in that manner. Let me now Drupada. The five Pandavas have married hear your suggestions as to what we

her jointly according to the rites enjoined should do."

by the sastras. With their mother

Duryodhana said: "I feel so distracted that them, and you think we can deceive them no plan occurs to me. Perhaps, we may

now, when they have acquired experience take advantage of the fact that these

and are moreover under the protection of Pandavas are not born of one and the

Drupada. They have seen through your

same mother and create enmity between

designs. Stratagems will not do hereafter.

the sons of Madri and those of Kunti. We You cannot sow dissensions among them.

can also try to bribe Drupada into joining You cannot bribe the wise and honorable our side. That he has given away his

Drupada. He will not give up the

daughter in marriage to the Pandavas will Pandavas on any account. Draupadi also not stand in the way of our making him an can never be turned against them.

ally. There is nothing that cannot be

Therefore, there is only one way left for accomplished by the power of wealth."

us, and that is to attack them before they Karna smiled and said: "This is but futile grow stronger and other friends join them.

talk."

We should make a surprise attack on the Duryodhana continued: "We should

Pandavas and Drupada before Krishna

somehow make sure that the Pandavas do joins them with his Yadava army. We

not come here and demand of us the

should take the heroic way out of our

kingdom that is now in our possession.

difficulty, as befits kshatriyas. Trickery We may commission a few brahmanas to

will prove useless." Thus spoke Karna.

spread convenient rumours in Drupada's Dhritarashtra could not make up his mind.

city and severally tell the Pandavas that The king, therefore, sent for Bhishma and they would meet with great danger if they Drona and consulted them.

were to go to Hastinapura. Then the

Bhishma was very happy when he heard

Pandavas would fear to come here and we that the Pandavas were alive and well as shall be safe, from them."

guests of King Drupada of Panchala,

Karna replied: "This too is idle talk. You whose daughter they had married. cannot frighten them that way."

Consulted on the steps to be taken,

Duryodhana continued: "Can we not Bhishma, wise with the ripe knowledge of create discord among the Pandavas by

right and wrong, replied:

means of Draupadi? Her polyandrous

"The proper course will be to welcome marriage is very convenient for us. We them back and give them half the

shall arouse doubts and jealousies in their kingdom. The citizens of the state also minds through the efforts of experts in the desire such a

settlement. This is the only science of erotics. We shall certainly way to maintain the dignity of our family.

succeed. We can get a beautiful woman to There is much loose talk not creditable to beguile some of the sons of Kunti and

you about the fire incident at the wax thus make Draupadi turn against them. If house. All blame, even all suspicion, will Draupadi begins to suspect any of them, be set at rest if you invite the Pandavas we can invite him to Hastinapura and use and hand over half kingdom to them. This him so that our plan prospers."

is my advice."

Karna laughed this also to scorn. He said: Drona also gave the same counsel and

"None of your proposals is any good. You suggested sending a proper messenger to cannot conquer the Pandavas by

bring about an amicable settlement and stratagem. When they were here and were establish peace.

like immature birds with undeveloped

Karna flew into a rage at this suggestion.

wings, we found we could not deceive

He was very much devoted to

Duryodhana and could not at all bear the Vidura went to the city of King Drupada idea of giving a portion of the kingdom to in a speedy vehicle taking along with him the Pandavas. He told Dhritarashtra:

many kinds of jewels and other valuable

"I am surprised that Drona, who has presents.

received wealth and honors at your hands, Vidura rendered due honor to King

has made such a suggestion. A king

Drupada and requested him on behalf of should examine critically the advice of his Dhritarashtra to send the Pandavas with ministers before accepting or rejecting it."

Panchali to Hastinapura.

At these words of Karna, Drona, his old Drupada mistrusted Dhritarashtra, but he eyes full of anger, said: "O wicked man, merely said: "The Pandavas may do as you are advising the king to go on the they like."

wrong path. If Dhritarashtra does not do Vidura went to Kuntidevi and prostrated what Bhishma and myself have advised,

himself before her. She said: "Son of the Kauravas will certainly meet with

Vichitravirya, you saved my sons. They destruction in the near future."

are, therefore, your children. I trust you. I Then Dhritarashtra sought the advice of shall do as you advise." She was also Vidura who replied:

suspicious of Dhritarashtra's intentions.

"The counsel given by Bhishma, the head Vidura thus assured her: "Your children of our race, and Drona, the master, is wise will never meet with destruction. They and just and should not be disregarded.

will inherit the kingdom and acquire great The Pandavas are also your children like renown. Come, let us go." At last Drupada Duryodhana and his brothers. You should also gave his assent and Vidura returned realise that those who advise you to injure to Hastinapura with the Pandavas, Kunti, the Pandavas are really bent upon the

and Draupadi.

destruction of the race. Drupada and his In jubilant welcome of the beloved

sons as well as Krishna and the Yadavas princes who were returning home after

are staunch allies of the Pandavas. It is long years of exile and travail, the streets impossible to defeat them in battle.

of Hastinapura had been sprinkled with Karna's advice is foolish and wrong. It is water and decorated with flowers. As had reported abroad that we tried to kill the been already decided, half the kingdom Pandavas in the wax house, and we should was made over to the Pandavas and

first of all try to clear ourselves of the Yudhishtira was duly crowned king.

blame. The citizens and the whole country Dhritarashtra blessed the newly crowned are delighted to know that the Pandavas Yudhishtira and bade him farewell with are alive and they desire to see them once these words: "My brother Pandu made this again. Do not listen to the words of

kingdom prosperous. May you prove a

Duryodhana. Karna and Sakuni are but

worthy heir to his renown! King Pandu

raw youths, ignorant of statesmanship and delighted in abiding by my advice. Love incompetent to advise. Follow Bhishma's me in the same manner. My sons are

advice."

wicked and proud. I have made this

In the end Dhritarashtra determined to settlement so that there may be no strife or establish peace by giving half the

hatred between you. Go to

kingdom to the sons of Pandu. He sent Khandavaprastha and make it your

Vidura to the kingdom of Panchala to

capital. Our ancestors Pururavas,

fetch the Pandavas and Draupadi.

Nahusha, and Yayati ruled the kingdom

from there. That was our ancient capital.

Re-establish that and be famous." In this interesting vehicles of the great truths they manner Dhritarashtra spoke affectionately sometimes convey.

to Yudhishthira.

Khandavaprastha, that forest full of

The Pandavas renovated that ruined city, uneven places and thorns and prickles and built palaces and forts, and renamed it cumbered with the crumbling vestiges of a Indraprastha. It grew in wealth and beauty long dead city, was indeed a frightful and became the admiration of the world.

place when it came into the possession of The Pandavas ruled there happily for

the Pandavas.

thirty-six years with their mother and Birds and beasts had made it their abode, Draupadi, never straying from the path of and it was infested with thieves and

dharma.

wicked men. Krishna and Arjuna resolved **19. THE SARANGA BIRDS**

to set fire to the forest and construct a new IN the stories narrated in the Puranas, city in its place.

birds and beasts speak like men, and

A saranga bird was living there with its sometimes they give sound advice and

four fledgelings. The male bird was

even teach spiritual wisdom. But the

pleasantly roaming about in the forest natural qualities of those creatures are with another female bird neglecting wife adroitly made to peep through this human and children. The mother bird looked after veil.

its young ones.

One of the characteristic beauties of the As the forest was set on fire as

Puranic literature is this happy fusion of commanded by Krishna and Arjuna and

nature and imagination. In a delightful the fire spread in all directions, doing its passage in the Ramayana, Hanuman, who

destructive work, the worried mother bird is described as very wise and learned, is began to lament:

made to frolic with apish joy, when he

'The fire is coming nearer and nearer

imagined that the beautiful damsel he saw burning everything, and soon it will be at Ravana's inner courtyard was Sita.

here and destroy us. All forest creatures It is usual to entertain children with stories are in despair and the air is full of the in which birds and beasts are made to

agonising crash of falling trees. Poor speak. But the stories of the Puranas are wingless babies! You will become a prey meant for elderly people, and in them

to the fire. What shall I do? Your father usually some background is given in

has deserted us, and I am not strong

explanation of animals having the gift of enough to fly away carrying you with

human speech.

me."

The usual expedient employed is a

To the mother who was wailing thus, the previous birth when those creatures were children said:

human beings. For instance, a deer was a

"Mother, do not torment yourself on our rishi in a previous birth, or a fox a king.

account. Leave us to our fate. If we die The subsequent degradation being due to here, we shall attain a good birth in some a curse.

future life. If you give up your life for our In such cases the deer will act as a deer sake, our family will become extinct. Fly and yet speak as a rishi, and in the fox the to a place of safety, take another mate and clever nature is shot through with the be happy. You will soon have other

characteristics of a wise and experienced children and be able to forget us. Mother, king. The stories are thereby made

reflect and do what is best for our race."

Despite this earnest entreaty, the mother came into the world. Take another mate had no mind to leave her children. She and live happily."

said: "I shall remain here and perish in the The fire which destroyed the whole forest, flames with you."

mercifully left the baby birds unscathed.

This is the background of the story of the When the fire had subsided, the mother birds. A rishi named Mandapala long

bird came back and saw with wonder that lived faithful to his vow of perfect

her children were safe and chirping

brahmacharya but when he sought entry to merrily. She embraced them and was

the higher regions, the gatekeeper said: intensely happy.

"There is no place here for a childless While the fire was raging, the male bird, man" and turned him back. He was then anxious for the safety of his young ones, born as a saranga bird and lived with a had expressed his fears to his new love-female companion named Jarita. She laid bird Lapita. She had petulantly upbraided four eggs. Then he left Jarita and

him. Hearing his repeated laments "Is it wandered in the woods with another

so?" she said: "I know your mind, I know female companion, Lapita.

that you desire to go back to Jarita, having The four eggs of Jarita hatched in time had enough of me. Why falsely bring in and they were the four birds mentioned the fire and the children? You have

above. As they were the children of a rishi yourself told me that the children of Jarita they could cheer and encourage their

would never perish in fire since the Fire mother in the way they did.

god has given you that boon. You may as The mother bird told her children: "There well tell the truth and go away, if you like, is a rat-hole by the side of this tree. I shall to your beloved Jarita. I shall only be put you there. You can get into the hole another of the many trusting females

and escape the fire. I shall close the mouth betrayed by unworthy males and cast out of the hole with earth and the fire will not wandering in the forest. You may go."

touch you. When the fire dies down I shall The bird Mandapala said: "Your let you out."

assumption is untrue. I took birth as a bird The children would not agree. They said: for obtaining children and I am naturally

"The rat in the hole will devour us. It is anxious about them.

better to perish in the flames than to die I shall just go and see them and then come ignobly by being eaten up by rats."

back to you " Having thus consoled his The mother bird tried to relieve the fears new mate, he went to the tree where Jarita of the children and said: "I saw an eagle was seated.

devour the rat. There is now no danger for Jarita paid no attention to her consort but you inside the hole."

remained absorbed in joy at finding her But the children said: "There are sure to children alive.

be other rats in the hole. Our danger is not Then she turned to her husband and asked ended by the killing of one rat by the in an indifferent tone why he had come.

eagle. Kindly save your life by flying He replied with affection:

before the fire reaches us and this tree

"Are my children happy? Who is the catches fire. We cannot get into the rat-eldest among them?"

hole. Why should you sacrifice your life Then Jarita cut in icily: "Do you greatly for our sake? How have we merited it,

care? Go back to her for whom you

who have done nothing for you? We have abandoned me. Be happy with her."

only brought you unhappiness since we

Mandapala philosophised: "A woman will assuming the title of emperor, Jarasandha not care for her husband after she has will certainly oppose it. And the only way become a mother. Such is the way of the to overcome his opposition is to defeat world. Even the blameless Vasishtha was and kill him. You can then not only

thus ignored by Arundhati."

perform the Rajasuya but also rescue and **20. JARASANDHA**

win the adherence of the kings who

THE Pandavas ruled Indraprastha in all languish in his prisons."

glory. Those who surrounded

At these words of Krishna, Yudhishtira Yudhishtira urged him to perform the

said: "I agree. I am but one of the many Rajasuya sacrifice and assume the title of kings who rule their kingdoms with

Emperor. It is evident that imperialism fairness and justice and lead happy

had an irresistible glamour even in those unambitious lives. It is mere vanity and days.

vainglory to desire to become an emperor.

Yudhishtira sought Sri Krishna's advice Why should not a king rest satisfied with in this matter. When Krishna learnt that his own kingdom? So, I shall give up this Dharmaputra desired to see him, he set desire to be an emperor. And really, the out in a chariot harnessed with swift

title has no temptations for me. It is my horses and reached Indraprastha.

brothers who wish it. When you yourself Yudhishtira said: "My people urge me to are afraid of Jarasandha what can we hope perform Rajasuya, but as you know, only to do?"

he who can secure the respect and

Bhima did not at all like this spirit of allegiance of all kings, can perform that cowardly contentment.

sacrifice and win the status of emperor.

Bhima said: "Ambition is the noblest Advise me, you are not among those virtue of a king. What is the good of being whose affection makes them blind and

strong if one does not know his own

partial. Nor are you one of those who

strength? I cannot reconcile myself to live advise to please and whose counsel is

a life of idle ease and contentment. He pleasant rather than true or wholesome."

who casts off indolence and properly

Krishna replied: "Quite so and that is why employs political means, can conquer

you cannot be emperor while the mighty even those stronger than himself. Strength Jarasandha of Magadha is alive and

reinforced by stratagem will surely do unconquered. He has conquered many

much. What, indeed, cannot be

kings and holds them in subjection. All accomplished by a combination of my

the kshatriyas, including the redoubtable physical strength, Krishna's wisdom and Sisupala himself, are afraid of his prowess Arjuna's dexterity? We can conquer

and are submissive to him. Have you not Jarasandha's might, if we three join and heard of the wicked Kamsa, the son of

set about it without doubts or fears."

Ugrasena? After he had become the son-

Krishna interposed: "Jarasandha should in-law and ally of Jarasandha my people certainly be slain and fully deserves it. He and I attacked Jarasandha. After three has unjustly cast eighty-six princes in years of continuous fighting we had to prison. He has planned to immolate a

acknowledge defeat and we left Mathura hundred kings and is waiting to lay hold and moved to Dwaraka in the west, and

of fourteen more. If Bhima and Arjuna

built a new city where we are living in agree, I shall accompany them and peace and plenty. Even if Duryodhana,

together we will slay that king by

Karna and others do not object to your

stratagem and set free the imprisoned in ancient days used very much the same princes. I like this suggestion."

specious reasoning as now.

Yudhishtira was not pleased with this **21. THE SLAYING OF**

advice. He said: "This may really mean **JARASANDHA**

sacrificing Bhima and Arjuna who are to BRIHADRATHA, the commander of

me as my two eyes, merely to gratify a three regiments, reigned in the kingdom of vain desire to be an emperor. I do not like Magadha and attained celebrity as a great to send them on this dangerous errand. It hero. He married the twin daughters of the seems to me far better to give up the idea raja of Kasi and vowed to them that he altogether."

would not show any partiality to either.

Arjuna said: "What is the use to us of an Brihadratha was not blessed with a child existence without heroic deeds, born as for a long time. When he became old, he we are of an illustrious line? A Kshatriya handed over his kingdom to his ministers, though endowed with all other good

went to the forest with his two wives and qualities, will not become famous if he engaged himself in austerities.

does not exert himself. Enthusiasm is the He went to Sage Kausika of the Gautama mother of success. We can seize fortune if family, with a sorrowful longing for

we do our duties energetically. Even a children in his heart. And when the sage powerful man may fail if, through

was moved with pity and asked him what lassitude, he does not employ the means he wanted, he answered:

he has. Failure is due, in the vast majority

"I am childless and have come to the of cases, to ignorance of one's own forest giving up my kingdom. Give me strength. We know we are strong, and we children."

are not afraid of using our strength to the The sage was filled with compassion and, utmost. Why should Yudhishtira suppose even as he was thinking how to help the that we are incapable of this? When we king, a mango fruit fell into his lap. He have become old, it will be time to assume took it and gave it to the king with this the ochre robe, resort to the forest and blessing: "Take it. Your wish will be pass the rest of our days in penance and fulfilled."

austerities. Now, we should lead strenuous The king cut the fruit into two halves and lives and do heroic deeds worthy of the gave one to each wife. He did so to keep traditions of our race."

his vow not to show partiality to either.

Krishna was delighted to hear these words Some time after they had partaken of the and said: "What else can Arjuna, born of fruit, the wives became pregnant.

Kunti in the Bharata race, advise? Death The delivery took place in due course. But comes to all, the hero as well as the

instead of bringing the expected joy, it sluggard. But the noblest duty of a plunged them into greater grief than

kshatriya is to be true to his race and faith, before. For they each gave birth to but a and overcoming his foes in righteous

half of a child. Each half was a monstrous battle, to win glory."

birth which seemed a revolting lump.

Finally Yudhishtira assented to the

They were indeed two equal and

unanimous opinion that their duty lay in complementary portions of one baby,

slaying Jarasandha.

consisting of one eye, one leg, half a face, This conversation has a curiously modern one ear and so on. Seized with grief, they ring about it and shows that powerful men commanded their attendants to tie the

gruesome pieces in a cloth and cast them Krishna and the Pandavas had recourse

away.

for slaying Jarasandha.

The attendants did as they were instructed They disguised themselves as men who

and threw the cloth bundle on a heap of had taken religious vows, clad in robes of refuse in the street. A cannibal Rakshasi bark-fibre and carrying the holy darbha chanced upon that place. She was elated at grass in their hands. Thus they entered the seeing the two pieces of flesh and, as she kingdom of Magadha and arrived at the

gathered them up both at once, accidentally capital of Jarasandha.

the halves came together the right way.

Jarasandha was disturbed by portents of ill And they at once adhered together and

omen. To ward off the threatened danger, changed into a whole living child, perfect he had propitiatory rites performed by the in every detail.

priests and himself took to fasts and

The surprised Rakshasi did not wish to penance.

kill the child. She took on the guise of a Krishna, Bhima, and Arjuna entered the beautiful woman and, going to the king, palace unarmed. Jarasandha received them presented the child to him saying: "This is with respect as their noble bearing seemed your child."

to indicate an illustrious origin. Bhima The king was immensely delighted and

and Arjuna made no reply to his words of handed it over to his two wives. This child welcome because they wished to avoid

became known as Jarasandha. He grew up having to tell lies.

in to a man of immense physical strength.

Krishna spoke on their behalf: "These two But his body had one weakness namely,

are observing a vow of silence for the that being made up by the fusion of two present as at part of their austerities. They separate parts, it could be split again into can speak only after midnight."

two, if sufficient force were used.

Jarasandha entertained them in the hall of This interesting story embodies the

sacrifice and returned to the palace.

important truth that two sundered parts It was the practice of Jarasandha to meet joined together will still remain weak, noble guests who had taken vows and talk with a tendency to split. When the

to them at their leisure and convenience, conquest and slaying of Jarasandha had and so he called at midnight to see them.

been resolved upon, Sri Krishna said:

Their conduct made Jarasandha

"Hamsa, Hidimbaka, Kamsa, and other suspicious, and he also observed that they allies of Jarasandha are no more. Now that had on their hands the scars made by the he is isolated, this is the right time to kill bowstring and had besides the proud

him. It is useless to fight with armies. He bearing of kshatriyas.

must be provoked to a single combat and When Jarasandha demanded the truth of

slain."

them they said frankly: "We are your foes According to the code of honor of those and seek instant combat. You can choose days, a kshatriya had to accept the

one of us at will to fight with you."

challenge to a duel whether with or

After acquainting himself as to who they without weapons.

were, Jarasandha said: "Krishna, you are a The latter sort was a fight to the death cowherd and Arjuna is a mere boy. Bhima with weighted gauntlets or a wrestling to is famous for his physical strength. So, I the death in catch-as-catch-can style. This wish to fight with him." Since Bhima was was the kshatriya tradition to which

unarmed, Jarasandha chivalrously agreed to fight him without weapons.

Bhima and Jarasandha were so equally is nothing new. We learn from the

matched in strength that they fought with Mahabharata that walkout was resorted to each other continuously for thirteen days even in ancient times.

without taking rest or refreshments, while The India of those days consisted of a Krishna and Arjuna looked on in

number of independent states. Though

alternating hope and anxiety.

there was one dharma and one culture

On the fourteenth day, Jarasandha showed throughout the land, the autonomy of each signs of exhaustion, and Krishna

state was scrupulously respected.

prompted Bhima that the time had come

Occasionally, some strong and ambitious to make an end of him.

monarch would seek the assent of his

At once Bhima lifted him and whirling

fellow kings to his overlordship, which him round and round a hundred times,

would sometimes be given without

dashed him to the earth and seizing his question.

legs tore his body asunder into two halves.

After receiving this assent he would

And Bhima roared in exultation. The two perform a grand Rajasuya sacrifice, which halves at once joined and Jarasandha, thus all the

acquiescing kings would attend in made whole, leapt up into vigorous life
token of acknowledgement of his

and again attacked Bhima.

supremacy.

Bhima aghast at the sight, was at a loss In accordance with this custom,
the

what to do, when he saw Krishna pick up Pandavas invited the other kings
after the a straw, tear it into two, and cast the bits slaying of Jarasandha
and performed the in opposite directions.

Rajasuya.

Bhima took the hint, and when once again The time came for doing the
honors of the he tore Jarasandha asunder he threw the occasion. The
custom was to render first two portions in opposite directions, so that
honor to the guest who was considered

they could not come together and join.

most worthy of taking precedence over all Thus did Jarasandha meet his
end.

others.

The captive princes were released and

The question arose as to who should be Jarasandha's son was crowned
King of

honored first. The grandsire was

Magadha. And Krishna, Bhima and

emphatically of the opinion that Sri

Arjuna returned to Indraprastha.

Krishna, the king of Dwaraka, should be With Jarasandha gone, the way was now

honored first, which was also

clear for the Rajasuya which the Pandavas Yudhishtira's own opinion.

performed with great pomp and splendor.

Yudhishtira followed the advice and

Yudhishtira assumed the title of

under his instructions Sahadeva offered to emperor.

Sri Krishna the honors enjoined by

The celebrations were marred by only one tradition. Sisupala, the king of Chedi, who incident. Towards the close of the festive hated Krishna as wickedness alone can

celebrations, at the time of paying the first hate goodness, could not tolerate it.

honor, Sisupala behaved disrespectfully in He laughed aloud in derision and said: the assembly of princes and provoked a

"How ridiculous and unjust, but I am not fight with Krishna in which he was slain.

surprised. The man who sought advice

This story is told in the next chapter.

was born in illegitimacy. (This was an **22. THE FIRST HONOR**

insulting allusion to the sons of Kunti) THE practice of staging a walkout from The man who gave advice was born of

an assembly in protest against something one who ever declines from high to low.

(This is in reference to the fact that sacrifices that you have honored him? It Bhishma was born of Ganga, the river

cannot be, for Vyasa, the great master, is naturally flowing from higher to lower present. It would have been better even if levels.) And he who did the honors was you had paid the first honor to Bhishma, also born illegitimately. And what shall I for dotard as he be, he has still the merit say of the man honored! He is a fool by of being the oldest man of your house.

birth and a cowherd by breeding. Dumb

Your family teacher, Kripacharya, is also indeed must be the members of this

present in this assembly. How could you assembly if they have not a word to say to then pay the first honor to this cowherd?

this! This is no place for worthy men."

Ashwatthama, the hero who is expert in Some of the assembled princes applauded all sastras, is here. How did you choose Sisupala. Encouraged by their applause he Krishna, forgetting him? Among the

addressed Yudhishtira:

princes assembled here, there is

"When there are so many kings gathered Duryodhana. And there is also Karna, the here, it is a shame that you paid the first disciple of Parasurama. Leaving him

honor to Krishna. Not to render respect aside, out of childish partiality, you chose where it is rightly due and to render it Krishna for the first honor Krishna who is where it is not merited are both equally neither royal, nor heroic, nor learned, nor grave offences. It is a pity that, for all holy, nor even hoary, who is nothing but a your imperial pretensions you are ignorant low cowherd! Thus you have dishonored

of this."

us all, whom you have invited here. O

Getting more and more angry as he spoke, kings, it is not out of fear that we assented he continued: "Ignoring the many kings to Yudhishtira's assuming the title of and heroes who are here at your own

emperor. We personally do not much care invitation and in malicious despise of whether he is friend or foe. But, having them, you have paid royal honors to a

heard much prate of his righteousness, we cowherd boor, a mere nobody. Vasudeva, wanted to see him uphold the flag of

the father of Krishna, was but a servant of dharma. He has now wantonly dishonored Ugrasena. He is not even of royal blood.

us, after all that talk of virtue and dharma.

Is this the place and the occasion to show What virtue or dharma was there in his your vulgar partiality for Krishna, the son giving priority of honor to this villain of Devaki? Is this worthy of the children Krishna who killed Jarasandha in an

of Pandu? O sons of Pandu, you are raw, unjust manner? You should henceforth

untaught youths, altogether ignorant of the call Yudhishtira an unrighteous person.

way to conduct a royal assembly. This

O Krishna, what impudence on your part dotard Bhishma guided you foolishly and to accept the undeserved honor which

thus made fools of you. Krishna, why,

these misguided Pandavas did you! Did

Krishna is no ruler at all! O Yudhishtira, you forget yourself? Or did you forget why did you dare to do this wretch first decent tradition? Or was it just a case of a honor in this illustrious assemblage of dog snatching at a remnant of food which kings? He has not even the merit of age nobody cared to claim or guard? Do you and if you admire grey hair, is not his not really see that this farce is a ghastly father alive? You could not have honored mockery and disgrace to yourself? It is him as your preceptor surely, for your like the mockery of showing beautiful

preceptor is Drona who is here in this things to a blind man or offering a maiden assembly. Is it as an expert in performing in marriage to a eunuch. Likewise, these

kingly honors are really an affront to you.

kings will perish, and the old order of It is now evident that the would-be

things will pass away. This catastrophe emperor Yudhishtira, the senile

will spring out of the enmity between you Bhishma, and this fellow Krishna are all and your brothers on the one side and

made of the same stuff."

your cousins, the Dhritarashtras, on the After Sisupala had spoken these harsh

other. It will culminate in a war resulting words, he rose from his seat and walked in practical annihilation of the Kshatriya out calling upon the other kings to join race. No one can go against destiny. Be him in resenting the insult. Many of them firm and steadfast in righteousness. Be followed him.

vigilant and rule the kingdom, farewell."

Yudhishtira ran after them and tried to And Vyasa blessed Yudhishtira. Vyasa's appease them with sweet words of peace words filled Yudhishtira with grief and but in vain, for they were too angry to be with a great repugnance for worldly

appeased.

ambition and life itself.

Sisupala's aggressive vanity waxed to

He informed his brothers of the prediction fighting pitch, and there ensued a terrible of unavoidable racial disaster. Life

fight between Krishna and Sisupala, in seemed to him a bitter and weary business which the latter was slain by his discus.

and his destiny particularly cruel and The Rajasuya was duly celebrated and

unbearable.

Yudhishtira recognised emperor.

Arjuna said: "You are a king and it is not **23. SAKUNI COMES IN**

right for you to be agitated. Let us meet AT the close of the Rajasuya, the princes, destiny with an undaunted front and do priests and elders, who had gathered for our duty."

the purpose, took leave and returned to Yudhishtira replied: "Brothers, may God their places. Vyasa also came to say

protect us and give us wisdom. For my

farewell. Dharmaputra rose and received part, I take this vow never to speak

him with due respect and sat by his side.

harshly to my brothers or to my kinsmen The sage said: "O son of Kunti, you have for the next thirteen years. I shall avoid all got the title of emperor which you

pretext for conflict. I shall never give way eminently deserve. May the illustrious to anger, which is the root cause of

Kuru race gain even greater glory through enmity. It shall be my duty to give no you. Give me leave to return to my

occasion for anger or pretext for hostility.

hermitage."

Thus shall we profit by Bhagavan Vyasa's Yudhishtira touched the feet of his

warning." His brothers expressed cordial progenitor and guru and said: "O master, assent.

you alone can remove my apprehensions.

The first event of the series which

Wise men have predicted from portents

culminated in the devastating slaughter on the happenings of catastrophic events. Has the blood-sodden field of Kurukshetra and this prediction been fulfilled by the death the event which was the evil root of all, of Sisupala or is more to ensue?"

was the gambling match into which

Bhagavan Vyasa replied: "Dear child, Yudhishtira was inveigled by Sakuni,

much sorrow and suffering is in store for who was Duryodhana's evil genius.

thirteen years to come. The portents

Why did the wise and good Yudhishtira indicate the destruction of the Kshatriya suffer himself to be persuaded to this step and are not exhausted with the death which he must have known to hold evil

of Sisupala. It is far from it. Hundreds of possibilities?

The main cause was his fixed resolve to Sakuni said: "O Duryodhana, the

be on amicable terms with his cousins by Pandavas are your brothers. It is not right not opposing their wishes. And a friendly on your part to be jealous of their

invitation to dice could not be summarily prosperity. They are but enjoying their turned down, since the etiquette of those legitimate inheritance. By their good

days made it a point of honor to accept a fortune they have prospered and game of equal hazard.

flourished without doing any injury to Out of his very anxiety to foster goodwill, others. Why should you be jealous? How he laid open the field for the poisonous can their strength and happiness diminish seed of hatred and death. Here is an

your greatness? Your brothers and

illustration of the futility of human plans, relations stand by you and obey you.

however well meant or wise, without

Drona, Ashwatthama and Karna are on

divine aid. Our best wisdom is vain

your side. Why do you grieve when

against fate, and if destiny is kind, our Bhishma, Kripa, Jayadratha,
Somadatta

very follies turn to our advantage.

and myself are your supporters? You can While Dharmaputra was care-
worn with

conquer even the whole world. Do not

solicitude to avoid a quarrel at all costs, give way to grief."

Duryodhana was burning with jealousy at At these words, Duryodhana
said: "O

the thought of the prosperity of the

Sakuni, it is true that I have so many to Pandavas that he had witnessed in
their support me. Why should we not wage war capital during the Rajasuya
sacrifice.

and drive the Pandavas out of

Duryodhana saw unprecedented wealth,

Indraprastha?"

attractive and sight eluding crystal doors But Sakuni said: "No. That will
not be and many pieces of exquisite artistry in easy, but I know a way to
drive

the court-hall of Yudhishthira, all

Yudhishthira out of Indraprastha without a suggestive of great prosperity.

fight or the shedding of blood."

He also saw how glad the kings of many The eyes of Duryodhana lighted up, but it countries were to become the allies of the seemed too good to be true. He asked

Pandavas. This gave him unbearable grief.

incredulously: "Uncle, is it possible to He was so absorbed in sorrow at the overcome the Pandavas without

prosperity of the Pandavas that he did not sacrificing any life? What is your plan?"

at first hear Sakuni who was by his side, Sakuni replied: "Yudhishtira is fond of speaking to him.

the game of dice and being unskillful is Sakuni asked: "Why are you sighing?

altogether ignorant of its tricks and the Why are you tormented with sorrow?"

opportunity it offers to cleverer people. If Duryodhana replied: "Yudhishtira, we invite him to a game, he would accept, surrounded by his brothers, is like Indra, following the tradition of the kshatriyas. I the king of gods. Before the very eyes of know the tricks of the game and I shall the assembled kings Sisupala was slain play on your behalf. Yudhishtira will be and not one of them had the courage to helpless as a child against me. I shall win come forward to avenge him. Like the

his kingdom and wealth for you without vaisyas who live by trade, they bartered shedding a drop of blood."

their honor and jewels and riches for

24. THE INVITATION

Yudhishtira's goodwill. How can I avoid DURYODHANA and Sakuni went to

giving way to grief after seeing all this?

Dhritarashtra. Sakuni opened the

What is the good of living?"

conversation. He said: "O king,

Duryodhana is wan with grief and anxiety.

heroism and ancestry. Why should you be You are paying no attention to his

jealous of your brother? No. You should unbearable sorrow. Why this unconcern?"

not be jealous." Thus said the old king Dhritarashtra who doted on his son

who, though overfond of his son, did not embraced Duryodhana and said: "I do not occasionally hesitate to say what he felt to see why you should be disconsolate. What be just.

is here that you already do not enjoy? The Duryodhana did not at all like the advice whole world is at your feet. When you are of his father, and his reply was not very surrounded by all kinds of pleasures like respectful.

the very gods, why should you pine in

He replied: "The man without common sorrow? You have learnt the Vedas,

sense, but immersed in learning, is like a archery, and other sciences from the best wooden ladle immersed in savoury food

of masters. As my first born, you have which it neither tastes nor benefits from.

inherited the throne. What is left you to You have much learning of statecraft but wish for? Tell me."

have no state wisdom at all, as your

Duryodhana replied: "Father, like advice to me clearly shows. The way of anybody else, rich or poor, I eat and cover the world is one thing and the my nakedness, but I find life unbearable.

administration of a state is quite another.

What is the use of leading such a life?"

Thus has Brihaspati said: 'Forbearance And then he revealed in detail the envy and contentment, though the duties of

and hatred that were eating into his vitals ordinary men, are not virtues in kings.'

and depriving life of its savour. He

The kshatriya's duty is a constant seeking referred to the prosperity he had seen in of victory."

the capital of the Pandavas that to him Duryodhana spoke thus quoting maxims

was bitterer than loss of his all would of politics and citing examples and have been.

making the worse appear the better

He burst out: "Contentment with one's lot reason.

is not characteristic of a kshatriya. Fear Then Sakuni intervened and set forth in and pity lower the dignity of kings. My detail his infallible plan of inviting wealth and pleasures do not give me any Yudhishtira to play the game of dice, satisfaction since I have witnessed the defeating him utterly and divesting him of greater prosperity of Yudhishtira. O

his all without recourse to arms.

king, the Pandavas have grown, while we The wicked Sakuni wound up with

have shrunk."

saying: "It is enough if you merely send Dhritarashtra said: "Beloved child, you for the son of Kunti to play the game of are the eldest son of my royal spouse and dice. Leave the rest to me."

me and heir to the glory and greatness of Duryodhana added: "Sakuni will win for our renowned race. Do not cherish any

me the riches of the Pandavas without a hatred towards the Pandavas. Sorrow and fight, if you would only agree to invite death will be the sole result of hatred of Yudhishtira."

kith and kin, especially when they are Dhritarashtra said: "Your suggestion does blameless. Tell me, why do you hate the not seem proper. Let us ask Vidura about guileless Yudhishtira? Is not his

it. He will advise us rightly."

prosperity ours too? Our friends are his But Duryodhana would not hear of

friends. He has not the least jealousy or consulting Vidura. He said to his father: hatred towards us. You are equal to him in

"Vidura will only give us the platitudes of

ordinary morality, which will not help us my behalf to come and play dice." Thus to our object. The policy of kings must be commanded, Vidura

went to Yudhishtira very different from the goody maxims of with an invitation.

textbooks, and is sterner stuff of which the The weak-witted Dhritarashtra, over-test is success. Moreover, Vidura does not persuaded, yielded to the desire of his son like me and is partial to the Pandavas.

through his attachment to him in spite of You know this as well as I do."

the fact that he knew this was the way that Dhritarashtra said: "The Pandavas are destiny was working itself out.

strong. I do not think it wise to antagonize **25. THE WAGER**

them. The game of dice will only lead to AT THE sight of Vidura, Yudhishtira

enmity. The passions resulting from the anxiously inquired: "Why are you so game will know no bounds. We should

cheerless? Is it well with all our relations not do it."

in Hastinapura? Are the king and the

But Duryodhana was importunate: "Wise princes well?"

statesmanship lies in casting off all fear Vidura acquainted him with his mission: and protecting oneself by one's own

"Everyone in Hastinapura is well. How efforts. Should we not force the issue fares it with you all? I have come to invite while yet we are more powerful than they you on behalf of King Dhritarashtra to are? That will be real foresight. A lost come and see the newly erected hall of opportunity may never come again, and it games. A beautiful hall has been erected is not as though we invented the game of there even like yours. The king would like dice to injure the Pandavas. It is an

you to come with your brothers, see

ancient pastime which kshatriyas have
everything, have a game of dice and
always indulged in, and if it will now return to your capital."
serve us to win our cause without

Yudhishtira seemed to ask counsel of
bloodshed, where is the harm?"

Vidura: "Wagering games create quarrels Dhritarashtra replied: "Dear son,
I have among kshatriyas. A wise man will avoid grown old. Do as you like.
But the line them if he can. We are ever abiding by that you are taking
does not appeal to me.

your advice. What would you have us

I am sure you will repent later. This is the do?"
work of destiny."

Vidura replied: "Everyone is aware that In the end, out-argued and through
sheer the playing of dice is the root of many fatigue and hopelessness of
dissuading his evils. I did my best to oppose this idea.

son, Dhritarashtra assented, and ordered Still the king has commanded me
to invite the servants to prepare a hall of games.

you and I have come. You may do as you Yet he could not forbear
consulting

like."

Vidura in secret about the matter.

Despite this warning, Yudhishtira went Vidura said: "O king, this will

to Hastinapura with his brothers and

undoubtedly bring about the ruin of our retinue. It may be asked why the wise

race by raising up unquenchable hate."

Yudhishtira responded to the invitation.

Dhritarashtra, who could not oppose the Three reasons may be given. Men rush

demand of his son, said: "If fortune favors consciously on their ruin impelled by lust, us I have no fear regarding this game. If gambling and drink. Yudhishtira was

on the contrary, fortune goes against us, fond of gambling. The kshatriya tradition how could we help it? For, destiny is all-made it a matter of etiquette and honor not powerful. Go and invite Yudhishtira on to refuse an invitation to a game of dice.

There is a third reason too. True to the game of dice also. But if you are afraid, vow he took at the time Vyasa had warned you need not play. But do not come out him of the quarrels that would arise

with this worn excuse of right and

leading to destruction of the race.

wrong."

Yudhishtira would not give any occasion Yudhishtira replied: "Well, who is to for displeasure or complaint by refusing play with me?"

the invitation of Dhritarashtra.

Duryodhana said: "Mine is the

These causes conspired with his natural responsibility for finding the stakes in the inclination to make Yudhishtira accept form of wealth and gems to play the

the invitation and go to Hastinapura. The game. My uncle Sakuni will actually cast Pandavas and their retinue stopped in the the dice in my stead."

magnificent palace reserved for them.

Yudhishtira had thought himself secure Yudhishtira rested on the day of arrival, of defeating Duryodhana in play but

and after the daily routine of duties, went Sakuni was a different matter, for Sakuni to the hall of games the next morning.

was a recognised expert. So he hesitated After the exchange of customary and said: "It is not, I think, customary for greetings, Sakuni announced to one man to play on behalf of another."

Yudhishtira that the cloth for playing the Sakuni retorted tauntingly: "I see that you game had been spread and invited him to are forging another excuse."

it.

Yudhishtira flushed and, casting caution Yudhishtira at first said: "O king, to the winds, replied: "Well, I shall play."

gambling is bad. It is not through heroism The hall was fully crowded. Drona, Kripa, or merit that one succeeds in a game of Bhishma, Vidura, and Dhritarashtra were chance. Asita, Devala and other wise

seated there. They knew that the game

rishis who were well-versed in worldly would end viciously and sat unhappily

affairs have declared that gambling should witnessing what they could not prevent.

be avoided since it offers scope for deceit.

The assembled princes watched the game They have also said that conquest in battle with great interest and enthusiasm. At first is the proper path for the kshatriyas. You they wagered jewels and later gold, silver are not unaware of it."

and then chariots and horses. Yudhishtira But a part of himself, weakened by

lost continually.

addiction to gambling, was at war with his When he lost all these, Yudhishtira

judgment and in his heart of hearts

staked his servants and lost them also. He Yudhishtira desired to play.

pledged his elephants and armies and lost In his discussion with Sakuni, we see this them too. The dice thrown by Sakuni

inner conflict. The keen-witted Sakuni seemed at every time to obey his will.

spotted this weakness at once and said: Cows, sheep, cities, villages and citizens

"What is wrong with the game? What, in and all other possessions were lost by fact, is a battle? What is even a discussion Yudhishtira. Still, drugged with

between Vedic scholars? The learned man misfortune, he would not stop.

wins victory over the ignorant. The better He lost the ornaments of his brothers and man wins in every case. It is just a test of himself as well as

the very clothes they strength or skill, that is all, and there is wore. Still bad luck dogged him, or rather nothing wrong in it. As for the result, in the trickery of Sakuni was too much for every field of activity, the expert defeats him.

the beginner, and that is what happens in a

Sakuni asked: "Is there anything else that strength. I offer him as a bet" and he you can offer as wager?"

played again and lost Bhima too.

Yudhishtira said: "Here is the beautiful The wicked Sakuni asked: "Is there any sky-complexioned Nakula. He is one of

thing else you can offer?"

my riches. I place him as a wager."

Dharmaputra replied: "Yes. Here is Sakuni replied: "Is it so? We shall be glad myself. If you win, I shall be your slave."

to win your beloved prince." With these

"Look. I win." Thus saying, Sakuni cast words Sakuni cast the dice and the result the dice and won. After that Sakuni stood was what he had foretold.

up in the assembly and shouted the names The assembly trembled.

of each of the five Pandavas and loudly Yudhishtira said: "Here is my brother proclaimed that they had all become his Sahadeva. He is famous for his infinite lawful slaves.

knowledge in all the arts. It is wrong to The assembly looked on in stunned

bet him, still I do so. Let us play."

silence. Sakuni alone turned

Sakuni cast the dice with the words:

to Yudhishtira and said: "There is one

"Here, I have played and I have

jewel still in your possession by staking won." Yudhishtira lost Sahadeva too.

which you can yet free yourself. Can you The wicked Sakuni was afraid that

not continue the game offering your wife Yudhishtira might stop there. So be

Draupadi as wager?"

lashed Yudhishtira with these words:

Yudhishtira despairingly said: "I pledge

"To you, Bhima and Arjuna, being your her," and he trembled unwittingly.

full brothers, are no doubt dearer than the There was audible distress and agitation in sons of Madri. You will not offer them, I that part of the assembly where the elders know."

sat. Soon great shouts of 'Fie! Fie!' arose Yudhishtira, now thoroughly reckless

from all sides. The more emotional wept.

and stung to the quick by the sneering Others perspired, and felt the end of the imputation that he held his step-brothers world was come.

cheap, replied: "Fool, do you seek to Duryodhana, his brothers and Karna

divide us? How can you, living an evil shouted with exultation. In that group life, understand the righteous life we Yuyutsu alone bent his head in

shame and lead?"

sorrow and heaved a deep sigh. Sakuni

He continued: "I offer as wager the ever-cast the dice and shouted again: "I have victorious Arjuna who successfully

won."

voyages across oceans of battle. Let us At once Duryodhana turned to Vidura and play."

said: "Go and fetch Draupadi, the beloved Sakuni answered: "I cast the dice" and he wife of the Pandavas. She must hence

played. Yudhishtira lost Arjuna also.

forward sweep and clean our house. Let The stubborn madness of unbroken

her come without delay."

misfortune carried Yudhishtira further Vidura exclaimed: "Are you mad that you and deeper. With tears in his eyes, he said: rush to certain destruction? You are

"O king, Bhima, my brother, is our leader hanging by a slender thread over a

in battle. He strikes terror into the heart of bottomless abyss! Drunk with success,

demons and is equal to Indra; he can

you do not see it, but it will engulf you!"

never suffer the least dishonor and he is Having thus reprimanded Duryodhana,

peerless throughout the world in physical Vidura turned to the assembly and said:

"Yudhishtira had no right to stake

Panchali as by then he had himself already asked of him the question put by

lost his freedom and lost all rights. I see Draupadi.

that the ruin of the Kauravas is imminent, Yudhishtira remained speechless.

and that, regardless of the advice of their Then Duryodhana bade Prathikami bring

friends and well-wishers, the sons of

Panchali herself there to question her Dhritarashtra are on the path to hell."

husband. Prathikami went again to

Duryodhana was angry at these words of Draupadi and humbly said: "Princess, the Vidura and told Prathikami, his

mean-minded Duryodhana desires you to

charioteer: "Vidura is jealous of us and he go to the assembly and ask your question is afraid of the Pandavas. But you are yourself."

different. Go forth and bring Draupadi Draupadi answered: "No. Return to the immediately."

assembly and put the question and

26. DRAUPADI'S GRIEF

demand an answer."

PRATHIKAMI went to Draupadi as

Prathikami did so.

ordered by his master. He said to her: "O

Enraged, Duryodhana turned to his

revered princess, Yudhishtira fell under brother Duhsasana and said:
"This man is the spell of the game of dice and has

a fool and is afraid of Bhima. Go and

wagered and lost even you. Now you

fetch Draupadi even if you have to drag belong to Duryodhana. I have
come by

her here."

Duryodhana's command to take you to

Thus commanded, the wicked Duhsasana

serve in his household as maid servant, at once sped with joy on his
errand. He which will hereafter be your office."

proceeded to the place where Draupadi

Draupadi, the spouse of the emperor who was, shouting: "Come, why do
you delay?

had performed Rajasuya, was

You are now ours. Be not shy, beautiful dumbfounded, at this strange
message.

lady. Make yourself agreeable to us, now She asked: "Prathikami, what do
you say?

that you have been won by us. Come to

Which prince would pledge his wife? Had the assembly" and in his impatience, he had nothing else to pawn?"

bade as though to take her thither by

Prathikami answered: "It is because he force.

had already lost all other possessions and Panchali rose trembling, heart-stricken had nothing else left that he played

with sorrow and started to fly for refuge to offering you as a stake."

the inner apartments of Dhritarashtra's Then he told her the whole story of how queen. Duhsasana darted after her, caught Yudhishtira had lost all his wealth and her by the hair and dragged her to the had finally betted her, after having first assembly.

forfeited his brothers and himself.

It is with a shudder of repugnance that we Though the news was such as to break the relate how the sons of Dhritarashtra

heart and kill the soul, still, Draupadi soon stooped to commit this vilest of deeds.

regained her fortitude and, with anger As soon as she came to the assembly,

blazing from her eyes, said: "O charioteer, Draupadi controlled her anguish and

return. Ask of him who played the game appealed to the elders gathered there: whether in it he first lost himself, or his

"How could you consent to my being wife. Ask this question in the open staked by the king who was himself

assembly. Bring me his answer and then trapped into the game and cheated by

you can take me." Prathikami went to the wicked persons, expert in the art? Since assembly and, turning to Yudhishthira,

he was no longer a free man, how could For that reason alone the wager is illegal.

he stake anything at all?"

Besides, Yudhishthira had already lost his Then, stretching out her arms and raising freedom, and being no longer a free man, her flowing eyes in agonised supplication how could he have a right to offer her as a she cried in a voice broken with sobs: stake? And there is this further objection.

"If you have loved and revered the It was Sakuni who suggested her as a mothers who bore you and gave you suck, pledge, which is against the rules of the if the honor of wife or sister or daughter game, under which neither player may

has been dear to you, if you believe in demand a specific bet. If we consider all God and dharma, forsake me not in this these points, we must admit that Panchali horror more cruel than death"

has not been legally won by us. This is my At this heart-broken cry, as of a poor fawn opinion."

stricken to death, the elders hung their When the young Vikarna spoke thus heads in grief and shame. Bhima could

courageously, the wisdom given by God

hold himself no longer. His swelling heart to the members of the assembly suddenly found relief in a roar of wrath that shook illumined their minds. There were great the very walls, and turning to

shouts of applause. They shouted:

Yudhishtira he said bitterly:

"Dharma has been saved. Dharma has

"Even abandoned professional gamblers been saved."

would not stake the harlots who live with At that moment Karna rose up and said: them, and you, worse than they, have left

"O Vikarna, forgetting that there are the daughter of Drupada to the mercy of elders in this assembly, you lay down the these ruffians. I cannot bear this injustice.

law though you are but a stripling. By You are the cause of this great crime.

your ignorance and rashness you are

Brother Sahadeva, bring fire. I am going injuring the very family which gave you to set fire to those hands of his which cast birth, just as the flame generated by the the dice."

arani destroys its source, the stick. It is an Arjuna however remonstrated gently with ill bird that fouls its own nest. At the very Bhima: "You have never before spoken beginning, when Yudhishtira was a free thus. The plot devised by our enemies is man, he forfeited all he possessed and entangling us also in its meshes and

that, of course, included Draupadi. Hence, inciting us to wicked action. We should Draupadi had already come into Sakuni's not succumb and play their game.

possession. There is nothing more to be Beware."

said in the matter. Even the clothes they With a superhuman effort, Bhima

have on are now Sakuni's property. O

controlled his anger.

Duhsasana, seize the garments of the

Vikarna, the son of Dhritarashtra, could Pandavas and the robes of Draupadi and not bear the sight of the agony of

hand them over to Sakuni."

Panchali. He rose up and said: "O

As soon as they heard the cruel words of Kshatriya heroes, why are you silent? I Karna, the Pandavas, feeling that they had am a mere youth, I know, but your silence to stand the test of dharma to the bitter compels me to speak. Listen. Yudhishtira end, flung off their upper garments to was enticed to this game by a deeply

show that they were ready to follow the plotted invitation and he pledged this lady path of honor and right at any cost.

when he had no right to do so, because Seeing this, Duhsasana went to Draupadi she does not belong to Yudhishtira alone.

and made ready to seize her clothes by

force. All earthly aid had failed, and in the the Pandavas left that accursed hall,

anguish of utter helplessness, she

bewildered and stunned, and seeing a

implored divine mercy and succour:

miracle in this sudden release from

"O Lord of the World," she wailed, "God calamity. But it was too good to endure.

whom I adore and trust, abandon me not After Yudhishtira and his brothers had in this dire plight. You are my sole refuge.

departed, there was a long and angry

Protect me." And she fainted away.

discussion in the palace of the Kauravas.

Then, as the wicked Duhsasana started his Incited by Duhsasana, Sakuni and others, shameful work of pulling at Panchali's Duryodhana upbraided his father with

robes and good men shuddered and

having frustrated their well-laid plans on averted their eyes, even then, in the mercy the very threshold of success.

of God a miracle occurred.

He quoted Brihaspati's aphorism that no In vain Duhsasana toiled to strip off her device could be considered wrong which garments, for as he pulled off each, ever had as its object the destruction of

fresh garments were seen to clothe her formidable enemies.

body, and soon a great heap of

He spoke in detail on the prowess of the resplendent clothes was piled up before Pandavas and expressed his conviction

the assembly till Duhsasana desisted and that the only hope of overcoming the

sat down in sheer fatigue.

Pandavas lay in guile and taking

The assembly trembled at this marvel and advantage of their pride and sense of

good men praised God and wept. Bhima

honor.

with quivering lips, loudly uttered this No self-respecting kshatriya could decline terrible oath: "May I never go to the blest an invitation to a game of dice.

abode of my ancestors if I do not rend the Duryodhana secured his doting father's breast and drink the heart's blood of this reluctant and ominous approval to a plan sinful Duhsasana, this shame of the

to entice Yudhishthira once again to a Bharata race."

game of dice.

Suddenly, the howling of jackals could be A messenger was accordingly dispatched heard. Donkeys and carnivorous birds

after Yudhishthira who had taken his

began to send forth weird dissonant cries departure for Indraprastha. He came up from all sides, portending calamities to with Yudhishthira before the latter had come.

reached his destination and invited him on Dhritarashtra who realised that this

behalf of king Dhritarashtra to come back.

incident would be the cause of the

On hearing this invitation, Yudhishthira destruction of his race, for once acted with said: "Good and evil come from destiny wisdom and courage. He called Draupadi and cannot be avoided. If we must play to his side and

attempted to soothe her again we must, that is all. A challenge to with words of gentleness and affection.

dice cannot in honor be refused. I must Then he turned to Yudhishtira and said: accept it." Truly, as Sri Vyasa says:

"You are so blameless that you can have

"There never was and never can be an no enemies. Forgive in your magnanimity antelope of gold! Yet, Rama went in vain the evil done by Duryodhana and dismiss pursuit of what seemed one. Surely, when all memory of it from your mind. Take calamities are imminent, the judgment is back your kingdom and riches and

first destroyed."

everything else and be free and

Dharmaputra returned to Hastinapura and prosperous. Return to Indraprastha." And set again for a game with Sakuni, though

everyone in the assembly tried to dissuade When he heard these words, Dhritarashtra him.

was filled with ever-greater fear and

He seemed a mere pawn moved by Kali to anxiety than before. He asked: "What do relieve the burden of the world.

the citizens say?"

The stake played for was that the defeated Vidura answered: "O great king, I shall party should go with his brothers into tell you in their own words what the

exile to the forest and remain there for citizens of all castes and creeds say: 'Our twelve years and spend the thirteenth year leaders have left us. Fie on the elders of incognito. If they were recognised in the the Kuru race who have suffered such

thirteenth year, they should go again into things to happen! The covetous exile for twelve years.

Dhritarashtra and his sons have driven Needless to say, Yudhishtira met with away the sons of Pandu to the forest.'

defeat on this occasion also, and the

While the citizens blame us thus, the

Pandavas took the vows of those who are heavens are vexed with cloudless to go to the forest.

lightning, and the distressed earth quakes, All the members of the assembly bent

and there are other evil portents."

down their heads in shame.

While Dhritarashtra and Vidura were

27. DHRITARASHTRA'S ANXIETY

conversing thus, the sage Narada suddenly WHEN the Pandavas set out for the forest, appeared before them. Narada declared: there arose a great clamor of lamentation

"Fourteen years from this day the from people who thronged the streets and Kauravas will become extinct as the result climbed the roofs and towers and trees to of the crime committed by Duryodhana"

see them go.

and vanished from sight.

The princes, who, of yore, rode in

Duryodhana and his companions were

jewelled chariots or on lordly elephants to filled with fear and approached Drona

strains of auspicious music, now walked with a prayer never to abandon them,

away from their birthright on weary feet, whatever happened.

accompanied by weeping crowds. On all

Drona answered gravely: "I believe with sides cries arose of: "Fie and Alas! Does the wise that the Pandavas are of divine not God see this from His heaven?"

birth and unconquerable. Yet my duty is The blind Dhritarashtra sent for Vidura to fight for the sons of Dhritarashtra who and asked him to describe the departure of rely on me and whose salt I eat. I shall the Pandavas into exile. Vidura replied: strive for them, heart and soul. But destiny

"Yudhishtira, the son of Kunti, went with is all-powerful. The Pandavas will surely his face covered with a cloth. Bhima went return from exile, burning with anger. I behind with his eyes lowered on his arms.

should know what anger is, for I

Arjuna proceeded scattering sand on his dethroned and dishonored Drupada on

path. Nakula and Sahadeva besmeared

account of my anger towards him.

their bodies with dust and closely

Implacably revengeful, he has performed followed Yudhishtira. Draupadi

a sacrifice so that he might be blessed accompanied Dharmaputra, her

with a son who would kill me. It is said dishevelled hair covering her face and her Dhrishtadyumna is that son. As destiny eyes streaming with tears. Dhaumya, the would have it, he is the brother-in-law and priest, went along with them singing the fast friend of the Pandavas. And things are Sama hymns, addressed to Yama, the

moving as foreordained. Your actions

Lord of Death."

tend in the same direction and your days

are numbered. Lose no time in doing good gradually his patience wore thin with

while you may; perform great sacrifice, repeated homilies.

enjoy sinless pleasures, give alms to the One day, Dhritarashtra could stand it no needy. Nemesis will overtake you in the longer. "O Vidura," he burst out, "you are fourteenth year. Duryodhana, make peace always speaking for the Pandavas and

with Yudhishtira this is my counsel to against my sons. You do not seek our

you. But, of course, you will do what you good. Duryodhana was born of my loins.

like."

How can I give him up? What is the use Duryodhana was not at all pleased with of advising such an unnatural course? I these words of Drona.

have lost my faith in you and do not need Sanjaya asked Dhritarashtra: "O king, you anymore. You are free to go to the why are you worried?"

Pandavas if you like." Then, turning his The blind king replied: "How can I know back on Vidura, he retired to the inner peace after having injured the Pandavas?"

apartments.

Sanjaya said: "What you say is quite true.

Vidura sorrowfully felt that the

The victim of adverse fate will first

destruction of the Kuru race was certain become perverted, utterly losing his sense and, taking Dhritarashtra at his word, of right and wrong. Time, the all

drove in a chariot with fleet horses to the destroyer, does not take a club and break forest where the Pandavas lived.

the head of a man but by destroying his Dhritarashtra was filled with anxious

judgment, makes him act madly to his

remorse. He reflected thin himself: "What own ruin. Your sons have grossly insulted have I done? I have only strengthened

Panchali and put themselves on the path Duryodhana, while driving the wise

of destruction."

Vidura to the Pandavas."

Dhritarashtra said: "I did not follow the But later he called for Sanjaya and asked wise path of dharma and statesmanship

him to bear a repentant message to Vidura but suffered myself to be misled by my imploring him to forgive the thoughtless foolish son and, as you say, we are fast words of an unhappy father and to return.

hastening towards the abyss."

Sanjaya hurried to the hermitage where Vidura used to advise
Dhritarashtra

the Pandavas were staying and found

earnestly. He would often tell him: "Your them clad in deer-skin and
surrounded by son has committed a great wrong.

sages.

Dharmaputra has been cheated. Was it not He also saw Vidura there and
conveyed

your duty to turn your children to the path Dhritarashtra's message adding
that the of virtue and pull them away from vice?

blind king would die broken-hearted if he You should order even now that
the

did not return.

Pandavas get back the kingdom granted to The soft-hearted Vidura, who
was dharma them by you. Recall Yudhishtira from

incarnate, was greatly moved and returned the forest and make peace with
him. You to Hastinapura.

should even restrain Duryodhana by force Dhritarashtra embraced Vidura
and the

if he will not listen to reason."

difference between them was washed

At first Dhritarashtra would listen in sad away in tears of mutual affection.

silence when Vidura spoke thus, for he One day, the sage Maitreya came to
the knew Vidura to be a wiser man than

court of Dhritarashtra and was welcomed himself who wished him well.
But

with great respect.

Dhritarashtra craved his blessing and much like those in wars of the present asked him: "Revered sir, you have day.

certainly met my beloved children, the Dwaraka was a strongly garrisoned Pandavas, in Kurujangala. Are they well?

fortress built on an island and well

Will mutual affection abide in our family provided with means of defence.
Ample

without any diminution?"

barracks had been provided and there was Maitreya said: "I accidentally met an abundant supply of food and weapons Yudhishtira in the Kamyaka forest. The and the garrison included many illustrious sages of the place had come to see him. I warriors.

learnt of the events that took place in Ugrasena imposed a stringent ban upon

Hastinapura, and I marvelled that such drinking and amusements generally for

things should have been permitted while the period of the siege. All the bridges Bhishma and yourself were alive."

were demolished and ships were forbidd Later, Maitreya saw Duryodhana who was enentry into ports in the realm.

also in the court and advised him, for his Iron spikes were planted in the moats

own good, not to injure but to make peace around the fortress and the city walls kept with the Pandavas who were not only

in good repair.

mighty themselves but related to Krishna All entrances to the city were guarded and Drupada.

with barbed wire and permits and

The obstinate and foolish Duryodhana

passwords strictly controlled ingress and merely laughed, slapping his thighs in egress. Thus no arrangements were

derision and, tearing the ground with his neglected that could further strengthen the feet and without granting an answer,

city which nature had already made

turned away.

impregnable.

Maitreya grew angry and looking at

The pay of the soldiers was increased.

Duryodhana said: "Are you so arrogant Volunteers for service were rigidly tested and do you slap your thighs in derision of before being accepted as soldiers.

one who wishes you well? Your thighs

The siege was so rigorously pushed that will be broken by a Bhima's mace and you the garrison suffered great privations.

will die on the battlefield." At this Krishna, when he returned, was struck to Dhritarashtra jumped up, fell at the feet of the heart at the sufferings of

his beloved the sage and begged forgiveness.

city and he compelled Salva immediately Maitreya said: "My curse will not work if to raise the siege, by attacking and

your son makes peace with the Pandavas.

defeating him.

Otherwise it will have effect," and strode It was only afterwards that Krishna learnt indignantly out of the assembly.

for the first time of the events at

28. KRISHNA'S VOW

Hastinapura, the game of dice and the

As SOON as the news of the slaying of

exile of the Pandavas. At once he set out Sisupala by Krishna reached his friend for the forest where the Pandavas were Salva, he became very angry and besieged living.

Dwaraka with a mighty force.

Along with Krishna went many, including Krishna having not yet returned to

men of the Bhoja and Vrishni tribes,

Dwaraka, old Ugrasena was in charge of Dhrishtaketu, the king of the Chedi

the defence of the city. The sieges

country, and the Kekayas who were all

described in the Mahabharata seem very devoted to the Pandavas.

They were filled with righteous Krishna took a solemn vow before
indignation when they heard of
Draupadi.

Duryodhana's perfidy and cried out that This vow, it will be seen, was in
perfect surely the earth would drink the blood of accord with the purpose
of the Lord's

such wicked people.

avatars, as declared in scriptures:

Draupadi approached Sri Krishna and, in a

"For protecting the righteous, for voice drowned in tears and broken with
destroying the wicked and for firmly

sobs, told the story of her wrongs. She upholding the law, I am born on
earth age said: "I was dragged to the assembly when after age."

I had but a single garment on my body.

Dhrishtadyumna also consoled his sister The sons of Dhritarashtra insulted
me

and told her how nemesis would overtake most outrageously and gloated
over my

the Kauravas.

agony. They thought that I had become

He said: "I will kill Drona, Sikhandin will their slave and accosted me and
treated cause Bhishma's fall. Bhima will take the me as one. Even
Bhishma and

lives of the wicked Duryodhana and his Dhritarashtra forgot my birth and breeding brothers. Arjuna will slay Karna, the

and my relationship to them. O

charioteer's son."

Janardhana, even my husbands did not

Sri Krishna said: "When this calamity protect me from the jeers and the ribald befell you, I was in Dwaraka. Had I been insults of those foul ruffians. Bhima's in Hastinapur, I would never have allowed bodily strength and Arjuna's Gandiva bow this fraudulent game of dice to take place.

were alike of no avail. Under such

Uninvited, I would have gone there and supreme provocation even weaklings

stirred up Drona, Kripa and the other

would have found strength and courage to elders to a sense of duty. I would, at all strike the vile insulter dead. The Pandavas costs, have prevented this destructive play are renowned heroes and yet Duryodhana of dice. When Sakuni was cheating you, I lives! I, the daughter-in-law of the

was fighting King Salva who had

emperor Pandu, was dragged by my hair.

besieged my city. It was only after I had I, the wife of five heroes, was dishonored.

defeated him that I came to know of the O Madhusudana, even you had deserted

game of dice and the subsequent sordid me." She stood trembling, utterly unable story. It grieves me that I am not able to to continue, for the grief convulsed her.

remove your sorrows immediately but you Krishna was deeply moved and he

know, some water must be lost before a consoled the weeping Draupadi. He said: broken dam is restored."

"Those who tormented you will be

Then Krishna took leave and returned to stricken to death in the bloody quagmire Dwaraka with Subhadra, the wife of

of a lost battle. Wipe your eyes. I

Arjuna, and their child, Abhimanyu.

solemnly promise that your grievous

Dhrishtadyumna went back to Panchala

wrongs shall be amply avenged. I shall taking with him the sons of Draupadi.

help the Pandavas in every way. You will **29. PASUPATA**

become an empress. The heavens may

IN the beginning of their stay in the forest, fall, the Himalayas may split in twain, the Bhima and Draupadi used, on occasions, earth may crumble or the boundless sea to argue with Yudhishtira.

may dry up, but, I tell you verily, my They would plead that only righteous words shall stand. I swear this," and anger befitted a kshatriya and that

patience and forbearance under slights and again for another thirteen years. The

insults were not worthy of him.

sastras too support me when I say that a They would quote weighty authorities and filched promise is no promise. A handful argue vehemently in support of their

of grass thrown to a tired bull ought to be contention. Yudhishtira would firmly

enough as expiation for breaking such a reply that they should abide by the promise. You should resolve to kill our promise

they had made and that

enemies immediately. There is no higher forbearance was the highest virtue of all.

duty for a kshatriya."

Bhima was burning with impatience to

Bhima was never tired of pressing his

attack and kill Duryodhana immediately view. Draupadi also would refer to the and win back the kingdom. He thought it dishonor she had suffered at the hands of unworthy of warriors to continue to dwell Duryodhana, Karna and Duhsasana and

tamely in the forest.

would quote authorities from the

Bhima said to Yudhishtira: "You speak scriptures that would give Yudhishtira like those who repeat Vedic mantras and anxiety to think.

are satisfied with the sound of the words He would sometimes answer with
though ignorant of their meaning. Your common maxims of politics and
refer to intellect has become confused. You are the relative strength of the
parties. He born as a kshatriya and yet you do not would say: "Our enemy
has such

think or behave like one. You have

adherents as Bhurishravas, Bhishma,

become a brahmana by temperament. You

Drona, Karna and Aswatthama.

know, the scriptures enjoin on a kshatriya Duryodhana and his brothers are
expert in sternness and enterprise. We should not warfare. Many feudatory
princes, as well let the wicked sons of Dhritarashtra have as mighty
monarchs, are now on their

their way. Vain is the birth of a kshatriya side. Bhishma and Drona, indeed,
have no who does not conquer his deceitful

respect for Duryodhana's character, but enemies. This is my opinion, and
to me, if will not give him up and are prepared to we go to hell by killing a
deceitful foe, sacrifice their lives on his side in the such hell is heaven.
Your forbearance

battlefield. Karna is a brave and skilful burns us worse than fire. It
scorches

fighter, well versed in the use of all the Arjuna and myself day and night,
making weapons. The course of war is

us sleepless. Those miscreants have seized unpredictable and success is
uncertain.

our kingdom by fraud and are enjoying it, There is no use in being hasty."
Thus while you lie torpid like a gorged python.

Yudhishtira managed with difficulty to You say that we should abide by our

restrain the impatience of the younger promise. How can the world-renowned

Pandavas.

Arjuna live incognito? Can the Himalayas Later, as advised by Vyasa, Arjuna went be hidden under a handful of grass? How to the Himalayas to practise austerities for can the lion-hearted Arjuna, Nakula and the purpose of getting new weapons from Sahadeva live in hiding? Can the famous the devas. Arjuna took leave of his

Draupadi walk about unrecognized by

brothers and went to Panchali to bid her others? Even if we do these impossible farewell.

things, the son of Dhritarashtra will find She said: "O Dhananjaya, may you

out through his spies. Hence, this promise prosper in your mission. May God give

of ours is impossible of performance and you all that Kuntidevi hoped and wished has been put on us merely to thrust us out for when you were born. The happiness,

life, honor and prosperity of us all depend Arjuna, who shot an arrow into it with his on you. Return after acquiring new

Gandiva bow at the same moment that the weapons." Thus Panchali sent him forth hunter Siva transfixed it with a shaft from with auspicious words.

his Pinaka bow.

It is noteworthy that though the voice was Arjuna shouted in loud voice:
"Who are Draupadi the wife's, yet the benediction you? Why are you
ranging in this forest was Kunti the mother's for the words

with your wife? How dare you shoot at

were: "May God give all that Kuntidevi the game I had aimed at?"

wished and hoped for when you were

The hunter replied as though in contempt: born."

"This forest, full of game, belongs to us, Arjuna passed through dense
forests and who live in it. You do not look tough

reached the mountain of Indrakila, where enough to be a forester. Your
limbs and he met an old brahmana. The ascetic

bearing bespeak a soft luxurious life. It is smiled and spoke affectionately
to Arjuna: rather for me to ask what you are doing

"Child, you are clad in armor and carry here." He also added that it was his
shaft weapons. Who are you? Weapons are of

that had killed the boar, and that if Arjuna no use here. What do you seek
in this garb thought differently be was welcome to

of a kshatriya in this abode of ascetics and fight about it.

saints who have conquered anger and

Nothing could please Arjuna better. He passion?" That was Indra, the king
of jumped up and showered snake-like

gods, who came to have the pleasure of arrows at Siva. To his amazement,
they meeting his son.

seemed to have no effect on the hunter Arjuna bowed to his father and
said: "I and fell back hurtless like storm-driven seek arms. Bless me with

weapons." Indra rain from a mountain peak.

replied: "O Dhananjaya, what is the use of When he had no more arrows, he started weapons? Ask for pleasures or seek to go to strike Siva with his bow. But the hunter to higher worlds for enjoyment."

seemed not to heed it and wrenched with Arjuna answered: "O king of gods, I do ease the bow out of Arjuna's hand and

not seek pleasures of higher worlds. I burst into laughter.

have come here after leaving Panchali and Arjuna, who had been disarmed with

my brothers in the forest. I seek but

humiliating ease by one who seemed an

weapons."

ordinary hunter of the forest, was struck The thousand-eyed said: "If you be with amazement, almost amounting to

blessed by the vision of god Siva, the doubt. But undaunted, he drew his sword three-eyed god, and obtain his grace, you and continued the combat.

will receive divine weapons. Do penance The sword was split into pieces on the unto Siva."

hunter's adamant frame. There was

Thus saying Indra disappeared. Then,

now nothing to do but to grapple with the Arjuna went to the Himalayas and did

formidable unknown. But here again he

penance to obtain the grace of Siva.

was outmatched.

Siva under the guise of a hunter and

The hunter caught him in an iron clasp so accompanied by his divine spouse

close that Arjuna was quite helpless.

Umadevi, entered the forest in pursuit of Worsted and overmastered, Arjuna

game.

humbly sought divine aid and meditated The chase grew fast and furious, and

on Siva. As he did so, a light broke on his presently a wild boar started charging

troubled mind, and at once he knew who forests with the blessed Draupadi, born the hunter really was.

from the sacrificial fire."

He fell at the feet of the Lord and, in a Satyaki, who was seated near, said: "O

broken voice of repentance and adoration Balarama, this is no time for lamenting.

he prayed for forgiveness. "I forgive you,"

Should we wait till Yudhishtira asks us said Siva smilingly and gave him back his to do our duty for the Pandavas? While Gandiva bow, as well as the other

you and Krishna and all other relations are weapons, of which he had been deprived.

living, why should the Pandavas waste

He also bestowed on Arjuna the

their precious years in the forest? Let us marvellous Pasupata weapon.

collect our forces and attack Duryodhana.

Arjuna's body, battered in the unequal With the army of the Vrishnis, we
are

combat, was made whole and perfect by

surely strong enough to destroy the

the divine touch of the three-eyed god and Kauravas. Why, where is the
need to foil became a hundred fold stronger and more Karna's vaunted
archery and cut off his brilliant than before.

head. Let us kill Duryodhana and his

"Go to heaven and render dutiful respect adherents in the battlefield and
hand over to your father Indra," said Siva and the kingdom to Abhimanyu
if the

vanished from view like the setting sun.

Pandavas wish to keep their word and stay Arjuna was overcome with joy
and

in the forest. This is good for them and exclaimed: "Have I really seen the
Lord befits us as men of valor."

face to face and have I been blessed with Vasudeva, who was listening
carefully to his divine touch? What more do I need?"

this speech, said: "What you say is true.

At that moment, Matali, the charioteer of But the Pandavas would not like to

Indra, came there with his chariot and receive from the hands of others what they took Arjuna to the kingdom of the gods.

have not won by their own efforts.

30. AFFLICTION IS NOTHING NEW

Draupadi for one, born of a heroic race as BALARAMA and Krishna came with

she is, would not hear of it. Yudhishtira their retinue to the abode of the Pandavas will never give up the path of

in the forest. Deeply distressed by what he righteousness for love or fear. When he saw, Balarama said to Krishna:

stipulated period of exile is over the kings

"O Krishna, it would seem that virtue and of Panchala, Kekaya and Chedi and

wickedness bear contrary fruit in this life.

ourselves will unite our forces to help the For see, the wicked Duryodhana is ruling Pandavas to conquer their enemies."

his kingdom clad in silk and gold, while Yudhishtira was delighted at these words the virtuous Yudhishtira lives in the of Krishna. "Sri Krishna knows my mind,"

forest wearing the bark of trees. Seeing said he. "Truth is greater than power or such unmerited prosperity and undeserved prosperity and has to be guarded at all privation, men have lost their faith in God.

costs and not the kingdom. When he

The praise of virtue in the sastras seems wants us to fight, he shall find us ready.

mere mummary when we see the actual

The heroes of the Vrishni race may now results of good and evil in this world.

return with the certainty that we shall How will Dhritarashtra justify his conduct meet again when the time is ripe." With and defend himself when he is face to face these words Yudhishtira gave them leave with the god of death? Even the

to return.

mountains and the earth weep at the sight Arjuna was still away in the Himalayas of the blameless Pandavas dwelling in the and Bhima's anxiety and impatience

became well nigh insupportable. He said drew us into this game of dice and cheated to Yudhishtira:

us of our kingdom and riches, and drove

"You know that our life depends on my heroic brothers, as well as Panchali Arjuna. He has been away very long, and and myself, to the forest. Arjuna, who left we have had no tidings of him. If he

us a long time ago to get divine weapons, should be lost to us, then neither the king has not returned as yet and we miss him of Panchala, nor Satyaki nor even Sri

sorely. Will he return with divine arms?

Krishna can save us, and I for one cannot And when will he be back? Surely never survive that loss. All this we owe to that was there in this world a man who

mad game of dice, our sorrows and

suffered so much sorrow as myself."

sufferings, as well as the growing strength The great sage replied: "Do not let your of our foes. To be dwelling in the forest is mind dwell on sorrow.

Arjuna will return not the duty enjoined on a kshatriya. We with divine weapons and you will conquer should immediately recall Arjuna and

your enemies in the fitness of time. You wage war with the sons of Dhritarashtra, say that there is no one in this world that with the help of Sri Krishna. I shall be as unfortunate as you. Now, that is not satisfied only when the wicked Sakuni, true, though everyone, tried by adversity, Karna and Duryodhana are slain. After

is inclined to claim pre-eminence in

this clear duty is done, you may, if you sorrow, because things felt are more than like, return to the forest and live a life of things heard or seen. Have you heard of asceticism. It is not a sin to kill by king Nala of Nishadha? He suffered more stratagem an enemy who has resorted to sorrows than yourself even in the forest.

stratagem. I have heard that the Atharva He was deceived by Pushkara at a game

Veda has incantations, which can

of dice. He lost his wealth and kingdom compress time and reduce its span. If we and had to go in exile to the forest. Less could, by such means, squeeze thirteen fortunate than you, he had not with him years into thirteen days, we would be

his brothers or brahmanas. The influence perfectly justified in doing so, and you of Kali, the spirit of the dark age, deprived will permit me on the fourteenth day to him of his discrimination and good sense.

kill Duryodhana."

And not knowing what he was doing, he

Hearing these words of Bhima,

deserted his wife who had accompanied

Dharmaputra affectionately embraced him, and wandered about in the forest, and sought to restrain his impetuosity.

solitary and almost mad. Now, compare

"Beloved brother, as soon as the period of your state with his. You have the thirteen years is over, Arjuna, the hero, company of your heroic brothers and

with the Gandiva bow, and yourself will devoted wife and are supported by a few fight and kill Duryodhana. Be patient till learned brahmanas in your adversity.

then. Duryodhana and his followers, who Your mind is sound and steady. Self-pity are sunk in sin, cannot escape. Be assured is natural, but you are really not so badly off it." While the sorrow-stricken brothers off."

were thus engaged in debate, the great The sage then narrated the life of Nala sage Brihadhaswa came to the hermitage of which constitutes twenty-eight chapters of the Pandavas and was received with the the great epic. The sage concluded with customary honors.

these words:

After a while, Yudhishtira said to him:

"O Pandava, Nala was tried by sorrows

"Revered sage, our deceitful enemies, more agonising than yours, yet he triumphed over them all and his life ended oblations. We have, therefore, resorted to happily. You have the alleviations of

this austerity, in order to persuade you to unclouded intellect and the society of your save us from this peril."

nearest and dearest. You spend much of When Agastya heard this, he decided to your time in exalted contemplation of

marry.

dharma and in holy converse with

The king of the country of Vidarbha was brahmanas who are learned in the Vedas childless and, so, careworn. He repaired to and Vedantas. Bear your trials and

Agastya to get his blessing. In granting tribulations with fortitude, for they are the him the boon, Agastya announced that the lot of man and not peculiar to you."

king would be the father of a beautiful Thus did the sage Brihadaswa console

girl, who, he stipulated should be given in Yudhishtira.

marriage to him.

31. AGASTYA

Soon the queen gave birth to a girl who THE brahmanas, who had been with

was named Lopamudra. She grew with

Yudhishtira in Indraprastha, had

years into a maiden of such rare beauty followed him to the forest. It was difficult and charm that she became celebrated in to maintain such a large establishment.

the kshatriya world. But no prince dared Some time after Arjuna had gone on his to woo her for fear of Agastya.

quest of Pasupata, a brahmana sage named Later, the sage Agastya came to Vidarbha Lomasa came to the abode of the

and demanded the hand of the king's

Pandavas.

daughter. The king was reluctant to give He advised Yudhishtira to minimize his the delicately nurtured princess in

retinue before going on pilgrimage as it marriage to a sage leading the primitive would be difficult to move freely from life of a forester but he also feared the place to place with a large following.

anger of the sage if he said nay, and was Yudhishtira, who had long felt that

plunged in sorrow.

difficulty, announced to his followers that Lopamudra, greatly concerned, discovered such of them, as were unaccustomed to

the cause of her parent's unhappiness and hardship and to hard and scanty fare and expressed her readiness, nay her desire, to those who had followed merely in token marry the sage.

of loyalty, might return to Dhritarashtra The king was relieved, and the marriage or, if they preferred it, go to Drupada, the of Agastya and Lopamudra was celebrated King of Panchala.

in due course. When the princess set out Later, with a greatly reduced retinue, the to accompany the sage, he bade her give Pandavas started on a pilgrimage to holy up her costly garments and valuable

places, acquainting themselves with the jewels.

stories and traditions relating to each. The Unquestioningly Lopamudra distributed

story of Agastya was one such.

her priceless jewels and garments amongst Agastya, it is said, once saw some

her companions and attendants, and

ancestral spirits dangling head down and covering herself in deerskin and garments asked them who they were and how they

of bark, she joyfully accompanied the had come to be in that unpleasant plight.

sage.

They replied: "Dear child, we are your During the time Lopamudra and Agastya

ancestors. If you discharge not your debt spent in tapas and meditation at

to us by marrying and begetting progeny, Gangadwara, a strong and abiding love

there will be no one after you to offer us sprang up between them. For conjugal

life, Lopamudra's modesty shrank from Seeing this, Agastya said: "To accept any the lack of privacy in a forest hermitage.

gift from this king, will be a hardship to And one day, with blushing and the citizens. So, I shall seek elsewhere,"

humbleness she expressed her mind to her and the sage was about to leave. The king husband.

said that he would also accompany him

She said: "My desire is that I may have and both of them went to another State the royal bedding, the beautiful robes and where also they found the same state of the valuable jewels I had when I was in affairs.

my father's place and that you too may Vyasa thus lays down and illustrates the have splendid garments and ornaments.

maxim that a king should not tax his

And then we shall enjoy life to our heart's subjects more than necessary for rightful content."

public expenditure and that if one accepts Agastya smilingly replied: "I have neither as gift anything from the public revenues, the wealth nor the facilities to provide one adds to the burden of the subjects to what you want. Are we not beggars living that extent.

in the forest?"

Agastya thought he had better go to the But Lopamudra knew her lord's yogic

wicked asura Ilvala and try his luck.

power, and said: "Lord, you are all-Ilvala and his brother Vatapi cherished an powerful by the strength of your

implacable hatred towards brahmanas.

austerities. You can get the wealth of the They had curious plan for killing them.

whole world in a moment if you but will."

Ilvala would, with effective hospitality, Agastya said that no doubt that was so, invite a brahmana to a feast.

but, if he spent his austerities in gaining By the power of his magic he would

things of such little moment as riches, transform his brother Vatapi into a goat they would soon dwindle to nothing.

and he would kill this pseudo-goat for She replied: "I do not wish that. What I food and serve its meat to the guest. In desire is that you should earn in the

those days, the brahmanas used to eat

ordinary way sufficient wealth for us to meat. The feast over, Ilvala would invoke live in ease and comfort."

his brother Vatapi to come out, for he had Agastya consented and set out as an

the art of bringing back to life those ordinary brahmana to beg of various whom he had killed.

kings. Agastya went to a king who was

And Vatapi, who as food had entered the reputed to be very wealthy. The sage told vitals of the unlucky brahmana, would

the king: "I have come in quest of wealth.

spring up sound and whole and rend his Give me what I seek, without causing any way out with fiendish laughter, of course loss or injury to others."

killing the guest in doing so.

The king presented a true picture of the In this manner, many brahmanas had died.

income and expenditure of the State and Ilvala was very happy when he learnt that told him he was free to take what he

Agastya was in the neighborhood, since deemed fit. The sage found from the

he felt that here was a good brahmana

accounts that there was no balance left.

delivered into his hands.

The expenditure of a State turns out

So, he welcomed him and prepared the

always to be at least equal to its income.

usual feast. The sage ate heartily of Vatapi This seems to have been the case in

transformed into a goat, and it only

ancient times also.

remained for Ilvala to call out Vatapi for the rending scene. And, as usual, Ilvala

repeated the magic formula and shouted: the following story. It is told in the

"Vatapi come out!"

Ramayana also, but not in the same detail.

Agastya smiled and, gently rubbing his Vibhandaka who was resplendent like

stomach, said: "O Vatapi, be digested in Brahma, the Creator, lived with his son my stomach for the peace and good of the Rishyasringa in a forest. The latter had not world." Ilvala shouted again and again in come across any mortal, man or woman,

frantic fear: "O Vatapi, come forth."

except his father.

There was no response and the sage

The country of Anga was once afflicted explained the reason. Vatapi had been

with a dire famine. Crops had withered for digested. The trick had been tried once too want of rain and men perished for lack of often.

food. All living things were in distress.

The asura bowed to Agastya and

Romapada, the king of the country,

surrendered to him the riches he sought.

approached the brahmanas to advise him Thus was the sage able to satisfy of some means of saving the kingdom

Lopamudra's desire. Agastya asked her
from famine.

what she would prefer whether ten

The brahmanas replied: "Best of kings, ordinarily good sons or one super-good there is a young sage called Rishyasringa son with the strength of ten.

who lives a life of perfect chastity. Invite Lopamudra replied she would like to have him to our kingdom. He has won the

one exceptionally virtuous and learned power, by his austerities, of bringing rain son. The story goes that she was blessed and plenty wherever he goes."

with such a gifted son.

The king discussed with his courtiers the Once the Vindhya became jealous of the means by which Rishyasringa could be

Meru Mountain and tried to grow in

brought from the hermitage of the sage stature, obstructing the sun, the moon and Vibhandaka. In accordance with their

the planets. Unable to prevent this danger, advice, he called together the most

the gods sought aid from Agastya. The

charming courtesans of the city and

sage went to the Vindhya Mountain and

entrusted them with the mission of

said:

bringing Rishyasringa to Anga.

"Best of mountains, stop you're growing The damsels were in a quandary.
On the till I cross you on my way to the south and one hand, they feared to
disobey the king.

return north again. After my return, you On the other, they also feared the
sage's can grow, as you like. Wait till then."

wrath. Finally, they made up their minds Since the Vindhya Mountain
respected

to go, relying on Providence to help them, Agastya, it bowed to his
request.

in achieving the good work of rescuing Agastya did not return north at all,
but the stricken land from famine.

settled in the south and so the Vindhya They were suitably equipped for
their

remain arrested in growth to this day.

enterprise before being sent to the

Such is the story as narrated in the

hermitage. The leader of this band of Mahabharata.

courtesans made a beautiful garden of a **32. RISHYASRINGA**

big boat, with artificial trees and creepers, IT is an error to think that it is
easy for a with an imitation ashrama in the center.

person to lead a life of chastity if he is She had the boat moored in the
river near brought up in complete ignorance of

Vibhandaka's hermitage, and the

sensual pleasures. Virtue guarded only by courtesans visited the hermitage with

ignorance is very insecure as illustrated by quaking hearts. Luckily for them, the sage

was not at home. Feeling that this was the to perform the agnihotra sacrifice and opportune moment, one of the beautiful gently slipped out of the hermitage.

damsels went to the sage's son.

When Vibhandaka returned to the

She thus addressed Rishyasringa: "Great hermitage, he was shocked to see the

sage, are you well? Have you sufficient place so untidy with sweet meats scattered roots and fruits? Are the penances of the all over, for the hermitage had not been rishis of the forest proceeding

cleansed. The shrubs and creepers looked satisfactorily? Is your father's glory draggled and untidy.

constantly growing? Is your own study of His son's face had not its usual lustre but the Vedas progressing?" This was how seemed clouded and disturbed as by a

rishis used to accost one another in those storm of passion. The usual simple duties days.

of the hermitage had been neglected.

The youthful anchorite had never before Vibhandaka was troubled and asked his

seen such a beautiful human form or heard son: "Dear boy, why have you not yet such a sweet voice.

gathered the sacred firewood? Who has

The instinctive yearning for society,

broken these nice plants and shrubs? Has especially of the opposite sex,
though he the cow been milked? Has anyone been

had never seen a woman before, began to here to serve you? Who gave you
this

work on his mind from the moment he

strange garland? Why do you appear

beheld that graceful form.

worried?"

He thought that she was a young sage like The simple and ingenuous
Rishyasringa

himself, and felt a strange irrepressible joy replied: "A brahmacharin of
wonderful surging up in his soul. He answered,

form was here. I cannot describe his

fixing eyes on his interlocutor:

brightness and beauty or the sweetness of

"You seem to be a bright brahmacharin.

his voice. My inner being has been filled Who are you? I bow to you.
Where is

with indescribable happiness and affection your hermitage? What are the
austerities by listening to his voice and looking at his you are practising?"
and he rendered her eyes. When he embraced me, which it

the customary offerings.

seems is his customary greeting, I

She said to him: "At a distance of three experienced a joy which I have never felt yojanas from here is my ashrama. I have before, no, not even when eating the

brought fruits for you. I am not fit to sweetest fruits," and then he described to receive your prostration, but I shall return his father the form, beauty and the doings your greetings and salutation in the way of his fair visitor.

customary with us." She embraced him Rishyasringa added wistfully: "My body warmly, fed him with the sweets she had seems to burn with desire for the company brought, decorated him with perfumed

of that brahmacharin and I should like to garlands, and served him with drinks.

go and find him and bring him here

She embraced him again, saying that that somehow. How can I give you any idea

was their way of salutation to honored about his devotion and brightness? My

guests. He thought it a very agreeable heart pants to see him."

way.

When Rishyasringa had thus brokenly

Shortly after, fearing the return of the sage expressed yearnings and disturbances to Vibhandaka, the courtesan took her leave which he had hitherto been a stranger, of Rishyasringa saying it was time for her Vibhandaka knew what had occurred. He

said: "Child, this was no brahmacharin

that you saw, but a malignant demon who Romapada gave his daughter Shanta in

sought, as demons do, to beguile us and marriage to Rishyasringa.

hinder our penances and austerities. They Though all ended as he had planned, the take recourse to many kinds of tricks and king was uneasy in his mind, for he was stratagems for the purpose. Do not let afraid that Vibhandaka might come in

them come near you."

search of his son and pronounce a curse After that Vibhandaka searched in vain on him.

for three days in the forest to find out the So, he sought to mollify Vibhandaka by wretches who had done this injury, and lining the route he would take with cattle returned baffled it his purpose.

and kind and by instructing the cowherds On another occasion, when Vibhandaka

in charge to say that they were

had gone out of the hermitage to bring Rishyasringa's servants and had come to roots and fruits, the courtesan again came welcome and honor their master's father softly to the place where Rishyasringa and place themselves at his service.

was seated. As soon as he saw her at a Not finding his son anywhere in the

distance, Rishyasringa jumped up and ran hermitage, the enraged Vibhandaka

to greet her gushingly, as pent up water thought that this might be the work of the surges out of a reservoir that has sprung a king of Anga.

leak.

He crossed intervening rivers and villages Even without waiting for prompting this and marched to the capital of the king as if time, Rishyasringa went near her and after to burn him in his anger. But as at each the customary salutation said: "O shining stage of the journey he saw magnificent brahmacharin, before my father returns let cattle which belonged to his son and was us go to your hermitage."

respectfully welcomed by his son's

This was just what she had hoped and

servants, his angry mood passed gradually worked for. And together they entered the as he approached the capital.

boat, which had been made to look like a When he came to the capital, he was

hermitage. As soon as the young sage had received with great honor and taken to the entered, the boat was freed from its

king's palace where he saw his son sitting moorings and floated easily down with its in state like the king of the gods in

welcome freight to the kingdom of Anga.

heaven. He saw by his side his wife, the As might be expected, the young sage had princess Shanta, whose great beauty

a pleasant and interesting journey and soothed and pleased him.

when he reached Anga, he certainly knew Vibhandaka blessed the king. He laid this more about the world and its ways than he injunction on his son: "Do all that will had done in the forest.

please this king. After the birth of a son, The coming of Rishyasringa delighted

come and join me in the forest."

Romapada infinitely and he took his

Rishyasringa did as his father bade him.

welcome guest to the luxuriously provided Lomasa concluded the story with these

inner apartments specially prepared for words addressed to Yudhishtira: "Like him.

Damayanti and Nala, Sita and Rama,

As foretold by the brahmanas, rain began Arundhati and Vasishtha, Lopamudra and to pour the instant Rishyasringa set his Agastya, and Draupadi and yourself,

foot in the country. The rivers and the Shanta and Rishyasringa repaired to the lakes were full and the people rejoiced.

forest in the fullness of time and spent their lives in mutual love and the worship

of God. This is the hermitage where am performing these austerities to realise Rishyasringa. lived. Bathe in these waters that desire. It takes a long time and

and be purified." The Pandavas bathed involves much hardship to learn the Vedas there and performed their devotions.

from a teacher. I am practising austerities **33. FRUITLESS PENANCE**

to acquire that knowledge directly. Bless IN the course of their wanderings, the me."

Pandavas reached the hermitage of

Indra smiled and said: "O brahmana, you Raibhya on the banks of the Ganga.

are on the wrong path. Return home, seek Lomasa told them the story of the place: a proper preceptor and learn the Vedas

"This is the ghat where Bharata, the son of from him. Austerity is not the way to

Dasaratha, bathed. These waters cleansed learning. The path is study and study

Indra of the sin of killing Vritra unfairly.

alone." With these words Indra vanished.

Here also Sanatkumara became one with

But the son of Bharadwaja would not give God. Aditi, the mother of the gods,

up.

offered oblations on this mountain and He pursued his course of austerities with prayed to be blessed with a son. O

even greater rigor, to the horror and the Yudhishtira, ascend this holy mountain distress of the gods. Indra again

and the misfortunes, which have cast a manifested himself before Yavakrida and cloud on your life, will vanish. Anger and warned him again:

passion will be washed off if you bathe in

"You have taken the wrong path to the running waters of this river."

acquire knowledge. You can acquire

Then Lomasa expatiated in greater detail knowledge only by study. Your father

on the sanctity of the place.

learnt the Vedas by patient study and so He began the story thus:

"Yavakrida, the can you. Go and study the Vedas. Desist son of a sage, met with destruction in this from this vain mortification of the body."

very place."

Yavakrida did not heed even this second He continued: "There lived in their warning of Indra and announced defiantly hermitages two eminent brahmanas,

that if his prayer were not granted, he named Bharadwaja and Raibhya, who

would cut off his limbs one by one and were dear friends. Raibhya and his two offer them as oblations to the fire. No, he sons, Paravasu and Arvavasu, learnt the would never give up.

Vedas and became famed scholars.

He continued his penance. One morning, Bharadwaja devoted himself wholly to the during his austerities, when he went to worship of God. He had a son named

bathe in the Ganga, he saw a gaunt old Yavakrida who saw with jealousy and

brahmana on the bank, laboriously

hatred that the brahmanas did not respect throwing handfuls of sand into the water.

his ascetic father as they did the learned Yavakrida asked: "Old man, what are you Raibhya. Yavakrida practised hard

doing?" The old man replied: "I am going penance to gain the grace of Indra. He to build a dam across this river. When, tortured his body with austerities and thus with handful after handful, I have built a awakened the compassion of Indra, who

dam of sand here, people can cross the appeared and asked him why he so river with ease. See how very difficult it is mortified his flesh."

at present to cross it. Useful work, isn't Yavakrida replied: "I wish to be more it?"

learned in the Vedas than any has ever Yavakrida laughed and said: "What a fool been before. I wish to be a great scholar. I you must be to think you can build a dam

across this mighty river with your silly granted to him and he was duly blessed handfuls of sand! Arise and take to some with a son named Medhavi.

more useful work."

Medhavi grew conceited at the thought

The old man said: "Is my project more that he was safe from death forever, since foolish than yours of mastering the Vedas he would live as long as the mountain

not by study but by austerities?"

existed, and he behaved with arrogance Yavakrida now knew that the old man was towards all.

Indra. More humble this time, Yavakrida One day, this vain man showed disrespect earnestly begged Indra to grant him

to a great sage named Dhanushaksha. At learning as a personal boon.

once that sage cursed that he might be Indra blessed, and comforted Yavakrida turned to ashes, but the curse took no with the following words:

effect on Medhavi who remained in

"Well, I grant you the boon you seek. Go perfect health.

and study the Vedas; you will become

Seeing this, the high-souled sage was

learned."

puzzled and then remembered the gift

34. YAVAKRIDA'S END

Medhavi had been endowed with at birth.

YAVAKRIDA studied the Vedas and

Dhanushaksha took the form of a wild

became learned. He grew vain with the

buffalo and by the power of his penances thought that he had acquired the

butted at the mountain and broke it to knowledge of the Vedas through the boon pieces and Medhavi fell down dead.

of Indra and not through human tutelage.

Bharadwaja concluded the story with this Bharadwaja did not like this and feared solemn warning to his son: "Learn that his son might ruin himself by

wisdom from this old story. Be not ruined slighting Raibhya. He thought it necessary by vanity. Cultivate self-restraint. Do not to warm him. "The

gods," he said, "grant transgress the limits of good conduct and boons to foolish people who persistently do not be disrespectful to the great

practise penances, as intoxicants are sold Raibhya."

to fools for money. They lead to loss of It was springtime. The trees and creepers self-control, and this leads to the warping were beautiful with flowers and the whole of the mind and utter destruction." He forest was gorgeous with color and sweet illustrated his advice by the ancient tale, with the song of birds.

which is given below.

The very earth seemed to be under the

In olden times there was a celebrated sage spell of the god of love. Paravasu's wife named Baladhi. He had a son whose

was strolling alone in the garden near the untimely death plunged him into grief. So, hermitage of Raibhya. She appeared more be practised rigorous penance to get a son than human, in the sweet union in her of who would never meet with death.

beauty, courage and purity.

The gods told the sage that this could At that time Yavakrida came there and

never be, for the human race was

was so overwhelmed by her loveliness

necessarily mortal, and there need must be that he completely lost his sense and self-a limit to human life. They asked him to control and became as a ravaging beast name his own limit.

with lust.

The sage replied: "In that case grant that He accosted her and taking brutal

the life of my son may persist as long as advantage of her fear and shame and

that mountain lasts." The boon was bewilderment, he dragged her to a lonely pot and violated her person.

Raibhya returned to his hermitage. He saw

"Alas! My child, you died of your pride his daughter in-law weeping, broken-and vanity. Was it not a great mistake that hearted and inconsolable and learning of you tried to learn the Vedas in a way not the shameful outrage perpetrated on her, resorted to by any brahmana? Why did

he was seized with implacable anger. He you behave so as to be cursed thus? May plucked a hair from his bead and offered it Raibhya, who caused the death of my only to the fire reciting a mantra.

son, be himself killed by one of his sons!"

At once, a maiden, as beautiful as his Thus, carried away by rage and grief the daughter-in-law, emerged from the

sage cursed Raibhya.

sacrificial fire.

Regaining control soon, he exclaimed in The sage plucked another hair from his anguish: "Alas! They alone are blessed knotted lock and offered it as oblation. A who have no sons. I have not only lost my terrible ghost rose from the fire. The sage only son, but in the madness of my grief I commanded them to kill Yavakrida. Both have also cursed my friend and

of them bowed to the order.

companion. What is the use of continuing While Yavakrida was performing the

my life?" He cremated his son's body and morning rites, the female spirit went near died by throwing himself on the funeral him and with smiles

and allurements put pyre.

him off his guard and as she ran away

35. MERE LEARNING IS NOT

with his water-jug, the male ghost rushed **ENOUGH**
on him with uplifted spear.

KING Brihadyumna, a disciple of the sage Yavakrida stood up in fear. Knowing that Raibhya, performed a great sacrifice at his mantras would be of no avail until he which he requested his teacher to let his cleansed himself with water, he looked for two sons Paravasu and Arvavasu officiate.

his water-jug. When he found it missing, With the permission of their father, both he rushed to a pond for water but the pond of them went joyfully to the capital of the was dry. He went to nearby stream, which king.

also dried up at his approach.

While arrangements were being made for There was no water for him anywhere.

the sacrifice, Paravasu desired one day to The terrible fiend pursued him

go and see his wife and, walking alone all everywhere and Yavakrida fled for his

night, he reached his hermitage before life, with the demon hot on his heels. His dawn. Near the hermitage, he saw in the sin had consumed the power of his vigils twilight, what seemed to him a beast of and fasts. At last, he sought refuge in the prey crouching for a spring and, hurling sacrificial hall of his father.

his weapon at it, killed it.

The half-blind man who was guarding the But to his horror and grief, he discovered hermitage stopped him as he could not

that he had killed his own father clad in recognise Yavakrida as, distorted with skins, mistaking him for a wild denizen of mortal fear, he sought to force his way in.

the forest. He realised that the fatal Meanwhile, the fiend overtook him and

mistake was the effect of the curse of killed him with his spear.

Bharadvaja.

When Bharadvaja returned to his

When he had hastily performed the

hermitage, he came upon his son's corpse funeral rites of his father, he went to and concluded that disrespect to Raibhya Arvavasu and told him the doleful tale. He must have led to this cruel fate.

said: "But this mishap should not interfere with the sacrifice of the king. Please do

the rites on my behalf in expiation of the accusation against a blameless brother, to sin I have unwittingly committed. There his other sins.

is, mercifully, atonement for sins

The virtuous Arvavasu who, besides being committed in ignorance. If you can be my falsely accused of a monstrous crime, was substitute here for undergoing the

also slandered as a liar, retreated to the expiation I shall be able to go and assist in forest in despair of finding justice in the conducting the king's sacrifice. I can world and betook himself to rigorous

officiate unaided, which is a thing you austerities.

cannot do as yet."

The gods were gracious and asked him:

The virtuous brother agreed and said:

"O virtuous soul, what is the boon you

"You may attend to the king's sacrifice. I seek?" High thinking and deep meditation shall do penance to free you from the

had in the meantime cleansed his heart of terrible taint of having killed a father and all anger at his brother's conduct; and so, a brahmana."

he only prayed that his father might be The virtuous Arvvasu, accordingly, took restored to life and that his brother might upon himself the expiatory rites on behalf be freed from wickedness and the sins that of his brother. That done, he came to the he had committed.

court of the king to join his brother and The gods granted his prayer.

assist in the sacrifice.

Lomasa narrated this story to

The sin of Paravasu was not washed off, Yudhishtira at a place near Raibhya's since expiation cannot be by proxy. It hermitage and said: "O Pandavas, bathe tainted his mind with wicked designs.

here and wash off your passions in this Becoming jealous of the radiance on his holy river."

brother's face, Paravasu decided to

Arvvasu and Paravasu were both sons of dishonor him by casting on him an

a great scholar. Both of them learnt at his injustice as a person and accordingly, feet and became eminent scholars

when Arvvasu entered the hall, Paravasu themselves.

loudly exclaimed so that the king might hear But learning is one thing and virtue is hear:

quite another. It is true that one should

"This man has committed the sin of know the difference between good and killing a brahmana and how can he enter evil, if one is to seek good and shun evil.

this holy sacrificial place?"

But this knowledge should soak into every Arvvasu indignantly denied the

thought and influence every act in one's accusation but none heeded him, and he life.

was ignominiously expelled from that hall Then indeed knowledge becomes virtue.

of sacrifice by the orders of the king.

The knowledge that is merely so much

Arvvasu repeatedly protested his

undigested information crammed into the innocence. "It is my brother who has mind, cannot instill virtue.

committed the sin and even then it was It is just an outward show like our clothes through a mistake. I have saved him by and is no real part of us.

performing expiatory rites."

36. ASHTAVAKRA

This made matters worse for him for

WHILE the Pandavas were wandering

nobody believed that the expiation he had among holy places in the forest, they

undergone was not for his own crime and came one day to the hermitage of the

everyone thought that he was adding false personages immortalized in the

Upanishads. Lomasa told Yudhishtira the Mithila, they came across the king and his story of that place.

retinue.

Udalaka, a great sage and teacher of

The attendants of the king marched in

Vedanta, had a disciple named Kagola,

front shouting: "Move away. Make way who was virtuous and devoted but had no for the King." Ashtavakra instead of great learning. So, the other disciples used moving out of the way said to the

to laugh and mock at him.

retainers:

Uddalaka, however, attached no great

"O royal attendants, even the king, if he is weight to his disciple's lack of erudition righteous, has to move and make way for but really appreciated

his virtues, devotion the blind, the deformed, the fair sex, and good conduct and gave his daughter persons bearing loads and brahmanas

Sujata in marriage to him.

learned in the Vedas. This is the rule The couple was blessed with a son. A enjoined by the scriptures."

child generally inherits the characteristics The king, surprised at these wise words of of both the parents. But fortunately the the brahmana boy, accepted the justness grandson of Uddalaka took after his

of the rebuke and made way, observing to grandfather rather than his father and his attendants: "What this brahmana knew the Vedas even while he was in his stripling says is true. Fire is fire whether it mother's womb.

is tiny or big and it has the power to When Kagola made mistakes, as he often burn."

did in reciting the Vedas, the child in the Ashtavakra and Svetaketu entered the

womb would twist his body with pain, and sacrificial hall. The gatekeeper stopped so it came to pass that he had eight

them and said: "Boys cannot go in. Only crooked bends in his body when he was

old men learned in the Vedas may go into born.

the sacrificial hall."

These crooked bends earned him the name Ashtavakra replied: "We are not mere of Ashtavakra, which means "Eight boys. We have observed the necessary

crooked bends." Kagola, one ill-fated day, vows and have learnt the Vedas. Those

provoked a polemical contest with Vandi, who have mastered the truths of the

the court scholar of Mithila, and, having Vedanta will not judge another on mere been defeated, was made to drown

considerations of age or appearance."

himself.

The gatekeeper said: "Stop. Have done Meanwhile Ashtavakra grew up to be a

with your idle brag. How can you, a mere towering scholar even in his boyhood, and boy, have learnt and realised the

at the age of twelve he had already

Vedanta?"

completed his study of the Vedas and the The boy said: "You mean I am not big like Vedanta.

an over-grown gourd with no substance in One day, Ashtavakra learnt that Janaka, it? Size is no indication of knowledge or the king of Mithila was performing a great worth, nor is age. A very tall old man may sacrifice in the course of which the

be a tall old fool. Let me pass."

assembled scholars would, as usual,

The gatekeeper said: "You are certainly debate on the sastras.

not old, nor tall, though you talk like all Ashtavakra set out for Mithila,

the hoary sages. Get out."

accompanied by his uncle Svetaketu. On Ashtavakra replied: "Gatekeeper, Grey their way to the place of sacrifice at hairs do not prove the ripeness of the soul.

The really mature man is the one who has

learnt the Vedas and the Vedangas, assess the greatness of a man on his mastered their gist and realised their physical appearance or age. External essence. I am here to meet the court pandit appearances are deceptive." Which shows Vandi. Inform King Janaka of my desire."

that the unlearned Kagola was not devoid At that moment the king himself came

of common sense.

there and easily recognized Ashtavakra, **37. BHIMA AND HANUMAN**

the precociously wise boy he had met

DRAUPADI used to complain frequently:

before.

"This Kamyaka forest is not beautiful The king asked: "Do you know that my without Arjuna. I find no joy in life in the court pandit Vandi has overthrown in

absence of Arjuna."

argument many great scholars in the past The other Pandavas shared Draupadi's

and caused them to be cast into the ocean?

wretchedness at separation from Arjuna, Does that not deter you from this

who had gone to the Himalayas in quest dangerous adventure?"

of divine weapons.

Ashtavakra replied: "Your eminent Bhimasena told Draupadi: "Blessed lady, I scholar has not hitherto encountered men myself feel the same about Arjuna and

like me who are proficient in the Vedas on what you say makes me thrill with love Vedanta. He has become arrogant and

and sympathy. Bereft of Arjuna, this

vain with easy victories over good men beautiful forest seems desolate. My mind who were not real scholars. I have come can know no peace without seeing Arjuna.

here to repay the debt due on account of Sahadeva, how do you feel?"

my father, who was defeated by this man Sahadeva said: "This hermitage seems to and made to drown himself, as I have

be empty without Arjuna. We shall try

heard from my mother. I have no doubt I whether a change of scene will help us to shall vanquish Vandi, whom you will see bear the pain of separation better."

crumple up like a broken-wheeled cart.

Yudhishthira addressing his priest

Please summon him."

Dhaumya said: "I have sent my younger Ashtavakra met Vandi. They took up a

brother Arjuna to win divine weapons.

debatable thesis and started an argument, That dauntless and dexterous hero has not each employing his utmost learning and yet returned. We have sent him to the

wits to confound the other. And in the end Himalayas to get from Indra, the king of the assembly unanimously declared the

gods, weapons with which we could

victory of Ashtavakra and the defeat of conquer Bhishma, Drona, Kripa and

Vandi.

Aswatthama, since it is certain that these The court pandit of Mithila bowed his

heroes will fight on the side of the sons of head and paid the forfeit by drowning

Dhritarashtra. Karna knows the secret of himself in the ocean and going to the

divine weapons, and his supreme wish is abode of Varuna. Then the spirit of

to fight with Arjuna. I have sent Arjuna to Kagola, the father of Ashtavakra, gained gain Indra's grace and get weapons from peace and joy in the glory of his son.

him as the Kaurava heroes can be defeated The author of the epic instructs us through by no other means. Having sent him on a these words put in Kagola's mouth: "A very difficult errand, we cannot live here son need not be like his father. A father happily, for we miss him in all our

who is physically weak may have a very accustomed haunts. I wish to go strong son and an ignorant father may

elsewhere, for that may enable us to bear have a scholarly son. It is wrong to

the separation better. Can you suggest They reached Kulinda, the kingdom of

where we could go?"

Subahu, on the Himalayas. They accepted Dhaumya described many forests and holy the honors rendered to them by that king places. The Pandavas went the round of and rested there awhile. Later on, they those places to relieve themselves to some went to the charming forest of

extent from the pangs of separation.

Narayanasrama and halted there.

They spent many years in this pilgrimage One day, a breeze that blew from the

and in listening to the traditions, which northeast wafted a beautiful flower near sanctified each shrine. Draupadi would Draupadi. Draupadi took it in her hands often feel exhausted by having to traverse and was so charmed with its fragrance and mountains and forests. Bhima, sometimes beauty that she showed it rapturously to helped by his son Ghalotkacha, would

Bhima.

serve and encourage them and make their

"Come and see this flower. What a sweet labors easy.

fragrance! How charming! I shall hand

In the course of their wanderings through this over to Yudhishtira. Bring some

the Himalayan regions they came to a

flowers of this kind. We should grow this terrible forest where the path was rugged plant in our Kamyaka forest." Draupadi and steep.

ran to give the flower to Yudhishthira.

Yudhishthira was worried and told Bhima Anxious to please his beloved Draupadi, that the way would greatly distress

Bhima went in quest of that plant. He

Draupadi but that he himself would go on went alone in the direction from which the accompanied by Nakula and the sage

fragrance seemed to be borne by the

Lomasa.

breeze, without wasting a thought on the He suggested that Bhima and Sahadeva

wild beasts that crossed his path.

should stay behind at Gangadwara with

He presently came to a garden of plantain Draupadi. Bhima would not agree. He

trees at the foot of a mountain, and there said that the pain of separation from

he saw a huge monkey shining like

Arjuna ought to have taught his brother blazing fire, which lay right across his how much he would suffer if he were

path blocking it.

parted from Sahadeva, Draupadi and

He tried to frighten the animal out of his Bhima.

way by shouting at it. It only half opened Besides, Bhima could not leave

its eyes lazily and drawled: "I am Yudhishtira alone in this forest infested
indisposed and so I am lying here. Why with Rakshasas, demons and wild

lid you wake me? You are a wise human

animals. The way was hard, but he could being and I am mere animal. It is
proper easily carry Draupadi across the most

that the rational man should show mercy difficult parts of it. He could
carry Nakula to animals as interior creatures. I am and Sahadeva also.

afraid you are ignorant of right and

When Bhima said these words,

wrong. Who are you? Whither are you

Yudhishtira embraced him and blessed

bound? It is not possible to go further him and wished him an increase of

along this mountain path which is the path physical strength. Draupadi
smiled and of the gods. Men cannot cross this limit.

said, addressing Yudhishtira: "No one Eat what you like of the fruits of
this place need carry me. I can walk. Do not be

and if you are wise, go back in peace."

anxious about me."

Bhima, unused to being taken so lightly, grew angry and shouted: "Who
are you,

yourself, you monkey, that indulges in He set his jaws and strained every muscle such tall talk? I am a kshatriya hero, a till the very sinews cracked and he was descendant of the Kuru race and a son of covered with perspiration. But, still, could Kunti. Know that I am the son of the

not move that tail the least, a little bit up Wind god. Now move away from the path

or down or sideways. In shame, he bent or stop me at your peril."

down his head, and then asked in a

Hearing these words the monkey merely

chastened mood:

smiled and said: "I am, as you say, a

"Who are you? Forgive me and reveal to monkey, but you will come to destruction me whether you are a Siddha, god or

if you try to force a way."

Gandharva." Bhima like most strong men, Bhima said: "I do not want your advice was all respect when he saw one stronger and it is no concern of yours if I go to than himself, and spoke like a pupil

destruction. Get up and move out of the addressing his master.

way or I will make you."

Hanuman replied: "O mighty-armed

The monkey replied: "I have no strength Pandava, know that I am your brother,

to stand up, being but a very old monkey.

even that Hanuman, the son of the Wind If you have to go at any cost, jump over god, whom you mentioned a little while me."

ago. If you go on this path, which is the Bhima said: "Nothing could be easier but road to the spirit-world where the Yakshas the scriptures forbid it. Otherwise I should and the Rakshasas abide, you will meet jump over you and the mountain in one with danger and that is why I stop you. No bound, like Hanuman crossing the ocean."

man can go beyond this and live. But here The monkey remarked as though in

is the stream with its depths where you surprise: "O best of men, who is that can find the Saugandhika plant you came Hanuman who crossed the ocean? If you

to seek."

know his story, enlighten me."

Bhima was transported with delight: "I Bhima roared and said: "Have you not count myself the most fortunate of men in heard of Hanuman, my elder brother, who that I have been blessed to meet my

crossed the ocean, a hundred yojanas in brother. I wish to see the form in which breadth, to seek and find Sita, the wife of you crossed the ocean," and he prostrated Rama? I am equal to him in strength and before Hanuman.

heroism. Well, that is enough talk, now Hanuman smiled and began to increase

get up and make way and do not provoke the size of his body and stood forth firmly me to do you some harm."

to the world like a mountain seeming to The monkey answered: "O mighty hero, fill the landscape.

be patient. Be gentle as you are strong, Bhima was thrilled at actually seeing that and have mercy on the old and weak. I

divine form of this elder brother, the mere have no strength to rise up as I am

description of which had till then filled decrepit with age. Since you have scruples him with wonder. He covered his eyes,

in jumping over me, kindly move aside

unable to bear the dazzling light radiating my tail and make a path for yourself."

from that figure.

Proud of his immense strength, Bhima

Hanuman said: "Bhima, in the presence of thought to pull the monkey out of the way my enemies, my body can grow still

by its tail. But, to his amazement he could more." And Hanuman contracted his not move it in the least, though he exerted body, resuming his former size. He

all his strength.

tenderly embraced Bhimasena.

Bhagavan Vyasa says that Bhima felt Hearing this Markandeya told him a completely refreshed and became much sacred story.

stronger than before by the embrace of There was once a brahmana, named Hanuman.

Kausika who observed his vow of

Hanuman said: "O hero, go to your abode.

brahmacharya. with great steadfastness Think of me whenever you are in need. I and devotion.

felt the same delight when I embraced you One day, he sat under a tree reciting the that I had in times of yore when I was Vedas. A crane, perched on the top of the fortunate enough to touch the divine body tree, defiled his head with its droppings.

of Sri Rama. Ask any boon that you like."

He looked up at it, and his angry look Bhima said: "Blessed are the Pandavas for killed the bird and it fell down dead.

I have had the good fortune to see you.

The brahmana was pained when he saw

Inspired with your strength we are sure to the dead bird lying on the ground.

conquer our enemies."

How frightful it would be if wishes

Hanuman gave this parting blessing to his fulfilled themselves, if each hasty or angry brother:

wish took effect at once! How much there

"While you roar like a lion in the would be to regret or repent afterwards! It battlefield, my voice shall join yours and is lucky for us that wishes depend

strike terror into the hearts of your

on outward circumstances for

enemies. I shall be present on the flag of accomplishment, since that saves us from the chariot of your brother Arjuna. You much sin and sorrow.

will be victorious."

Kausika sorrowed that the evil thought Hanuman pointed out to Bhima the stream that passed in his mind in a moment of nearby, where grew the Saugandhika

anger had killed an innocent bird. Some flowers he had come to seek.

time later, he went as usual to beg alms.

This put Bhima at once in mind of

He stood before the door of a house to Draupadi who was waiting for his return, receive his dole. The housewife was

and he collected the flowers and returned cleansing utensils at that time. Kausika to her without delay.

waited in the hope that she would attend **38. I AM NO CRANE**

to him after her work was over.

ONCE the sage Markandeya came to see

In the meantime the master of the house the Pandavas. Yudhishtira happened to returned, tired and hungry, and the wife talk of the virtues of the fair sex and said: had to attend to his wants, wash and dry

"What greater wonder is there in this his feet and serve him with food.

world than the patience and the chastity of In this preoccupation she seemed to have woman? She gives birth to a child after forgotten the mendicant waiting outside.

cherishing it in her womb as dearer than After her husband had been cared for and life itself. She brings it into the world fed, she came out with alms to the

in pain and anxiety and thence forward her mendicant.

one thought is for its health and

She said: "I am sorry to have kept you happiness. Large hearted and forgiving, a waiting long. Pardon me."

woman forgives and continues to love

Kausika, burning with anger, said: "Lady, even a wicked husband who neglects and you have made me wait for such a long

hates and subjects her to all sorts of time. This indifference is not fair."

miseries. How strange!"

The woman told the brahmana: "Best of

"Revered sir, I know why you have come.

brahmanas, kindly do forgive me. I was Let us go home," said the butcher and he serving my husband and hence the delay."

took the brahmana to his house where he The brahmana remarked: "It is right and saw a happy family and was greatly struck proper to attend on the husband, but the by the devotion with which the butcher brahmana also should not be disregarded.

served his parents.

You seem an arrogant woman."

Kausika took his lessons from that butcher She said: "Be not angry with me and on dharma, man's calling and duty.

remember that I kept you waiting only

Afterwards, the brahmana returned to his because I was dutifully serving my

house and began to tend his parents, a husband. I am no crane to be killed by a duty, which he had rather neglected

violent thought and your rage can do no before.

harm to the woman who devotes herself to The moral of this striking story of

the service of her husband."

Dharmavyadha so skillfully woven by

The brahmana was taken aback. He

Vedavyasa into the Mahabharata, is the wondered how the woman knew of the

same as the teaching of the Gita. Man

crane incident.

reaches perfection by the honest pursuit of She continued: "O great one, you do not whatever calling falls to his lot in life, and know the secret of duty, and you are also that this is really worship of God who not aware that anger is the greatest enemy created and pervades all. (Bhagavad Gita, that dwells in man. Forgive the delay in XVIII, 45-46)

attending to you. Go to Mithila and be The occupation may be one he is born to instructed in the secret of good life by in society or it may have been forced on Dharmavyadha living in that city."

him by circumstances or he may have

The brahmana was amazed. He said: "I taken it up by choice. But what really deserve your just admonition and it will matters is the spirit of sincerity and do me good. May all good attend you."

faithfulness with which be does his life's With these words he went to Mithila.

work.

Kausika reached Mithila and looked for Vedavyasa emphasizes this great truth by Dharmavyadha's residence, which he

making a scholarly brahmana, who did not thought would be some lonely hermitage know it, learn it from a butcher, who lived far from the noise and bustle of common it in his humble and despised life.

life.

39. THE WICKED ARE NEVER

He walked along magnificent roads

SATISFIED

between beautiful houses and gardens in MANY brahmanas visited the Pandavas

that great city and finally reached a

during their exile. And one such, returning butcher's shop, in which was a man selling to Hastinapura, went to see Dhritarashtra, meat. His amazement was great when he

who received him with due honor.

learnt that this man was Dharmavyadha.

The brahmana told him how the Pandavas, The brahmana was shocked beyond

born princes, were, by unkind destiny, at measure and stood at a distance in disgust.

the mercy of the wind and the sun and

The butcher suddenly rose from his seat, suffered great privations.

came to the brahmana and inquired:

Dhritarashtra was probably sorry to hear

"Revered sir, are you well? Did that this. But what troubled him most were the chaste brahmana lady send you to me?"

consequences to his own sons. Could

The brahmana was stupefied.

Yudhishtira continue to hold the justly permission," and Duryodhana shed tears wrathful Bhima in check?

at his father's cruelty in denying him this Dhritarashtra feared that the anger of the pleasure.

Pandavas, long pent up, might one day

He said again: "The king fears the break its bounds and overflow in a

Pandavas, as he thinks that they are

devastating flood.

endowed with the power of austerities. He The king anxiously pondered thus:

forbids us to go to the forest and meet

"Arjuna and Bhima will certainly try to them, lest danger should befall us. But I punish us. Sakuni, Karna, Duryodhana

tell you, all we have done so far is labor and the short-sighted Duhsasana are

lost, without a sight of the sufferings of perched precariously up a tree in search of Draupadi, Bhima and Arjuna in the forest.

a honeycomb while below is the abyss of This life of idle ease is torment to me Bhima's anger yawning to receive them to without that great joy. Sakuni and yourself their destruction."

must seek a way of obtaining the king's The blind king pursued his thought: "Alas, consent for us to go to the forest and see why did we become a prey to

the Pandavas in their misery."

covetousness? It is not as though poverty Early next morning, Karna went to

drove us to it! Why did we take to the Duryodhana with a cheerful face and

path of injustice? Instead of enjoying our announced that he had found a way out of boundless wealth in contentment we

the difficulty.

succumbed to lust of power and

He said: "What do you think of going to possession and coveted what was not ours.

our ranches at Dwaitavana for the annual Wrong cannot but yield its bitter harvest!

stock-taking of the cows? The king

Arjuna has returned from heaven with

certainly cannot object to that." Sakuni divine weapons. What could tempt one

and Duryodhana applauded this bright

back to earth from heaven but the craving idea and sent the leader of the cowherds to for vengeance? And we have earned it!"

the king to secure his permission.

These thoughts would haunt and give him But the king would not assent. He said: no peace.

"Hunting is indeed beneficial to the Though Dhritarashtra was thus worried, princes. It is also desirable to take stock of Sakuni, Karna and Duryodhana were

the cows. But I learn that the Pandavas are giddily happy and found much pleasure in dwelling in that forest. It is not advisable exulting congratulation of one another on for you to go there. I cannot agree to send their prosperity.

you to a place near the abode of Bhima Karna and Sakuni said to Duryodhana:

and Arjuna while there is still occasion for

"The kingdom which was in the hands of anger and strife."

Yudhishtira has become ours. We need

Duryodhana said: "We shall not go near no longer burn with jealousy."

them. On the contrary we shall be very Duryodhana replied: "O Karna, all that is careful and avoid them." The king true, but would it not be a joy of joys to answered:

see with my own eyes the sufferings of

"However careful you may be, there is the Pandavas and bring their sorrow to a danger in mere nearness. Also, it is not climax by a display of our happiness? The right to intrude on the sorrows of the only way to perfect our happiness is to go Pandavas in their forest life. Anyone of to the forest and see the distress of the your soldiers might trespass and give

Pandavas, but my father will refuse

offence, which may lead to trouble.

Someone else can go in your stead to Duryodhana was annoyed at this count the cattle."

presumption and directed his men to turn Sakuni said: "O king, Yudhishtira knows the Gandharva prince out and put up the and follows the path of dharma. He has tents. The attendants returned to the lake given

his promise in the open assembly and tried to carry out their orders but and the Pandavas will follow his bidding.

found the Gandharvas too many for them The sons of Kunti will not show any

and had to retreat in precipitation.

enmity towards us. Do not oppose

When Duryodhana came to know of this,

Duryodhana who is fond of hunting. Let he grew very angry and with a large army him return after taking stock of the cows. I marched to destroy the audacious enemies shall also accompany him and see to it who had dared to resist his pleasure. A that none of us go anywhere near the

great fight ensued between the

Pandavas."

Gandharvas and Duryodhana's army.

The king, over-persuaded as usual, said: At first the fight went in favor of the

"Well, please yourselves." A heart full of Kauravas. But the tables were quickly

hate can know no contentment. Hate is a turned when Chitrasena, the king of the cruel fire, which extorts the fuel, on which Gandharvas, rallied his troops and began it lives and grows.

using his magic weapons.

40. DURYODHANA DISGRACED

Karna and the other Kaurava heroes lost THE Kauravas reached Dwaitavana with a their chariots and weapons and had to

great army and many followers.

retreat in haste and ignominy.

Duryodhana and Karna went with

Duryodhana alone remained in the

unconcealed joy at the very thought of battlefield but he was soon seized by

being able to gloat on the sad plight of the Chitrasena, who placed him in his chariot Pandavas.

bound hand and foot, and blew his conch They themselves camped in luxurious rest in token of victory.

houses in a place four miles off the abode The Gandharvas took many of the

of the Pandavas. They inspected the herds prominent Kauravas captive. The Kaurava of cows and took stock of them.

army fled in all directions and some of the After counting the cows, bulls and calves, fugitives took refuge in the hermitage of they enjoyed the dance, the hunt, the

the Pandavas.

sylvan sports and other entertainment's Bhima heard the news of Duryodhana's

arranged for them.

defeat and capture with delight and

While hunting, Duryodhana and his party amusement. He said to Yudhishtira:

reached an attractive pond near the

"These Gandharvas have done our job for hermitage of the Pandavas and ordered a us. Duryodhana, who must have come

camp to be put on its bank.

here to mock at us, has got what he

Chitrasena, the king of the Gandharvas, deserved. I feel like thanking our and his attendants had already encamped Gandharva friend!"

in the neighborhood of the pool and they But Yudhishtira reproved him: "Dear prevented Duryodhana's men from putting brother, this is not the time for you to up their camp.

rejoice. The Kauravas are our kith and kin They returned to Duryodhana and

and their humiliation, at the hands of represented that some petty prince who strangers, is ours. We cannot hold back was there with his followers was giving and take this lying down. We must rescue them trouble.

them."

Bhima did not think this very reasonable.

Sakuni interposed and said: "Listen to He said: "Why should we save this sinner Karna's words. Why do you say that you who tried to burn us alive in the wax

would give up your life when the kingdom house? Why should you feel sorry for the seized from the Pandavas is yours to

fellow who poisoned my food, bound me

enjoy? Fasting serves no purpose, for if hand and foot and wanted to drown me in you really repent of what you have done the river? What brotherly feeling can we till now, you should make friends with the really have towards these vile wretches Pandavas and give them back their

who hauled Draupadi by the hair to

kingdom."

the assembly and disgraced her?"

When Duryodhana heard this speech, his At that moment a cry of agony from

evil nature regained ascendancy, for

Duryodhana reached them faintly from the giving back the kingdom to the Pandavas distance and Yudhishtira, greatly moved, was to him a hundred times worse than

overruled Bhima's objection and bade his defeat or disgrace. He shouted: "I shall brothers go to the rescue of the Kauravas.

conquer the Pandavas."

Obedient to his behest, Bhima and Arjuna Karna said: "That is the way for a king to rallied the routed Kaurava forces and

talk."

offered battle to the Gandharvas. But

And he added: "What sense is there in Chitrasena had no wish to fight with the dying? You can do something worthwhile Pandavas and at their

approach, released only if you are alive."

Duryodhana and the other prisoners

While returning home, Karna said: "I saying that all he wanted was to teach a swear to you by all that is holy that, when lesson to these arrogant Kauravas.

the stipulated period of thirteen years is The dishonored Kauravas returned in

over, I will kill Arjuna in battle." And haste to Hastinapura, with Karna, who, then he touched his sword in token of the having been, driven off the battlefield, oath.

joined them on the way.

41. SRI KRISHNA'S HUNGER

Duryodhana, in great shame and

WHILE the Pandavas were dwelling in

dejection, felt it would have been far the forest, Duryodhana celebrated a great better if he had been killed by Chitrasena sacrifice with much pomp and splendor.

and announced his wish to fast unto death.

He wanted to perform the Rajasuya

He said to Duhsasana: "Be crowned and sacrifice, but the brahmanas told him that rule the kingdom. I can no longer continue he could not do that while Yudhishtira to live after having become a laughing and Dhritarashtra were alive and advised stock to my enemies."

him to perform the sacrifice known as the Duhsasana protested his unworthiness to Vaishnava instead.

be king and caught hold of his brother's. He accepted this advice and celebrated the feet and wept. Karna could not bear the Vaishnava with great splendor. But when sight of the brother's sorrow.

the ceremony was over, the citizens began Karna said: "This does not befit heroes of to talk among themselves that

the Kuru race. What is the use of just Duryodhana's sacrifice had not come up to collapsing under sorrow? It will but make even a sixteenth part of Yudhishtira's your enemies happy. Look at the

Rajasuya in magnificence.

Pandavas. They have not taken to fasts in The friends of Duryodhana, on the other spite of the disgrace they have suffered."

hand, praised him and the sacrifice he had celebrated and likened it to those

performed by Yayati, Mandhata, Bharata The brothers welcomed the sage, saluted and others.

and honored him. Then the sage said: "We Court flatterers were not sparing with shall be back soon. Our meals must be

their praise. Karna told Duryodhana that ready then, for we are hungry," and his Rajasuya had been only postponed till hurried off with his disciples to the river.

the Pandavas should be defeated and slain As a result of the austerities of

in battle and repeated that his part would Yudhishtira at the beginning of their stay be the slaying of Arjuna.

in the forest, the Sun god had given him

"Till I have slain Arjuna," said he, "I shall the Akshayapatra, a wonderful vessel that not take meat or wine, nor will I refuse the held a never-failing supply of food.

prayer of anyone who asks me for

In making the gift, the god had said,

anything." Such was the solemn vow

"Through this I shall place at your taken by Karna in the assembly.

disposal for twelve years as much food as The sons of Dhritarashtra were delighted is required for your daily consumption.

to hear this vow of the great hero Karna Not till everyone has been served and

and shouted in joy. They felt as if the Draupadi herself has taken her share will Pandavas had been slain already.

the vessel become empty for the day."

Spies conveyed to the Pandavas in the Accordingly, the brahmanas and other

forest the news of the oath taken by

guests would be served first. Afterwards Karna. Yudhishtira was greatly

the Pandava brothers would take their concerned, for he had a great opinion of meals. Finally, Draupadi would have her Karna's prowess.

share.

Karna had been born with divine armor

When Durvasa reached the place, all of and was undoubtedly a mighty hero. One them, including Draupadi, had eaten their morning, just before the hour of

meals and so the vessel was empty and

awakening, Yudhishtira had a dream.

denuded of its power for the day.

Many of our dreams come either in the

Draupadi was greatly troubled and

beginning or at the end of our sleep. He perfectly at a loss to find food when the dreamt that the wild beasts of the forest sage and his disciples should return after came and appealed to him piteously not to their ablutions. In the kitchen, she prayed destroy them altogether, but to move on to earnestly to Sri Krishna to come to her aid some other forest.

in this hopeless predicament and deliver Duryodhana felt sure that the Pandavas, her from the wrath of the sage.

who themselves lived from hand to mouth At once Sri Krishna appeared before her.

in the forest, would be unable to feed or

"I am very hungry," he said, "bring entertain the sage and his following, and without delay something to eat and we

would incur some dreadful curse from that shall speak of other things afterwards."

too hasty visitor for their want of

Here was a pretty pass. It looked as

hospitality. This would give him greater though the ally from whom she hoped for joy than any benefit he could have asked relief had gone over to the foe! She cried for himself when the sage offered a boon.

out in great confusion: "Alas! Why do you Durvasa went with his disciples to the try me thus, O Krishna? The power of the Pandavas as was desired

by Duryodhana, vessel given by the Sun is exhausted for as the latter were resting after their the day. And the sage Durvasa has come.

midday meal.

What shall I do? The sage and his

disciples will soon be here and as though

this were not enough, you have also come One day, a deer was rubbing itself against at this juncture saying that you are

a poor brahmana's fire-kindling mortar hungry."

and as it turned to go, the mortar got Sri Krishna said: "I am terribly hungry entangled in its horns and the affrighted and want food, not excuses. Fetch the

animal fled wildly with it into the forest.

vessel and let me see for myself."

In those days matches were unknown and Draupadi brought it to him. A tiny bit of fire was kindled with pieces of wood by cooked vegetable and a grain of rice were mechanical friction.

sticking to the rim of the vessel.

"Alas! The deer is running away with my Sri Krishna ate them with satisfaction, fire-kindler. How can I perform the fire accepting them as Sri Hari, the Soul of the sacrifice?" shouted the brahmana and Universe. Draupadi was filled with shame rushed towards the Pandavas for help in at her slovenliness in not having cleaned his extremity.

the vessel free of all remnants. A bit had The Pandavas pursued the animal but it been left which had been partaken by

was a magic deer, which sped in great

Vasudeva!

leaps and bounds, decoying the Pandavas Sri Krishna seemed replete with far into the forest and then disappeared.

satisfaction after eating his solitary grain Worn out by the futile chase, the and calling Bhima, told him to go to the Pandavas sat in great dejection under a river and intimate to the revered sage that banyan tree.

food was ready and waiting for them.

Nakula sighed: "We cannot render even Bhimasena, greatly puzzled, but full of this trifling service to the brahmana. How faith in Sri Krishna, hastened to the river we have degenerated!" said he sadly.

where Durvasa and his followers were

Bhima said: "Quite so. When Draupadi bathing.

was dragged into the assembly, we should They were in great surprise to find that have killed those wretches. Is it not

their ravenous hunger had given place to a because we did not do so that we have had pleased satiety. They had all the

to suffer all these sorrows?" and he looked comfortable cheerfulness of people who at Arjuna sadly.

had feasted well.

Arjuna agreed. "I bore in silence the The disciples told the sage: "We have vulgar and insulting brag of that son of the come here after asking Yudhishtira to charioteer, doing nothing. So we have

prepare food for us, but we feel well-fed deservedly fallen into this pitiable state."

and full and cannot eat anything more."

Yudhishtira noticed with sorrow that all Durvasa knew what it was and he told

of them had lost their cheerfulness and Bhima: "We have taken our meals. Tell courage. He thought they would be more Yudhishtira to forgive us." Then the cheerful with something to do. He was

party went away.

tormented with thirst and so he said to The explanation is that as the whole

Nakula: "Brother, climb that tree and see universe is contained in Sri Krishna, his whether there is any pool or river nearby."

satisfaction with a single grain of rice Nakula climbed the tree, looked around satisfied for the time the hunger of all and said: "At a little distance I see water beings including the sage.

plants and cranes. There must certainly be **42. THE ENCHANTED POOL**

water there."

THE stipulated period of twelve years was Yudhishtira sent him to fetch some to drawing to a close.

drink.

Nakula was glad when he got to the place water. This pool is mine. If you disobey and saw there was a pool. He was very

me, you will follow your brothers."

thirsty himself and so thought of

Arjuna's anger knew no bounds. He cried: quenching his thirst first before taking

"Who are you? Come and stand up to me, water in his quiver for his brother. But no and I will kill you," and he shot keen-sooner did he dip his hand in the

edged arrows in the direction of the voice.

transparent water than he heard a voice, The invisible being laughed in scorn:

which said:

"Your arrows do but wound the air.

"Do not be rash. This pool belongs to me.

Answer my questions and then you can

O son of Madri, answer my questions and satisfy your thirst. If you drink the water then drink the water."

without doing so, you will die."

Nakula was surprised, but carried away by Greatly vexed, Arjuna made up his mind his intense thirst and heedless of the to seek out and grapple with this elusive warning, he drank the water. At once,

foe. But first he had to quench his terrible overcome by irresistible drowsiness, he thirst. Yes, thirst was the enemy he must fell down, to all appearance dead.

kill first. So he drank the water and also Surprised that Nakula had not returned, fell down dead.

Yudhishthira sent Sahadeva to see what After anxious waiting Yudhishthira turned the matter was. When Sahadeva reached to Bhima: "Dear brother, Arjuna, the great the pool and saw his brother lying on the hero, has also not yet returned. Something ground, he wondered whether any harm

terrible must have happened to our

had come to him. But before looking into brothers, for our stars are bad. Please seek the matter further, rushed irresistibly to them out and be quick about it. Also bring the water to quench his burning thirst.

water, for I die of thirst." Bhima, racked The voice was heard again: "O Sahadeva, with anxiety, hurried away without a

this is my pool. Answer my questions and word.

then only may you quench your thirst."

His grief and rage can be imagined when Like Nakula, Sahadeva also did not heed he saw his three brothers lying there dead.

the warning. He drank the water and at He thought: "This is certainly the work of once dropped down.

the Yakshas. I will hunt them down and Puzzled and worried that Sahadeva also kill them. But O! I am so thirsty, I shall did not return, Yudhishtira sent Arjuna to first drink water the better to fight them."

see whether the brothers had met with any And then he descended into the pool.

danger. "And bring water," he added, for The voice shouted: "Bhimasena, beware.

he was very thirsty.

You may drink only after answering my

Arjuna went swiftly. He saw both his

questions. You will die if you disregard brothers lying dead near the pool. He was my words."

shocked at the sight and felt that they

"Who are you to dictate to me?" cried must have been killed by some lurking

Bhima, and he drank the water avidly,

foe.

glaring around in defiance. And as he did Though heart-broken with grief and

so, his great strength seemed to slip from burning with the desire for revenge, he him like a garment. And he also fell dead felt all feelings submerged in a monstrous among his brothers.

thirst, which irresistibly impelled him to Alone, Yudhishtira wailed full of anxiety the fatal pool. Again, a voice was heard: and thirst. "Have they been subjected to a

"Answer my question before you drink the curse or are they wandering about in the

forest in a vain search for water or have in his turn drawn to the water by a they fainted or died of thirst?"

consuming thirst.

Unable to bear these thoughts and driven At once the voice without form warned as desperate by an overpowering thirst, he before: "Your brothers died because they started out to look for his brothers and the did not heed my words. Do not follow

pool.

them. Answer my questions first and then Yudhishtira proceeded in the direction quench your thirst. This pool is mine."

his brothers had taken through tracts

Yudhishtira knew that these could be

infested with wild boar and abounding in none other than the words of a Yaksha

spotted deer and huge forest birds.

and guessed what had happened to his

Presently he came upon a beautiful green brothers. He saw a possible way of

meadow, girdling a pool of pellucid water, redeeming the situation.

nectar to his eyes.

He said to the bodiless voice: "Please ask But when he saw his brothers lying there your questions." The voice put questions like sacred flagpoles thrown pell-mell rapidly one after another.

after a festival, unable to restrain his grief, The Yaksha asked: "What makes sun he lifted his voice and wept. He stroked shine every day?"

the faces of Bhima and Arjuna as they lay Yudhishtira replied: "The power of so still and silent there and mourned: Brahman."

"Was this to be the end of all our vows?

The Yaksha asked: "What rescues man in Just when our exile is about to end, you danger?"

have been snatched away. Even the gods Yudhishtira replied: "Courage is man's have forsaken me in my misfortune!"

salvation in danger."

As he looked at their mighty limbs, now The Yaksha asked: "By the study of which so helpless, he sadly wondered who could science does man become wise?"

have been powerful enough to kill them.

Yudhishtira replied: "Not by studying Brokenly, he reflected: "Surely my heart any sastra does man become wise. It is by must be made of steel not to break even association with the great in wisdom that after seeing Nakula and Sahadeva dead.

he gets wisdom."

For what purpose should I continue to live The Yaksha asked: "What is more nobly in this world?"

sustaining than the earth?"

Then a sense of mystery overcame him,

Yudhishtira replied: "The mother who for this could be no ordinary occurrence.

brings up the children she has borne is The world held no warriors who could

nobler and more sustaining than the

overcome his brothers. Besides, there

earth."

were no wounds on their bodies which

The Yaksha asked: "What is higher than could have let out life and their faces were the sky?"

faces of men who slept in peace and not of Yudhishtira replied: "The father."

those who died in wrath.

The Yaksha asked: "What is fleetest than There was also no trace of the footprints wind?"

of an enemy. There was surely some

Yudhishtira replied: "Mind."

magic about it. Or, could it be a trick The Yaksha asked: "What is more

played by Duryodhana? Might he not

blighted than withered straw?"

have poisoned the water? Then

Yudhishtira replied: "A sorrow-stricken Yudhishtira also descended into the pool, heart."

The Yaksha asked: "What befriends a those who remain seek to live forever.

traveller?"

This verily is the greatest wonder."

Yudhishtira replied: "Learning."

Thus, the Yaksha posed many questions

The Yaksha asked: "Who is the friend of and Yudhishtira answered them all.

one who stays at home?"

In the end the Yaksha asked: "O king, one Yudhishtira replied: "The wife."

of your dead brothers can now be revived.

The Yaksha asked: "Who accompanies a Whom do you want revived? He shall

man in death?"

come back to life."

Yudhishtira replied: "Dharma. That Yudhishtira thought for a moment and

alone accompanies the soul in its solitary then replied: "May the cloud-journey after death."

complexioned, lotus-eyed, broad-chested The Yaksha asked: "Which is the biggest and long-armed Nakula, lying like a fallen vessel?"

ebony tree, arise."

Yudhishtira replied: "The earth, which The Yaksha was pleased at this and asked contains all within itself is the greatest Yudhishtira: "Why did you choose vessel."

Nakula in preference to Bhima who has

The Yaksha asked: "What is happiness?"

the strength of sixteen thousand

Yudhishtira replied: "Happiness is the elephants? I have heard that Bhima is

result of good conduct."

most dear to you. And why not Arjuna,

The Yaksha asked: "What is that,

whose prowess in arms is your protection?

abandoning which man becomes loved by

Tell me why you chose Nakula rather than all?"

either of these two."

Yudhishtira replied: "Pride, for Yudhishtira replied: "O Yaksha, dharma abandoning that man will be loved by all."

is the only shield of man and not Bhima or The Yaksha asked: "What is the loss Arjuna. If dharma is set at naught, man which yields joy and not sorrow?"

will be ruined. Kunti and Madri were the Yudhishtira replied: "Anger, giving it up, two wives of my father. I am surviving, a we will no longer subject to sorrow."

son of Kunti, and so, she is not completely The Yaksha asked: "What is that, by bereaved. In order that the scales of

giving up which, man becomes rich?"

justice may be even, I ask that Madri's son Yudhishtira replied: "Desire, getting rid Nakula may revive." The Yaksha was of it, man becomes wealthy."

pleased with Yudhishtira's impartiality The Yaksha asked: "What makes one a and granted that all his brothers would real brahmana? Is it birth, good conduct or come back to life.

learning? Answer decisively."

It was Yama, the Lord of Death, who had Yudhishtira replied: "Birth and learning taken the form of the deer and the Yaksha do not make one a brahmana. Good

so that he might see his son Yudhishtira conduct alone does. However learned a

and test him. He embraced Yudhishtira person may be he will not be a brahmana and blessed him.

if he is a slave to bad habits. Even though Yama said: "Only a few days remain to he may be learned in the four Vedas, a complete the stipulated period of your man of bad conduct falls to a lower class."

exile in the forest. The thirteenth year will The Yaksha asked: "What is the greatest also pass by. None of your enemies will wonder in the world?"

be able to discover you. You will

Yudhishtira replied: "Every day, men see successfully fulfil your undertaking," and creatures depart to Yama's abode and yet, saying this he disappeared.

The Pandavas had, no doubt, to pass So spoke Yudhishtira to the brahmanas through all sorts of troubles during their who were living with the Pandavas till exile, but the gains too were not

then. His voice shook with emotion as he inconsiderable. It was a period of hard spoke these words.

discipline and searching probation

Dhaumya consoled him. He said: "Parting, through which they emerged stronger and is hard, and the dangers are many and

nobler men.

great. But you are too wise and learned to Arjuna returned from tapas with divine be shaken or daunted. You must disguise weapons and strengthened by contact with yourselves. Indra, the Lord of gods, when Indra. Bhima also met his elder brother pestered by the demons, disguised himself Hanuman near the lake where the

as a brahmana and lived unknown in the Saugandhika flowers bloomed and got

country of Nishadha. Safely concealed

tenfold strength from his embrace. Having thus, he managed to destroy his enemies.

met, at the enchanted pool, his father You must also do likewise. Did not

Yama, the Lord of Dharma, Yudhishtira Mahavishnu, the Lord of the Universe,

shone with tenfold lustre.

become a child in the womb of Aditi,

"The minds of those who listen to the suffer human birth, and take away from sacred story of Yudhishtira's meeting Emperor Bali his kingdom for the

with his father, will never go after evil.

salvation of the world? Did not Lord

They will never seek to create quarrels Narayana, the refuge of men, enter into among friends or covet the wealth of

the weapon of Indra to defeat Vritra, the others. They will never fall victims to lust.

asura king? Did not the Fire god hide

They will never be unduly attached to

himself in the waters for the sake of the transitory things." Thus said

gods? Does not the moon keep out of

Vaisampayana to Janamejaya as he related sight every day? Did not Lord Vishnu, the this story of the Yaksha. May the same all-pervading God,

descend as the son of good attend the readers of this story as Dasaratha
and spend long years, suffering retold by us.

many sorrows for the sake of killing

43. DOMESTIC SERVICE

Ravana? The greatest souls in the past

"O BRAHMANAS, we have been

have sanctified disguise for a good

deceived by the sons of Dhritarashtra, purpose. You will, likewise, conquer your cheated out of our kingdom and reduced enemies and win prosperity."

to poverty. Still we have passed these Yudhishtira took leave of the brahmanas years cheerfully with joy in the forest. The and gave the members of his retinue leave thirteenth year of exile has come, and with to go home. The Pandavas retired to a

it the time for us to part from you. For we secluded spot in the forest and discussed have to spend the next twelve months

their future line of action. Yudhishtira undiscovered by the spies of Duryodhana.

sadly asked Arjuna: "You are well God knows when the day will dawn which conversant with the ways of the world.

will see us together again, without fear or Where would it be best for us to spend the concealment. Now, bless us before we go.

thirteenth year?"

And may we escape the notice of those

Arjuna replied: "O great king, you know who may wish to betray us to the sons of Yama, the Lord of Death, has blessed us.

Dhritarashtra, either through fear or hope We can easily pass the twelve months

of reward."

together without being discovered. There are many charming states for us to choose

from for our sojourn, states like Panchala, Bhima laughingly replied: "O king, I Matsya, Salva, Videha, Bahlika,

think of taking service as a cook in the Dasharna, Surasena, Kalinga, and court of Virata. You know that I have a Magadha. It is, of course, for you to

great appetite and that I am also an expert choose. But if I may venture an opinion, in cooking. I shall please Virata by

the Matsya country of king Virata is the preparing such dainty food as he has never best, prosperous and charming as it is."

tasted. I shall chop the trees of the forest Yudhishtira answered: "Virata, the king and bring heaps of fuel. I shall also delight of Matsya, is very strong and he loves us the king by contending with and defeating much. He is of mature judgment and is

the wrestlers who come to his court."

devoted to the practice of virtue. He will This made Yudhishtira anxious for he

not be won over or frightened by

feared that danger might befall them if Duryodhana. I agree that it would be best Bhima engaged himself in wrestling

to live incognito in Virata's kingdom."

bouts. At once Bhima spoke thus to calm Arjuna said: "Well then, O king, what his fears:

work would you seek in the court of

"I shall not kill anyone. I may give a bad Virata?"

jolt to any wrestler who deserves it but I When he asked this question, Arjuna was shall not kill anyone. I shall restrain mad full of sorrow at the thought of

bulls, buffaloes and other wild animals Yudhishtira, the great and guileless king, and thus entertain king Virata."

who had performed the Rajasuya

Afterwards Yudhishtira addressed

sacrifice, having to disguise himself and Arjuna: "What profession do you propose take service.

to take up? How can you hide your

Yudhishtira answered: "I am thinking of towering valor?"

asking Virata to take me in his service as a When he asked this question Yudhishtira courtier. I could delight him with my

could not restrain him from narrating the conversation and my dexterity at dice. I brilliant exploits of Arjuna. He spoke of shall take the garb of a sanyasin and shall his brother's glory in twenty verses. Well, keep him agreeably engaged by my skill who deserves praise if not Arjuna?

in reading omens and knowledge

Arjuna replied: "Revered brother, I shall of astrology as well as of the Vedas,

hide myself in the guise of a eunuch and Vedangas, ethics, politics and other

serve the ladies of the court. I shall hide sciences. I shall have to be careful of under a jacket the scars on my arms made course, but be not anxious about me. I by the constant chafing of the bowstring.

shall tell him that I was an intimate friend When I rejected Urvasi's amorous

of Yudhishtira and learnt these things overtures on the ground that she was like while I was privileged to be with him. O

a mother unto me, she cursed me with loss Bhima, what works will you, who

of manhood. But through Indra's grace the conquered and slew Baka and Hidimba,

curse would hold good only for a year, take up under Virata? You saved us by

and the time would be mine to choose. I killing Jatasura. Valor and strength are shall serve out that year of loss of

over-flowing from you. What disguise can manhood now. Wearing bangles made of

hide your mighty personality and enable white conchs, braiding my hair like a

you to live unknown in the country of

woman, and clothing myself in female

Mastya?" Yudhishtira was in tears as he attire, I shall engage myself in menial put this question to Bhima.

work in the inner apartments of Virata's

queen. I shall teach the women singing Draupadi saw his grief and spoke these and dancing. And I shall seek service

brave words: "O best of kings, do not saying that I used to serve Draupadi in grieve or suffer anxiety on my account. I Yudhishtira's court." Saying this, Arjuna shall be a sairandhri in the court of the turned to Draupadi and smiled.

queen of Virata, the companion and

Yudhishtira was in tears. "Alas! Have the attendant of the princess. I shall preserve fates decreed that he, who is the equal of my freedom and chastity, for the attendant Sri Krishna himself in fame and valor, a and companion of a princess has this right scion of Bharata's line, who stands high and can exercise it. I shall pass my days in like the great golden Mount Meru, must such light tasks as braiding the hair and go and seek employment of Virata as a

entertaining the women of the court with eunuch in the queen's inner apartments?"

small talk. I shall represent that I had thus he said brokenly.

served princess Draupadi in

Yudhishtira then turned to Nakula and Yudhishtira's court and seek employment asked him what work he would engage in from the queen. Thus shall I remain

and, as he thought of Madri, the mother of unknown to others."

Nakula, tears rolled down his eyes.

Yudhishtira praised Draupadi's courage Nakula replied: "I shall work in King and said: "O auspicious one, you speak as Virata's stables. My mind delights in

befits one of your family."

training and looking after horses. For I When the Pandavas thus decided,

know the heart of horses and have

Dhaumya blessed them and advised them

knowledge of their ailments and cure. I thus: "Those who are engaged in service can not only ride and break horses but under a king should always be vigilant.

also harness and drive them in a chariot. I They must serve without talking too

shall say that I had looked after the horses much. They may give their counsel only of the Pandavas and I have no doubt

when asked, and never obtrude it. They Virata will take me in his service."

should praise the king on befitting

Yudhishtira asked Sahadeva: "You, with occasions. All things, no matter how

the intelligence of Brihaspati, the priest small, may be done only after informing and the preceptor of the gods, and the the king, who is a veritable fire in human knowledge of Sukra, the teacher of the form. Do not go too near him, nor yet

asuras, what work will you take up?"

appear to avoid him. Even though a

Sahadeva replied: "Let Nakula look after person may be trusted by the king and

horses. I shall tend the cows. I shall guard have great authority, still be should

Virata's cattle from the ravages of disease always behave as if he would be and the attacks of wild beasts."

dismissed immediately, It would be

"O Draupadi," but Yudhishtira could not foolishness to place too much confidence find words to ask her what she proposed in a king. One may not sit in the

to do. She was dearer to him than life conveyance, seat or chariot of the king, itself, worthy of all reverence and

presuming on his affection. A servant of protection, and it seemed sacrilege to talk the king should ever be active and self-of service. She was a princess, the

restrained. He should not be excessively daughter of a king, nobly born, tenderly elated, nor unduly depressed, by being nurtured. Yudhishtira felt choked by

honored or dishonored by the king. He

shame and despair.

may not reveal the secrets confided to him, nor may he receive anything in the

form of gift from the citizens. He should of the palace as maid and companion,

not be jealous of other servants. The king engaging herself in uncongenial tasks.

may place fools in positions of authority, Kichaka, the brother of Sudeshna, was the leaving aside the wise. Such waywardness commander-in-chief of Virata's army and should be ignored. One cannot be too

it was to him that the old king Virata careful with the ladies of the court. There owed his power and prestige. Kichaka

should not be the faintest suggestion of wielded such vast influence that people indelicacy in one's conduct towards

used to say that Kichaka was the real king them."

of the Matsya country and old Virata king Dhaumya then blessed the Pandavas:

only in name.

"Live thus in patience for one year, Kichaka was inordinately vain of his serving the king Virata, and then, you will strength and his influence over the king.

pass the rest of your days in happiness, He was so smitten with Draupadi's beauty regaining your lost throne."

that he conceived an uncontrollable

44. VIRTUE VINDICATED

passion for her. And he was so sure of his YUDHISHTHIRA put on the garb of a

own attractions and power that it never sanyasin. Arjuna transformed himself into occurred to him that she, though a mere a eunuch. Others

also disguised

maidservant could resist his will. He made themselves. But no disguise could take amorous overtures to her, which greatly away their natural charm, grace and

vexed her.

nobility of appearance.

Draupadi was too shy to speak of this to When they went to King Virata seeking

Sudeshna or to others. She gave out that service, they seemed to him born to

her husbands were Gandharvas who

command and rule rather than to serve. He would mysteriously kill those who tried to hesitated, at first, to engage them in dishonor her.

service but yielding to their urgent

Her good conduct and lustre made every solicitations, he finally appointed them to one believe in her story about the

the places they sought of him.

Gandharvas. But Kichaka was not to be

Yudhishtira became the king's
frightened so easily and he sought
companion and spent his days in playing persistently to seduce Draupadi.

dice with him. Bhima worked as the chief His persecution became so
intolerable that of the cooks. He also entertained the king at last she
complained of it to Queen

by wrestling with the reputed men of
Sudeshna, and implored her protection.

might whom came to the court, and by

Kichaka, of course, had greater influence controlling wild animals.

over his sister, and he shamelessly

Arjuna assumed the name of Brihannala

confided to her his unlawful passion for and taught dancing, singing and
her maid and sought her aid to compass instrumental music to Princess
Uttara, the his wish.

daughter of Virata, and the ladies. Nakula He represented himself as dying
of desire.

looked after the horses and Sahadeva

"I am so full of torment," he said, "that looked after the cows and the bulls.

from the time I met your maid, I do not The princess Draupadi who, if fate
had get any sleep or rest. You must save my been less cruel, should herself
have been life by managing somehow to make her

served by many maids, had now to pass

receive my advances favorably." The her days in serving Sudeshna, Virata's queen tried to dissuade him but Kichaka queen. She lived in the inner apartments would not listen. And finally Sudeshna

yielded. Both of them decided upon a plan helplessness under the intolerable insult to entrap Draupadi.

offered to her.

One night, many sweetmeats and

Her deep distress made her forget the

intoxicating drinks were prepared in the danger that would befall the Pandavas if house of Kichaka and a great feast was they were discovered prematurely. She

arranged. Sudeshna called Sairandhri to went that night to Bhima and waking him her side and handing her a beautiful

up, gave vent to her agonized sense of golden jug bade her go and bring her a jug wrong.

of wine from Kichaka's house.

After telling him how brutally Kichaka Draupadi hesitated to go to the house of had pursued and insulted her, she

the infatuated Kichaka at that hour and appealed piteously to Bhima for

begged hard that someone else of her

protection and revenge. She said in a

many attendants might be sent, but

voice choked with sobs:

Sudeshna did not listen. She pretended to

"I cannot bear this any longer. You must be angry and said sharply: "Go, you must.

kill this wretch at once. For your sake, to I can not send anyone else," and poor help you keep your promise, I serve in a Draupadi had to obey.

menial office and even prepare sandal

Draupadi's fears were justified. When she paste for Virata. I have not minded it, I, reached Kichaka's house, that wretch,

who have till now served only you or

maddened with lust and wine, began to

Mother Kunti, whom I love and honor.

pester her with urgent entreaties and

But now, I have to serve these wretches, solicitations.

fearful every moment of some disgraceful She rejected his prayers and said: "Why outrage. Not that I mind hard work, see do you, who belong to a noble royal

my hands." And she showed her hands, family, seek me, born of a low caste?

which were cracked and stained with

Why do you take to the wrong path? Why menial tasks.

do you approach me, a married lady? You Bhima respectfully carried her hands to will perish. My protectors, the

his face and eyes, and speechless with Gandharvas, will kill you in their anger."

sorrow and pity and love, he dried her When Draupadi would not yield to his

tears. Finally he found his voice, and said entreaties, Kichaka seized her by the arm thickly:

and pulled her about. But putting down

"I care not for the promise of Yudhishtira the vessel she carried, she wrenched

or the advice of Arjuna. I care not what herself free and fled, hotly pursued by the may happen but I will do as you say. I will maddened Kichaka.

kill Kichaka and his gang here and now!"

She fled to the court wailing loudly. But and he rose.

even there, intoxicated not only with

But Draupadi warned Bhima not to be

wine, but even more by his power and

hasty. They talked it over and finally influence, Kichaka followed her and

decided that Kichaka should be beguiled kicked her in the presence of all with to come alone at night to a retired spot in abusive words.

the dancing hall where he should find Everyone was afraid of the all-powerful waiting for him Bhima disguised as a

commander-in-chief and no one was bold woman, instead of Draupadi.

enough to oppose him.

Next morning, Kichaka renewed his

Draupadi could not bear the sorrow and hateful attentions and vaingloriously said anger she felt at the thought of her

to Draupadi: "O Sairandhri, I threw you

down and kicked you in the presence of Grimly they wrestled, Kichaka no doubt the king. Did any one there come forward thinking he had to do with one of the

to help you? Virata is only king in name Gandharva husbands. They were not ill

of this Matsya country. But I, the

matched, for at that time Bhima, Balarama commander-in-chief, am the real

and Kichaka were reputed to be in the

sovereign. Now, do not be a fool, but

same class in strength and wrestling skill.

come and enjoy life with me, with all

The struggle between Bhima and Kichaka royal honors. I shall be your devoted

was like that between Vali and Sugriva. In servant." And he begged and bullied and the end Bhima killed Kichaka, pounding cringed, devouring her the while with lust-and kneading his body into a shapeless reddened eyes.

lump of flesh.

Draupadi pretended to yield and said:

Then he gave the glad news of Kichaka's

"Kichaka, believe me, I can no longer punishment to Draupadi and went in haste resist your solicitations. But none of your to his kitchen, bathed, rubbed sandal paste companions or brothers should know of

over his body and slept with satisfaction.

our relations. If you swear that you will Draupadi awoke the guards of the court faithfully keep the secret from others, I and said to them: "Kichaka came to shall yield to your wish."

molest me, but as I had warned him, the Kichaka delightedly agreed to the

Gandharvas, my husbands, made short

condition and he promised to go alone to a work of him. Your commander-in-chief,

place of assignation that very night.

who fell a prey to lust, has been killed.

She said: "The women have their dancing Look at him." And she showed them the lessons during daytime in the dancing hall corpse of Kichaka, which had been

and return to their own quarters at

reduced to such a shapeless mass that it nightfall. None will be in the dancing hall had no human semblance.

at night. Come there tonight. I shall be **45. MATSYA DEFENDED**

waiting for you there. You can have your THE fate of Kichaka made Draupadi an

will of me."

object of fear to the people of Virata.

Kichaka reveled in happiness. That night,

"This woman, so beautiful that she Kichaka took his bath, perfumed and captures all hearts, is as dangerous as she decked himself, went to the dancing hall is lovely, for the Gandharvas guard her.

and finding with joy that the doors were She is a great danger to the people of the open, gently entered the place.

city and the members of the royal

In the very dim light, he saw someone

household, for the Gandharvas may stop lying there on a couch, no doubt

at nothing in their jealous anger. It would Sairandhri. He groped his way in the dark, be best to send her out of the city."

and gently laid his hands on the person of Reflecting thus, the citizens went to

the sleeper.

Sudeshna and prayed to her to expel

Alas! It was not the soft form of

Draupadi.

Sairandhri that he touched but the iron Sudeshna told Draupadi: "You are, no frame of Bhima who lept forth on him like doubt, a very virtuous lady, but kindly a lion on its prey and hurled him to the leave our city. I have had enough of you."

ground. But surprised as he was, Kichaka There was only one month more to

was no coward, and he was now fighting complete the stipulated period of living for dear life.

incognito and Draupadi begged earnestly to be permitted to stay just another month

by when, she said, her Gandharva Kichaka has given me a lot of trouble.

husbands would have realised their

Kichaka's death must have weakened

objects and would be ready to take her Virata considerably. Give me leave to

away with them.

attack Virata now."

The Gandharvas would be very grateful to Karna seconded this proposition. They

King Virata and his kingdom. Whether

unanimously came to the decision that

grateful or not, the Gandharvas could be Susarma should attack Matsya from the

deadly if irritated and Sudeshna was too south and draw off the army of Virata to afraid of Draupadi to refuse her request.

the south for defence. Duryodhana, with From the beginning of the thirteenth year, the Kaurava army, would then launch a

the spies of Duryodhana, under his

surprise attack on Virata from the

express orders, had searched for the

northern side, which would be relatively Pandavas in all possible places of hiding.

undefended.

After several months of futile search, they Susarma invaded Matsya from the south

reported their failure to Duryodhana and seized the cattle and laid waste the

added that probably the Pandavas had

gardens and fields on the way. The

perished of privations.

cowherds ran in great distress to Virata, Then came the news that the powerful

who now very much wished that Kichaka

Kichaka had been killed in single combat were alive, for he surely would have made by some Gandharva on account of a

short work of the raiders. When he said so woman.

to Kanka (the assumed name by which

There were only two persons who could

Yudhishtira was known in Virata's court) kill Kichaka, and Bhima was one of them.

the latter said: "O king, be not worried.

And so they suspected that Bhima might Even though I am a hermit, I am an expert have been the vengeful Gandharva who

in warfare. I shall put on armor and go in had killed Kichaka. Duryodhana also felt a chariot and drive away your enemies.

that the lady who was the cause of the Please instruct that your horse keeper killing might be Draupadi. He expressed Dharmagranthi, your chief cook Valala, his doubts in the open assembly.

and your stable herd Tantripala may also He said: "I suspect that the Pandavas are get into chariots and help us. I have heard in Virata's city. Now, he is one of the that they are great fighters. Kindly give kings who are too stiff-necked to court our orders that the necessary chariots and the friendship. It would be a good thing to weapons may be given to us."

invade his country and carry away his

Delighted, Virata was only too willing to cows. If the Pandavas are hiding there, accept the offer. The chariots were ready.

they will certainly come out to fight with All the Pandavas excepting Arjuna went us to repay Virata's hospitality and we can out with the army of Virata to oppose

easily spot them. If we discover them

Susarma and his men.

there and we can sure before the stipulated A fierce fight ensued between the armies time, they will have to go to the forest of Virata and Susarma, with much loss of again for another twelve, years. If, on the life on both sides. Susarma attacked

other hand, the Pandavas are not there, Virata and surrounded his chariot, there is nothing lost."

compelling him to get down and fight on King Susarma, the ruler of Trigarta

foot.

heartily supported him. "The king of Susarma captured Virata and held him

Matsya is my enemy." he said, "and captive in his chariot. With the capture of

Virata, the army of Matsya lost heart and

"If only I can get someone to be my began to scatter in all directions, when charioteer I will recover the cows single-Yudhishtira commanded Bhima to attack handed. Well, my feats of arms will be Susarma and release Virata and rally the worth seeing and people will know there scattered Matsya forces.

is little to choose between Arjuna and At these words of Yudhishtira, Bhima

myself."

was about to uproot a tree, but

When Uttara said these words Draupadi

Yudhishtira stopped him and said: "No was in the inner apartments and must have such tricks, please, and no battle cry or laughed within herself.

your identity will be revealed. Fight like She ran to princess Uttara and said: "O

anybody else from the chariot with your princess, great danger has be fallen the bows and arrows."

country. The cowherds have complained

Bhima accordingly got into the chariot to the young that the Kaurava army is

attacked the enemy, set Virata free and advancing on our city from the north and captured Susarma. The dispersed forces of has captured cattle ranches and cows on Matsya rallied into new formations

the outskirts. The prince is eager to fight charged and defeated the army of them and is in need of a charioteer.

Susarma.

Should such a small thing as that stand in As soon as the news of Susarma's defeat the way of victory and glory? I tell you reached the city, the people were

that Brihannala has been Arjuna's

extremely jubilant. They decorated the charioteer. When I was in the service of city and went forth to welcome their

the queen of the Pandavas, I heard of this victorious king back home.

fact and I also know that Brihannala learnt When they were thus making preparations archery from Arjuna. Order Brihannala

to receive king Virata, the big army of immediately to go and drive the prince's Duryodhana came down on them from the

chariot."

north, and began despoiling the cattle Arjuna as Brihannala pretended to be

ranches on the outskirts of the city.

unfamiliar with armor and raised a laugh The Kaurava army marched in force and

at his awkwardness in wearing it.

rounded up the countless cows that were The women of the palace laughed at his there. The leader of the cowherds ran to fears and told him again not to be afraid the city and said to the prince Uttara: "O

for Uttara would look after him.

prince, the Kauravas are marching on,

Arjuna spent some time in such fun but, robbing us of our cows. King Virata has when he harnessed the horses, it could be gone south to fight against the Trigarta.

seen that, at least, he was an expert

We are in consternation as there is no one charioteer. And when he held the reins, to protect us. You are the king's son and the horses seemed to love and obey him.

we look to you for protection. Pray, come

"The prince will be victorious. We shall and recover the cows for the honor of

despoil the enemy of their embroidered your family."

robes and distribute them to you as the When the leader of the cowherds made

prize of victory" were the last words of this complaint to Uttara in the presence of Brihannala to the women of the palace, as the people and especially of the women of the chariot rapidly bore the prince

the palace, the prince felt flushed with outwards to battle.

valor and proudly said:

46. PRINCE UTTARA

UTTARA, the son of Virata, set off with fighting people who are immeasurably

enthusiasm from the city in his chariot stronger than we fight? Do not be a fool!

with Brihannala as his charioteer and

Turn back the chariot. Otherwise, I shall commanded the latter to drive quickly to jump out and walk back." With these the place where the Kauravas had rounded words Uttara cast off his bows and

up the cows.

arrows, got down from the chariot and

Willingly, the horses were put to their best began to fly towards the city, mad with speed. And presently the Kaurava army

panic.

was sighted, at first a gleaming, line, This should not be taken as something that enveloped in a cloud of dust that seemed has never happened in life. Nor is Uttara's to go up to the skies.

panic during his first battle, by any means, Going nearer, Uttara saw the great army singular.

drew in battle by Bhishma, Drona, Kripa, Fear is a strong instinctive feeling, though Duryodhana and Karna. At that sight, his it can be overcome by will-power or

courage, which had been gradually drying strong motives like love, shame or hate, or up during the rapid rush to the field, was more usually, by discipline.

quite gone. His mouth went dry and his Even men who have afterwards
hair stood on end.

distinguished themselves by heroic deeds His limbs were all in a tremble.
He shut have confessed to having felt something his eyes with both his
hands to keep out like panic fear, the first time they came the fearsome
sight. He said: "How can I, under fire. Uttara was by no means an

single-handed, attack an army? I have no exceptional coward, for he
fought and fell troops, since the king, my father, has gauntly at
Kurukshetra.

taken all available forces, leaving the city Arjuna pursued the running
prince,

unprotected. It is absurd to think that one shouting to him to stop and
behave like a man can alone fight a well-equipped

Kshatriya. The braided hair of the

army, led by world-renowned warrior! Oh charioteer began to dance and
his clothes Brihannala, turn back the chariot."

began to wave as he ran in pursuit of

Brihannala laughed and said: "O prince, Uttara. The prince fled hither and
thither, you started from the city, full of fierce trying to dodge the hands
that would stop determination and the ladies expect great him.

things of you. The citizens also have put Those of the Kaurava army, who
could

their trust in you. Sairandhri praised me see this spectacle, found it
amusing.

and I have come at your request. If we Drona was puzzled at the sight of
return without recovering the cows, we Brihannala who, albeit dressed

shall become the laughing-stock of all. I fantastically, seemed a man rigged out as will not turn back the chariot. Let us stand a woman and to remind him curiously of firm and fight. Have no fear." With these Arjuna.

words Brihannala began to drive the

When he remarked about this, Karna said: chariot towards the enemy and they

"How can this be Arjuna? What does it approached quite close to them.

matter even if he is? What can Arjuna

Uttara's distress was pitiable. He said in a alone do against us in the absence of the quaking voice: "I cannot do it, I simply other Pandavas? The king has left his son cannot. Let the Kauravas march off with alone in the city and gone with his whole the cows and if the women laugh, let

army to fight against Susarma. The young them. I do not care. What sense is there in prince has brought the attendant of the

ladies of the palace as his charioteer. That Pandavas. Climb up the tree bravely and is all."

bring them down. Do not delay."

Poor Uttara was imploring Brihannala to Seeing that resistance was of no avail let him go, promising untold wealth if he Uttara climbed up the tree as Brihannala did so. He appealed to his pity: "I am the had asked him to and took, in great

only son of my mother. I am a child

disgust, the bag tied up there and came grown up on my mother's lap. I am full of down.

fear."

When the leather bag was opened, he saw But, Brihannala wanted to save him from weapons as bright as the sun. Uttara stood himself, and would not let him go. He

amazed at the sight of the gleaming

pursued him, seized him and dragged him weapons and covered his eyes.

to the chariot by force.

He mustered courage and touched them.

Uttara began to sob and said: "What a fool The touch seemed to send a stream of

I was to brag! Alas! What will happen to hope and high courage into him. He asked me?"

with ardor: "O charioteer, what a wonder!

Arjuna said kindly, soothing the prince's You say that these bows, arrows and

fears: "Be not afraid. I shall fight with the swords belong to the Pandavas. They have Kauravas. Help me by looking after the been deprived of their kingdom and they horses and driving the chariot, and I shall have retired to the forest. Do you know do the rest. Believe me, no good ever

them? Where are they?"

came of flight. We will rout the enemy Then Arjuna told him briefly how they

and recover your cows. You will have all were all in Virata's court. He said:

the glory." With these words Arjuna lifted

"Kanka, who serves the king, is

the prince on to the chariot and, putting Yudhishtira. Valala, the cook who the reins in his hands, asked him to drive prepares such nice dishes for your father, towards a tree near the burial ground.

is none other than Bhima. Sairandhri, for Drona, who was watching all this intently, insulting whom Kichaka was killed, is

knew that the

fantastically dressed

Draupadi. Dharmagranthi, who looks after charioteer was Arjuna and shared his

the horses and Tantripala, the keeper of knowledge with Bhishma.

the cows, are Nakula and Sahadeva

Duryodhana turned to Karna and said:

respectively. I am Arjuna. Be not afraid.

"Why should we worry who he is? Even if O prince, you will soon see me defeat the he is Arjuna, he will be only playing into Kauravas even in the sight of Bhishma, our hands, for his being discovered will Drona and Aswatthama and recover the

send the Pandavas to the forest for another cows. You will also gain renown and it twelve years."

will be a lesson to you."

As soon as they came near the tree

Then Uttara folded his hands and said: "O

Brihannala bade the prince get down,

Arjuna, how fortunate I am to see you

climb the tree and take down the arms

with my own eyes! So, Arjuna is the

hidden there. The prince said in alarm and victorious hero whose very contact has grief: "People say that what hangs on this put heart and courage into me. Forgive the tree is the corpse of an old huntress. How wrongs I have done through ignorance."

can I touch a dead body? How can you

As they approached the Kaurava host,

ask me to do such a thing?"

Arjuna recounted some of his heroic

Arjuna said: "It is not a corpse, prince. I deeds, so that Uttara might not lose grip of know that it contains the weapons of the his newly awakened courage. Arriving in

front of the Kauravas, he got down, THE chariot of Arjuna thundered on its prayed to God, removed the conch-way, seeming to shake the earth. The

bangles from his hands and put on leather hearts of the Kauravas quaked when they gauntlets.

heard the twang of the Gandiva bow.

He then tied a cloth on his flowing hair,

"Our army must be arrayed well and with stood facing the east, meditated on his care. Arjuna, has come," said Drona armor, got into the chariot and gloried in anxiously. Duryodhana did not at all like the familiar feel of his famous Gandiva the honor Drona did Arjuna by this

bow. He stringed it and thrice twanged the anxiety.

string whose shrill note raised an echo He said to Karna: "The Pandavas' pledge from all sides.

was that they would spend twelve years in Hearing the sound, the heroes of the

the forest and the following year

Kaurava army said to one another: "This undiscovered. The thirteenth year has not surely is Gandiva's voice." When Arjuna ended yet. Arjuna has revealed himself stood on the chariot in all his godlike before the time. Why then should we give stature and blew his conch Devadatta, the way to fear? The Pandavas will have to go Kaurava army was alarmed and a frenzied again to the forest for another twelve shout arose that the Pandavas had come.

years. Drona is suffering from the cold The story of Uttara, who spoke boastfully feet of the too learned. Let us leave him in in the ladies' boudoirs and fled in panic at the rear and advance to the battle."

the sight of the hostile array, his not been Karna assented and said: "Our soldiers'

introduced in the Mahabharata, merely as heart is not in the fight and they are a comic interlude.

trembling with fear. They say that the It is in ordinary human nature to look with man, who stands so proudly, bow in hand, contempt on lower levels of conduct in on the chariot, speeding towards us, is ability. The rich scorn the poor, the

Arjuna. But why need we fear even if it beautiful scorn the plain, and the strong were Parasurama? I will myself stop the scorn the weak. Brave men despise

advancing warrior and redeem my word to cowards. But Arjuna was no ordinary

you, and fight him, aye, even if all the man. He was a great soul and a true hero others stand back. They may drive away who felt that his duty as a strong, brave the cows of the Matsya king while, single man was to help others to rise above their handed, I shall give them cover, engaging weakness.

Arjuna in battle," and Karna, as usual, Knowing that nature had endowed him

began to blow his own trumpet.

with courage and bravery at birth, and that When Kripa heard these words of Karna, he owed them to no special exertions on he said: "This is pure tomfoolery. We his part, he had the true humility of the must all make a combined attack on

really great. And he did what he could to Arjuna. That would be our one chance of put courage into Uttara and make him

success. Do not therefore, brag about your worthy of his lineage. This was Arjuna's opposing him alone and unaided."

characteristic nobility. He never abused Karna grew angry. He said: "The acharya his strength and power. One of his many ever delights in singing Arjuna's praises names is Bibhatsu, which means one who and in magnifying his prowess. Whether shrank from doing an unworthy act, and he does so from fear or excessive

he lived up to it.

fondness for the Pandavas, I do not know.

47. PROMISE FULFILLED

Those, who are afraid, need not fight, but

may simply look on, while others, who are can, by mere cheating, sneak a victory in true to the salt they have eaten, engage in battle for you?"

battle. I, for one, a mere soldier who loves The leaders of the Kaurava army lost their my friends and hates my enemies, will

patience and began a loud wordy warfare.

stand here and fight. What business have Seeing this, the grandsire was filled with men learned in the Vedas, who love and sorrow and said:

praise their enemies, got here?" said he

"The wise man does not insult his sneeringly.

teachers. One should engage in battle only Aswatthama, Drona's son and Kripa's

after a careful calculation of time, place nephew, could not hear unmoved this

and circumstance. Even wise people often sneer at the venerable teachers. He said lose their balance and good sense over sternly to Karna: "We have not yet taken their own affairs. Ruffled by anger, even the king back to Hastinapura, and the

the usually so sensible Duryodhana fails battle is yet to be won. Your brag is idle to recognise that the warrior who stands vainglory. It may be that we are not

braving our army is Arjuna. His intellect kshatriyas and that we belong to the class has been clouded by anger. O

that recites the Vedas and the sastras. But Aswatthama, pray do not mind Karna's

I have not been able to find in any sastra offensive remarks. You must take them as that it is honor able for kings to seize intended merely to put the preceptors on kingdoms by cheating at dice. Even those, their best spirit and sting them into action.

who fight and conquer kingdoms, do not This is not the time to nurse enmity or crow too loudly about it. And I cannot see sow dissension. Drona, Kripa and

what you have done to be proud of. The Aswatthama should forget and forgive.

fire is silent and yet cooks the food. The Where can the Kauravas find in the whole sun shines but not on him. Likewise,

world, heroes superior to Drona, the

Mother earth sustains all things, movable preceptor, and his son Aswatthama, who and immovable, and supports her burden combine in themselves Vedic scholarship without so much as a whisper. What claim and kshatriya heroism? We know of none to praise has a kshatriya who has

other than Parasurama who can equal

unlawfully seized another's kingdom at a Drona. We can conquer Arjuna only if we game of dice? To have cheated the

all join together and fight him. Let us Pandavas of their kingdom is no more a address ourselves to the task before us. If matter of glory than to have spread traps we quarrel amongst ourselves we cannot for unsuspecting birds. O Duryodhana, O

fight Arjuna."

Karna, in what battle did your heroes

Thus spoke the grandsire. Soothed by his defeat the Pandavas? You dragged

noble words, angry feelings subsided.

Draupadi to the assembly. Are you proud Bhishma turned to Duryodhana and

of it? You have destroyed the Kaurava

continued:

race like an empty-headed clod that fells a

"Best of kings, Arjuna has come. The big sandal tree for love of its fragrance. A stipulated period of thirteen years

fight with Arjuna, you will find, is a very terminated yesterday. Your calculation is different thing from a throw of the dice.

wrong, as men learned in the science of The Gandiva will send forth sharp arrows planetary movements will tell you. I knew and not fours and twos as in the game of that the period had ended when Arjuna

dice. Vain fools, do you think that Sakuni blew his conch. Reflect a little before deciding on war. If you wish to make

peace with the Pandavas, now is the time defeated Drona. Seeing Drona standing

for it. What do you seek, a just and

spent with fatigue, Aswatthama joined in honorable peace or a mutually destructive the fight and attacked Arjuna, which gave war? Ponder well and make your choice."

Arjuna an opportunity of letting Drona Duryodhana replied: "Revered sire, I have withdraw from the field.

no wish for peace. I shall not give even a Then, there ensued a bitter struggle

village to the Pandavas. Let us get ready between Aswatthama and Arjuna. When

for war."

Aswatthama grew weary, Kripa relieved

Then Drona said: "Let prince Duryodhana him and maintained the attack against

take away a fourth of the army to guard Arjuna.

him and return to Hastinapura. Let another But Kripa also sustained defeat and the surround the cows and seize them. If we whole army was routed and fled in fear.

return without seizing the cows it would Though rallied and brought back to the amount to an acknowledgment of defeat.

attack by Bhishma, Drona and others,

With the rest of the army, the five of us there was no fight left in them. Finally, will give battle to Arjuna."

they left the field, after a glorious fight The Kaurava forces ranged themselves

between Bhishma and Arjuna, which, it is accordingly in battle array. Arjuna said: said, the gods themselves came to see.

"O Uttara, I do not see Duryodhana's The attempt to head off Arjuna's pursuit chariot or Duryodhana. I see Bhishma

of Duryodhana thus failed and soon

standing, clad in armor. I think

Arjuna came up with Duryodhana and

Duryodhana is driving away the cows to strongly attacked him.
Duryodhana was

Hastinapura. Let us pursue him and

defeated and fled from the battlefield, but recover the cows." With these words

not far, because, when Arjuna taunted him Arjuna moved away from the Kaurava

with cowardice, he turned round like a army and went after Duryodhana and the serpent and resumed the fight.

cows.

Bhishma and others surrounded and

And as he was going, he respect fully

protected him. Arjuna fought and finally, greeted his teachers and the old grandsire, he employed a magic weapon that made

by drawing his Gandiva bow and sending them all fall down unconscious on the

arrows so as to fall near their feet.

battlefield. While they were in that

Reverently saluting them in this heroic condition he snatched away their fashion, he left them and pursued

garments. The seizure of the clothes of the Duryodhana. Arjuna reached the place

enemy was the sign of decisive victory in where the cows were gathered and put to those days.

rout the marauding forces.

When Duryodhana came, Bhishma sent

He then turned to the cowherds and asked him back to the city. The whole army

them to take the cows to the barns, which returned to Hastinapura after this

they did with great rejoicing. Arjuna then humiliating defeat.

pursued Duryodhana. Seeing this,

Arjuna said: "O Uttara, turn back the Bhishma and the other Kaurava warriors horses. Our cows have been regained. Our rushed to the rescue and, surrounding

enemies have fled. O prince, return to Arjuna, sent forth arrows against him.

your kingdom, adorning your person with Arjuna carried on a wonderful fight. First, sandal paste and decked with flowers."

he made at Karna and drove him from the On the way back, Arjuna deposited the

battlefield. After that, he attacked and weapons as before on the tree and dressed

himself once more as Brihannala. He sent out as charioteer, success was certain.

messengers in advance to proclaim in the There is nothing extraordinary in your city that Uttara had won a glorious

son's victory. I happen to know that even victory.

Indra's charioteer or Krishna's cannot **48. VIRATA'S DELUSION**

equal Brihannala."

AFTER defeating Susarma, king of

This seemed absurd to Virata, but he was Trigarta, Virata returned to his capital too happy to resent it. He made large gifts amidst the acclamations of the citizens.

of precious stones and other wealth to the When he reached his palace, he saw that messengers who brought the good news

Uttara was not there and the womenfolk and ordered public rejoicing. "My success told him with much elation that Uttara had over Susarma is nothing," he proclaimed.

set out to conquer the Kauravas.

"The prince's is the real victory. Let They had not a doubt that their hand some special prayers of thanksgiving be offered prince could conquer the whole world.

at all places of worship. Let all the

But the king's heart sank within him at the principal streets are decorated with flags news, for he knew the impossible task

and the citizen's go in procession to

which the delicately nurtured prince had strains of triumphal music. Make all

taken on himself with no better following arrangements to receive, in a befitting than a eunuch.

manner, my lion-hearted boy."

"My dearly loved son must be dead by Virata sent out ministers, soldiers, and now," he

cried, overwhelmed with

maidens to welcome his son, returning in anguish. He then bade his ministers

triumph. When the king retired to his

collect and send as strong a force as could private apartments, he asked Sairandhri to be got together for rescuing Uttara if he bring the dice. He said to Kanka: "I cannot was still alive and bring him back. Scouts contain my joy. Come, let us play," and also were immediately despatched to find sat down to a game with Yudhishtira.

out Uttara's whereabouts and fate.

They talked while they played and

Dharmaputra, now disguised as the

naturally, the king was full of his son's sanyasin Kanka, tried to comfort Virata by greatness and prowess. "See the glory of assuring him that the prince could come to my son, Bhuminjaya. He has put the

no harm, since Brihannala had gone as his famed Kaurava warriors to flight."

charioteer. "You do not know about her,"

"Yes," replied Yudhishtira with a smile.

said he. "I do. Whosoever fights from a

"Your son is indeed fortunate for, without chariot driven by her, can be sure of

the best of good fortune, how could he victory. Further, the news of Susarma's have secured Brihannala to drive his

defeat must have reached there and the chariot?"

Kauravas must have retreated."

Virata was angry at this persistent

Meanwhile courtiers arrived from the field glorification of Brihannala at the expenses of battle with the glad news that Uttara of Uttara. "Why do you, again and again had defeated the Kaurava forces and

babble about the eunuch?" he cried.

recovered the kine.

"While I am talking about my son's This seemed too good to be true, even to victory, you expatiate on the charioteering the fond father, but Yudhishtira

skill of the eunuch, as if that were of any smilingly reassured him. Said he: "Have significance." The king's anger only no doubts, O king. What the messengers increased when Kanka remonstrated: "I say must be true. When Brihannala went know what I am talking about. Brihannala

is no ordinary person. The chariot she untimely and envious belittling of you drives can never see defeat, and whoever when I was in an ocean of delight at the is in it, is sure of success in any

news of your glorious victory. Each time I undertaking, no matter how difficult."

mentioned you, this unlucky brahmana

Now, this perverse flouting could not be extolled your charioteer, the eunuch, and borne, and Virata in a passion flung the gave the victory to him. It was too silly dice at Yudhishtira's face and followed really, and I am sorry I struck him, but it this up with a blow on Yudhishtira's

is not worth talking about."

cheek. Yudhishtira was hurt and blood Uttara was overwhelmed with fear.
"Alas!

flowed down his face.

You have done great wrong. Fall at his Sairandhri who was nearby, wiped the

feet right now, father, and pray

blood with the edge of her garment and for forgiveness or we will be destroyed, squeezed it into a golden cup. "Why all root and branch."

this fuss? What are you collecting the Virata, to whom all this was inexplicable, blood into a cup for?" demanded the angry stood with a puzzled frown not knowing king, who was still in a passion.

what to do. But Uttara was so anxious and

"A Sanyasin's blood may not be split on importunate that he yielded and bowed to the ground, O king," replied Sairandhri.

Yudhishtira asking for pardon.

"The rains will fail in your land for as Thereafter, embracing his son and making many years as there are drops in the blood him sit, Virata said:

"My boy, you are that is split on the earth. That was why I truly a hero. I am in a fever of impatience collected the blood in this cup. I fear you to hear all about it. How did you defeat do not know Kanka's greatness."

the Kaurava army? How did you recover Meanwhile the gatekeeper announced:

the kine?"

"Uttara and Brihannala have arrived. The Uttara hung his head down. "I conquered prince is waiting for an audience with the no army," he said,

"and rescued no cows.

king." Virata got up excitedly and said: All that was the work of a god prince. He

"Ask him in, ask him

in." And

took up our cause, rescued me from

Yudhishtira whispered to the sentry: "Let destruction, put the Kaurava soldiers to Uttara come alone. Brihannala should stay flight and brought the herd back. I did behind."

nothing."

He did this to prevent a catastrophe, for he The king could hardly believe his ears.

knew Arjuna would be unable to control

"Where is that god prince?" he asked. "I his anger when he saw the injury on his must see and thank the hero who rescued brother's face. He could not bear to see my son and beat back my foes. I will give Dharmaputra hurt by anyone except in fair my daughter, Uttara, in marriage to him.

battle.

Go and fetch him in."

Uttara entered and paid due homage to his

"He has disappeared for the time being,"

royal father. When he turned to do

replied the prince, "but I think he will obeisance to Kanka be was horrified to come again either today or tomorrow."

see his bleeding face, for now he knew Uttara spoke thus because Arjuna was

that Kanka was the great Yudhishtira.

indeed a prince of the gods and had also

"O king," he cried, "who was it that for the time being disappeared in caused hurt to this great one?"

Brihannala.

Virata looked at his son and said: "Why In Virata's hall of assembly, all the all this fuss about it? I struck him for leading citizens had gathered to celebrate

the king's victory and the prince's. Kanka, Dharmaputra laughed and said:

Valala the cook, Brihannala, Tantripala

"Messengers, return quickly to

and Dharmagranthi, who were responsible Duryodhana and tell him to make further for the victories, arrived also and entering inquiry. The venerable Bhishma and

the hall, to the surprise of everyone, sat others learned in the stars will no doubt among the princes unbid.

tell him that full thirteen years had been Some explained the conduct by saying

completed before your forces heard again that, after all, these humbler folk had the twang of Dhananjaya's bow and fled in rendered invaluable service at a critical fear."

time and really deserved recognition.

49. TAKING COUNSEL

Virata entered the court. On seeing Kanka THE thirteenth year during which the

sanyasin and the cook and the others

Pandavas had to remain undiscovered

seated in places reserved for princess and came to an end.

the nobility the king lost his temper and No longer obliged to be in disguise, they gave loud vent to his displeasure.

left Virata's capital as Pandavas and

When they felt they had enough fun, the settled openly in Upaplavya, another place Pandavas disclosed their identity to the in Matsya territory. From there, they sent amazement of all present. Virata was

emissaries to summon their friends and beside himself with joy to think that it was relatives.

the Pandava princes and Panchali who had From Dwaraka came Balarama and

been ministering to him all these days in Krishna with Arjuna's wife Subhadra, and disguise. He embraced Kanka in

her son, Abhimanyu and accompanied by

exuberant gratitude and made a formal

many Yadava warriors. Loud and long

surrender of his kingdom and his all to was the blare of trumpet-conchs as the him, of course immediately receiving

Matsya prince and the Pandavas went

them back with thanks. Virata also

forth to receive Janardana.

insisted that he should give his daughter in Indrasena and many others like him, who marriage to Arjuna.

had at the beginning of the preceding year But Arjuna said: "No, that would not be left the Pandavas in the forest, rejoined proper, for the princess learnt dancing and them with their chariots at Upaplavya.

music from me. I, as her teacher, am in The Kasi prince and Saibya ruler arrived the position of father to her." He, with their forces.

however, agreed to accept her for his son Drupada, the Panchala prince, was there Abhimanyu.

too with three divisions, bringing with Meanwhile, envoys arrived from the

him Sikhandin and Draupadi's sons and

wicked and treacherous Duryodhana with her brother Dhrishtadyumna. There were a message for Yudhishtira. "O son of many other princes gathered at

Kunti," they said, "Duryodhana feels very Upaplavya, well attached to the Pandavas, sorry that owing to the hasty action of Abhimanyu's marriage to princess Uttara Dhananjaya, you have to go back to the was solemnized according to Vedic rites woods again. He let himself be recognised before that illustrious gathering of friendly before the end of the thirteenth year and heroes. The wedding celebrations over, so, in accordance with your undertaking, they met in conclave in Virata's hall of you have to dwell in the forest for another assembly.

twelve years."

Krishna sat next to Yudhishtira and

Virata, while Balarama and Satyaki were

seated beside Drupada. As the bustle died Drona and Vidura, Kripa and Aswatthama down, all eyes were turned on Krishna, and even of Karna and Sakuni if possible, who now rose to speak.

and secure support for Kunti's sons. He

"You all know," said Krishna to the should be one who, on no account, would hushed assembly, "the story of the great give way to anger. Dharmaputra, with full deceit how Yudhishtira was cheated at knowledge of consequences, staked his

the game board and deprived of his

kingdom and lost it, obstinately

kingdom and exiled with his brothers and disregarding the reasoning of friends.

Draupadi to the forest. For thirteen years, Fully aware that he was no match for the the sons of Pandu have patiently borne adept Sakuni, he yet played against him.

their trouble in redemption of their

He cannot now complain but can only

pledged word. Ponder well and counsel a supplicate for his rights. A fit envoy course, which will be in consonance with would be one who is not a warmonger but dharma and contribute to the glory and is dead set, in spite of every difficulty, on welfare of both Pandavas and Kauravas.

achieving a peaceful settlement. Princes, I For, Dharmaputra desires nothing that he desire you to approach Duryodhana

cannot justly claim. He wishes nothing but tactfully and make peace with him. Let us good even to the sons of Dhritarashtra avoid an armed conflict by all the means who deceived him and did him grievous

in our power. Only that which accrues in wrong. In giving your counsel, bear in peace is worth while. Out of war, nothing mind the fraud and meanness of the

but wrong can issue."

Kauravas as well as the honorable

Balarama's position was that Yudhishtira magnanimity of the Pandavas. Devise a

knew what he was doing when he

just and honorable settlement. We do not gambled away his kingdom and could not know what Duryodhana has in his mind. I now claim it as of right.

feel we should send an able and upright The fulfilment of the conditions of exile emissary to him to persuade him to a

could only give the Pandavas their

peaceful settlement by the restoration of personal freedom and not their kingdom, half the kingdom to Yudhishtira."

that is to say, they need not serve another Balarama then rose to address the

term of exile in the forest. But it gave gathering. "You have just heard Krishna,"

them no right to the return of their

he said. "The solution he propounds is kingdom.

wise and just. I endorse it as good for both Dharmaputra could only supplicate for the Duryodhana and Dharmaputra. If Kunti's return of what he had lost and not claim it sons can get back their kingdom by a

as of right. Balarama did not relish an peaceful settlement, nothing could be

armed conflict among scions of the same better for them, the Kauravas and for all family and rightly held that war would concerned. Only then will there be

lead only to disaster.

happiness and peace in the land. Someone The poet puts an eternal truth in has to go to convey to Duryodhana

Balarama's mouth.

Yudhishtira's wish for a peaceful

Satyaki, the Yadava warrior, who heard settlement and bring an answer from him, Balarama speak thus, could not contain a man who has the weight and the ability himself. He rose in anger and spoke

to bring about peace and good

indignantly:

understanding. The envoy should get the

"Balarama's words do not strike me as in cooperation of Bhishma, Dhritarashtra, the least degree just. One can, if skilful

enough, make out a plausible plea for any to part with territory without a war and it case, but not all the skill in the world can would be folly to waste time."

convert wrong into right or injustice into Drupada's heart was gladdened by

justice. I must protest against Balarama's Satyaki's resolute words. He rose and said: stand, which fills me with disgust. Do we

"Satyaki is right and I support him. Soft not see in one and the same tree, one

words will not bring Duryodhana round to branch bowed with fruit and another

reason. Let us continue our preparations sticking out gaunt and useless? So, of for war and let our friends be warned

these brothers, Krishna speaks words that without loss of time to bring up their breathe the spirit of dharma while

forces. Send word instantly to Salya,

Balarama's attitude is unworthy. And if Dhrishtaketu, Jayatsena and Kekaya. We you grant what cannot be doubted that the must, of course, send a suitable envoy to Kauravas cheated Yudhishtira of his

Dhritarashtra. The learned brahmana, who share of the kingdom, why then, allowing conducts the religious ceremonies in my them to keep it is as unjust as confirming court, can be sent to Hastinapura, with a thief in the possession of his booty!

confidence. Instruct him well as to what Anyone, who finds fault with

he should say to Duryodhana and how he Dharmaputra, does so in cowardly fear of should convey the message to Bhishma,

Duryodhana, not for any sound reason. O

Dhritarashtra and Dronacharya."

princes, forgive my harsh speech. Not of When Drupada concluded,
Vasudeva

his own volition but because the Kauravas (Krishna, the son of Vasudeva)
rose and pressed and invited him to do so, did the addressing Drupada,
said:

novice and unwilling Dharmaputra play

"What you suggest is practicable and also with a dishonest gambler that
game so

conforms to the kingly code. Baladeva

fraught with disaster. Why should he bow and I are bound to the Kauravas
and the and supplicate before Duryodhana, now

Pandavas with equal ties of affection. We that he has fulfilled his pledges?

came here for princess Uttara's wedding Yudhishtira is not a mendicant
and need and will return now to our city. Great are not beg. He has kept his
word and so have you among the princes of the land, alike in his brothers
twelve years in exile in the age and wisdom, and entitled to advise us
forest and twelve months there after in all. Dhritarashtra too holds you, his

disguise according to their pledge. And boyhood friends, in high esteem
like

yet, Duryodhana and his associates, most Drona and Kripa. It is therefore
only right shamelessly and dishonestly, question the that you should
instruct the brahmana

performance. I shall defeat these impudent envoy on his mission of peace.
If he fails villains in battle and they shall either seek to persuade
Duryodhana out of his error, Yudhishtira's pardon or meet their doom.

prepare for the inevitable conflict, my How can a righteous war be wrong
in any friends, and send word to us."

case? There is no sin in slaying enemies The conference ended and Krishna left for who take up arms and fight. To supplicate Dwaraka with his people. The Pandavas

before the enemy, is to incur disgrace. If and their allies went on with their

Duryodhana desires war, he can have it preparations. Messengers went forth to all and we shall be quite ready for it. Let the friendly princes who got busy and

there be no delay and let us get on with mobilised their respective armies.

the preparations. Duryodhana is not going Meanwhile, Duryodhana and his brothers were not idle. They also began preparing

for the coming conflict and sent word to unawares and attacked Pearl Harbor

their friends to get their contingents ready destroying their naval forces there.

for war.

Drupada's instruction to the brahmana

News of these preparations on both sides would show that this was no new

soon spread through out the land. "The technique. And that, even in the old days, constant rapid journeying back and forth the same method was followed of carrying of princes caused a great stir everywhere.

on negotiations and even sincerely

The earth shook beneath the heavy tramp working for peace, but simultaneously

of marching legions," says the poet.

preparing, with unremitting vigor, for It would appear that even in olden days, outbreak of war and carrying on peace

military preparations were made in much talks with the object of creating dissension the same way as in our times.

in the enemy's ranks. There is nothing Drupada called in his brahmana and said new under the sun!

to him: "You know Duryodhana's bent of **50. ARJUNA'S CHARIOTEER** mind as well as the qualities of the

HAVING sent Drupada's brahmana to

Pandavas. Go to him as the emissary of Hastinapura on the peace mission, the

the Pandavas. The Kauravas deceived the Pandavas sent word, at the same time, to Pandavas with the connivance of their

the princes likely to favor their cause to father Dhritarashtra who would not listen collect their forces and hold themselves in to the sage advice of Vidura. Show the readiness for war. To Dwaraka, Arjuna

old, weak king, who is misled by his son, went himself.

the path of dharma and wisdom. You will Having understood through his spies the find in Vidura a great ally in this task.

turn events were taking, Duryodhana too Your mission may lead to differences of did not remain idle. Learning that

opinion among the elder statesmen such Vasudeva (Krishna) was back in his home as Bhishma, Drona and Kripa as well as city, he sped towards Dwaraka in his

among the warlords. And, if this happens, chariot, as fast as his swiftest horses could it will be some time before those

take him. The two of them, Arjuna and

differences are smoothed out, which will Duryodhana, thus reached Dwaraka on the be time gained for the completion of the same day.

Pandavas war preparations. As long as

Krishna was fast asleep. Because they

you are in Duryodhana's capital talking of were his close relatives, Arjuna and

peace, their preparations for war will Duryodhana could go into his bedroom.

receive a set-back which is all to the good There they both waited for Krishna to

from the Pandavas' standpoint. If, by a wake up. Duryodhana, who went in first, miracle, you are able to come back with seated himself on a decorated throne-chair good terms of peace, so much the better. I at the head of the bed, while Arjuna kept do not expect Duryodhana will agree to a standing at its foot with arms folded in peaceful settlement. Still, to send one on a respectful posture.

peace mission will be advantageous to

When Mahadeva woke up, his eyes fell on us."

Arjuna who stood in front of him and he In December 1941, the Japanese were

gave him warm welcome. Turning then to carrying on negotiations with the

Duryodhana, he welcomed him too and

Americans and, immediately on the

asked them what brought them both to
breakdown of those talks, took them
Dwaraka. Duryodhana was the first to
speak.

"It looks," said he, "as though war would imbecile choice. He gladly chose
the help break out between us soon. If it does, you of Vasudevas army and
his request was

must support me. Arjuna and I are equally granted. Pleased with the
acquisition of a beloved of you. We both claim equally

mighty force, Duryodhana went to

close relationship with you. You cannot Baladeva and told him the story.

say that either of us is nearer to you than As he finished speaking, the
mighty

the other. I came here before Arjuna.

Balarama said: "Duryodhana, they must Tradition has it that he who came
first have told you all I said at the time of the should be shown preference.
Janardana, marriage of Virata's daughter. I pleaded you are the greatest
among the great; so it your case and urged everything that could is
incumbent on you to set an example to be said for you. Often have I told
Krishna others. Confirm with your conduct the

that we have equal ties with the Kauravas traditional dharma and
remember that it and the Pandavas. But my words failed to was I who
came first."

carry conviction to him. I am helpless. It To which Purushottama
(Krishna)

is impossible for me to side with one

answered: "Son of Dhritarashtra, it may be whom Krishna opposes. I will not help

that you came here first, but it was Kunti's Partha and I cannot support you against son that I saw immediately on waking up.

Krishna. Duryodhana, you come of an

If you were the first arrival, it was Arjuna illustrious line, which is respected by all who first caught my eye. So, even in this the princes of the land. Well, then, if it respect, your claims on me are equal and I must be war, bear yourself in accordance am therefore bound to render assistance to with the Kshatriya code," said he.

both sides. In distributing favors, the Duryodhana returned to Hastinapura in

traditional usage is to begin with the high spirits saying to himself: "Arjuna has junior-most among the recipients. I would, made a fool of himself. The great army of therefore, offer the choice to Arjuna first.

Dwaraka will fight on my side and

The Narayana, my tribesmen, are my

Balarama's good wishes too are with me.

equals in battle and constitute a host, large Vasudeva has been left without an army."

and almost invincible. In my distribution

"Dhananjaya, why did you choose thus of assistance, they will be on one side, and unwisely, preferring me alone and

I individually on the other. But I shall unarmed to my fully equipped and heroic wield no weapon and take no part in

forces?" asked Krishna of Arjuna with a actual fighting."

smile, when they were alone. Arjuna

Turning to Arjuna he said, "Partha, think answered:

it over well. Would you want me, alone

"My ambition is to achieve glory even like and weaponless, or would you prefer the yours. You have the power and prowess to prowess of the Narayana? Exercise the

face all the princes of the land and their right to the first choice which custom hordes in battle single-handed. I too feel I gives you as the younger man."

can do it. So, I desire that I should win the Scarcely had Krishna finished when

battle with you driving my chariot

Arjuna said with reverence and without unarmed. I have desired this for long and hesitation: "I would be content if you are you have today fulfilled my wish."

with us, though you may wield no

Vasudeva smiled again and pronounced

weapon."

this benediction: "Are you trying to Duryodhana could hardly contain himself compete with me? May you succeed," for for joy at what he thought was Arjuna's he was pleased with Arjuna's decision.

This is the sacred story of how Krishna honored he felt at Salya's acceptance of became Partha's charioteer.

the Kaurava hospitality.

51. SALYA AGAINST HIS NEPHEWS

This amazed Salya whom till then had no SALYA, the ruler of Madradesa, was the suspicion of the truth, and he was also brother of Madri, the mother of Nakula touched by the chivalry of Duryodhana in and Sahadeva. He heard that the Pandavas lavishing kingly hospitality on a partisan were camping in the city of Upaplavya

of the Pandavas.

and making preparations for war.

Greatly moved, he exclaimed, "How noble He collected a very big army and set off and kind of you! How can I repay you?"

towards that city to join the Pandavas.

Duryodhana replied: "You and your forces Salya's army was so large that where it should fight on my side. This is the

halted for rest, the encampment extended reward I ask of you."

over a length of nearly fifteen miles.

Salya was stunned.

News of Salya and his marching forces

The Puranas wherein right conduct is

reached Duryodhana. Deciding that Salya always preached, sometimes set out

should somehow be persuaded to join his stories in which conduct, not in

side, Duryodhana instructed his officers to conformity with Dharma, seems

provide him and his great army with all condoned. Is it right, one may ask, for facilities and treat them to sumptuous religious books thus to seem to justify hospitality.

wrong?

In accordance with Duryodhana's

A little reflection will enable one to see instruction, several beautifully decorated the matter in proper light. It is necessary rest houses were erected at several places to bring home the fact that even wise, on the route, at which Salva and his men good and great men are liable to fall into were treated to wondrous hospitality.

error.

Food and drink were lavishly provided.

That is why the Puranas, although ever Salva was exceedingly pleased with the seeking to instil Dharma, contain

attentions paid to him but assumed that his narratives to show how in this world even nephew, Yudhishtira, had arranged all good people sometimes sin against

this. Salva's army marched on, the earth Dharma, as though irresistibly driven to shaking beneath their heavy strides.

do so.

Feeling very pleased with the hospitality, This is to press home the truth that

he called the waiting attendants one day howsoever learned one may be, humility and said to them:

and constant vigilance are absolutely

"I must reward you all who have treated necessary if one wishes to avoid evil.

me and my soldiers with so much love

Why indeed, did the great authors of our and attention. Please tell Kunti's son that epics write about the lapses of Rama in he should let me do this, and bring me his the Ramayana and Yudhishtira in the

consent."

Mahabharata?

The servants went and told their master, Where was the need to make mention of

Duryodhana, this. Duryodhana, who was

them and then labor arguments to explain all the time moving unobserved with the them away, thereby disturbing men's

party waiting on Salva and his soldiers, at minds?

once took this opportunity to present

It was not as though others had discovered himself before Salva, and say how

the lapses and Vyasa and Valmiki had to defend their heroes. The stories are artistic

creations in which lapses they impress the

"Go, see him and return soon. And do not desired moral.

forget your promise to me," said

The parts dealing with the lapses deeply Duryodhana.

distress the reader's mind and serve as

"Good luck to you. Go back to your solemn warnings of pitfalls, which wait to palace. I will not betray you." Saying this, engulf the careless.

Salya went to the city of Upaplavya where They dispose the mind to humility and

Yudhishtira was camping.

watchfulness and make it realise the need The Pandavas received the ruler of Madra for divine guidance. The modern cinema with great eclat. Nakula and Sahadeva

also projects on the screen much that is were joyous beyond measure to see their bad and immoral.

uncle to whom the Pandavas narrated all Whatever may be the explanation offered their hardships and sufferings.

by the protagonists of the cinema, evil is When they started talking about obtaining presented on the screen in an attractive his help in the war that was impending, fashion that grips people's minds and

Salya related to them the story of his tempts them into the path of wickedness.

promise to Duryodhana.

This is not so in the Puranas. Although Yudhishtira saw at once that it had been they do point out that even great men now a mistake to take Salya's assistance for and again fell into error and committed granted, thereby letting Duryodhana

wrong, the presentation is such as to warn forestall them.

the reader and not to allure him into evil Concealing his disappointment as best he ways.

could, Yudhishtira addressed Salva thus: This is the striking difference between our

"Great warrior, you are bound to keep the epics and the modern talkies, which arises promise you have made to, Duryodhana.

from the difference in the character of the You are the equal of Vasudeva in battle people who produced them.

and Karna will have you as his charioteer

"You are the same unto us both. I must when he seeks Arjuna's life in the mean as much to you as the Pandavas.

battlefield. Are you going to be the cause You must agree to come to my aid," said of Arjuna's death? Or are you going to Duryodhana.

save him then? I know I cannot fairly ask Salva answered: "Be it so." Flattered by this of you. Still I do."

Duryodhana's splendid reception, Salva To which Salva rejoined: "My lad, I have deserted the Pandavas who were entitled been tricked into giving Duryodhana my to his love and esteem and pledged his word and I shall be ranged against you in word to fight on Duryodhana's side which battle. But when Karna proceeds to attack shows what dangers may lurk in receiving Arjuna, if I happen to be his charioteer, the hospitality of kings.

you may take it he will go to battle

Feeling that it would not be right to go disheartened and Arjuna shall be saved.

back without meeting Yudhishtira, Salva Fear not. The sorrows and insults, which then turned to Duryodhana saying:

were visited on Draupadi and you all, will

"Duryodhana, believe me. I have given soon be an avenged memory.
Henceforth, you my word of honor. I must however

yours will be good luck. No one can

meet Yudhishtira and tell him what I

prevent or alter what has been ordained by have done."

fate. I have acted wrongly. Bear with me."

52. VRITRA

INDRA, the Lord of the three regions, Visvarupa agreed, to the great advantage was once so drunk with pride that he quite of the gods for, as a result of his guidance forgot the courteous manners and forms and teaching, they were saved from the that the gods had hitherto observed.

tormenting asuras.

When Brihaspati, preceptor of the gods, Visvarupa's, mother was of the asura clan foremost in all branches of learning, and of daityas, which caused Indra to regard venerated alike by the gods and the

Visvarupa with suspicion. He feared that asuras, came to his court, Indra did not because of his birth, Visvarupa might not rise from his seat to receive the acharya or be quite loyal and his suspicion gradually ask him to be seated and failed to do the deepened.

customary honors.

Apprehending danger to himself from this In his great conceit, Indra persuaded

descendent of the enemies of the gods, himself to believe that the sastras allowed Indra sought to entice him into error with him as a king in court the prerogative of the temptresses of his court and so weaken receiving guests seated. Brihaspati was him spiritually. But Visvarupa did not hurt by Indra's discourtesy and, attributing succumb.

it to the arrogance of prosperity, silently The artful and seductive blandishments of left the assembly.

Indra's glamour girls had no effect on the Without the high priest of the gods, the young ascetic. He held fast to his vow of court lost in splendor and dignity and celibacy. When Indra found that his plan became an unimpressive gathering.

of seduction failed, he gave way to

Indra soon realized the foolishness of his murderous thoughts and one day killed

conduct and, sensing trouble for himself Visvarupa with the Vajrayudha.

from the acharya's displeasure, he thought The story goes that the world suffers

to make up with him by falling at his feet vicariously for this great sin of Indra.

and asking for forgiveness.

And, as a result of it, parts of the earth But this he could not do, because

turned alkaline and became unsuitable for Brihaspati had, in his anger, made himself cultivation and women came to be

invisible. This preyed on Indra's mind.

afflicted with the physical troubles and With Brihaspati gone, Indra's strength uncleanness peculiar to them. The

began to decline, while that of the asuras frothing of water is also attributed to this.

increased, which encouraged the latter to Twashta in his great rage and grief at attack the gods. Then Brahma, taking pity Indra's cruel killing of his son and,

on the beleaguered gods, advised them to desirous of avenging his death, performed take unto themselves a new acharya.

a great sacrifice. And out of the sacrificial Said he to them: "You have, through flames sprang Indra's mortal enemy

Indra's folly, lost Brihaspati. Go now to Vritra.

Twashtha's son Visvarupa and request that Twashtha sent him against the chief of the noble spirit to be your preceptor and all gods, saying: "Enemy of Indra, may you will be well with you."

be strong and may you kill Indra." A great Heartened by these words, the gods

battle raged between the two in which

sought the youthful anchorite Visvarupa Vritra was gaining the upper hand.

and made their request to him saying:

When the battle was going against Indra,

"Though young in years, you are well the rishis and the gods sought refuge in versed in the Vedas. Do us the honor of great Vishnu who offered them protection being our teacher."

and said to them: "Be not afraid. I shall

enter Indra's Vajrayudha and he will win But Indra was not dead. He ripped Vritra's the battle in the end." And they returned in belly open and issuing forth went to the good heart.

nearby beach. And directing his

They went to Vritra and said to him:

thunderbolt at the water hurled it so that

"Please make friends with Indra. You are the surf flew and hit Vritra. Vishnu having both equal in strength and valor."

entered the foam, it became a deadly

Vritra respectfully answered: "O

weapon and the mighty Vritra lay dead.

blameless ones, how can Indra, and I

The long battle thus ended and the

become friends? Forgive me. There

afflicted world heaved a sigh of relief. But cannot be friendship between
rivals for to Indra himself, the end of the war

supremacy. Two great powers cannot

brought only ignominy because his

coexist as you know."

victory was secured through sin and deceit The rishis said in reply: "Do
not entertain and is went into hiding for sheer shame.

such doubts. Two good souls can be

Indra's disappearance caused the gods and friends and their friendship is
often after the rishis great distress. For a people hostility."

without a king or a council of state to Vritra yielded saying: "Well, then, I
shall govern them cannot prosper. So they went cease fighting. But I have
no faith in to the good and mighty king Nahusha and Indra. He might take
me unawares. So I offered him the crown.

seek this boon of you, namely, that neither

"Forgive me, I cannot be your king. Who by day nor by night, neither with
dry

am I to aspire to the seat of Indra? How weapons nor with wet ones,
neither with can I protect you? It is impossible," he stone nor with wood,
nor with metals, nor humbly objected. But they insisted,

with arrows shall Indra be able to take my saying: "Do not hesitate. Be
anointed our life."

king. All the merit and potency of our

"So be it," said the rishis and the gods.

penance will be yours and be an addition Hostilities ceased. But soon
Vritra's fears to your strength. The power and the

were confirmed. Indra only feigned

energy of everyone you set your eyes on friendship for Vritra but was, all
the time, shall be transferred to you and you will be waiting for a suitable
opportunity to slay invincible." Thus over-powered, he him.

agreed. Revolution is no new thing. This One evening, he met Vritra on the
beach story shows that, even in the world of the and began to attack him in
the twilight.

gods, there was a revolution leading to The battle had raged for a long
while

Indra's dethronement and Nahusha's

when Vritra praising the Lord Vishnu,

installation as king in his stead. The story said to Indra: "Meanest of the
mean, why of Nahusha's fall is also instructive.

do you not use the unfailing Vajrayudha?

53. NAHUSHA

Hallowed by Hari, use it against me and I THE sin of the unrighteous slaughter of shall attain blessedness through Hari."

Vritra pulled Indra down from his high Indra maimed Vritra by chopping off his estate and made him a fugitive. Nahusha right arm but, undaunted, the latter hurled became the king of the gods in his stead.

with his left band, his iron mace at his Nahusha started well, assisted by the merit assailant who thereupon cut down his

and the fame earned by him while he was other arm also. When Indra disappeared a king on earth. Thereafter, he fell on evil into the mouth of Vritra, great was the days.

consternation of the gods.

The assumption of the kingship of the proposal and leave her in my charge. So, gods filled him with arrogance, He lost his now set about it," ordered Nahusha.

humility and became filled with lawless The affrighted gods decided to talk the desires.

matter over with Brihaspati and somehow Nahusha indulged freely in the pleasures contrive to bring Sachidevi to Nahusha.

of heaven and gave him up to untamed

They all went to Brihaspati and related to and lecherous thoughts. One day, he saw him what Nahusha had said and pleaded

Indra's wife and became enamored of her.

that Sachidevi should submit to Nahusha's Possessed by evil thoughts, he spoke in desires.

tones of command to the assembled gods: At which, the chaste Sachidevi shook with

"Why has not Sachidevi, the wife of the shame and fear and cried out: "My God! I king of the gods, come to me? Am I not cannot do it. I sought refuge in you. Oh the king of the gods now? Send her to my brahmana, do protect me."

house soon."

Brihaspati consoled her and said: "He, When she learnt this, Indra's wife was who betrays one who has sought refuge, indignant. In fear and distress, she went to will meet with destruction. The very earth Brihaspati and cried out: "Preceptor, save will not let the seed, that he sows, sprout.

me from this wicked person."

I will not give you up. Nahusha's end is Brihaspati offered her protection. "Fear approaching. Be not afraid."

not " he said, "Indra will soon be back.

He indicated a way of escape from her

Stay here with me. You will regain your difficult situation by hinting that she husband." When Nahusha learnt that should pray for time, and the shrewd

Sachidevi did not agree to fall in with his Sachidevi took the hint and bravely went wishes and that she sought and obtained to Nahusha's palace.

shelter under Brihaspati's roof, he became As soon as Nahusha saw her, pride and

exceedingly angry.

lust having deprived him of his senses, he The king's displeasure frightened the

was beside himself with joy and said: "O

gods. They protested: "King of the gods, fair one, do not tremble. I am the lord of be not angry. Your anger will make the the three regions. There can be no sin in world sad. Sachidevi is another's wife, do your becoming my wife."

not covet her. Do not swerve from the

Hearing the wicked man's words, the

path of righteousness."

virtuous Indrani, Indra's wife, trembled for But, the infatuated Nahusha would not

a moment. Soon regaining composure she listen to them. Tauntingly, he said to replied: "King of the gods, before I them: "When Indra lusted for Ahalya, become yours, I have a request to make. Is where

were your principles of

Indra alive or is he dead? If he is alive, righteousness and good conduct? Why did where is he? If, after making enquiries you not prevent him then and why do you and searching for him, I do not find him, stop me now? What did you do when he

then no sin will attach to me and I could so shamelessly murdered Visvarupa when become your wife with a clear

the latter was in penance and where was conscience."

your virtuous horror when he killed Vritra Nahusha said: "What you say is right. Go through deceit? Sachidevi's only course is and search for him and be sure to return.

to come and live with me and it will be for Remember the plighted word." Saying your good to get her reconciled to my

this, he sent her back to Brihaspati's house.

The gods went to the great Vishnu and glad and receive you and bid you complained to him of Nahusha. They said: welcome," she said.

"Lord, it was your might that killed Vritra Nahusha fell into the trap. "What a grand but Indra bears, the sin of it, and ashamed idea! Your imagination is wonderful. It and afraid to show himself in his unclean pleases me exceedingly. It is but proper state, he has hidden himself.

that the great rishis should carry me, who Pray indicate a way of deliverance for am blessed with the powers of absorbing him." Narayana said in reply: "Let him the energy of those on whom my eyes fall.

worship me. He will be cleansed of sin I shall do exactly as you have

and the evil-minded Nahusha will meet

wished,"said he, and sent her back home.

with destruction."

The infatuated Nahusha called the rishis Sachidevi prayed to the goddess of

and bade them carry him on their

chastity, and, by her grace, reached where shoulders.

Indra was in hiding. Indra had reduced At this sacrilege, the three worlds were himself to the size of an atom and hid aghast and trembled. But worse was to

himself in a fibre of the stem of a lotus come as the palanquin was carried along.

plant growing in Manasarovara. He was

Inflamed with thoughts of the beautiful doing penance in that state waiting for Sachidevi waiting for him, Nahusha was better days. Sachidevi could not contain impatient to reach her soon. So he began herself for sorrow at her husband's plight goading the rishi-bearers of his palanquin and burst into tears. She acquainted him to go faster. And he went so far in his mad with her troubles.

wickedness as to kick Agastya, one of the Indra spoke words of courage to her.

bearers, saying "sarpa, sarpa." (Sarpa

"Nahusha's end is drawing near," he said.

means to move and also a serpent.) The

"Go to him by yourself and tell him that insanity of lust and arrogance had reached you consent to his proposal. Ask him to its culmination. Nahusha's cup of iniquity come to your residence in a palanquin

was full.

carried by ascetics. Then Nahusha will be

"Meanest of the mean, do thou fall from destroyed."

heaven and become a sarpa on earth,"

Sachidevi went and pretended to agree to cursed the rishi in his wrath. Immediately Nahusha's proposal as Indra had asked her Nahusha fell headlong, down from

to do. Overjoyed that she had returned to heaven, and became a python in the jungle him in this complaisant mood, the foolish and had to wait for several thousand years Nahusha burst out: "Blessed one, I am for his deliverance. Indra was restored to your slave and ready to do you're every his state. He became the king of the gods bidding. You have been true to your

and Sachidevi's grief ended.

word."

Relating this story of the sufferings of

"Yes, I have come back. You will be my Indra and his wife to Yudhishtira and husband. I want you to do something,

Draupadi at Upaplavya, their uncle Salya which I very much desire. Are you not the tried to comfort them.

lord of the world? It is my wish that you

"Victory awaits the patient. Those, whom should come majestically to my house in a prosperity makes arrogant, meet with

grander style than the great Vishnu or destruction. You, your brothers and

Rudra or the asuras. Let the palanquin be Draupadi have gone through untold

borne by the seven rishis. I shall then be sufferings like Indra and his wife. Your trials will soon be over and you will

regain your kingdom. The evil-minded because they fully know that war never Karna and Duryodhana will be destroyed brings any good but only destruction.

even as Nahusha was," said Salya.

Render unto them, therefore, the things **54. SANJAYA'S MISSION**

that are due to them. This would be in THE Pandavas were camping at

accordance both with justice and with the Upaplavya in Virata's territory. From

agreement previously reached. Let there there, they sent emissaries to all friendly be no delay."

rulers. Contingents arrived from all parts After this appeal of the messenger, the of the country and soon, the Pandavas had wise and brave Bhishma spoke. "By the a mighty force of seven divisions. The grace of God," he said, "the Pandavas are Kauravas did likewise and collected an safe and well. Although they have

army of eleven divisions.

obtained the support of many princes and Then, as now, a division was made up of are strong enough for battle, they are not all arms grouped together in accordance bent on war. They still seek peace. To with established military practice. In those restore to them their property is the only days, a division consisted of 21,870

right thing to do."

chariots, an equal number of elephants, Bhishma had not finished when Karna

thrice as many horses and five times as angrily broke in and, turning to the many foot soldiers, and they were

messenger, exclaimed: "O brahmana, is provided with weapons of all kinds and there anything new in what you have said?

other war equipment.

What tortures it to tell the same old story?

Chariots were the "armored cars" of How can Yudhishtira claim the property ancient warfare and elephants, specially that he lost at the game board? If, now, trained for war, corresponded to the "

Yudhishtira wants anything, he must beg tanks" of modern times.

for it as a gift! He arrogantly prefers this Drupada's brahmana messenger reached

absurd claim in fond reliance on the

Dhritarashtra's court. After the usual strength of his allies, particularly Matsya ceremonial introduction and enquiries

and Panchala. Let me tell you clearly that were over, the messenger addressed the nothing can be got out of Duryodhana by assembled gathering on behalf of the

threats. As the plighted word, that the Pandavas:

Pandavas should live undiscovered during

"Law is eternal and of inherent validity.

the thirteenth year, has been broken, they You know this and I need not point it out must once again go back to the forest for to you. Dhritarashtra and Pandu are both another twelve years and return

Vichitravirya's sons and are, according to thereafter."

our usages, equally entitled to their

Bhishma interposed: "Son of Radha, you father's property. In spite of this,

speak foolishly. If we do not do as this Dhritarashtra's sons have taken possession messenger tells us, war will be upon us in of the whole kingdom, while Pandu's sons which we are certain to be defeated. And are without their share of the common

Duryodhana and all of us are doomed to inheritance. There can be no justification destruction." The disorder and excitement for this. Scions of the Kuru dynasty, the in the assembly made Dhritarashtra

Pandavas desire peace. They are prepared intervene.

to forget the sufferings they have

He said to the messenger: "Having undergone and to let bygones be bygones.

mind the good of the world and

They are unwilling to resort to war,

considering the Pandava's welfare, I have

decided to send Sanjaya to them. Please ocean, old age and death are inescapable.

return at once and tell Yudhishtira this."

Duryodhana and his brothers are fools.

Then Dhritarashtra called Sanjaya aside But that is no reason why you should

and instructed him thus: "Sanjaya, go to swerve from rectitude or lose patience.

the sons of Pandu and convey to them my Even if they do not give back your

affectionate regards and my kind inquiries kingdom, you should not abandon the

about Krishna, Satyaki and Virata. Give supreme path of dharma."

all the princes assembled there my

Yudhishtira answered: "Sanjaya, what regards. Go there on my behalf and speak you say is true. Rectitude is the best of conciliatingly so as to secure the

possessions, but are we committing

avoidance of war."

wrong? Krishna knows the intricacies of Sanjaya went to Yudhishtira on this

rectitude and dharma. He wishes both

mission of peace. After the introductory sides well. I shall do as Vasudeva orders."

salutations, Sanjaya thus addressed

Krishna said: "I desire the welfare of the Yudhishtira in the midst of his court: Pandavas. I desire also that Dhritarashtra

"Dharmaputra, it is my good fortune to be and his sons should be happy. This is a able to see you again with my eyes.

difficult matter. I think I can settle this Surrounded by princes, you present the issue by myself going to Hastinapura. If I picture of Indra himself. The sight

could obtain peace from the Kauravas on gladdens my heart. King Dhritarashtra

terms that do not conflict with the welfare sends you his best wishes and desires to of all, nothing would make me and the know that you are well and happy. The

Pandavas happier. If I succeed in doing son of Ambika (Dhritarashtra) detests all so, the Kauravas will have been rescued talk of war. He desires your friendship from the jaws of death. I shall also have and yearns for peace."

achieved something good and worthwhile.

When Dharmaputra heard Sanjaya say

Even if, through a peaceful settlement, the this, he felt glad and answered:
"If so, Pandavas get back what is due to them, Dhritarashtra's sons have
been saved, nay, they will still serve Dhritarashtra loyally.

we have all escaped a great tragedy. I, too, They desire nothing else. But
they are also desire only peace and hate war. If our prepared for war if
need be. Of these two kingdom is returned to us, we will wipe alternatives,
peace and war, Dhritarashtra out all memories of the sufferings we have
can choose what he pleases."

undergone."

And Yudhishtira said to Sanjaya:

Sanjaya spoke again: "Dhritarashtra's sons

"Sanjaya, go back to the Kaurava, court are perverse. Disregarding their
father's and tell the son of Ambika this from me: advice and their
grandsire's wise words,

'Was it not through your generosity that they are still as wicked as ever.
But you we obtained a share of the kingdom when should not lose
patience. Yudhishtira, we were young? You, who made me a

you stand ever for right conduct. Let us king once, should not deny us our
share eschew the great evil of war. Can

now and drive us to make a beggar's

happiness be gained with possessions

living on the charity of others. Dear uncle, obtained through war? What
good can we there is enough room in the world for both reap from a
kingdom won after killing our of us and the Kauravas. Let there be no own
relatives? Do not therefore

antagonism, therefore, between us.' Thus commence hostilities. Even if
one were to should you request Dhritarashtra on my gain the whole earth
bounded by the

behalf. Give the grandsire my love and

regards and ask him to devise some way it. The Gandiva bow is impatient for war.

of ensuring that his grandchildren live My bowstring is throbbing even without happily in amity. Convey the same

my stretching it and from my quiver,

message to Vidura also. Vidura is the

arrows keep peeping out impatiently,

person who can best see what is good for demanding when? When?
Sanjaya, evil

all of us and advise accordingly. Explain stars make the foolish
Duryodhana seek matters to Duryodhana and tell him on my war with
Krishna and myself. Not even

behalf: 'My dear brother, you made us, Indra and the gods can defeat us.'
Thus who were princes of the realm, live in the spoke Dhananjaya," said
Sanjaya.

forest, clad in skins. You insulted and Bhishma counselled Dhritarashtra
against harassed our weeping wife in the

opposing the combined might of Arjuna

assembly of princes. We bore all this

and Krishna. "Karna, who boasts

patiently. Give us back, at least now, what repeatedly that he will slay the
Pandavas", is lawfully ours. Do not covet what

said Bhishma, "is not equal to a sixteenth belongs to others. We are five.
For the part of the Pandavas. Your sons are

five of us give at least five villages and heading for destruction, listening to his make peace with us. We shall be content.

words. When Arjuna beat back your son's Say thus to Duryodhana, Sanjaya. I am

attack on Virata's capital and humbled his prepared and ready for peace as well as pride, what was Karna able to do? When for war."

the Gandharvas took your son prisoner, After Yudhishtira had said these words, where did the invincible Karna bide

Sanjaya took leave of Kesava and the

himself? Was it not Arjuna who drove

Pandavas, and went back to Hastinapura.

back the Gandharvas?" Thus did Bhishma **55. NOT A NEEDLE-POINT OF**

taunt Karna and warn the Kauravas.

TERRITORY

"What grandfather Bhisma says is the AFTER he had despatched Sanjaya to the only proper thing to do," said

Pandavas, Dhritarashtra, filled with

Dhritarashtra. "All wise men say, and I anxiety, could not get a wink of sleep that know, that it is best to seek peace. But night. He sent for Vidura and spent the what can I do? These fools would go their whole night talking to him.

own way, however loudly I protest."

"To give the Pandavas their share of the Duryodhana, who had been listening to all kingdom is the safest plan," said Vidura.

this, stood up. "Father, do not worry and

"Only this can bring good to both sides.

tremble about our safety. We know how

Treat the Pandavas and your own sons

strong we are. That we shall win is

with equal affection. In this case, the right certain. Yudhishtira knows it too, for, course is also the wise one."

giving up all hope of kingdom, he only Vidura counselled Dhritarashtra in this begs now for five villages. Is it not clear manner at great length.

from this that he is already scared about The next morning Sanjaya returned to

our eleven divisions? What can the

Hastinapura. And gave a full account of Pandavas oppose to our eleven divisions?

what had taken place in Yudhishtira's Why then do you doubt our victory?"

court.

Duryodhana said to his father and tried to

"Chiefly, Duryodhana should know what cheer him up.

Arjuna said: 'Krishna and I are going to

"My son, let us not have war," said destroy Duryodhana and his followers,

Dhritarashtra. "Be satisfied with half the root and branch. Make no mistake about kingdom. It is enough if we govern that

half well." Duryodhana could stand it no safety, for the Kauravas will stop at

longer. "The Pandavas will not receive nothing."

even a needle-point of territory," he Krishna answered: "Dharmaputra, I know exclaimed, and left the court. In the

how wicked Duryodhana is. But still we excitement that prevailed, the court broke should make all attempts at a peaceful up.

solution so as to give the world no cause Let us now relate what the Pandavas were to accuse us of not having done

saying among themselves. After Sanjaya everything possible to avert war. We must left Upaplavya for Hastinapura,

omit nothing, no matter how slender our Yudhishtira said to Krishna: "Vasudeva, hopes of success. Have no fears for my Sanjaya is

Dhritarashtra's alter ego. From safety, for, if the Kauravas offer me, a his speech, I have divined what is in

messenger of peace, any threat of bodily Dhritarashtra's mind. Dhritarashtra is harm, I will reduce them to ashes."

trying to secure peace without giving us Said Yudhishtira: "You are all-knowing.

any territory. In my simplicity, I was glad You know our hearts as well as theirs. In at first when I heard Sanjaya speak. But it expounding matters and in the art of

soon became clear that my joy was

persuasion, there is none better than you."

unfounded. He then struck a middle line Krishna said: "Yes, I know you both.

and spoke desiring peace. But the words Your mind ever clings to righteousness with which he ended his message seemed and theirs is always steeped in hatred, to commend meekness to us, even if our jealousy and enmity. I will do all I can to just rights were denied. Dhritarashtra has secure the result, which I know is dear to not been playing fair with us. The crisis is you, a settlement reached without war

approaching. There are none but you to even though it may have, but little for protect us. I made my offer that we would you. The signs are ominous and portend be content with only five villages. The war. Still duty demands that we should wicked Kauravas will refuse even this.

make the attempt for peace."

How can we tolerate this height of

Thus saying, Krishna took leave of the intransigence? Only you can advise us in Pandavas and set off in his chariot to this crisis. There is none but you who Hastinapura.

knows what our duty is now and can

56. KRISHNA'S MISSION

guide us in dharma as well as in

SATYAKI accompanied Govinda

statesmanship."

(Krishna) to Hastinapura. Before setting Krishna said in reply: "For the good of out on his journey, Krishna had a lone you both, I have decided to go to

discussion with the Pandavas. Even the Hastinapura. I shall go to Dhritarashtra's mighty Bhima, rather surprisingly,

court and try to secure your rights without supported a peaceful settlement.

war. If my mission succeeds, it will be for

"Let not the race be destroyed. Peace is the good of the world."

very much to be preferred," said he. The Yudhishtira said: "Krishna, pray do not poet Vyasa makes Bhima speak thus in

go. What is the good of your going to the order to show that truly great warriors enemies' place now? The perverse

desire peace, and that to seek peace is not Duryodhana will stick to his folly. I do not a sign of fear.

like your going among those unscrupulous But Draupadi could not forget her

men. We cannot let you jeopardise your humiliation. Holding her locks in her hand she stood before Krishna, and in a voice

quivering with grief, she said: here seeking a peaceful settlement? Make

"Madhusudana, look at these tresses of that possible. You cannot satisfy Madhava mine and do what honor requires to be

with other gifts."

done. There can be no peace with honor.

When Govinda reached Hastinapura, the

Even if Arjuna and Bhima are against

citizens had thronged in such numbers in war, my father, old though he is, will go the decorated streets that his chariot could to battle, supported by my children. Even only progress very slowly. He went first if my father can keep out, my children, to Dhritarashtra's palace and then

with Subhadra's son Abhimanyu, at their proceeded to Vidura's house. Kuntidevi head, will fight the Kauravas. I have, for met him there.

the sake of Dharmaputra, these thirteen Thinking of the sufferings of her sons and years, suppressed the burning flame of overpowered by grief, she wept. Krishna anger within me. I can restrain myself no comforted her and, taking leave of her, longer." And she sobbed, remembering made for Duryodhana's palace.

the great outrage.

Duryodhana gave Govinda welcome and

Krishna was moved and said: "Weep not.

invited him to dinner, but Krishna said Dhritarashtra's sons will not listen to my with a smile: "Emissaries eat only after words of peace. They are going to fall and their mission is fulfilled. You may give a their bodies will be food for wild dogs and feast when my work here is completed."

jackals. You will live to see us victorious Declining Duryodhana's invitation, he

and the insult to you will be fully

returned to Vidura's house where he

avenged, and that too, soon." Draupadi rested.

was satisfied.

Vidura and Krishna took counsel together.

Madhava (Krishna) halted for the night Vidura told him that Duryodhana's

near the city of Kucasthala. When news of arrogance was based on his confidence

Krishna's forthcoming visit came, the city that no one could defeat him as long as was in great excitement.

Bhishma and Drona, who, he knew, were

Dhritarashtra issued orders for decorating under a moral obligation not to abandon the city and arrangements for receiving him, stood by him.

Janardana (Krishna) were in full swing.

Vidura said that it would be a mistake for Dhritarashtra issued instructions that Govinda even to enter the wicked man's Duhsasana's palace, being bigger and

court. All, who knew Duryodhana and his more beautiful than Duryodhana's, should brothers, apprehended that they would

be got ready and placed at the disposal of plot, through fraud and deceit, against Krishna and his entourage and large tents Krishna's life.

were erected at several places outside the

"What you say about Duryodhana is true.

city, along the route which Krishna's

I have not come here with any hope that I chariot was to take.

would be able to secure a peaceful

Dhritarashtra consulted Vidura. He said to settlement, but only in order that the him: "Make arrangements for presenting world might not hold me to blame. Have Govinda with chariots and elephants.

no fear for my life," said Krishna.

Presents of other kinds should also be got The next morning, Duryodhana and

ready." But Vidura said:

Sakuni came to Krishna and informed him

"Govinda cannot be bought with presents.

that Dhritarashtra was waiting for him.

Give him that for which he is coming to Govinda went to the court along with

the land of the Kurus. Does he not come Vidura.

As Vasudeva came into the court, that Drona and Bhishma also tried repeatedly great assemblage of kings stood up.

to persuade Duryodhana and turn him

Saluting the elders with folded hands and from error. Duryodhana was furious with with a word or a smile for the others, everyone for pressing him in this matter to Krishna took his seat. The introductions agree to a peaceful solution. He rose, and over, Govinda rose from his seat and, said:

turning to Dhritarashtra explained the

"Madhusudana, you wrong me out of love object of his visit. He made clear what the for the Pandavas. The others here also Pandavas wanted.

blame me, but I do not think I am one

"Dhritarashtra, do not bring ruin to your whit to blame in this matter. The

people. You regard as bad what is good Pandavas, of their own volition, staked for you and as good what is bad. It is your their kingdom at play and, being defeated, duty to restrain your sons. The Pandavas justly forfeited it. How am I responsible are prepared for war but they desire peace.

for it? Losing the game, they went to the They wish to live in happiness under you.

forests as in honor bound. For what fault Treat them also as your sons and devise of mine do they now seek battle and wish an honorable solution, and the world will to slay us? I will not yield to threats.

acclaim you," said Krishna.

When I was young, the elders did us

Dhritarashtra said: "My friends know that grievous wrong by giving the Pandavas, I I am not to blame. I desire precisely what do not know why, a part of the kingdom Madhava has stated but I am powerless.

to which they had not a shadow of a right.

My wicked sons do not listen to me.

I acquiesced then but they lost it at play. I Krishna, I entreat you to advise refuse to return it to them. I am utterly Duryodhana."

blameless. I will not give the Pandavas an Krishna turned to Duryodhana and said: inch of land, not even a needle-point of

"You are the descendant of a noble line.

it!"

Pursue the path of dharma. Your present When Duryodhana said that he had not

thoughts are unworthy and befit only men committed wrong, Govinda laughed and

of low birth. On account of you, this

said: "The play was fraudulently arranged famous line is in danger of being

by you in conspiracy with Sakuni and you destroyed. If you listen to reason and afterwards insulted Draupadi in an

justice, the Pandavas themselves will

assembly of princes. And yet, you have install Dhritarashtra as king and you as the the impudence to say that you have

heir apparent. Make peace with them by committed no wrong," and reminded him giving them half the kingdom."

of the other iniquities he had perpetrated Bhishma and Drona also pressed against the Pandavas.

Duryodhana to listen to Govinda. But

Duhshasana seeing that Bhishma and others Duryodhana's heart could not be softened.

were accepting Krishna's indictment of

"I pity Dhritarashtra and Gandhari whom Duryodhana said: "Brother, it seems that Duryodhana is doomed to bereavement

these people have a plot to bind you with and desolation by his misdeeds," said ropes and hand you over to the Pandavas.

Vidura.

Let us get away from here," and

Dhritarashtra once again said to his son: Duryodhana, accompanied by his

"If you do not listen to Govinda's advice, brothers, walked out of the court.

our race will perish."

Govinda addressed the court again and

said: "Sires, the Yadavas and Vrishnis live

happily, now that Kamsa and Sisupala are (Krishna as Supreme Being) got into his dead. In order to save a whole people, it is chariot and sped towards Upaplavya. War some times necessary to sacrifice an

became a certainty.

individual. Does it not happen

57. ATTACHMENT AND DUTY

occasionally that a village is abandoned in ANY ray of hope there might have been

order that the country may be saved? I am of a peaceful settlement when Krishna

afraid you will have to sacrifice

went to Hastinapura was extinguished

Duryodhana if you want to save your race.

when he returned and narrated what

That is the only way."

happened. Kunti was overwhelmed with

Dhritarashtra said to Vidura: "Bring far-grief when she learnt that it was to be war sighted Gandhari here. It is possible that to the death.

Duryodhana might listen to her."

"How can I" reflected Kunti, "give my Gandhari was sent for and, when she

thoughts tongue and say to my sons, 'Bear came to the court, Duryodhana was sent the insults. Let us not ask for any territory for.

and let us avoid war'? How can my sons Duryodhana, his eyes red with anger,

accept what is contrary to kshatriya

returned and Gandhari tried by all the tradition?"

means in her power to bring him round to

"At the same time," she thought, "what reason. Duryodhana said 'No' and again can be gained by mutual killings in the walked out of the hall.

war and what happiness attained after the He and his friends had plotted to seize destruction of the race? How shall I face Krishna. News of this reached the court.

this dilemma?" Thus was she tormented Govinda, who had anticipated all this, by the prospect of wholesale destruction laughed and disclosed his divinity.

on the one hand and the claims of

The blind Dhritarashtra, by the grace of kshatriya honor on the other.

Krishna, temporarily regained his sight

"How can my sons defeat the mighty three and was able to see Krishna in his

combined, Bhishma, Drona and Karna?

Visvarupa presence in every form.

They are warriors who have never yet met

"Pundarikaksha, (lotus-eyed Krishna) defeat. When I think of them, my mind

having seen your Visvarupa, I do not wish trembles. I do not worry about the others.

to see anything else. I ask that I should be These three are the only people in the blind again," said Dhritarashtra, and he Kaurava army capable of fighting the

became blind again. "All our efforts have Pandavas with any hope of slaying them.

failed. Duryodhana is obstinate," said Of these, Dronacharya might refrain from Dhritarashtra to Govinda.

killing my children from either love or And Krishna rose and, with Satyaki and unwillingness to meet one's own disciples Vidura on either side of him, left the in battle. The grandsire will certainly not court.

want to kill them. But Karna is the

He went straight to Kunti. He told her Pandavas' chief enemy. He is anxious to what had happened and she asked him to please Duryodhana by killing my sons.

convey her blessings to her sons.

Karna is a great man-at-arms. As I think

"The time has come," said she, "for that of him engaged in battle against my other for which a kshatriya woman brings forth sons, my heart is consumed with agony

sons. May you protect my sons!"

like a faggot in the fire. Now is the time A kshatriya mother brings forth children for me, to seek Karna out and tell him the to be sacrificed in war. Purushottamat truth about his birth, on knowing which,

he is bound to abandon Duryodhana's brothers Balarama and Krishna.

cause."

Surrounded by your five brothers, your Tormented by these anxious thoughts

effulgence will be like that of Brahma about her children. Kunti went to the

among the gods. In perplexing situations, banks of the Ganga where Karna usually one must do what gives satisfaction to offered his daily prayers.

loving parents. This is the highest dharma Karna was there at his devotions. Facing according to our scriptures."

east and with uplifted hands he was in When his mother spoke thus to him at the deep meditations. Kunti quietly stood

end of his devotions to the sun, Karna felt behind him and waited.

a sign in his heart that the Sun god

Karna was in meditation and was

endorsed Kunti's request. But he checked unmindful of everything until he felt the himself and took it to mean that the Sun hot rays of the sun on his back.

god was testing his loyalty and strength of His prayers over, Karna looked back to mind. He should not be found wanting.

find Kunti standing behind him and

With an effort of the will, he controlled holding the hem of his upper garment over alike the temptations of self-interest and her head to shield it from the burning sun.

the prompting of natural affection. He said That Pandu's queen and the mother of the sadly but firmly: "What you have said, Pandava princes should be there, waiting dear mother, is contrary to dharma. If I patiently for him to finish his prayers, swerve from the path of duty, I shall have filled him with great confusion and

done myself much more hurt than any that amazement.

an enemy might inflict on me in the

"The son of Radha and the chariot-driver battlefield. You deprived me of all that Adhiratha bows to you. I am at your

was my birthright as a kshatriya when you service. What can I do for you, O queen?"

threw me, a helpless babe, into the river.

asked Karna, according to the established And now, you talk to me of my duties as a forms of respectful address.

kshatriya. You denied me the motherly

"Karna," said Kuntidevi, "you are not love, which blesses all life. And now, Radha's son, nor is the charioteer your thinking of your other children's good, father. Do not think that you are a man of you tell me this story. If I now join the the chariot-driver's caste. You are Surya's Pandavas, will not the world proclaim that son born out of the womb of Pritha of

I have done so out of fear? I have eaten royal blood, otherwise known as Kunti.

the salt of Dhritarashtra's sons, won their May good fortune attend you"!

confidence as their champion and enjoyed She then narrated the story of his birth.

all the consideration and kindness they

"You who were born with full armor and showed me. And now you want me, when

golden earrings," said Kunti, "not the battle is about to be joined, to be knowing that the Pandavas are your

untrue to my salt and go over to the

brothers, have joined Duryodhana and

Pandavas. The sons of Dhritarashtra look have come to hate them. To live in

on me as the ark, which will enable them dependence on Dhritarashtra's sons, does to cross the deluge of war. I have myself not befit you. Join Arjuna and be one of urged them into this war. How can I now the kings of the realm. May you and

desert them? Could there be blacker

Arjuna put down the wicked! The whole

treachery and baser ingratitude? What in world will be at your feet. Your fame will life, or beyond it, would be worth a price reach far and wide, like that of the

like that? Mother dear, I must discharge

my debt, aye, with life, if necessary; They formed the army in seven divisions otherwise, I shall be no better than a and appointed Drupada, Virata,

common thief purloining my food all

Dhrishtadyumna, Sikhandin, Satyaki,

these years. I shall surely use all my Chekitana and Bhimasena at the head of followers against your sons in this coming each division. They then considered who war. I cannot deceive you. Please forgive should be appointed Generalissimo.

me."

Addressing Sahadeva, Yudhishtira said:

"But yet," continued he, "I cannot have

"We should select one of these seven to be my mother plead completely in vain. Part Supreme Commander. He should be one

with Arjuna to me. Either he or myself capable of successfully facing the great must die in this war. I will not kill your Bhishma, who can burn enemies to ashes.

other sons, whatever they may do unto

He should be one who knows how to

me. Mother of warrior sons, you will still dispose his forces as circumstances

have five sons. Either I or Arjuna will require from time to time. Who do you

survive this war. And with the other four think is most fitted for this

sons, you will still have five".

responsibility?"

When Kunti heard her first-born speak

In the olden days, it was the practice to thus firmly, adhering to the kshatriya ascertain the views of younger people

code, her heart was full of tumultuous and first, before consulting elders. This

contrary feelings and, without trusting instilled enthusiasm and self-confidence herself to speak. She embraced him and in the younger folk. If the elders were departed in silence.

consulted first, it would not be possible

"Who can go against what has been for others to speak with freedom, and

ordained?" she thought. "He has, at least, even honest differences of opinion might offered not to harm four of my sons. That savor of disrespect.

is enough. May God bless him," and she

"Let us take as our Supreme Commander returned home.

the king of Virata who helped us when we **58. THE PANDAVA**

lived in disguise and with whose support **GENERALISSIMO**

we now demand our share of the

GOVINDA reached Upaplavya and told

kingdom," replied Sahadeva.

the Pandavas what had happened in

"It seems to me best to make Drupada the Hastinapura.

Generalissimo, for, in point of age,

"I spoke urging what was right and what wisdom, courage, birth and strength, he is was also good for them. But, it was all in supreme," said Nakula.

vain. There is now no way out except the

"Drupada, the father of Draupadi, has fourth, that is, the last alternative of war.

learnt archery from Bharadwaja, and has The foolish Duryodhana would not listen for long been waiting for an encounter to the advice tendered to him by the elders with Drona. He is much respected by all in the assembly. We must now prepare for kings, and is supporting us, as if we were war without delay. Kurukshetra is waiting his own sons. He should lead our army

for the holocaust."

against Drona and Bhishma."

"There is no longer any hope of peace,"

Dharmaputra then asked Dhananjaya for

said Yudhishtira, addressing his brothers, his opinion. "I think, Dhrishtadyumna and issued orders for marshalling their should be our chief in the battlefield. The forces in, battle array.

hero who has his senses under control and who has been born to bring about Drona's

end. Dhrishtadyumna alone can withstand Bowing to Drupada and Virata, the visitor the arrows of Bhishma whose skill in

seated himself beside Dharmaputra.

archery made even the great Parasurama

"I have come to Kurukshetra," said he, hold back. He is the only man fitted to be

"learning that the descendants of Bharata our commander. I can think of no one

have let themselves be overwhelmed by

else," replied Arjuna.

greed, anger and hatred and that the peace Bhimasena said: "O king, what Arjuna talks have broken down and that war has says is true, but the rishis and elders have been declared."

said that Sikhandin has come into the

Overcome by emotion, he paused for a

world to kill Bhishma. My inclination

while and then continued: "Dharmaputra, would be to give the command to

dreadful destruction is ahead. The earth is Sikhandin whose radiant face is like that going to is a bloody morass strewn with of Parasurama. I do not think any one else mangled bodies! It is an evil destiny that can defeat Bhishma."

has maddened the kshatriya world to

Yudhishtira finally asked Kesava for his foregather here to meet its doom. Often opinion. "The warriors mentioned are, have I told Krishna, 'Duryodhana is the each one of them, worthy of selection,"

same to us as the Pandavas. We may not said Krishna. "Any one of them would fill take sides in their foolish quarrels.' He the Kauravas with fear. All things

would not listen to me. His great affection considered, I would endorse Arjuna's

for Dhananjaya has misled Krishna and he choice. Anoint Dhrishtadyumna,

is with you in this war which I see he has therefore, as your Supreme Commander."

approved. How can Krishna and I be in

Accordingly, Dhrishtadyumna, Drupada's opposite camps? For Bhima and

illustrious son, who led Draupadi at the Duryodhana, both of them my pupils, I

swayamvara and gave her away to Arjuna, have equal regard and love. How then can who for thirteen long years was brooding I support one against the other? Nor can I over the insult that his sister had to suffer bear to see the Kauravas destroyed. I will in Duryodhana's court, and who was

therefore have nothing to do with this war, waiting for an opportunity to
avenge the this conflagration that will consume

wrong, was anointed Supreme

everything. This tragedy has made me

Commander of the Pandava army.

lose all interest in the world and so I shall The lion-roar of warriors, the
blowing of wander among holy places."

conchs and shells and the trumpeting of Having thus spoken against the
calamitous elephants rent the air, With warlike cheers war, Krishna's
brother left the place, his which made the sky ring, the Pandava

heart laden with sorrow and his mind

army entered Kurukshetra in martial

seeking consolation in God.

array.

This episode of Balarama's, keeping out **59. BALARAMA**

of the Mahabharata war is illustrative of BALARAMA, the illustrious
brother of

the perplexing situations in which good Krishna, visited the Pandavas, in
their and honest men often find themselves.

encampment. As Halayudha (plough

Compelled to choose between two equally bearer), clad in blue silk,
entered

justifiable, but contrary, courses of action, majestically like a lion.

Yudhishtira, the unhappy individual is caught on the Krishna and others

gave the broad-horns of a dilemma. It is only honest men shouldered warrior a glad welcome.

that find themselves in this predicament.

The dishonest ones of the earth have no

such problems, guided as they are solely being old, Rukma's became the dominant by their own attachments and desires, that voice and it looked as though Rukmini is, by self-interest.

would be compelled to marry Sisupala.

Not so the great men who have renounced Rukmini, whose heart was wholly

all desire. Witness the great trials to Krishna's because she was Lakshmi which, in the Mahabharata, Bhishma,

incarnate, was disconsolate. She feared Vidura, Yudhishtira and Karna were put.

that her father would be helpless against We read in that epic how they solved their her domineering brother and would not be several difficulties. Their solutions did not able to prevent the unhappy marriage.

conform to a single moral pattern but

Mustering all her strength of mind,

reflected their several individualities. The Rukmini resolved somehow to find a way conduct of each was the reaction of his out of her predicament. She took counsel personality and character to the impact of with a brahmana whom, abandoning all

circumstances.

maidenly reserve, she sent as her emissary Modern critics and expositors sometimes to Krishna, charging him to explain

forget this underlying basic factor and matters to her beloved and sue for help.

seek to weigh all in the same scales,

The brahmana accordingly went

which is quite wrong. We may profit by toDwaraka and conveyed to Krishna

the way in which, in the Ramayana,

Rukmini's sad plight and her entreaty, and Dasaratha, Kumbhakarna, Maricha,

handed to him the letter Rukmini had sent Bharata and Lakshmana reacted to the

through him. The letter ran as follows: difficulties with which each of them was

"My heart has already accepted you as faced.

lord and master. I charge you therefore to Likewise, Balarama's neutrality in the come and succour me before Sisupala

Mahabharata war has a lesson. Only two carries me off by force. The matter cannot princes kept out of that war. One was

brook any delay; so you must be here

Balarama and the other was Rukma, the tomorrow. Sisupala's forces, as well as ruler of Bhojakata. The story of Rukma, Jarasandha's, will oppose you and will whose younger sister Rukmini married

have to be overcome before you can have Krishna, is told in the next chapter.

me. May you be the triumphant hero and **60. RUKMINI**

capture me! My brother has decided to

BHISHMAKA, the king of Vidarbha, had

marry me to Sisupala and, as part of the five sons and an only daughter, Rukmini, wedding ceremonies, I am going to the

a princess of matchless beauty, charm and temple along with my retinue to offer

strength of character.

worship to Parvati. That would be the best Having heard of Krishna and his renown, time for you to come and rescue me. If she wished to be united to him in wedlock you do not turn up, I will put an end to my and the desire daily grew in intensity. Her life so that I may at least join you in my relatives approved the idea, all except her next birth."

eldest brother Rukma, the heir apparent, Krishna read this and immediately

between whom and Krishna there was no

mounted his chariot. At the king's behest, love lost.

Kundinapura, the capital of Vidarbha, was Rukma pressed his father not to give

most gorgeously decorated and

Rukmini in marriage to the ruler of

preparations for the wedding of the

Dwaraka but to marry her instead to
princess with Sisupala were in full swing.

Sisupala, the king of Chedi. The king

The bridegroom elect and his associates, Vasudeva, he offered help to the
all sworn enemies of Krishna, had already Pandavas.

assembled in the capital. Balarama came

"Oh Pandavas," said he addressing to know of Krishna's sudden and secret
Dhananjaya, "the enemy forces are very departure, all by himself.

large. I have come to help you. Give me Guessing that it must be about the
the word and I shall attack whichever

daughter of the king of Vidarbha and

sector of the enemy formation you would anxious lest Krishna should be
hemmed in like me to. I have the strength to attack alone by mortal
enemies thirsting for his Drona, Kripa or even Bhishma. I shall

blood, he hurriedly assembled a great

bring you victory. Only let me know your force and marched on to
Kundinapura.

wish."

Leaving her apartments, Rukmini,

Turning to Vasudeva, Dhananjaya

accompanied by her retinue, went in

laughed.

procession to the temple, where divine

"Oh, ruler of Bhojakata," said Arjuna, "we service was held.

are not afraid of the size of the enemy

"Oh Devi," implored Rukmini, praying for forces. We have no need of your help and her intercession. "I prostrate myself before do not particularly desire it. You may see who knowest my devotion. Grant that either go away or stay on, just as you Krishna may espouse me."

like."

Stepping out of the temple, Rukmini

At this, Rukma was filled with anger and sighted Krishna's chariot and ran straight shame and went to Duryodhana's camp

as a needle to the attracting magnet. She with his army. "The Pandavas have fled to him and got into his chariot. And refused my proffered assistance." Said he Krishna drove off with her, to the

to Duryodhana. "My forces are at your bewilderment of all around.

disposal."

The servants ran to Rukma, the heir

"Is it not after the Pandavas rejected your apparent, and related what had happened.

assistance that you have come here?"

"I will not return without killing exclaimed Duryodhana, and added: "I am Janardana," swore Rukma, and went in not in such dire need yet as to welcome pursuit of Krishna with a large force.

their leavings."

But, meanwhile, Balarama had arrived

Rukma, thus put to disgrace by both sides, with his army, and a great battle ensued returned to his kingdom without taking between the two opposing forces in which part in battle. Neutrality in war may be of the enemy was utterly routed. Balarama several kinds.

and Krishna returned home in triumph,

It may arise from conscientious objection where Rukmini's wedding with Krishna

to war or it may be due to mere conceit was celebrated with customary rites.

and self-interest. Yet others may keep The defeated Rukma was ashamed to

aloof through cowardice or sheer inertia.

return to Kundinapura and built at the Balarama was neutral in the Mahabharata very site of the battle between Krishna war because of his love of peace. Rukma, and himself a new city, Bhojakata, over on the other hand, abstained as a result of which he ruled.

his conceit.

Hearing of the Kurukshetra battle, Rukma Instead of acting according to dharma, he arrived there with a huge force. Thinking thought of personal glory, and neither side that he could thereby win the friendship of would have him.

61. NON-COOPERATION

IT was the day before the commencement the impending war. Let me tell you my

of the great battle. The grandsire, now the settled conviction, it is you, not I, who Kaurava Generalissimo, was with

will fail the Kauravas. Why hide your real Duryodhana seeking to inspire him with feelings? The fact of the matter is that you his own heroic spirit and cheerfulness.

have no genuine affection for

Bhishma spoke of the strength, skill and Duryodhana, but he does not know it.

prowess of the warriors ranged on the

Hating me you seek to come between me

Kauravas' side. Duryodhana was cheered and Duryodhana and poison his mind

up. Presently, Karna became the subject against me. And in furtherance of your of their talk.

wicked design, you have been belittling

"Karna has earned your affection," said my strength and running me down. You

Bhishma, "but I do not think much of him.

have stooped to behavior unworthy of a I do not like his great hatred of the

kshatriya. Age alone does not confer a Pandavas, and he is too boastful. There is title to honor and respect among warriors, no limit to his arrogance and he is much but prowess does. Desist from poisoning given to disparaging others. I would not our relations."

place him in the highest rank among the Turning then to Duryodhana, Karna said: warriors of the land. Besides, he has given

"Illustrious warrior, think well and look to away the divine armor with which he was your own good. Do not place too great a born. He is not

therefore likely to be of reliance on the grandsire. He is trying to great help to me in this battle. The curse sow dissension in our ranks. His

of Parasurama is on him too. His

appraisement of me will injure your cause.

command of supernatural weapons will

By running me down, he seeks to dampen fail him in his hour of need, for he will not my enthusiasm. He has become senile and be able to remember the mantras. And the his time is up. His arrogance does not let battle that will ensue between him and him have regard for anyone else. Age

Arjuna will prove fatal for Karna."

must be respected and experience is useful Thus spoke Bhishma without mincing

but, as the sastras warn us, there is a point matters, and this was exceedingly

when age becomes senility and ripeness unpalatable to Duryodhana and Karna. To falls into rottenness and decay. You have make matters worse, Drona agreed with

made Bhishma your Generalissimo who

the grandsire and said:

will, I have no doubt, earn some fame

"Karna

is full of pride and

from the heroic deeds of others. But I will overconfidence, which will cause him to not bear arms while he is in command.

be neglectful of the finer points of

Only after he has fallen will I do so."

strategy, and through carelessness, he will The arrogant man is never conscious of suffer defeat."

his own arrogance. When accused of it, he Enraged by these harsh words, Karna

charges the accuser with that very fault.

turned to the grandsire with flaming eyes.

His judgment is warped and he considers

"You sir," said he, "have always slighted it a crime on the part of anyone to point me through mere dislike and envy and

out his defect. This is well illustrated in have never neglected an opportunity of this episode.

humiliating me, though I gave you no

Controlling his anger, Bhishma replied: reason. I bore all your taunts and thrusts

"Son of Surya, we are in a crisis and that for the sake of Duryodhana. You have

is why you have not ceased to live this said that I would not be of much help in moment. You have been the evil genius of

the Kauravas." Duryodhana was in attacked. A horseman could attack only a distress.

horseman, not one on foot.

"Son of Ganga, I need the help of you Likewise, charioteers, elephant troops and both," he said. "You will both do deeds of infantrymen could engage themselves in great heroism, I have no doubt. At the battle only with their opposite numbers in break of dawn, the battle joins. Let there the enemy ranks.

be no fighting among friends, with the foe Those who sought quarter or surrendered in full force before us!"

were safe from slaughter. Nor might one, But Karna was adamant in that he would for the moment disengaged, direct his

not take up arms so long as Bhishma was weapons against another who was

in supreme command. Duryodhana

engaged in combat.

eventually yielded to Karna and suffered It was wrong to slay one who had been

him to carry out his threat.

disarmed or whose attention was directed Karna kept out during the first ten days of elsewhere or who was retreating or who the battle, though all his men participated had lost his armor. And no shafts were to in it. At the end of the tenth day, when the be directed against non-combatant

great Bhishma lay on the battlefield

attendants or those engaged in blowing covered all over with arrows, Karna went conchs or beating drums.

to him and bowed reverently and asked

These were the rules that the Kauravas for forgiveness and blessings, which he and the Pandavas solemnly declared they received.

would follow.

Thereafter, Karna cooperated and himself The passage of time has witnessed many proposed Drona for the command of the

changes in men's ideas of right and wrong.

Kaurava forces in succession to Bhishma.

Nothing is exempt from attack in modern When Drona also fell, Karna took over the warfare.

command and led the Kaurava forces.

Not only are munitions made the target of **62. KRISHNA TEACHES**

attack, but dumb animals such as horses, ALL was ready for the battle. The

camels, mules and medical stores, nay, warriors on both sides gathered together non-combatants of all ages, are destroyed and solemnly bound themselves to honor without compunction.

the traditional rules of war.

Sometimes the established conventions

The code of conduct in war and methods went overboard even in the Mahabharata of warfare vary from time to time. It is war.

only if what was in vogue at the time of We see clearly in the story that occasional the Mahabharata war is kept in mind that transgressions took place for one reason we can understand the epic. Otherwise, or another. But, on the whole, the

the story would be puzzling in places.

accepted rules of honorable and humane From what follows, the reader may have war were observed by both sides in the some idea of the rules of

warfare followed Kurukshetra battle. And the occasional in the Kurukshetra battle. Each day, the violations were looked upon as wrong and battle was over at sunset, and the hostiles shameful.

mixed freely like friends.

Addressing the princes under his

Single combats might only be between

command, Bhishma said: "Heroes, yours equals and one could not use methods not is a glorious opportunity. Before you, are in accordance with dharma. Thus those

the gates of heaven wide open. The joy of who left the field or retired would not be living with Indra and Brahma awaits you.

Pursue the path of your ancestors and armies saw with amazement Yudhishtira, follow the kshatriya dharma. Fight with the steadfast and brave son of Pandu,

joy and attain fame and greatness. A

suddenly doff his armor and put away his kshatriya does not wish to die of disease weapons. Descending from his chariot, he or old age in his bed but prefers to die on proceeded on foot towards the commander the battlefield," and the princes responded of the Kaurava forces.

by ordering their trumpets to be sounded

"What is this that Yudhishtira is doing?"

and shouted victory to the Kauravas.

asked everyone and was puzzled by this On Bhishma's flag shone brightly the

sudden and silent proceeding on the part palm tree and five stars. On Aswatthama's of the Pandava.

the lion tail fluttered in the air.

Dhananjaya too was perplexed and he

In Drona's golden-hued standard, the

jumped down from his chariot and ran to ascetic's bowl and the bow glistened, and Yudhishtira. The other brothers and

the cobra of Duryodhana's famed banner Krishna also joined.

danced proudly with outspread hood.

They feared that perhaps Yudhishtira, On Kripa's flag was depicted a bull, while surrendering to his natural inclination, had Jayadratha's carried a wild boar. Likewise suddenly decided to seek peace on any

others and the battlefield thus presented a terms and was going forward to announce pageant of flags.

this.

Seeing the Kaurava forces ranged in battle

"King, why are you proceeding to the array, Yudhishtira gave orders to Arjuna: enemy's lines in this strange manner? You

"The enemy force is very large. Our army have told us nothing. The enemy is ready being smaller, our tactics should be

for battle, their soldiers sheathed in armor concentration rather than deployment that and with uplifted weapons. But you have will only weaken us. Array our forces, doffed your armor and thrown aside your therefore, in needle formation."

weapons and are proceeding forward,

Now, when Arjuna saw men arrayed on

unattended and on foot. Tell us what you both sides for mutual slaughter, he was are about." Thus said Arjuna to

deeply agitated and Krishna spoke to him Dharmaputra. But Yudhishtira was

in order to quell his agitation and remove immersed in deep thought and proceeded his doubts.

forward silently.

Krishna's exhortation to Arjuna at this Then Vasudeva, who knew the hearts of

juncture is the Bhagavad Gita, which is men, smiled and said: "He is going to the enshrined in millions of hearts as the elders to ask for their benediction before Word of God. The Bhagavad Gita is

commencing this terrible fight. He feels it acknowledged by all as one of the

is not right to start such a grave

supreme treasures of human literature.

proceeding without formally taking such Its gospel of devotion to duty, without benediction and permission. He goes to attachment or desire of reward, has shown the grandsire to take his blessing and that the way of life for all men, rich or poor, of Dronacharya. So he goes unarmed. It is learned or ignorant, who have sought for right that he does this. He knows

light in the dark problems of life.

proprieties. It is only thus that we might **63. YUDHISHTHIRA SEEKS** fare well in this battle."

BENEDICTION

The men in Duryodhana's army, when
EVERYTHING was ready for the battle
they saw Yudhishtira advancing with
to begin. At this tense moment, both
hands clasped in humble attitude, thought:

"Here is the Pandava coming to sue for Brihatbala, Duryodhana and
Bhima,

peace, frightened at our strength. Truly Yudhishtira and Salya, and

this man brings disgrace to the race of Dhrishtadyumna and Drona were
thus

kshatriyas. Why was this coward born

engaged in great battles.

among us?" Thus did they talk among Similarly, thousands of other
warriors themselves reviling Dharmaputra though fought severally
according to the rules of delighted at the prospect of securing

war of those days.

victory without a blow.

Besides these numerous single combats

Yudhishtira went through the lines of between renowned warriors, there
was

soldiers armed from head to foot and

also indiscriminate fighting among

proceeded straight to where Bhishma was common soldiers. The name of "sankula and, bending low and touching his feet in yuddha" was given to such free fighting salutation, said:

and promiscuous carnage. The

"Grandsire, permit us to begin the battle.

Kurukshetra battle witnessed many such We have dared to give battle to you, our

"sankula" fights wherein countless men unconquerable and incomparable fought and died in the mad lust of battle.

grandsire. We seek benediction before

On the field lay piles of slaughtered

beginning the fight."

soldiers, charioteers, elephants and horses.

"Child," replied the grandsire, "born in the The ground became a bloody mire in

race of Bharatas, you have acted worthily which it was difficult for the chariots to and according to our code of conduct. It move about. In modern battles there is no gives me joy to see this. Fight and you such thing as single combats. It is all will have victory. I am not a free agent. I

"sankula."

am bound by my obligation to the king

The Kauravas fought under Bhishma's

and must fight on the side of the

command for ten days. After him, Drona Kauravas. But you will not be defeated."

took the command. When Drona died,

After thus obtaining the permission and Karna succeeded to the command. Karna

the blessings of the grandsire,

fell towards the close of the seventeenth Yudhishtira went to Drona and

day's battle. And Salva led the Kaurava circumambulated and bowed, according to army on the eighteenth and last day.

form, to the acharya, who also gave his Towards the latter part of the battle, many blessings, saying:

savage and unchivalrous deeds were done.

"I am under inescapable obligations to the Chivalry and rules of war die hard, for Kauravas, O son of Dharma. Our vested

there is an innate nobility in human

interests enslave us and become our

nature. But difficult situations and

masters. Thus have I become bound to the temptations arise which men are too weak Kauravas. I shall fight on their side. But to resist, especially when they are

yours will be the victory."

exhausted with fighting and warped with Yudhishtira similarly

approached and

hatred and bloodshed.

obtained the blessings of Kripacharya and Even great men commit wrong and their

uncle Salva and returned to the Pandava lapses thereafter furnish bad examples to lines.

others, and dharma comes to be

The battle began, commencing with single disregarded more and more easily and

combats between the leading chiefs armed frequently. Thus does violence beget and with equal weapons. Bhishma and Partha, nourish adharm and plunge the world in Satyaki and Kritavarma, Abhimanyu and

wickedness.

64. THE FIRST DAY'S BATTLE

joy, seeing the valor of the young hero.

DUHSASANA was leading the Kaurava

Unwillingly, he had to use his full

forces and Bhimasena did the same on the strength against the boy. Virata, his son Pandava side. The noise of battle rolled Uttara, Dhrishtadyumna, the son of

and rent the air. The kettledrums,

Drupada and Bhima came to relieve the

trumpets, horns and conchs made the sky young hero and attacked the grandsire

ring with their clamor.

who then turned his attentions on them.

Horses neighed, charging elephants

Uttara, the son of Virata, rode an elephant trumpeted and the warriors uttered their and led a fierce charge on Salya. Salya's lion-roars. Arrows flew in the air like chariot horses were trampled to death and burning meteors. Fathers and sons, uncles thereupon he hurled a javelin at Uttara. It and nephews slew one another forgetful of went with unerring aim and pierced him in old affection and ties of blood. It was a the chest.

mad and terrible carnage. In the forenoon The goad he had in his hand dropped and of the first day's battle the Pandava army he rolled down dead. But the elephant did was badly shaken. Wherever Bhishma's

not withdraw. It continued charging until chariot went, it was like the dance of the Salya cut off its trunk and hit it in many destroyer.

Abhimanyu could not bear this places with his arrows. And then it uttered and he attacked the grandsire. When the a loud cry and fell dead. Salya got into oldest and the youngest warriors thus met Kritavarma's car.

in battle, the gods came to watch the

Virata's son Sveta saw Salya slay his

combat. Abhimanyu's flag, displaying the younger brother. His anger rose, like fire golden karnikara tree brightly waved on fed by libations of butter. And he drove his chariot.

his chariot towards Salya. Seven chariot Kritavarma was hit by one of his arrows warriors at once came up in support of and Salya was hit five times. Bhishma

Salya and protected him from all sides.

himself was hit nine times by

Arrows were showered on Sveta and the
Abhimanyu's shafts. Durmukha's
missiles sped across like lightning in charioteer was struck by one of
clouds. Sveta defended himself

Abhimanyu's sword-edge arrow and his
marvelously. He parried their shafts with severed head rolled on the
ground.

his own and cut their javelins down as Another broke Kripa's bow.
Abhimanyu's they sped towards him. The warriors in feats brought down
showers of flowers

both armies were amazed at the skill

from the gods who looked on. Bhishma

displayed by Sveta. Duryodhana lost no and the warrior supporting him
exclaimed: time now and sent forces to relieve Salva.

"Indeed, a worthy son to Dhananjaya!"

Whereupon there was a great battle.

Then the Kaurava warriors made a

Thousands of soldiers perished, and

combined attack on the valiant youth. But numerous were the chariots
broken and

he stood against them all. He parried with the horses and elephants killed.
Sveta his own all the shafts discharged by

succeeded in putting Duryodhana's men to Bhishma.

flight and he pushed forward and attacked One of his well-aimed arrows brought the Bhishma.

grandsire's palm tree flag down. Seeing Bhishma's flag was brought down by

this, Bhimasena was overjoyed and made Sveta. Bhishma, in his turn, killed Sveta's a great lion-roar that further inspired the horses and charioteer. There upon, they valiant nephew. Great was the grandsire's

hurled javelins at one another and fought and broke their formation, killing large on.

numbers.

Sveta took a mace, and swinging it, sent it Arjuna, turning to Krishna, his charioteer, at Bhishma's car which was smashed to

said: "If we continue in this way, our army pieces. But the grandsire, even before the will soon be totally destroyed by the

mace dashed against the chariot, had

grandsire. Unless we slay Bhishma, I am anticipated it and jumped down. From the afraid we can not save our army."

ground he pulled the string of his bow to

"Dhananjaya, then get ready. There is the his ear and sent a fatal arrow at Sveta.

grandsire's chariot," replied Krishna, and Sveta was struck and fell dead. Duhsasana drove straight towards him.

blew his horn and danced in joy. This was The chariot sped forward at a great pace.

followed by a great attack on the Pandava The grandsire sent his shafts welcoming army by Bhishma.

the challenge. Duryodhana had ordered

The Pandava forces suffered greatly on his men to protect the grandsire most

the first day of the battle. Dharmaputra vigilantly and never to let him expose was seized with apprehension, and

himself to danger.

Duryodhana's joy was unbounded. The

Accordingly, all the warriors, supporting brothers came to Krishna and were

the grandsire, at once intervened and

engaged in anxious consultations.

attacked Arjuna who, however, fought on

"Chief among Bharatas," said Krishna to unconcerned.

Yudhishtira, "do not fear. God has It was well known that there were but

blessed you with valiant brothers. Why three on the Kaurava side who could stand should you entertain any doubts? There is against Arjuna with any chance of success Satyaki and there are Virata, Drupada and the grandsire Bhishma, Drona and Karna.

Dhrishtadyumna, besides myself. What

Arjuna made short work of the warriors, reason is there for you to be dejected? Do who intervened in support of Bhishma.

you forget that Sikhandin is awaiting for The way in which he wielded his great

his predestined victim Bhishma?" Thus bow on this occasion, extorted the

did Krishna comfort Yudhishtira.

admiration of all the great generals in the **65. THE SECOND DAY**

army. His chariot flashed hither and

THE Pandava army, having fared badly

thither sundering hostile ranks like forked on the first day of the battle,

lightning, so rapidly that the eye ached to Dhrishtadyumna, the
Generalissimo,

follow its career.

devised measures to avoid a repetition of Duryodhana's heart beat fast as
he

it. On the second day, the army was most watched this combat. His
confidence in carefully arrayed and everything was done the great
Bhishma began to be shaken.

to instil confidence.

"Son of Ganga," Duryodhana said, "it Duryodhana, filled with conceit on

seems as if even while you and Drona are account of the success on the
first day, alive

and fighting, this irresistible

stood in the center of his army and

combination of Arjuna and Krishna will addressed his warriors.

destroy our entire army. Karna whose

"Heroes in armor", he said in a loud voice, devotion and loyalty to me are
most

"our victory is assured. Fight and care not genuine stands aside and does not fight for for life."

me only because of you. I fear I shall be The Kaurava army, led by Bhishma, again deceived and you will not take steps

made strong attack on the Pandava forces quickly to destroy Phalgun (Arjuna)."

The gods came down to watch the combat Drona sent an arrow that brought the mace between Bhishma and Arjuna. These were down. Dhrishtadyumna then drew his

two of the greatest warriors on earth. Both sword and rushed forward like a lion

chariots were drawn by white steeds.

springing on its elephant prey. But Drona From either side flew arrows in countless again disabled him and prevented his

number. Shaft met shaft in the air and advance.

sometimes the grandsire's missile hit

Just then Bhima, who saw the Panchala's Arjuna's breast and that of Madhava

predicament, sent a shower of arrows on (Krishna). And the blood flowing made

Drona and carried Dhrishtadyumna to

Madhava more beautiful than ever as he safety in his chariot.

stood like a green palasa tree in full bloom Duryodhana who saw this sent the

with crimson flowers.

Kalinga forces against Bhimasena. Bhima Arjuna's wrath rose when he saw his dear killed the Kalinga warriors in great

charioteer hit and he pulled his bow and number. Like Death itself he moved about sent well-aimed arrows at the grandsire.

among his enemies and felled them to the The combatants were equal and the battle ground. So fierce was the destruction that raged for a long while.

the entire army trembled in fear.

In the movements the chariots made they When Bhishma saw this, he came to

were so close to one another and moved relieve the Kalingas. Satyaki, Abhimanyu about so fast that it was not possible to say and other warriors came up in support of where Arjuna was and where Bhishma.

Bhima. One of Satyaki's shafts brought Only the flag could be distinguished.

Bhishma's charioteer down and the horses As this great and wonderful scene was

of Bhishma's chariot, left uncontrolled, enacted in one part of the field, at another bolted carrying Bhishma away from the

place a fierce battle was being fought field.

between Drona and his born enemy

The Pandava army was wild with

Dhrishtadyumna, the son of the king of enthusiasm when Bhishma's chariot sped the Panchalas and brother of Draupadi.

thus out of the field. They took advantage Drona's attack was powerful and

of the situation and made a fierce attack Dhrishtadyumna was wounded badly. But

on the Kaurava army.

the latter retaliated with equal vigor and Great was the loss the Kaurava army

with a grin of hatred he shot arrows and suffered in that day's battle as a result of sped other missiles at Drona.

Arjuna's deeds of valor. The generals of Drona defended himself with great skill.

the Kaurava army were greatly perturbed He parried the sharp missiles and the

and their previous day's enthusiasm had heavy maces hurled at him with his

all disappeared.

arrows and broke them to pieces even as They eagerly looked forward to sunset

they sped in the air.

when there would be an end to the day's Many times did Dhrishtadyumna's bow

battle. As the sun sank in the west,

break, hit by Drona's arrows. One of

Bhishma said to Drona: "It is well we stop Drona's arrows killed the Panchala

the fighting now. Our army is

prince's charioteer. Thereupon

disheartened and weary."

Dhrishtadyumna took up a mace and,

On the side of the Pandavas, Dhananjaya jumping down from the chariot, went

and others returned in great cheer to their forward on foot.

camp, with bands playing. At the end of the second day's battle, the Kauravas were

in the mood that the Pandavas were in the Bhima and his son Ghatotkacha attacked previous evening.

Duryodhana's division and in that day's **66. THE THIRD DAY'S BATTLE**

battle the son appeared to excel his great ON the morning of the third day Bhishma father in valor.

arrayed his army in eagle formation and Bhima's shafts hit Duryodhana and he lay himself led it while Duryodhana and his in swoon in his chariot. His charioteer forces protected the rear. So great was the quickly drove the chariot away from the care taken over every detail that the

scene. He feared that the Kaurava forces Kauravas were certain that there could be would be completely demoralised if they no mishap for them that day.

saw that the prince had been disabled.

The Pandavas too arrayed their forces

But even this movement created great

with skill. Dhananjaya and

confusion. Bhimasena took full advantage Dhrishtadyumna decided in favor of a

of the position and worked havoc among crescent formation of their army so as the fleeing Kaurava forces.

more effectually to cope with the eagle Drona and Bhishma who saw the formation of the enemy's forces.

discomfiture and confusion of the

On the right horn of the crescent stood Kaurava army came up quickly and

Bhima and on the left Arjuna, leading the restored confidence. The scattered forces respective divisions. The battle began. All were brought together and Duryodhana

arms were at once engaged and blood

was again seen leading them.

flowed in torrents and the dust that was

"How can you stand thus," said raised by chariots, horses and elephants Duryodhana to the grandsire, "looking on rose to hide the sun.

when our forces are scattered and put to Dhananjaya's attack was powerful but the disgraceful flight? I fear you are too kind enemy stood firm. A counter-attack was to the Pandavas. Why did you not tell me made by the Kauravas concentrating on

frankly 'I love the Pandavas;

Arjuna's position. Javelins and spears and Dhrishtadyumna and Satyaki are my

other missiles flew in the air shining like friends and I cannot attack or slay them.'

forked lightning in a thunderstorm.

You should have stated the position

Like a great cloud of locusts the shafts explicitly to me. Surely these men are not covered Arjuna's chariot. But with

equal to you. And if you were so minded, amazing skill he raised a moving you could deal with them easily. Even

fortification around his chariot with

now, it would be best if you and Drona arrows discharged in an unending stream told me frankly your mind in the matter."

from his famous bow.

The chagrin of defeat, and the knowledge At another point Sakuni led a large force that the grandsire disapproved of his ways against Satyaki and Abhimanyu. Satyaki's made Duryodhana speak thus bitterly. But chariot was broken to pieces and he had to Bhishma merely smiled and said: "Wasn't scramble up Abhimanyu's chariot and

I quite frank in my advice to you? That thereafter both fought from the same

advice you rejected when you decided on chariot.

war. I tried to prevent the war but, now They were able to destroy Sakuni's forces.

that it has come, I am fulfilling my duties Drona and Bhishma jointly attacked

by you with all my might. I am an old

Dharmaputra's division and Nakula and

man and what I am doing is quite my

Sahadeva joined their brother in opposing utmost."

Drona's offensive.

Saying thus, the grandsire resumed his Krishna was not happy at the way Arjuna operations. The turn of events in the

met the attack. The grandsire's bow was forenoon had been so much in their favor working fiercely. But Arjuna's hands did that the delighted Pandavas were now

not do their best, for his heart was not in somewhat careless.

it.

They did not expect Bhishma to rally his He had too much regard for his great

forces and attack them again. But stung by grandsire. Krishna thought that, if Arjuna Duryodhana's reproaches, the grandsire went on like this, the army, which had raged about the field like a destroying fire.

been so badly demoralized already, would He rallied his men and delivered the most be utterly destroyed and all would be lost.

severe attack yet made on the Pandava

Krishna managed the chariot skilfully, but army. The latter thought that the grandsire in spite of it, both he and Arjuna were hit had multiplied himself into a number of many times by Bhishma's arrows.

Bhishmas fighting at several points. So Janardana's (Krishna) anger rose. "I can swift were his movements that afternoon.

stand this no longer, Arjuna. I shall kill Those who opposed him were struck

Bhishma myself if you will not do it!" he down and perished like months in the fire.

exclaimed, and dropping the reins, he took The Pandava army was thoroughly broken up his discus and jumped down from the and began to scatter. Vasudeva, Partha chariot and dashed forward towards

and Sikhandin tried hard to restore order Bhishma.

and confidence, but were unsuccessful.

Bhishma was far from being perturbed at

"Dhanjaya," said Krishna, "now has the this. On the contrary, his face expanded critical time come. Be true to your

with ecstatic joy. "Come, come, Oh Lotus-decision not to flinch from your duty to eyed One!" he exclaimed.

kill in battle Bhishma, Drona and all the

"I bow to you, Oh Madhava. Lord of the other friends and relatives and respected World, have you indeed come down from

elders. You have pledged yourself to it the chariot for my sake? I offer you my and you have now to carry it out.

life. If I be slain by you, I shall be Otherwise our army is lost beyond

glorified in the three worlds. Give me that redemption. You must now attack the

boon. May your hands take this life away grandsire."

and save me for eternity."

"Drive on," said Arjuna.

Arjuna was distressed to see this. He

As Dhananjaya's chariot sped on towards jumped down and ran after Krishna.

Bhishma, it met a hot reception from the Overtaking him with great difficulty, he grandsire, who covered it with his arrows.

entreated Krishna to turn back.

But, Arjuna bent his bow and discharged

"Do not lose your patience with me.

three shafts that broke the grandsire's bow.

Desist and I promise not to flinch," he Bhishma picked up another bow but it too said, and persuaded Krishna to return. The met the same fate. The grandsire's heart chariot reins were again in Krishna's

was gladdened when he saw Arjuna's skill hands. Arjuna attacked the Kaurava forces in archery.

furiously and thousands were slain by

"Hail, brave warrior!" applauded the him.

grandsire, even as, taking up another bow; The Kauravas suffered a severe defeat on he poured shafts on Arjuna's chariot with the evening of the third day. As they

unerring aim.

returned to their camps in torchlight, they said to one another: "Who can equal

Arjuna? There is nothing strange in his rushed to Salya's help. Bhimasena also being victorious." So marvelous was appeared on the scene at this juncture.

Arjuna's prowess that day.

When Bhima raised his mace aloft,

67. THE FOURTH DAY

Duryodhana's brothers lost courage.

THE battle was very much the same every Duryodhana, who saw this, was day and the narrative is one of

exceedingly angry and immediately

monotonous fighting and killing. Still, the charged against Bhima with a large force great battle is the central event in the of elephants.

Mahabharata and, if we skip over it, we As soon as Bhima saw the elephants

cannot fully understand the epic heroes of coming up, he descended from his chariot, that crowded stage.

iron mace in hand, attacked them so

At break of day, Bhishma arrayed the

fiercely that they scattered in a wild Kaurava forces again. Surrounded by stampede, throwing the Kaurava ranks

Drona, Duryodhana and others, the

into disorder.

grandsire looked verily like great Indra, It will be seen that even in our Puranic holding his thunder bolt, surrounded by stories elephants fared as badly in battle as the devas.

they did in the wars of the Greeks and the The Kaurava army, with its chariots,

Romans. Bhima's attack on the elephants elephants and horses all arrayed in battle was like Indra's devastating onslaught on order and ready for the fight, presented the winged mountains.

the appearance of the sky in a great

The slaughtered elephants lay dead on the thunderstorm.

field like great hills. Those that escaped The grandsire gave orders for advance.

fled in panic and caused great havoc in the Arjuna watched the hostile movements

Kaurava army, trampling numerous

from his chariot, whereon the Hanuman

soldiers in their wild race. Duryodhana, flag was waving, and he too got ready.

thereupon, ordered a wholesale attack on The battle commenced. Aswatthama,

Bhima.

Bhurisravas, Salya, Chitrasena and the son But he stood firm as a rock and presently, of Chala surrounded Abhimanyu and

the Pandava warriors came up and joined attacked him. The warrior fought like a lion. A number of Duryodhana's arrows

lion opposing five elephants.

struck Bhima's chest and he climbed up Arjuna saw this combined attack on his chariot again.

son and, with a wrathful lion roar joined

"Visoka, now is the glad hour," said his son whereat the tempo of fighting

Bhima to his charioteer. "I see a number flared up. Dhrishtadyumna also arrived of Dhritarashtra's sons before me, ready to with a large force. The son of Chala was be shaken down like ripe fruits on a tree.

killed.

Keep your hold well on the reins and

Chala himself now joined and he with

drive on. I am going to dispatch these Salya, made a strong attack on

wretches to Yama's abode." Bhima's Dhrishtadyumna. The latter's bow was arrows would have killed Duryodhana

severed into two by a sharp missile

then and there, had it not been for his discharged by Salya.

armor.

Abhimanyu saw this and sent a shower of Eight of Duryodhana's brothers were slain arrows on Salya and put him in such

in that day's battle by Bhima. Duryodhana danger that Duryodhana and his brothers fought fiercely. Bhima's bow was

smashed by one of Duryodhana's arrows.

Taking up a fresh bow, Bhima sent an tossed ocean. I shall surely drown,

arrow with a knife-edge at Duryodhana

overwhelmed in this sea of sorrow."

that cut the latter's bow into two.

Again and again, when Sanjaya related the Not baffled by this,
Duryodhana took up a happenings of the great battle,

fresh bow and discharged a well-aimed

Dhritarashtra would thus lament, unable shaft which struck Bhima on his
chest

to bear his grief.

with such force that he reeled and sat

"Bhima is going to kill all my sons," he down.

said. "I do not believe there is anyone with The Pandava warriors now
poured a great prowess enough in our army to protect my shower of arrows
on Duryodhana.

sons from death. Did Bhishma, Drona,

Ghatotkacha, who saw his father sit dazed Kripa and Aswatthama look on

with the force of the blow, got

unconcerned when our army fled in

exceedingly angry and fell on the Kaurava terror? What indeed is their
plan? When army, which was unable to stand against and how are they
going to help

his onslaught.

Duryodhana? How are my sons to escape

"We cannot fight this Rakshasa today."

from destruction?"

said Bhishma to Drona. "Our men are Saying thus, the blind old king burst into weary. It is nearing sunset and at night of tears.

the Rakshasas grows stronger with the

"Calm yourself, King," said Sanjaya. "The darkness. Let us deal with Ghatotkacha Pandavas rest on the strength of a just tomorrow."

cause. So, they win. Your sons are brave The grandsire ordered his army to retire but their thoughts are wicked. Therefore, for the night. Duryodhana sat musing in luck does not favor them. They have done his tent, his eyes filled with tears. He had great injustice to the Pandavas, and they lost many of his brothers in that day's are reaping the harvest of their sins. The battle.

Pandavas are not winning by charms or

"Sanjaya," exclaimed Dhritarashtra.

magic incantations. They are fighting

"Every day, you give me nothing but bad according to the practice of kshatriyas.

news. Your tale has ever been one of

Their cause being just, they have strength.

sorrow, of defeat and loss of dear ones! I Friends advised you, but you discarded cannot stand this any more. What

wise counsel. Vidura, Bhishma, Drona

stratagem can save my people? How are

and I tried to stop you in your unwise we going to win in this fight? Indeed, I am course, but you did not listen and you full of fear. It seems fate is more powerful went on. Like a foolish sick man who

than human effort."

refuses to drink bitter medicine, you

"King " said Sanjaya in reply, "is this not obstinately refused to follow our advice, all the result of your own folly? Of what which would have saved your people,

avail is grief? How can I manufacture

preferring to do as your foolish son

good news for you? You should hear the desired. You are in distress now. Last truth with fortitude."

night, Duryodhana asked Bhishma the

"Ah! Vidura's words are coming true,"

same question as you put to me now. And said the blind old king, plunged in great Bhishma gave the same answer as I give grief.

you."

68. THE FIFTH DAY

When the fighting was stopped on the

"I AM like a shipwrecked man seeking to evening of the fourth day,
Duryodhana

save himself by swimming in a storm

went by himself to Bhishma's tent and, behind, securely guarding the main
body, bowing reverently, said:

aided by other generals.

"Grandsire, the world knows that you are Dharmaputra and the twin
brothers held a warrior who knows not fear. The same is the rear. Bhishma
bent his bow and

the case with Drona, Kripa, Aswatthama, discharged his shafts. The
Pandava army Kritavarma, Sudakshin, Bhurisaravas,

suffered greatly under the grandsire's Vikarna and Bhagadatta. Death has
no

attack.

terror for these veterans. There is no Dhananjaya saw this and retaliated by

doubt, the prowess of these great warriors fierce shafts aimed at Bhishma.

is limitless, even like your own. All the Duryodhana went to Drona and

Pandavas combined cannot defeat any one complained bitterly according
to his

of you. What then is the mystery behind custom.

this daily defeat of our army at the hands Drona upbraided him severely:
"Obstinate of the sons of Kunti?"

prince, you talk without understanding.

Bhishma replied: "Prince, listen to me. I You are ignorant of the Pandavas'
have given you advice on every occasion strength. We are doing our best."

and told you what was good for you. But, Drona's powerful attack on the
Pandava you have always refused to follow what army was too much for
Satyaki who was

your elders counselled you to do. Again, I meeting it and Bhima therefore
turned his tell you that it is best for you to make attentions to Drona. The
battle grew

peace with Pandu's sons. For your good as fiercer still. Drona, Bhishma
and Salya well as for that of the world, that is the made a combined attack
on Bhima.

only course that should be followed.

Sikhandin supported Bhima by pouring a Belonging to the same royal
house, you shower of arrows on Bhishma. As soon as can all enjoy this
vast country as yours. I Sikhandin stepped in, Bhishma turned

gave you this advice, but you disregarded away. For Sikhandin was born a
girl, and it and have grievously wronged the

Bhishma's principles did not permit him to Pandavas, the fruit of which
you are now attack a woman.

reaping. The Pandavas are protected by In the end, this same objection
proved to Krishna himself. How then can you hope be the cause of
Bhishma's death. When for victory? Even now, it is not loo late Drona saw
Bhishma turn away, he

for making peace and that is the way to attacked Sikhandin fiercely and compelled rule your kingdom, making the Pandavas, him to withdraw.

your powerful brothers, friends instead of There was a promiscuous battle the whole enemies. Destruction awaits you if you of the morning of the fifth day, and the insult Dhananjaya and Krishna, who are slaughter was terrific. In the after noon, none other than Nara and Narayana."

Duryodhana sent a large force to oppose Duryodhana took leave and went to his

Satyaki.

tent, but he could not sleep that night.

But Satyaki destroyed it completely and The battle was resumed the next morning.

advanced to attack Bhurisravas.

Bhishma arrayed the Kaurava forces in a Bhurisravas, who was a powerful strong formation. So did Dhrishtadyumna opponent, put Satyaki's men to fight, and for the Pandava army.

pressed Satyaki himself so fiercely that he Bhima stood at the head of the advance was in distress.

lines as usual. And Sikhandin,

Satyaki's ten sons saw their father's plight Dhrishtadyumna and Satyaki stood

and sought to relieve him by launching an

offensive against Bhurisravas, but decided upon, according to the situation as Bhurisravas undaunted by numbers,

it developed from time to time.

opposed the combined attack and was not The sixth day was marked by a prodigious to be shaken. His well-aimed darts broke slaughter, even in the first part of the their weapons and they were all slain, morning. Drona's charioteer was killed strewn on the field like so many tall trees and Drona took the reins of the horses struck down by lightning. Satyaki, wild himself and used his bow as well.

with rage and grief, drove forward at a Great was the destruction he effected. He furious pace to slay Bhurishravas.

went about like fire among cotton heaps.

The chariots of the two warriors dashed The formations of both armies were soon against each other and crumbled to pieces.

broken and indiscriminate and fierce

And the warriors stood face to face with fighting went on. Blood flowed in torrents sword and shield in desperate single

and the field was covered by dead bodies combat.

of soldiers, elephants and horses and the Then, Bhima came and took away Satyaki debris of chariots.

by force into his chariot and drove away.

Bhishma pierced the enemy's lines to For Bhima knew that Bhurishravas was an seek out Duryodhana's brothers and finish unrivalled swordsman and he did not want them. They, for their part, did not wait to Satyaki to be slain.

be sought, but rushed on him, in a

Arjuna killed thousands of warriors that combined attack from all sides. He was evening. The soldiers, dispatched against attacked by Duhshasana, Duryodhana,

him by Duryodhana, perished like moths Durmata, Jaya, Jayatsena, Vikarna,

in the fire. As the sun went down and

Chitrasena, Sudarsana, Charuchitra,

Bhishma gave orders to cease fighting, the Suvarma, Dushkarna and others, all

princes on the Pandava army surrounded together.

Arjuna and greeted him with loud cries of Bhimasena, who did not know what fear

admiration and victory.

was, stood up and fought them all. They The armies on both sides retired to camp, desired to take him prisoner and he to kill along with the tired horses and elephants.

them all on the spot.

69. THE SIXTH DAY

The battle raged fiercely, even like the ACCORDING to Yudhishtira's order

ancient battle between the gods and the Dhrishtadyumna arrayed the Pandava

asuras. Suddenly, the son of Pandu lost his army in makara (fish) formation for the patience and jumped down from his

sixth day's battle. The Kaurava army was chariot, mace in band, and made straight arrayed in krauncha (heron) formation.

on foot for the sons of Dhritarashtra, in We know, how, similarly, names were

hot haste to slay them.

given to physical exercise, asanas, or When Dhrishtadyumna saw Bhima's

postures. Vyuha was the general name for chariot disappear in the enemy lines, he battle array. Which Vyuha was best for was alarmed and rushed to prevent

any particular occasion, depended on the disaster. He reached Bhima's car, but

requirements of the offensive and

found it was occupied only by the

defensive plans of the day.

charioteer and Bhima was not in it. With What the strength and composition of the tears in his eyes, he asked the charioteer: forces arrayed should be and what

"Visoka, where is Bhima dearer to me positions they should take up were than life?" Dhrishtadyumna naturally thought Bhima had fallen.

Visoka bowed and said to the son of Drupada's son had to seek a place in

Drupada: "The son of Pandu asked me to Abhimanyu's car. The Pandava forces

stay here and, without waiting for my

began to waver and Drona was cheered by reply rushed forward on foot, mace in

the Kaurava army.

hand, into the enemy ranks."

Indiscriminate mass fighting and slaughter Fearing that Bhima would be

went on that day. At one time, Bhima and overpowered and killed Dhrishtadyumna

Duryodhana met face to face. The usual drove his chariot into the enemy lines in exchange of hot words took place and was search of Bhimasena, whose path was

followed by a great battle of archery.

marked by the bodies of slain elephants.

Duryodhana was hit and fell unconscious.

When Dhrishtadyumna found Bhima, he

Kripa extricated him with great skill and saw him surrounded on all sides by

took him away in his own chariot.

enemies fighting from their chariots.

Bhishma personally arrived at the spot Bhima stood against them all, mace in

now and led the attack and scattered the hand, wounded all over and breathing fire.

Pandava forces.

Dhrishtadyumna embraced him and took

The sun was sinking, but the battle was him into his chariot and proceeded to pick continued for an hour yet and the fighting out the shafts that had stuck in his body.

was fierce and many thousands perished.

Duryodhana now ordered his warriors to Then the day's battle ceased.
Yudhishtira attack Bhimasena and Dhrishtadyumna

was glad that Dhrishtadyumna and Bhima and not to wait for them to attack or

returned to camp alive.

challenge.

70. THE SEVENTH DAY

Accordingly, they made a combined

DURYODHANA, wounded all over and

attack even though they were not inclined suffering greatly, went to Bhishma and to engage themselves in further fighting.

said:

Dhrishtadyumna had a secret weapon,

"The battle had been going against us which he had obtained from Dronacharya every day. Our formations are broken and and, discharging it, threw the enemy

our warriors are being slain in large

forces into a stupor.

numbers. You are looking on doing

But Duryodhana then joined the fray and nothing."

discharged weapons to counter the stupor The grandsire soothed Duryodhana with

weapons of Dhrishtadyumna. Just then,

comforting words:

reinforcements sent by Yudhishtira

"Why do you let yourself be disheartened?

arrived.

Here are all of us, Drona, Salya,

A force of twelve chariots with their

Kritavarma, Aswatthama, Vikarna,

retinue led by Abhimanyu came upon the Bhagadatta, Sakuni, the two brothers of scene to support Bhima.

Avanti, the Trigarta chief, the king of Dhrishtadyumna was greatly relieved

Magadha, and Kripacharya. When these

when he saw this. Bhimasena had also by great warriors are here, ready to give up now refreshed himself and was ready to their lives for you, why should you feel renew the fight. He got into Kekaya's

downhearted? Get rid of this mood of

chariot and took up his position along dejection."

with the rest.

Saying this, he issued orders for the day.

Drona, however, was terrible that day. He

"See there," the grandsire said to killed Dhrishtadyumna's charioteer and Duryodhana. "These thousands of cars, horses and smashed his chariot and

horses and horsemen, great war elephants,

and those armed foot soldiers from lost his own chariot, horses and

various kingdoms are all ready to fight for charioteer.

you. With this fine army, you can

Virata's sons Uttara and Sveta had fallen vanquish even the gods. Fear not."

in the first day's battle. On this seventh Thus cheering up the dejected

day, Sanga also was slain just as his father Duryodhana, he gave him a healing balm came up to his side. Sikhandin, Drupada's for his wounds. Duryodhana rubbed it

son, was defeated by Aswatthama.

over his numerous wounds and felt

His chariot was smashed and he jumped

relieved.

down and stood sword and shield in hand.

He went to the field, heartened by the Aswatthama aimed his shaft at his sword grandsire's words of confidence. The army and broke it. Sikhandin then whirled the was that day arrayed in circular formation.

broken sword and hurled it at Aswatthama With each war elephant were seven

with tremendous force, but it was met by chariots fully equipped.

Aswatthama's arrow.

Each chariot was supported by seven

Sikhandin, badly beaten, got into Satyaki's horsemen. To each horseman were

chariot and retired. In the fight between attached ten shield bearers. Everyone

Satyaki and Alambasa, the former had the wore armor.

worst of it at first but later recovered Duryodhana stood resplendent like Indra ground and Alambasa had to flee.

at the center of this great and well-

In the battle between Dhrishtadyumna and equipped army. Yudhishtira arrayed the Duryodhana, the horses of the latter were Pandava army in vajravyuha. This day's killed and he had to alight from his

battle was fiercely fought simultaneously chariot. He, however, continued the fight, at many sectors.

sword in hand. Sakuni came then and took Bhishma personally opposed Arjuna's

the prince away in his chariot.

attacks. Drona and Virata were engaged Kritavarma made a strong attack on

with each other at another point.

Bhima but was worsted. He lost his

Sikhandin and Aswatthama fought a big

chariot and horses and acknowledging

battle at another sector.

defeat, fled towards Sakuni's car, with Duryodhana and Dhrishtadyumna fought

Bhima's arrows sticking all over him,

with each other at yet another point.

making him look like a porcupine

Nakula and Sahadeva attacked their uncle speeding away in the forest.

Salya. The Avanti kings opposed

Vinda and Anuvinda of Avanti were

Yudhamanyu, while Bhimasena opposed

defeated by Yudhamanyu, and their

Kritavarma, Chitrasena, Vikarna and

armies were completely destroyed.

Durmarsha.

Bhagadatta attacked Ghatotkacha and put There

were great battles between

to flight all his supporters.

Ghatotkacha and Bhagadatta, between

But, alone, Ghatotkacha stood and fought Alambasa and Satyaki, between

bravely. But in the end, he too had to save Bhurishravas and Dhrishtaketu, between

himself by flight, which gladdened the Yudhishtira and Srutayu and between

whole Kaurava army.

Chekitana and Kripa.

Salya attacked his nephews. Nakula's

In the battle between Drona and Virata, horses were killed and he had to join his the latter was worsted and he had to climb brother in the latter's chariot. Both

into the chariot of his son Sanga, having continued the fight from the same car.

Salya was hit by Sahadeva's arrow and

swooned. The charioteer skilfully drove Abhimanyu who inflicted a heavy defeat the car away and saved Salya.

on them but spared their lives, because When the Madra king (Salya) was seen

Bhima had sworn to kill them. Thereupon, retreating from the field Duryodhana's Bhishma attacked Abhimanyu.

army lost heart and the twin sons of Madri Arjuna saw this and said to his illustrious blew their conchs in triumph. Taking

charioteer: "Krishna, drive the car towards advantage of the situation, they inflicted Bhishma."

heavy damage on Salya's forces.

At that moment, the other Pandavas also At noon, Yudhishtira led an attack on joined Arjuna. But the grandsire was able Srutayu. The latter's well-aimed arrows to hold his own against all five until the intercepted Dharmaputra's missiles, and sunset, and the battle was suspended for his armor was pierced and he was severely the day. And the warriors of both sides, wounded.

weary and wounded, retired to their tents Yudhishtira then lost his temper and sent for rest and for having their injuries a powerful arrow that pierced Srutayu's attended to.

breast-plate. That day, Yudhishtira was After this, for an hour, soft music was not his normal self and burnt with anger.

played, soothing the warriors to their rest.

Srutayu's charioteer and horses were

That hour was spent, says the poet,

killed and the chariot was smashed and he without a word about war or hatred. It was had to flee on foot from the field. This an hour of heavenly bliss, and it was a completed the demorahsation of

glad sight to see. One can see herein what Duryodhana's army.

the great lesson of the Mahabharata is.

In the attack on Kripa, Chekitana, losing **71. THE EIGHTH DAY**

his chariot and charioteer, alighted and WHEN the eighth day dawned, Bhishma

attacked Kripa's charioteer and horses arrayed his army in tortoise formation.

with mace in hand and killed them.

Yudhishthira said to Dhrishtadyumna:

Kripa also alighted, and standing on the

"See there, the enemy is in kurma vyuha ground, discharged his arrows. Chekitana (tortoise formation). You have to answer was badly hit. He then whirled his mace at once with a formation that can break it."

and hurled it at Kripacharya, but the latter Dhrishtadyumna immediately proceeded

was able to intercept it with his own

to his task. The Pandava forces were

arrow.

arrayed in a three-pronged formation.

Thereupon they closed with each other, Bhima was at the head of one prong,

sword in hand. Both were wounded and

Satyaki of another, and Yudhishtira at fell on the ground, when Bhima came and the crest of the middle division. Our

took Chekitana away in his chariot.

ancestors had developed the science of Sakuni similarly took wounded Kripa

war very well.

away in his car.

It was not reduced to writing but was Ninety-six arrows of Dhrishtaketu struck preserved by tradition in the families of Bhurisravas. And the great warrior was kshatriyas. Armor and tactics were

like a sun radiating glory, as the arrows, employed suitably to meet the weapons of all sticking in his breast-plate, shone offence and the tactics that the enemy bright around his radiant face. Even in used in those days.

that condition, he compelled Dhrishtaketu The Kurukshetra battle was fought some to admit defeat and retire. Three of

thousands of years ago. Reading the story Duryodhana's brothers attacked of the battle in the Mahabharata, we

should not, having the practice and intercept and cut missiles in transit, or incidents of modern warfare in mind,

how one could be living when pierced all reject the Mahabharata narrative as mere over by arrows, or how far the armor worn myth with no relation to fact.

by the soldiers and officers could protect Only about a century and a half ago, the them against missiles or what were the English admiral Nelson fought great sea ambulance arrangements or how the dead battles and won undying renown.

were disposed of.

The weapons used and the vessels that

All these things appertaining to ancient actually took part in Nelson's battles, war, however interesting, will have to be would seem almost weird and even

in the realm of the unknown in spite of the ridiculous if compared with those of

vivid narrative we have in the

modern naval warfare.

Mahabharata epic.

If a hundred and fifty years can make so Bhima killed eight of Dhritarashtra's sons much difference, we must be prepared for early in the battle that day. Duryodhana's very strange things in the procedure and heart lost courage before this. It seemed to events of a period, so long back as that of his friends as if Bhimasena would

the Mahabharata war.

complete his revenge this very day, even Another matter to be kept in mind is that as he swore in the assembly hall, where we cannot expect, in the books of poets the great outrage was enacted.

and literary writers, accurate or full details Arjuna had a great bereavement in this about weapons and tactics, although the day's battle. His dear son Iravan was

narrative may be of battles.

killed. This son of Arjuna by his Naga Military affairs were in ancient times the wife had come and joined the Pandava

sole concern of the military order, the forces at Kurukshetra. Duryodhana sent kshatriyas. Their culture and their training his friend, the Rakshasa Alambasa, to

were entirely their own charge.

oppose the Naga warrior.

The principles and the secrets of warfare Iravan was slain after a fierce fight. When and the science and art of the use of

Arjuna heard this, he broke down

military weapons were handed down from completely. Said he turning to Vasudeva: generation to generation by tradition and

"Vidura had indeed told us plainly that personal instruction.

both sides would be plunged in grief

There were no military textbooks and

unbearable. What are we doing all this there was not any place for them in the wretched destruction up on one another works of poets and rishis. If a modern for? Just for the sake of property. After all novel deals in some chapters with the

this killing, what joy are we or they likely treatment and cure of a sick person, we to find in the end? O Madhusudana, I now can not expect to see such details in it as see why the far seeing Yudhishtira said might interest

a medical man. No author he would be content if Duryodhana would would care, even if he were able, to

give five villages to us, keeping

include scientific details in his story.

everything else to himself and he would So, we cannot hope to find in the epic of not resort to fighting if that were agreed Vyasa, precise details as to what is

to. Duryodhana, in his obstinate folly, tortoise formation or lotus formation. We refused to give even these five villages have no explanation as to how one could, and so, these great sins have to be

by discharging a continuous stream of

committed on both sides. I continue

arrows, build a defence around himself or fighting only because men would

otherwise think me a coward, who could

"Like ghee on the sacrificial fire I am submit tamely to wrong. When I see the pouring my life out for you. Why do you dead warriors lying on the field, my heart seek to mortify me, who have been doing is filled with unbearable anguish. Oh, how my very utmost for you? You speak like a wicked we are to carry on in this

man of no understanding, not knowing

miserable, sinful way."

what is right and what is wrong. They say Seeing Iravan killed, Ghatotkacha uttered that, when a man is nearing his death, the a loud war-cry which made all the

tree appears to him to be made of gold.

assembled soldiers tremble. And with his You see things now, not as they are. Your division, he fell upon the Kaurava army vision is clouded. You are now reaping ferociously. So great was the destruction the harvest of the hatred you deliberately he wrought that at many points the

sowed. The best course for you are to go Kaurava formation was broken.

on fighting, as well as you can. This is Seeing this, Duryodhana personally led an also the plain path of duty. It is not attack on Bhima's son. The king of Vanga possible for me to fight Sikhandin, for I joined Duryodhana with his elephants.

can never raise my hand against a woman.

Duryodhana fought most bravely on this Nor can I with my hands kill the eighth day of the battle. He killed a great Pandavas, for my mind revolts against it. I number of warriors on Ghatotkacha's side.

will do everything barring these two and Ghatotkacha hurled a javelin which would fight all the warriors opposed to you.

have ended Duryodhana's career but for Nothing is gained by losing heart. Fight as the Vanga chief's prompt intervention

a kshatriya should and honor will be yours with one of his elephants.

whatever the events."

The missile hit the beast, which fell dead, Saying thus to Duryodhana and cheering and Duryodhana was saved.

him up with wise and affectionate words, Bhishma was anxious about Duryodhana

Bhishma proceeded to issue instructions and sent a large force under Drona to

for arraying the forces for the day's battle.

support the Kaurava prince.

Duryodhana was heartened. He sent for

Many were the veterans who were in this Duhsasana and said to him:
"Brother, put force that attacked Ghatotkacha.

forth all our strength in today's battle. I am So tumultuous and fierce was
the fight at convinced, the grandsire is fighting on our this sector of the
battle that Yudhishthira side with his whole heart. It is only

feared for Ghatotkacha's safety and sent against Sikhandin, he says, he
cannot use Bhimasena to his aid.

his weapons. We should see that he is not Then the battle became even
fiercer than exposed to Sikhandin's attacks, for you before. Sixteen of
Duryodhana's brothers know, even a wild dog can kill a lion if perished on
this day.

the latter scorns to fight back."

72. THE NINTH DAY

There was a great fight between

ON the morning of the ninth day, before Abhimanyu and Alambasa.
Abhimanyu

the battle began, Duryodhana was

demonstrated that his valor was no less closeted with the grandsire. He gave vent than his illustrious father's. Alambasa had to his bitter feelings of disappointment to flee on foot to save himself.

over the way the battle was going. He

There were fierce combats between

uttered words that were like the sharp Satyaki and Aswatthama and between

spears and pained the grandsire greatly Drona and Arjuna. Thereafter, all the

but the latter was patient and said sadly: Pandavas attacked the grandsire and

Duryodhana sent Duhsasana to support Arjuna jumped down from the chariot

the old warrior. Bhishma fought furiously and, rushing forward overtook and held and beat the Pandavas back.

Krishna, casting both his arms around

The Pandava forces were thoroughly

him. "Stop, Krishna," he cried. "Do not demoralised and were flying hither and break your pledge. You have promised not thither, like cattle that had lost their way to use weapons in this battle. This is my in the forest.

work. I shall not fail. I shall send my Krishna halted the chariot and said to arrows and kill the beloved grandsire

Arjuna: "Partha, you and your brothers myself. Pray, mount the car and take the were looking forward to this day, after reins."

thirteen years. Do not hesitate to kill the Arjuna took Krishna back and the battle grandsire. Remember the duty of a

was resumed. The Pandava forces had
soldier."

been handled roughly, but now the sun

Arjuna bent his head down and, without was down in the west and the fighting

looking up, replied: "I would much rather ended for the day.

have continued to be an exile in the forest **73. THE PASSING OF
BHISHMA**

than kill the grandsire and the teachers IT was the tenth day of the battle. Keeping whom I love, but I shall obey you. Drive Sikhandin in front of him, Arjuna attacked on."

Bhishma. When Sikhandin's darts pierced Arjuna's heart was not in the fight.

his breast, sparks flew from the grandsire's Unwillingly and in great distress of mind, eyes.

he proceeded to the combat. Bhishma, on

For a moment the old warrior's anger rose the other hand, burnt fiercely like the like flaming fire and his eyes glared as if noonday sun.

to consume Sikhandin. But, at once, the When the army saw Arjuna's chariot

grandsire restrained himself.

proceed towards Bhishma, it regained

He decided not to be provoked into

courage and order once again prevailed.

fighting Sikhandin, who was born a

Bhishma's arrows came thick and fast and woman and to strike whom it seemed

covered the advancing chariot so

unworthy of a warrior.

completely that neither horses nor

He knew, however, his end was near and vehicles could be seen.

calmed himself. Sikhandin went on

Krishna was unperturbed and drove on

discharging his arrows, not minding the with circumspection and skill. Arjuna's battle of emotions in his opponent's mind.

shafts hit Bhishma's bow and shattered it Arjuna also steeled his heart, and from many times. But the grandsire went on

behind Sikhandin aimed arrows at the

renewing his weapon.

weak points in Bhishma's armor, even

"You are not fighting, Arjuna, as you while the grandsire stood still.

should!" exclaimed Krishna, and jumped Bhishma smiled as the arrows continued down in a rage from the chariot and,

to come down thick on him, and turning to taking up his discus, he advanced towards Duhsasana, said: "Ah, these are Arjuna's the grandsire.

arrows! These cannot be Sikhandin's, for Bhishma saw Vasudeva approaching.

they burn my flesh as the crab's young

"Hail, O Lotus-eyed One!" he cried.

ones tear their mother's body."

"Blessed am I to be separated from the Thus did the grandsire look upon his dear body by you! Come, come!"

pupil's arrows and, while saying this to Duhsasana, he took up a javelin and

hurled it at Arjuna. Arjuna met it with towards Arjuna said: "Dear son Partha, three arrows which cut it to pieces even give me a cushion befitting a warrior."

as it was speeding through the air.

When Arjuna, whose arrows were just

Bhishma then decided to end the combat then burning the grandsire's flesh, heard and made as if to dismount from his

those words addressed to him, he took

chariot, sword and shield in hand. But three arrows from out of his quiver and so before he could do so, his shield was cut placed them that the grandsire's head to pieces by Arjuna's arrows.

found support on their points.

With arrows sticking all over his body so

"Princes," said Bhishma addressing the thickly that there was not even an inch of assembled chiefs, "Arjuna's arrows were intervening space, Bhishma fell headlong indeed what my head required to be

to the ground from his chariot.

supported on. This pillow gives me

As he fell, the gods, who looked on from satisfaction. Now, I must lie thus until the above, folded their hands in reverent

sun turns north. My soul will not depart salutation and a gentle breeze, laden with till then. When I pass away, those of you fragrance and cool raindrops, swept over who may be alive then may come and see the battlefield.

me."

Thus fell the great and good Bhishma, the Then the grandsire turned again to Arjuna son of Ganga, who came on earth to

and said: "I am tormented with thirst. Get hallow it and all it bears.

me some drinking water." At once, Arjuna The blameless hero who, unasked, made

raised his bow, and drawing, it to the ear, the great renunciation to give joy to his shot a shaft down into the earth near the father. The undefeated bowman who had

grandsire on his right side.

humbled the pride of Rama of the axe.

Upon the opening made by the arrow,

The selfless worker for righteousness'

there gushed a stream of pure sweet water sake, thus repaid his debt to Duryodhana, to the very lips of the dying man. Ganga and lay wounded to death sanctifying with came up, says the poet, to quench her dear his life-blood the battlefield. As the son's burning thirst. Bhishma drank and grandsire fell, the hearts of the Kauravas was happy.

also fell along with him.

"Duryodhana, may you be wise!" said Bhishma's body did not touch the ground, Bhishma, addressing the Kaurava prince.

on account of the arrows sticking out all

"Did you see how Arjuna brought me over his body. His body shone more

water to quench my thirst? Who else in brightly than ever before, as it lay as on a this world can do such a deed? Make

bed of honor, supported by the shafts that peace with him without further delay.

had pierced his flesh.

May the war cease with my exit. Listen to Both armies ceased fighting and all the me, son, make peace with the Pandavas."

warriors came running and crowded round The grandsire's words did not please

the great hero, who lay on his bed of

Duryodhana. Even when dying, the

arrows. The kings of the earth stood with patient does not like medicine.
He objects bowed heads round him, as the gods

to the bitter taste. All the princes retired to round Brahma.

their camps.

"My head hangs down unsupported," said **74. KARNA AND THE
GRANDSIRE**

the grandsire. The princes who stood near, WHEN he learnt that Bhishma
lay

ran and brought cushions. The old warrior wounded and dying, Karna
hurried to the rejected them with a smile and, turning place and fell at his
feet and said:

"Eldest of the race. Radha's son, who, Deprived of Bhishma's leadership,
the

through no fault of his, incurred your Kaurava forces felt like sheep
without a great displeasure, humbly prostrates

shepherd when Bhishma no longer led

himself before you."

them. Indeed, even as Bhishma fell

When after humble salutation Karna stood wounded, the men shouted:

up, the grandsire, greatly moved, tenderly

"O Karna, you are the one left to lead and placed his hand on Karna's head
and

protect us."

blessed him.

The Kaurava warriors felt that, if but

"You are not Radha's son, young man," he Karna would agree to take up the

said in loving tones: "You are Kuntidevi's command, victory was certain. During the own first born. Narada, who knows all the first ten days when Bhishma led the

secrets of the world, himself revealed this forces, the son of Surya kept away from to me. Son of Surya, truly I entertained no the battle.

dislike for you. But I was grieved to see As already narrated, deeply hurt at the your increasing hatred of the Pandavas grandsire's contempt, Karna had said: "So although they gave you no cause for it. I long as you are up fighting, I shall keep know and admire your valor and your

aloof. If you slay the Pandavas and bring open handedness. And I know also that

victory to Duryodhana, I shall be glad.

you belong to the class of Phalguna and And I shall then, taking the king's leave, Krishna in prowess. It is proper that you go to the forest. But, if you be defeated befriend the Pandavas. Therein lies the and go to the abode of the brave, I who right path for you who are their brother.

am not deemed by you as an adhiratha

With the closing of my part in this war, (master of chariot warfare) will ride my may the chapter of your enmity also close.

chariot and oppose those whom you deem This is my wish, Karna."

to be of greater prowess than myself. And Karna listened respectfully and replied: defeating them, bring victory to

"Grandsire I know I am Kunti's son, and Duryodhana."

not charioteer born. But I have eaten

Thus had Karna sworn and, with

Duryodhana's salt and must be true to

Duryodhana's consent, kept aloof from the him, to be true to my own lineage. It is battle during the first ten days. Now he impossible for me to go over to the

went on foot to Bhishma who lay on his Pandavas now. You must permit me to

bed of arrows waiting for his end and, repay with my life, if it so be the debt I saluting him, addressed him thus:

owe to Duryodhana for his love and trust.

"Veteran grandsire, vanquisher of I have erred greatly in word and deed.

Parasurama, you lie on the field of battle, You must forgive me for it all and give struck down by Sikhandin. If you, who

me your blessings."

had reached the summit of right living and The great acharya, who knew all the laws were an embodiment of purity itself, must of right conduct and what Karna said,

lie wounded in this manner, it is clear that replied: "Do reflect for a while and then no one can attain in this world what he do as you wish, for that is the right way."

deserves by his merit. You were the one Even when Bhishma was mortally

boat on which the Kaurava princes

wounded and lay dying, the battle did not depended for crossing the flood of their cease. Discarding the grandsire's words of troubles. Heavy indeed

will be the blows wisdom, the Kauravas resumed the battle.

that the Pandavas will now deal at the Kauravas and great will be their consequent distress. Like fire and wind Dronacharya, the teacher of all these

burning down the forest, Arjuna and

princes and warriors, as supreme

Krishna will destroy the army of

commander. He indeed is the greatest of Kauravas. This is certain. Turn your

all those that carry arms today. No

gracious eyes on me and bless me, who

kshatriya equals him in the qualities

have accepted the command of the

required for leading our army. Let us

forces."

therefore install him."

Bhishma gave his blessings to

Duryodhana agreed that this was the right Karna."You are like the good earth to the thing to do, and so it was decided.

seeds, like rain clouds to living beings, Duryodhana went to Dronacharya and, in ever dependable, firm in your loyalty.

the presence of the assembled warriors Serve Duryodhana and save him.
You

and princes, bowed and addressed him:

vanquished the Kambojas for him. You

"Revered Master, you are unrivalled put down the Kiratas of the
Himalayan

among all those assembled here in caste, fastnesses for him. You fought
the

ancestry, knowledge of sciences, age,

Girivrajas on his behalf and defeated

wisdom, valor and skill. I beg of you to them. Many more things you have

accept the supreme command. Under your accomplished for him. Take
charge of the command, this army will be victorious."

Kaurava army now as your own rich

The assembled kings received this

possession and guard it well. May you

proposal with loud cheers and war cries lead Duryodhana's forces to
success! May that gladdened Duryodhana's heart.

you have every good fortune! Fight your Drona was installed in due form
amidst enemies, go."

thunderous acclamation. The praise of

Karna, having received the benediction of courtiers and the sound of
trumpets that the grandsire, mounted his chariot and accompanied the
ceremony, made the

rode to the battlefield. When the valorous Kauravas feel as though they had already Karna entered the field on his war chariot, vanquished the enemy. So great was their Duryodhana's joys knew no bounds. His

enthusiasm and confidence in Drona's

sorrow, at having lost Bhishma, was in leadership.

some degree alleviated.

Drona arrayed the army in circular

75. DRONA IN COMMAND

formation. Karna, who had till then stood DURYODHANA and Karna held counsel

aside was now seen moving about in his as to who should be put in supreme

great chariot on the battlefield and this put command of the forces.

new courage and joy into the hearts of the

"Well, everyone of these princely warriors Kaurava soldiers.

fighting on your side is great enough to be The talk went round in the army that the put in charge of our forces as supreme great Bhishma did not wish to slay the commander," said Karna.

sons of Pandu and therefore had not put

"All these kings are of equal prowess, his whole heart in the fight. But now that strength, energy, skill, courage, valor, Karna was in the field, it was certain that ancestry and wisdom. They cannot all be the Pandavas would be destroyed.

put in joint command and, if any of them Dronacharya was in command for five

be chosen, each of the others would feel days of the battle. Though of advanced hurt and may not put forth his whole

years, he was everywhere in the field and strength in the cause. Thereby we stand to displayed the fierce energy of a young suffer. So, my advice is that we install warrior. Whenever he led an attack, the

Pandava forces were scattered like clouds unrivalled glory has become ten times

before a storm.

enhanced."

He personally engaged the greatest

"I see, dear Duryodhana, what you warriors on the Pandava side in battle. He intend," Drona continued. "You wish to fought Satyaki, Bhima, Arjuna,

defeat the Pandavas in battle and then give Dhrishtadyumna, Abhimanyu, Drupada

them their share in the kingdom and live and Kasiraja and defeated them on many in peace and amity with them. I see this occasions.

clearly from your desire to capture

He harassed and inflicted severe

Yudhishthira alive."

punishment on the Pandava army during

Drona was exceedingly glad and he said the five days he was in command.

again: "Indeed Yudhishthira is the most **76. TO SEIZE YUDHISHTHIRA**

fortunate man on earth. The gods are

ALIVE

showering their favors on Kunti's good AS SOON AS Drona assumed command

son. So has he won the hearts of even

of the Kaurava forces Duryodhana, Karna enemies."

and Duhshasana sat in council and decided But Duryodhana's motives in wishing to on a plan. And Duryodhana went to

take Yudhishtira alive were far different.

Dronacharya to put it in operation.

And as soon as Drona acceded to his

"Acharya, we desire that you should proposal and gave his pledge that he

capture Yudhishtira alive and give him would do his best to capture Yudhishtira, over to us. We desire nothing more, not he began to reveal his real intentions.

even a total victory. If you achieve this for If Yudhishtira were slain, nothing would us, we shall all be exceedingly satisfied be gained by it, and the anger of the

with your conduct of the war."

Pandavas would be all the greater. The When Drona heard Duryodhana address

battle would rage more fiercely than

him thus, great was his joy, for he hated before. And Duryodhana knew that it

the very idea of slaying the Pandava

would only mean the utter defeat of his brothers. Even though, to fulfil his army.

obligation, the acharya loyally joined the Even if the fight were to be continued Kaurava side against the Pandavas, he

relentlessly

until both armies were

loved the sons of Kunti and especially the destroyed, Krishna would still remain

pure-minded Yudhishtira.

alive and he would put either Draupadi or So, when he heard Duryodhana request

Kunti in sovereign possession of the

that Yudhishtira should be captured

kingdom.

alive, he felt greatly relieved.

What then was the point in killing

"Duryodhana, may you be blessed!" the Yudhishtira? On the other hand, if

acharya said. "Do you too wish to abstain Yudhishtira was captured alive, from killing Yudhishtira? How it

Duryodhana thought, the war would end

gladdens my heart! Truly, Yudhishtira is more speedily and victoriously for the one without an enemy and the name

Kauravas.

Ajatasatru, which the people have given to Thereafter, he could surely play on

Kunti's eldest son, has been justified by Yudhishtira's goodness and his loyalty to your great decision. When even you have the traditional code of kshatriya conduct.

made up your mind that he should not be It was pretty certain he could be drawn killed but should be captured alive, his into the battle of dice again and sent to the forests once more.

Ten days of fighting had demonstrated to Vivimsati there was a great battle in

Duryodhana that further fighting would which chariots were broken on both sides.

only result in the destruction of the race, Salya fought his nephew Nakula and

not the fulfilment of the desires.

harassed him exceedingly, smiling most When Duryodhana made his motives clear provokingly all the time. But, in the end, to Drona, the acharya was greatly

Salya had his car smashed and his flag disappointed and he cursed Duryodhana in brought down, and he withdrew admitting his heart. But whatever the reason for it, defeat. Between Kripacharya and

he was glad that Yudhishtira was not to Dhrishtaketu there was a battle in which he killed.

the latter was worsted.

The news that Drona had given a solemn assurance to Duryodhana that he would also take part in the fighting between the Pandavas and the Kauravas.

Satyaki and Kritavarma and between

take Yudhishtira a prisoner, was carried off by Virata and Karna. Abhimanyu's valor was known by their spies to the Pandava army.

also demonstrated as he fought Paurava, The Pandavas knew that, when the

Kritavarma, Jayadratha and Salya single-acharya was determined on something and handed and made them withdraw.

gave his pledged word for executing it, his Then there was a great combat between

unrivalled eminence in the art of war and Salya and Bhimasena in which Salya was his valor made it a most serious affair.

defeated and made to retire. The Kaurava So, they soon got busy and so arrayed the forces began to lose courage and the

forces that Yudhishtira was never left Pandava army, who saw this, attacked the unsupported. Whatever movements might

Kaurava army with renewed energy and

take place, they always took care to leave broke its ranks.

sufficient protection against any surprise When Drona saw this, he decided to

attack on Yudhishtira.

restore lost morale by leading a straight In the first day's battle under the

attack on Yudhishtira. His golden chariot leadership of Drona, the acharya amply went forward, drawn by four noble Sindhu demonstrated

his great skill and energy.

horses, in the direction of Yudhishtira.

He moved about destroying the Pandava

Yudhishtira answered with barbed

forces like a fire burning up dry logs. His arrows, feathered with eagle-feathers. But rapid movements made the Pandava army

Drona did not mind, and advanced at great speed as if Drona was everywhere at the speed. Yudhishtira's bow was cut down same time showering arrows like rain and Drona was coming very near.

converting the battlefield into a stage for Dhrishtadyumna tried to intercept Drona the dance of the God of Death. He cut the bow in vain. The whole army shouted:

Pandava army in twain where

"Yudhishtira has been taken!" So near Dhrishtadyumna stood.

came Drona.

Many were the single combats among

Suddenly, then, Arjuna appeared on the renowned warriors. There was a fierce

battlefield, the earth rumbling under the battle between Sahadeva and Sakuni

wheels of his chariot, as it coursed swiftly skilled in illusion warfare. When they were over the bloody field, over bones and chariots broke, they alighted on the

bodies lying in heaps. Drona held back, ground. And, like two hills sprung to life for Arjuna had come on the scene. From standstill, they struck

each other with his Gandiva bow issued a continuous
maces and closed with one another in
stream of arrows. No one could see the single combat. Between Bhima and
shafts taken out of the quiver or placed in
position. It seemed as if, from out of the was the direction of Death, and
shouted great bow, an unending flood of arrows
"O Arjuna!" challenging him to battle.

issued without intermission. The

It was a great suicide squad organized to battlefield was darkened by
flying

achieve what Drona had pointed out to be missiles.

essential. Arjuna turned to Yudhishtira Drona retreated. Yudhishtira was
not

and addressed him thus: "King, the taken. The battle was stopped for the
day samsaptakas are calling me to battle. I am and the Kaurava forces
went to their camp pledged to accept a challenge thus thrown in chastened
mood.

out. Susarma and his men are calling me The Pandava army marched
proudly to

to battle. I shall destroy them all and camp and behind them walked
Kesava

return. Permit me to go."

(Krishna) and Arjuna conversing. Thus

"Brother beloved," said Yudhishtira, closed the eleventh day of the battle.

"you know Drona's intentions. Keep that **77. THE TWELFTH DAY**

in mind and do whatever you think fit. He THE attempt to capture Yudhishtira alive has promised Duryodhana to take me

failed. Drona was speaking to

alive. He is a matchless warrior, brave, Duryodhana about this. "It is clear we strong and skilled in, every branch of cannot succeed in our efforts to seize archery. He knows no fatigue and nothing Yudhishtira so long as Dhananjaya is

escapes his watchful eyes."

nearby. It is no want of interest on my

"King, here is Satyajit, standing in support part. If by some stratagem we could draw of you," replied Arjuna. "As long as he is Arjuna away to some other part of the

alive and by you, nothing can happen to field, I could pierce the Pandava you." So saying Arjuna asked the

formations and capture Yudhishtira. I Panchala prince Satyajit to stand guard by promise to seize him and deliver him to Yudhishtira's side and marched off like a you provided he does not flee from the hungry lion to meet the samsaptakas.

battle, renouncing honor. If he does that,

"There, Krishna, see the Trigartas then also we win indeed, do we not?"

standing, cheerful under the intoxication The chief of the Trigartadesa who heard of their oath, though they know they go to Drona say this talked it over with his certain death. Indeed they are full of the brothers, and they made a plan. They

exultation of approaching swarga." So resolved to take the samsaptaka oath and speaking to his great charioteer, Arjuna challenge Arjuna to battle and draw him approached the large samsaptaka force.

away from Yudhishtira's side.

This was the Twelfth Day of the great

Accordingly, together with a large force, battle. It was a fierce fight. After a time, they gathered, and sat before the fire, Arjuna's attack began to tell and the

dressed in matted grass, and went through Trigartas fell in swathes before him but funeral gifts and ceremonies for

Susarma reminded them of their oath.

themselves as if already dead, and took

"Heroes, we have taken our oaths before their oath: "Not till we have killed the fire and in the presence of the whole Dhananjaya will we turn back. If we flee army of warriors. Having sworn terrible in fear from battle, may we be punished as resolves, it is unworthy to flinch. Let us for deadly sin!"

not fall into public ridicule." The Having adjured themselves thus before the samsaptakas cheered their leader, and

sacred fire, they marched south for that faced Arjuna with the sublime courage of accepted deaths.

"Hrishikesa, they are resolved on fighting Yudhishtira. The Pandavas stood firm

to the last. Drive on," said Arjuna.

and answered Drona's attacks with

Driven by Madhusudana (Krishna)

showers of arrows.

Arjuna's chariot moved like Indra's car in Satyajit made a charge on Drona's car and the great war of the gods against the

there was a fierce combat in which

asuras. It went here and it went there and Drona's figure assumed the grimness of wherever it went, Arjuna's great bow, the the Destroyer. Many a warrior was slain Gandiva, scattered death among the

by him in succession. Vrika, a prince of doomed Trigartas.

Panchala, as well as Satyajit, fell dead.

The burst of blood in their compact ranks Seeing this, Satanika, son of Virata,

was like the burst of Palasa blossoms in a marched against Drona. In a moment,

springtime forest. The fighting was

Satanika's severed head rolled on the

severe. At one time Arjuna's car and

ground with the golden kundalas shining flagpole were immersed in darkness under in the earlobes.

the downpour of arrows.

Ketama, another chief, followed the attack

"Are you alive, Dhananjaya?" shouted but he too perished. Then, Vasudhana

Krishna.

rushed forward to stop the advance of

"Yes," replied Arjuna, and pulling the Drona, but he too fell dead. Yudhamanyu, string of his Gandiva, discharged shafts Satyaki, Sikhandin and Uttamaujas who

that dispelled the arrow-shower. It was came to push Drona back, were repulsed like the Rudra dance of dissolution. The and all these great warriors had to retreat.

field was full of severed limbs and

Drona was now almost within reach of

headless bodies and presented a terrible Yudhishtira.

spectacle.

At that moment, Panchalya, another son As Arjuna proceeded to oppose the

of Drupada, rushed madly up to stop the samsaptakas, Drona gave orders for a

acharya and fought most desperately. But, violent assault on the Pandava forces at he too was mortally wounded and fell

the point where Yudhishtira stood.

from his chariot like a failing star.

Yudhishtira saw this movement and

Then, Duryodhana was delighted and said spoke to the Panchala prince exultingly to Karna:

Dhrishtadyumna:

"Radheya, do you see the valor of our

"The brahmana is coming to seize me.

mighty leader? No more will the Pandavas Look after the forces with vigilance."

be inclined towards battle. See how their The son of Drupada did not wait for

army reels under Drona's blows."

Drona to advance but marched forward in Karna shook his head. "Do not be so his car himself to meet Drona.

confident," he said. "The Pandavas are not Dronacharya avoided Dhrishtadyumna,

to be so easily vanquished. They will

for well he knew that his death was never surrender. The wrongs they have destined to be at his hands and that death undergone are too great to be forgotten.

was not yet due. And he wheeled his

You tried to poison and kill them. You chariot in another direction where tried to burn them alive. You have grieved Drupada was leading his forces. and humiliated them at the game of dice Drupada's forces suffered heavy and you have forced them out to live in punishment at Drona's hands and blood

the forest for long years. They will not flowed in streams on the battlefield.

surrender. See there, their army has rallied Drona, then, again turned his attention to and all their forces are leading a combined

attack on Drona. There, see Bhima, unrecognizable mass. But Bhima escaped Satyaki, Yudhamanyu, Kshatradharma,

by jumping off the car in the nick of time.

Nakula, Uttamaujas, Drupada, Virata,

He knew all about elephants. He got

Sikhandin. Dhrishtaketu and other

below the great and fierce elephant and warriors have all come to protect

showered blows on its vital points. The Yudhishtira and are pressing Drona hard.

great beast got mad and whirled round

We should not stand idly watching, when like a potter's wheel, trying to throw off we have put such a heavy burden on the Bhimasena, who was sticking to its legs acharya. Great as he is, there is a limit to and attacking it from below.

the load even he can carry. Even wolves It bent down and caught Bhima by its

combined in large numbers can harass and trunk and was about to crush him under its kill a mighty elephant, Let us proceed. It knees, when Vrikodara somehow released will not do any longer to leave Drona

himself from its hold and again got below, unsupported."

in between its limbs and sticking to the **78. BRAVE BHAGADATTA**

elephant's under-regions, caused

DRONA made many attempts to take

exceeding pain to the beast.

Yudhishtira prisoner, but failed.

Bhima was thus gaining time in the hope Duryodhana led a large elephant division that some elephant on the Pandava side against Bhima. Bhima defended himself

would be led to attack Bhagadatta's

from his chariot with well-aimed arrows.

elephant and enable him to get away.

He sent crescent-headed shafts and tore But, when Bhima disappeared from view, down Duryodhana's flag and cut down his being hidden in between the beast's legs, bow even as he held it in his hand. Seeing the soldiers thought Bhima was slain.

the king harassed in this manner, the

They exclaimed: "Bhima is dead!

Mlechchha king Anga marched against

Bhagadatta's elephant has crushed

Bhimasena seated on a huge elephant.

Bhimasena!" and the cry was repeated all But Bhima sent shafts that laid the

over Kurukshetra.

elephant low and killed the Mlechchha

Yudhishtira heard the cry and, thinking king, which resulted in scattering that Bhima was slain, urged the forces to

section of the Kaurava forces in fear and destroy Bhagadatta. The king of Dasarna confusion. When the elephants

charged against Bhagadatta. Dasarna's

stampeded, the horses also took fright and elephant was also a fierce beast and there thousands of footmen were trampled

was great battle between Supratika and under the feet of the elephants and the Dasarna's elephant.

horses, flying in wild panic.

But Supratika's tusk pierced Dasarna's Seeing this great confusion and the beast in the side and it crashed down dead.

scattering of the Kaurava forces in all At that moment, Bhima emerged from

directions, the king of Pragjyotisha, the below Supratika and ran out safe. And the brave Bhagadatta grew indignant.

Pandava army cheered when they saw

He got up on his renowned elephant

Bhima alive.

Supratika and charged against Bhimasena.

Bhagadatta was now attacked on all sides, The gigantic beast rushed forward with but he did not lose heart. Resplendent on widespread ears and twirling trunk,

his elephant, he shone like a forest fire on crashed into Bhimasena's chariot. And in a hill. Ignoring the enemies around him, an instant, horses and vehicle were as he drove his beast on Satyaki's chariot.

The elephant seized the chariot with its trunk and lifting it high dashed it drove the chariot accordingly towards the upside down. Satyaki jumped out of the main battlefront.

chariot in time to save himself.

Susarma and his brothers came up behind Him. His charioteer displayed great agility and the chariot and shouted "Stop, stop." At skill and saved the vehicle as well as at the same time, they discharged shafts at horses, and righting the chariot, drove it to Arjuna's chariot.

where Satyaki stood.

Arjuna was of two minds.

Bhagadatta's elephant wrought great

"Here is Susarma challenging me to battle havoc in the Pandava army, hurling

and I hated declining this kind of

warriors about and killing them in great invitation, but there, to the north of us, our number, striking terror wherever it went.

formation seems broken and our men are Bhagadatta stood on its back, like Indra in need of immediate relief."

on Airavata when he fought the asuras.

While Arjuna was pondering thus, a

With ears spread out rigid in anger and javelin came hurtling at Arjuna and

trunk extended in front, the great beast another towards Janardana. Wild with

trampled upon numerous horses, chariots anger, Arjuna sent three well-aimed

and soldiers and wrought destruction all shafts, which compelled Susarma to turn over the Pandava army. The shafts hurled back.

at it seemed only to incense it more.

They lost no more time but drove quickly Like a herdsman in the forest driving the to where Bhagadatta was doing havoc. As cattle where he would, Bhagadatta drove soon as Arjuna's car was seen, the

the soldiers of the Pandava army before Pandava forces rallied and soon Arjuna him. Bhimasena, equipping himself once reached the lines where Bhagadatta was.

again with a chariot, renewed his attack Bhagadatta attacked Arjuna on Supratika on Bhagadatta.

like the Destroyer incarnate. But

The elephant stretched out its trunk and Vasudeva's skill avoided the shock, each blew out a violent spray of mucus that time the beast charged.

scared the horses of Bhima's chariot and Bhagadatta showered arrows on Arjuna

they bolted in wild flight and the

and Krishna. But Arjuna's arrows broke charioteer could not check them.

the elephant's armor and began to hurt the A great cloud of dust rose from the field beast. Bhagadatta saw that his elephant where this great elephant battle raged.

could no longer stand the attack and he Arjuna saw this from where he was hurled a javelin at Krishna.

fighting the samsaptakas and he also

Arjuna met it with a shaft from his bow heard the tumult created by Bhagadatta's and broke it into two. Bhagadatta then elephant.

discharged another javelin that struck He feared things had gone wrong and said Dhananjaya's helmet.

to Krishna: "Madhusudana, this is the cry Readjusting his helmet, Arjuna bent his of Supratika, Bhagadatta's elephant. This bow exclaiming: "Bhagadatta, take your king of Pragjyotisha is terrible with his last look at the world and prepare for elephant, and has no equal in that kind of death!"

warfare. He is sure to defeat and confound Bhagadatta was a veteran of very

our men. We must proceed at once and

advanced age. His grey hair and the

save the situation. We have punished

wrinkles on his noble old face gave him these samsaptakas enough. Drive to where the intrepid appearance of a lion. Indeed,

so old was he that the skin hung loose loud command went in vain even as the

down over his eyes and he had tied its words of man, who has lost his wealth, are folds over his forehead with a silk

disregarded by his wife.

kerchief so that they might not interfere Like a great hill the elephant stood rigid with his sight.

for a moment and then it suddenly sank Bhagadatta was not more renowned for

down driving its tusks into the earth and valor than for purity of character and yielded up the ghost with an agonised

conduct and was one of the most

squeal.

illustrious among the brave men of his Arjuna was somewhat grieved at the death time. Men gave him the title 'Friend of the noble animal and for his not having Indra' in recognition of his greatness.

been able to slay Bhagadatta, without

"Look around for the last time," said killing the beast.

Arjuna to this great man and hurled at him Arjuna's shafts tore the silken napkin that shafts that broke his bow, shattered his bound up the folds of the aged king's

quiver and pierced the joints of his armor.

forehead and he was blinded at once by In those days, all warriors wore heavy his own hanging wrinkles.

armor and the secret of hitting weak

Soon, a sharp crescent-headed shaft came points such as joints and moving parts was and pierced his chest. And Bhagadatta fell specially studied by kshatriyas and was an like a great tree in a storm, his golden important part of military training.

necklace shining like flowers on the

When deprived of all his weapons,

uprooted tree. The Kaurava forces fell into Bhagadatta hurled his elephant goad at utter confusion.

Arjuna. It was sent with deadly aim and Sakuni's brothers Vrisha and Achala tried charged with the Vaishnava mantra.

their best to oppose Arjuna and attacked It would have killed Arjuna, but Krishna him in front and rear. But their chariots came in between and presented himself as were soon dashed to pieces and they were a target for the missile. It settled on his themselves stricken dead on the field like chest as a shining necklace.

two lion cubs. They both looked much

Charged with the mantra of Vishnu, it

alike and equally noble in appearance.

could not hurt Vishnu but just became the The poet says that the bodies of these two Lord's jewelled garland round his neck.

valiant heroes who did not flee when the

"Janardana, how is it you have offered rest fled, shed a strange lustre all around.

yourself as a target for the enemy's

Sakuni was full of anger when he saw his missile? You said you would be charioteer brave and incomparable brothers lying

and leave all the fighting to me. How

dead on the field.

could you do this?" protested Arjuna.

He attacked Arjuna fiercely and used all

"Beloved Arjuna, you do not understand.

the weapons of illusion, in which he was This shaft would have killed you if it had skilled. But Arjuna's strokes broke all the hit you. But it is really my own thing and charms and rendered them useless. And

came back to its lawful owner," Krishna Sakuni had to leave the field, as fast as his said and laughed. Then, Partha sent an horses could bear him.

arrow that entered the head of

The Pandava forces then attacked Drona's Bhagadatta's elephant as a serpent enters army and wrought great havoc till the

into the anthill.

sunset, and the twelfth day's fight ended.

Bhagadatta tried to urge his great beast Drona gave orders to cease fighting and forward, but it stood stark rigid. And his the Kaurava forces, which had lost

heavily, retired in sullen dejection to their When Dhananjaya left the main front for camp.

meeting the samsaptakas, Drona

The Pandava army, on the other band, was rearranged his army in lotus formation in high spirits and its warriors gathered and attacked Yudhishtira fiercely.

round campfires in cheerful talk and

Bhima, Satyaki, Chekitana,

praise of Arjuna and the other heroes, who Dhrishtadyumna, Kuntibhoja, Drupada,

had led them to victory.

Ghatotkacha, Yudhamanyu, Sikhandin,

79. ABHIMANYU

Uttamaaujas, Virata, the Kekayas,

EARLY next morning, Duryodhana went

Srinjayas and many others opposed him.

to Dronacharya in a state of bitterness and But their resistance seemed paralysed by anger. After the customary salutation, he the violence of Drona's offensive.

addressed him thus in the presence of a Abhimanyu, son of Arjuna and Subhadra, large number of generals:

was still adolescent, but had already won

"Esteemed brahmana, Yudhishtira was recognition as a mighty man-at arms even quite within your reach yesterday and, if as the equal of his father and uncle in you had really wished to take him no one battle. Yudhishtira called Abhimanyu

could have prevented you. Yet, you did and said to him:

not take him, and to me the events of

"Dear son, Dronacharya is attacking our yesterday are inexplicable. I cannot

army greatly. Arjuna is absent and, if we understand what makes it hard for you to should be defeated in his absence, he will carry out your promise to me. Verily great be grieved beyond measure. No one

men are not understandable."

among us has been able to break Drona's Dronacharya was exceedingly hurt by this array. You know you can do it and no one insulting insinuation.

else. I ask you to take up this task."

"Duryodhana," he said, "I am putting forth

"I can do it," replied Abhimanyu. "I have on your be half all the strength and skill I been instructed by my father how to

possess. You entertain thoughts unworthy penetrate this formation and can certainly of a king. As long as Arjuna is present, do so. But if after forcing my way, it supporting Yudhishtira, it is not possible should unfortunately become necessary

for us to seize him. I have told you that for me to come out, I shall be at a loss already. It is only if we manage some how what to do, being as yet uninstructed in to get Arjuna out of the battlefield that we the art of extrication."

can hope to carry out this plan as you

"Valiant boy, break this impregnable desire. And I am devising ways to attain formation and open a passage for us. We this objective."

shall all break in your wake. We shall be Thus did Drona nobly conquer his just

with you to face any danger and no

anger and seek to comfort Duryodhana in question can arise of your having to come his distress.

out."

On the thirteenth day, the samsaptakas Bhimasena supported Yudhishtira's

again challenged Arjuna to battle and he proposal: "I shall be immediately behind accordingly went to attack them, where you and enter when you succeed in

they were arrayed to the south of the main breaking the enemy's formation. So also battlefront. The battle that was fought will Dhrishtadyumna, Satyaki, the

between the samsaptakas and Arjuna was Panchalas, the Kekayas and the forces of the fiercest that ever had been seen or Matsyadesa. Only break the formation as heard of till that day.

you alone can do. We shall do the rest and in the Kaurava ranks which bent under his smash the Kaurava army."

headlong onslaught.

Abhimanyu thought of his father and

The bend soon became a break and under Krishna. Feeling encouraged by what had Drona's very eyes, the formation was

been said by Bhimasena and

breached and Abhimanyu entered. But the Yudhishtira, and impelled by his own

breach closed under the inspiration of gallant nature, undertook the adventure.

Jayadratha, king of the Sindhus, before

"I shall please my great father and uncle,"

the other Pandava warriors could force he said with enthusiasm. "Let my valor be their way in according to plan and

staked on this."

Abhimanyu was alone!

"May your prowess grow," said Kaurava warriors opposed him, but they Yudhishtira and blessed the youth.

fell like moths in the fire, one after

"Sumitra, see Drona's flag flying there!

another. Abhimanyu's shafts searched the Drive straight and fast to that point," said weak points in the armor of his enemies.

Abhimanyu to his charioteer.

And the bodies of soldiers lay strewn on

"Faster, faster!" urged Abhimanyu as they the field like Kusa grass on the sacrificial sped along.

platform.

"May the gods protect you!" said the Bows, arrows, swords, shields, javelins, charioteer. "Yudhishtira has placed a pieces of harness, chait canopies, axes, very great burden on your young

maces, spears, whips, conchs, along with shoulders. Think well before you pierce severed heads and limbs of slain warriors, Drona's array and enter. The acharya is covered the field.

unrivalled in skill and experience, while Seeing the destruction wrought by you, though his equal in valor, have not Abhimanyu, Duryodhana was wroth and

his long years to back it."

rushed in person to oppose the youthful Abhimanyu smiled and replied: "Friend, I warrior. Drona, having leant that the king am Krishna's nephew and son of Arjuna, himself was engaged in battle with

am I not? Which other has that advantage?

Abhimanyu, became anxious and sent

Fear dares not approach me! These

veterans to protect Duryodhana.

enemies here have not a sixteenth part of With great difficulty, they managed to my strength. Drive fast towards Drona's rescue the king from the boy-hero who

division. Do not hesitate."

greatly disappointed at the escape of

The charioteer obeyed.

Duryodhana, vented his anger on the

As the golden chariot to which were

warriors that had come to rescue him and yoked beautiful young horses approached, put them to headlong flight.

the soldiers in the Kaurava army shouted: Then, throwing away all sense of shame

"Abhimanyu is coming! He has come!"

and chivalry, a large number of veteran The Pandavas followed Abhimanyu close

warriors made a combined and

behind him.

simultaneous attack on the hero, who

The Kaurava warriors were perturbed as found himself alone, surrounded by

they saw Abhimanyu's chariot approach

enemies on all sides. But, even as on all them with great speed.

sides a rock receives the rising tide of the

"Here is one greater in valor than Arjuna,"

sea, Arjuna's son withstood this united they thought and began to lose heart.

ouslaught.

Like a young lion on a herd of elephants, Drona, Aswatthama, Kripa, Karna,

Abhimanyu rushed on. There was a ripple Sakuni, Salya and many other great

warriors in their chariots, equipped with movement against each other and the

all arms, surged in attack on the young battle raged long.

hero, only to be dashed back, baffled and Duhsasana was struck senseless in his car, broken.

and his charioteer just managed to drive Asmaka rode his chariot at great speed away from the field saving Duhsasana's against Abhimanyu's. But smiling,

life. Karna attacked Abhimanyu with his Abhimanyu sent his shafts and disposed shafts and harassed him greatly.

of him in no time. Karna's armor was

But one of Abhimanyu's arrows felled

pierced.

Karna's bow and the young warrior

Salya was badly wounded and sat, unable followed up this advantage so vigorously to move, in his chariot. Salya's brother that he put Karna and his supporters to came up in great wrath to avenge his

flight. The Kaurava forces, when they saw brother's disgrace but he fell and his this, were completely demoralised.

chariot was broken to pieces.

The army was in confusion and men fled Thus did Abhimanyu, alone and in all directions, not caring for Drona's unsupported, oppose a host of veteran

shouts of remonstrance. And Abhimanyu

warriors and show the skill in the use of destroyed those that stood, as fire destroys arms which he had learnt from his

a dry jungle in summer.

illustrious father and from Vasudeva, his **80. THE DEATH OF ABHIMANYU**

uncle. Seeing this, the poet says,

THE Pandavas, proceeding according to

Dronacharya's eyes were filled with tears plan, had closely followed Abhimanyu

of affectionate admiration.

when he broke into the Kaurava

"Was there ever a fighter to equal this boy formation. But Dhritarashtra's son-in-law Abhimanyu?" exclaimed Drona to Kripa, Jayadratha, the gallant king of the

in the hearing of Duryodhana who could Sindhus, swooped down upon the not contain his anger.

Pandavas with all his forces and enabled

"The acharya's partiality for Arjuna the breach in the formation to be prevents him from killing Abhimanyu,"

effectively and solidly closed up, so that Duryodhana said, "and he sings his praises the Pandavas found it impossible to force instead of fighting him. Indeed, if the their way in.

acharya were minded to dispose of

Yudhishtira hurled a javelin and cut

Abhimanyu, would it take him long to do Jayadratha's bow. But in an instant, the it!"

Saindhava took up another bow and sent Often did Duryodhana suspect and

unerring shafts at Dharmaputra.

complain in this manner against Bhishma Bhimasena's arrows made deadly work,

and Drona. Having undertaken a war of

crashing down the canopy and flagstaff of adharma, he was often led to speak in this Jayadratha's car. But the Saindhava, was manner and hurt the feelings of the

alert and rearmed himself, each time his acharyas who stood loyally by him, even equipment was broken. He killed Bhima's when they saw the wickedness of his

chariot horses, and the latter had to go into ways.

Satyaki's car.

Duhsasana roared in anger and

In this manner, Jayadratha, with stubborn exclaiming: "This obstinate lad will perish valor, prevented the Pandavas from

now!" led his chariot forward to attack entering in Abhimanyu's wake. The young Abhimanyu. The chariots of Abhimanyu

hero was thus isolated and surrounded by and Duhsasana made wonderful the Kaurava forces.

The son of Subhadra was however sword. Karna's sharp arrows tore his undaunted. He attacked all the warriors shield into bits.

around him and slew them in great

Then Abhimanyu bent down and taking

number. Like rivers losing themselves in up one of his chariot wheels and whirling the ocean, the soldiers that went to attack it like a discus, stood up facing all the him, disappeared before his arrows. The enemies that surrounded him.

Kaurava army reeled under Abhimanyu's

The dust from the chariot wheel covered onslaughts.

him and the poet says it enhanced the

Duryodhana's son Lakshmana, a gallant

natural beauty of the young hero. He young warrior, then charged on

fought fiercely like a second Vishnu with Abhimanyu. When they saw this,
the discus.

retreating soldiers came back and

But soon, the combined onslaught of the supported Lakshmana, showering
arrows

warriors that surrounded him

on Abhimanyu, like rain falling on a hill.

overpowered him. The chariot wheel was Still, Arjuna's son was undaunted
and, his shattered to pieces. The son of Duhsasana shaft came swift and
shining, like a

came up then and closed with him in

serpent fresh-sloughed, and pierced

mortal combat.

Lakshmana. The handsome youth, with

Both went down together but Duhsasana's beautiful nose and eyebrows and
hair, lay son rose again and, while Abhimanyu was dead on the field and
the Kaurava soldiers struggling to his feet, struck him with his were filled
with grief.

mace and killed him.

"To hell with the wicked Abhimanyu,"

"Subhadra's son who, like an elephant in a shouted Duryodhana, and the
six great

lily pond, single-handed worked havoc in warriors, Dorna, Kripa, Karna,

the Kaurava army, was thus overpowered Aswatthama, Brihatbala and Kritavarma

by numbers and killed cruelly," said closed upon Abhimanyu.

Sanjaya to Dhritarashtra.

"It is impossible to pierce this youth's

"And, having killed him, your people armor," said Drona to Karna. "Aim at the danced around his dead body like savage reins of his horses and cut them off.

hunters exulting over their prey. All good Disable him thus and attack him from

men in the army were grieved and tears behind."

rolled from their eyes. Even the birds of The son of Surya did accordingly.

prey, that circled overhead making noises Abhimanyu's bow was broken by a shaft

seemed to cry 'Not thus!' 'Not thus!' "

discharged from behind. His horses and While there was blowing of conchs and

charioteer were killed. Thus disabled, the cries of victory all over the Kaurava army, young warrior stood on the field, with Yuyutsu, the son of Dhritarashtra, did not sword and shield, facing his enemies.

approve of all this. "This is ignoble," he As he stood dauntless like kshatriya

angrily cried.

dharma incarnate, he filled the warriors

"Soldiers, you have forgotten your code.

around with amazement. Whirling his

Verily, you should be ashamed but,

sword, he held his own against the

instead, you shout brazen cries of victory.

numerous warriors who had surrounded

Having committed a most wicked deed,

him, with a skill that confounded them.

you revel in foolish joy, blind to the It seemed to them as if his feet did not
rest danger that is imminent."

on earth and he was on wings, in the air.

So saying, Yuyutsu threw his weapon

Drona sent a shaft that broke Abhimanyu's away in disgust and left the
battlefield.

This young son of Dhritarashtra feared Knowing the nature of death, it is
not right sin. His words were not sweet in the

that you should grieve like the unlearned."

Kaurava ears, but he was a good man and Vyasa proceeded to console the
bereaved spoke out his mind.

Dharmaputra:

"When Brahma created

81. A FATHER'S GRIEF

living beings, he was filled with anxiety.

YUDHISHTHIRA was plunged in

These lives will multiply and soon their sorrow. "He has gone to the sleep that number will be beyond the capacity of the knows no waking, he who in battle

earth to bear. There seems to be no way of overcame Drona, Aswatthama and

coping with this. This thought of Brahma Duryodhana and who was like a grew into a flame which became bigger

destroying fire to enemy forces. O warrior and bigger until it threatened to destroy all that made Duhsasana flee in fear, are you creation at once. Then Rudra came and

dead? What then is there for me to fight pleaded for allaying this destructive fire.

for or win? Why do we want kingdom

Brahma controlled the great fire and

now? What words of comfort can I offer subdued it into the law that is known to to Arjuna? And what shall I say to

mortals as Death. This law of the creator Subhadra, quivering like a cow bereaved takes many forms, such as war or sickness of her calf? How can I utter to them vain or accident and keeps the balance between words of solace that serve no purpose?

birth and death. Death is thus an

Truly, ambition destroys the

inescapable law of existence, ordained for understanding of men. Like the fool who, the good of the world. It is not true

looking for honey, falls into a precipitous wisdom to be impatient with Death or to pit below and is destroyed, in my desire grieve immoderately for those who die.

for victory I pushed to the battlefield this There is no reason to pity those who pass boy, whose life was all before him in love away. We may have reason indeed to

and joy. There is no fool like me in the grieve for those who remain." After world. I have killed Arjuna's beloved son, saying these words of solace, Krishna

instead of protecting him during the

Dwaipayana retired.

absence of his father."

Dhananjaya and Krishna were proceeding Thus was Yudhishtira lamenting in

towards their camp after defeating and histent. Around him were sitting warriors, slaying the samsaptakas.

silent in sorrowful thought of the valor of

"Govinda, I do not know why," said the youthful hero and his cruel death. It Arjuna, "but my mind is not at ease. My was always the custom with Vyasa to

mouth feels parched and my heart is

come and comfort the Pandavas,

troubled with a great foreboding of loss. I whenever they were in great sorrow.

wonder if any calamity has happened to He was their great teacher as well as

Yudhishtira. Something makes me
grandsire. So he appeared now before
afraid, Krishna."

Yudhishtira. The sage was received with

"Do not be concerned about

all honor and Yudhishtira, having made Yudhishtira," replied
Krishna."He and him sit, said: "I have tried very hard to your other
brothers are safe." On the way, find peace of mind, but I am unable to they
halted and did the evening prayers.

find it."

Remounting the chariot, they proceeded to

"You are wise and a knower," said Vyasa, the camp. As they approached
the camp,

"and it is not meet that you should allow Arjuna's premonitions of
calamity

yourself to be lost in grief in this manner.

increased.

"Janardana, we do not hear the usual and much desired goal of all
kshatriyas. If auspicious music in the camp. The

you give way to grief in this inordinate soldiers, seeing me from a
distance, hang way, your brothers and other kings will down their heads
and avoid my sight. This lose heart. Stop grieving and infuse

is strange behavior on their part. O

courage and fortitude into the hearts of the Madhava, I fear greatly. Do you think my others,"

brothers are safe? I am confused. How is Dhananjaya desired to be told the full it Abhimanyu does not run out to meet us story of his brave son's end and

today as usual, accompanied by his

Yudhishtira related it: "I incited brothers?"

Abhimanyu

to enter the enemy's

They entered the camp.

formation. For I knew that he alone could

"Why are you all wearing sad faces? I do do it among all of us. 'Make your way into not see Abhimanyu here. How is it I see the lotus array and we shall follow

no glad faces? I understood that Drona immediately behind you. This great deed arrayed his army in the lotus formation.

of yours will please the hearts of your No one among you could pierce it as far father and your uncle,' I said. The youthful as I know. Did Abhimanyu force his way hero did accordingly and broke the great in? If so, he is dead, for I did not teach formation and made his way in. We went him how to make his way out of that

behind him according to plan. But, just formation. Has he been slain indeed?"

then, the wicked Jayadratha came and

When their mournful silence, and
effectively stopped us. He caused the
downcast eyes, that dared not meet his, breach in the formation to be
closed up at had confirmed his worst fears, the
once and we found ourselves unable to
bereaved father burst into heart-broken follow Abhimanyu. The Sindhu
kept us
lamentation.
out, and then, Oh, shame on kshatriyas
"Alas, has my dear boy indeed become who could do this! A crowd of
Yama's guest? Yudhishtira, Bhimasena, redoubtable warriors hemmed
him in, thus Dhrishtadyumna and great Satyaki have
isolated, and slew him."
all of you allowed the son of Subhadra to When he heard the full story,
Arjuna was be slain by the enemy? Alas! What
again over whelmed by grief and he fell comfort shall I give to Subhadra?
What on the ground in a swoon.
shall. I say to Draupadi? And what solace When he recovered, he took an
oath:
can be given to Uttara and who shall give
"Before sunset tomorrow, I shall slay this it?"
Jayadratha who caused my son's death. If Vasudeva spoke to his stricken
friend.

Drona and Kripa come between him and

"Beloved Arjuna," he said, "do not give me these acharyas also shall be

way thus to grief. Born as kshatriyas we overwhelmed and slain!"

have to live and die by weapons. Death is Saying this, he twanged the Gandiva

ever the companion of those who have

string, and Krishna blew the Panchajanya.

taken up the profession of arms and go And Bhima said:

into battle, determined not to retreat.

"This twang of Arjuna's bow and this Warriors must be ever ready to die young.

blare of Krishna's conch shall be, unto the Abhimanyu, boy as he was, has attained sons of Dhritarashtra, the summons of

the happy regions above which grey

Death!"

haired veterans yearn to reach in battle.

82. THE SINDHU KING

Abhimanyu's end is indeed the prescribed

NEWS of Arjuna's oath reached the Durmukha, Duhsasana, Subahu, Kalinga,

enemy. The spies informed Duryodhana's the Avanti princes, Drona, Drona's

friends that Arjuna, having learnt that illustrious son and Sakuni all these

Jayadratha was the cause of Abhimanyu's warriors and I myself are here and you death, had vowed to kill the Sindhu king cannot be in danger. The whole of my

before sunset next day.

army will have but one task today, to

Vriddhakshatra, the illustrious king of the defend you against Arjuna. You should

Sindhus, was blessed with a son, who was not leave us now." Jayadratha agreed to named Jayadratha. At the time of the birth remain. He went to Drona and said to him: of the prince, a voice was heard to say:

"Master, you taught me and Arjuna and

"This prince will attain great glory and he you know us both well. What is your

will attain the happy regions above, slain appraisal of us two?"

in battle. One who, among the warriors of

"Son, I discharged my duties as teacher all ages, ranks among the most illustrious and dealt with you both impartially. The will, in the field of battle, sever his head instruction was the same to you and to from the body."

Arjuna, but Arjuna excels because of his All living beings must die but hardly any, superior discipline and his own practice.

however wise or brave, welcome it.

But, you need not be discouraged by this.

Vriddhakshatra was grieved to hear the You will be placed behind a strong force voice declare his son's end.

that Arjuna cannot easily pierce. Fight In his disturbed state of mind, he uttered a according to the tradition of your

curse: "He, who shall cause my son's head ancestors. Death comes to us all, cowards to roll down on the ground, shall have his as well as brave men. And the warrior head burst at that very moment into

dying in battle attains with ease the happy fragments."

regions which others only attain with

Jayadratha grew up and, when he reached great difficulty. Discard fear and fight."

manhood, Vriddhakshatra handed over the Drona, having spoken thus to Jayadratha, care of the State to the prince. He retired proceeded to marshal the forces for the to the forest, where he spent the evening next day.

Twelve miles to the rear of the of his days in austerities in an ashrama main army Jayadratha and his detachment near the plain, which afterwards became were placed in a strongly guarded

the Kurukshetra field of battle.

position.

When Jayadratha came to know about

Bhurisravas, Karna, Aswatthama, Salya, Arjuna's vow, he remembered the

Vrishasena and Kripa were there with all prediction about his death and feared his their forces. Between them and the

end was near.

Pandava army, Dronacharya arrayed the

"I do not want to be in this battle any main Kaurava forces in circular

longer. Let me go back to my country," he formation.

said to Duryodhana.

Durmarshana's army was beaten. Like

"Do not fear, Saindhava," replied clouds driven about by a gale, the

Duryodhana. "Here are all these veterans Kaurava forces were scattered and fled in and warriors who will stand between you all directions. When Duhsasana saw this, and danger. Karna, Chitrasena, Vivimsati, his anger rose.

Bhurisravas, Salya, Vrishasena,

Leading a huge force of elephants he

Purumitra, Jaya, Bhoja, Kamboja,

surrounded Arjuna. Duhsasana was a very Sudakshina, Satyavrata, Vikarna,

wicked man but he was brave also. He

fought Arjuna fiercely and the field was his passage were defeated. Srutayudha

strewn with the dead. Finally, he

also tried to stop Arjuna's progress. There withdrew defeated and went back to join was a fierce battle in which Srutayudha Drona's forces.

lost his horses and he hurled his mace at Savyasachi's car swiftly proceeded

Krishna.

forward and passed Drona. "Illustrious His mother had obtained this mace as a one, grieving for my son, I have come to result of her offering but the condition wreak vengeance on the Sindhu king. I

attached to the boon operated and it came crave your blessings for the fulfilment of back and struck Srutayudha himself dead.

my vow," said Arjuna to the acharya.

This is the story of the mace.

The acharya smiled and said: "Arjuna, you Parnasa went through penances that

must first fight and defeat me before you pleased Varuna and obtained from that

can reach Jayadratha." Saying this Drona god a boon that her son Srutayudha may discharged a shower of arrows on Arjuna's not be killed by any enemy.

car. Partha also replied with his arrows

"I shall give your son a divine weapon.

but these the acharya parried with ease Let him use it in all his battles. No enemy and sent flaming shafts that hit Krishna will be able to defeat him or kill him. But and Arjuna.

he should not use the weapon against one The Pandava then decided to cut Drona's who does not fight. If he does, the weapon bow and bent his Gandiva for that

will recoil and kill him. Saying this, god purpose. Even as he was pulling his

Varuna gave a mace. Srutayudha, when

bowstring Drona's shaft came and cut the fighting Arjuna, disregarding the string.

injunction, hurled the mace at Krishna The acharya, still retaining the smile on who was not fighting but was only driving his face, rained a shower of arrows on Arjuna's chariot.

Arjuna and his horses and chariot. Arjuna The missile hit Janardana's chest and

fought back, but the acharya showered his immediately rebounded fiercely back to arrows that covered Arjuna and his chariot Srutayudha. And like a demon recoiling in darkness.

fatally on the magician, that commits an Krishna saw things were not going at all error in uttering the spell of power that well and said: "Partha, no more waste of holds it in thrall, it slew Srutayudha and time. Let us proceed. It is no use fighting laid him dead on the field, like a great this brahmana, who seems to know no

forest tree blown down by a storm.

fatigue." Saying this, Krishna drove Then the king of Kamboja led his forces Arjuna's chariot to the left of the acharya against Arjuna. After a fierce fight, he lay and proceeded forward.

stretched dead on the field like a great

"Stop, surely you will not proceed without flagstaff after the festival is over.

defeating your enemy," said Drona.

When they saw the strong warriors,

"You are my guru, not my enemy, O

Srutayudha and the king of Kamboja,

acharya. I am in the position of a son to slain, the Kaurava force was in great

you. There is no one in the wide world confusion.

that can defeat you," said Arjuna and they Srutayu and his brother Asrutayu then

proceeded forward at a swift pace

attacked Partha on both sides trying to bypassing Drona.

save the situation, and greatly harassed Then Arjuna pierced the Bhoja army.

him. At one stage of this battle, Arjuna Kritavarma and Sudakshina who opposed

leaned on the flagstaff, dazed with the doing their utmost as warriors, but they wounds he received.

are unequal to opposing the strength of But Krishna spoke to him encouragingly Arjuna, Krishna, Satyaki and Bhima.

and Arjuna recovered and resumed the

Duryodhana has not spared himself. He is fight, slaying the two brothers as well as putting forth his utmost strength. It is not their two sons who

continued the struggle.

meet that you should now accuse him or Arjuna marched on and, killing many

his devoted soldiers."

more warriors successfully made his way

"Dear Sanjaya, I admit my dereliction of to Jayadratha.

duty. What you say is right. No one can **83. BORROWED ARMOR**

change the course of fate. Tell me what WHEN Dhritarashtra heard Sanjaya relate happened. Tell me all, be it ever so

the success of Arjuna, he exclaimed: "Oh unpleasant," said the old king convulsed Sanjaya! When Janardana came to

with grief. And obedient to the old king's Hastinapura seeking a settlement, I told behest, Sanjaya continued his narration.

Duryodhana that it was a great

Duryodhana was greatly agitated when he opportunity and he must not lose it. I told saw Arjuna's chariot proceeding

him to make peace with his cousins.

triumphantly towards the Sindhu king. He

'Kesava has come to do us a good turn. Do rushed to Drona and complained bitterly: not disregard his advice,' I said. But

"Arjuna has effected a breach in the great Duryodhana heeded not. What Karna and

army and has advanced to Jayadratha's

Duhsasana said seemed to him better

position. Seeing our discomfiture, the advice than mine. The Destroyer entered warriors, protecting the Sindhu king, will his mind and he sought his own ruin.

surely lose heart. They had believed that it Drona deprecated war, so also did

was impossible for Arjuna to get past you Bhishma, Bhurisravas, Kripa and others.

and that has now been falsified. He

But my obstinate son would not listen.

advanced before your eyes and nothing

Impelled by inordinate ambition, he got was done to prevent it. You seem indeed entangled in anger and hatred, and invited bent on helping the Pandavas. I am in

this ruinous war."

great distress of mind. Sir, tell me, in what To Dhritarashtra thus lamenting, Sanjaya matter have I offended you? Why are you said: "Of what avail are your regrets now?

letting me down in this way? If I had

The life-giving water has all run to waste known that you would do this, I should and you now seek to stop the breach. Why not have asked Jayadratha to stay here. It did you not prevent the son of Kunti from was a great mistake I committed in not gambling? Had you done the right thing letting him go, as he desired, back to his then, all this great grief would have been own country. If Arjuna attacks him, it is stopped at the source. Even later, if you not possible for him to escape death.

had been firm and stopped your son from Forgiving me. I am talking foolishly,

his evil ways, this calamity could have been distracted by grief. Do go in person been avoided. You saw the evil and yet, yourself to save the Saindhava." against your own sound judgment, you

To this frantic appeal Drona made answer: followed the foolish advice of Karna and

"King, I shall not take offence at your Sakuni. Kesava, Yudhishtira and Drona thoughtless and unworthy remarks. You

do not respect you now as they did before.

are like a son to me. Aswatthama himself Vasudeva now knows that your rectitude is not dearer! Do what I ask you. Take this is only hypocrisy. The Kauravas are now coat of armor and, donning it, go and stop

Arjuna. I cannot do so for my presence is hands. But remember he is a great archer, necessary in this part of the field. See well-versed in bow lore, and also a keen there, the clouds of arrows! The Pandava and strong-limbed fighter." Thus said army is attacking us in great force.

Krishna and they halted to give battle to Yudhishtira is here unsupported by

the Kaurava.

Arjuna and is this not just the opportunity Duryodhana approached without fear.

we wanted? Our very plan has borne fruit

"They say, Arjuna, that you have done and I must now take Yudhishtira acts of prowess. I have not seen this

prisoner and deliver him to you. I cannot myself. Let me see if your courage and give up this objective and run after

your skill are indeed as great as your Phalguna now. If I go after Arjuna now, reputation," said Duryodhana to Arjuna as our battle array will be hopelessly broken he began to battle.

and we shall be lost. Let me put this armor The combat was fierce indeed and

on you. Go in confidence. Do not fear.

Krishna was surprised.

You have valor, skill and experience. This

"Partha, I am astonished," said Krishna, coat will protect you against all weapons.

"How is it your arrows do not seem to It will not let any blow pass through your hurt Duryodhana? This is the first time I body. Go forth to battle, Duryodhana, in see the shafts proceeding from the

confidence as Indra did, clad in the armor Gandiva bow strike their targets without given by Brahma. May victory be yours."

effect. This is strange, Have your arms Duryodhana's confidence was restored

lost their power? Or has the Gandiva bow and, as the acharya directed, he went, lost its quality? Why do your arrows strike dressed in magic armor and accompanied Duryodhana and drop to the ground

by a large force of soldiers, to attack without piercing him? This is most Arjuna.

puzzling."

Arjuna had crossed the Kaurava army and Arjuna smiled and replied: "I understand.

gone far ahead towards where Jayadratha This man has come dressed by Drona in

had been kept for safety. Seeing that the charmed armor. The acharya has taught

horses were somewhat fatigued, Krishna me the secret of this armor, but this man stopped the chariot and was about to

wears it as a bullock might do. You will unyoke the tired animals, when the

see some fun now!"

brothers Vinda and Anuvinda came up

Saying thus, Arjuna proceeded to shoot suddenly and began to attack Arjuna.

his arrows, first depriving Duryodhana of They were defeated and Arjuna scattered his horses, his charioteer and his car.

their forces and slew them both. After Then, Arjuna broke his bow and disarmed this, Krishna unyoked the chariot and let him completely. There after he sent

the horses roll in the mud. The horses needle-eye darts which pierced just those rested for a while and were refreshed.

parts of Duryodhana's body that were not Then, they proceeded again according to covered by armor, until he could bear it no plan.

longer and turned and fled.

"Dhananjaya, look behind! There comes When Duryodhana was thus discomfited,

the foolhardy Duryodhana. What good

Krishna blew his conch and it sent a thrill of luck! Long have you suppressed your

of fear in Jayadratha's army. The warriors' anger, and now is the time for you to let around the Sindhu king were surprised.

yourself go. Here is the man who caused them at once got ready in their chariots all this grief, delivering himself into your and Bhurisravas, Chala, Karna,

Vrishasena, Kripa, Salya, Aswatthama his charioteer. "This man is the principal and Jayadratha, eight of them, arrayed cause of Duryodhana's arrogance. This their forces against Arjuna.

man fancies himself a very great soldier **84. YUDHISHTHIRA'S MISGIVINGS**

and is ever bursting with conceit. I must WHEN the Pandavas saw Duryodhana

teach him a lesson. Take the chariot up proceeding in the direction of Arjuna, they quickly."

attacked the Kaurava army in force so as Satyaki's charioteer accordingly lashed the to hold Drona and prevent him from going silver-white horses and took the car at a to Jayadratha's rescue.

great pace. Satyaki and Drona shot shafts So, Dhrishtadyumna led his forces

at one another so quick that they covered repeatedly against Drona. As a result of the sun, and the battlefield was in

all this, the Kaurava army had to fight on darkness for a while. The steel shafts three fronts, and was greatly weakened.

swished glimmering like newly-sloughed Driving his chariot right against Drona's, snakes rushing about.

Dhrishtadyumna attacked him violently.

The chariot hoods and the flagstuffs on Drona's chestnut horses and the Panchala's both sides were battered down. Drona as dove-colored ones were entangled with

well as Satyaki were bleeding profusely.

one another and presented a picturesque The warriors on either side stood still sight like the clouds at sunset.

watching the duel and they did not blow Dhrishtadyumna threw away his bow and, their conchs or raise their war cries or sword and shield in hand, he sprang upon sound their lion-roars.

Drona's chariot. Now standing on the

The Devas, Vidyadharas, Gandharvas and shafts of the vehicle, now on the horses Yakshas watched the great battle from

and now on the yoke, he attacked Drona above. Drona's bow was broken by a well-bewilderingly, all the while seeming to aimed shaft from Satyaki, and the son of scorch him with baleful and bloodshot

Bharadwaja had to take another bow and, eyes.

even as he strung it, Satyaki shot it down Long did this fight go on. Drona pulled again. Drona took up another bow that his bow in great wrath and sent a shaft, too was shot down.

which would have drunk the Panchala's

And so it went on till Drona lost a

life but for the unexpected intervention of hundred and one bows without being able Satyaki who sent an arrow and diverted to shoot an arrow. The

great acharya said the acharya's shaft.

to himself: "This man Satyaki is a warrior Drona then turned and attacked Satyaki, in the class of Sri Rama, Kartavirya,

which enabled the Panchala warriors to Dhananjaya and Bhishma,"and was glad take Dhrishtadyumna away. Drona,

he had an opponent worthy of him.

hissing like a black cobra, his eyes red It was a craftsman's professional joy at with anger, advanced on Satyaki who was skill displayed in the art he loved. For among the front rank warriors on the

every specially-charged shaft that Drona Pandava side and who, when he saw

sent, Satyaki had a ready answer of

Drona desiring battle, went forward to equivalent quality. Long did this equal accept the challenge.

combat continue. Drona of unrivalled skill

"Here is the man who, giving up his in archery then resolved on killing Satyaki vocation as a brahmana has taken up the and sent the fire astra. But Satyaki saw profession of fighting and is causing

this and, losing no time, sent the Varuna distress to the Pandavas," Satyaki said to astra to counteract it.

But now Satyaki's strength began to fail Satyaki." Thus did Dharmaputra speak in and, seeing this, the Kaurava warriors great trepidation.

were glad and shouted in satisfaction.

Satyaki, who was weary after his battle When Yudhishtira saw Satyaki was hard with Drona, replied: "Faultless among pressed, he told those nearby to go to men, I shall obey your command. What

Satyaki's relief. "Our great and good hero would I not do for Dhananjaya's sake? My Yuyudhana (Satyaki) is being

life is the merest trifle in my eyes. If you overpowered by Drona. You should go

order me, I am ready to fight the gods there at once," he said to Dhrishtadyumna.

themselves. But allow me to put before

"The brahmana will otherwise slay you what the wise Vasudeva and Arjuna

Satyaki in a few minutes. Why are you

told me when they left. 'Until we return hesitating? Go at once. Drona is playing after slaying Jayadratha you should not with Satyaki as a cat plays with a bird.

leave Yudhishtira's side. Be vigilant in Satyaki is indeed in the paws of the

protecting him. We entrust this to you in Destroyer." Yudhishtira ordered the confidence and go. There is only one

army to make a powerful attack on Drona.

warrior in the Kaurava army whom we

Satyaki was saved with difficulty. Just fear, and he is Drona. You know his

then, the sound of Krishna's conch was sworn intention. We go leaving

heard from the sector where Arjuna was Dharmaputra's safety in our hands.' Thus fighting.

said Vasudeva and Arjuna to me when

"O Satyaki, I hear Panchajanya," cried they went. Arjuna laid this trust on me, Yudhishtira; "but the twang of Arjuna's believing me fit for it. How can I

bow does not accompany it. I fear Arjuna disregard his command? Do not have any has been surrounded by Jayadratha's

fear about Arjuna's safety. No one can friends and is in danger. Arjuna is defeat him. The Sindhu king and the

opposed by forces both in front of him others cannot cope with a sixteenth part of and in his rear. He pierced the Kaurava Arjuna. Dharmaputra, to whom shall I

ranks in the morning and he has not come entrust your safety if I must go? I see no back yet though the greater part of the day one here who can stand against Drona if is gone. How is it that only Krishna's he comes to seize you. Do not ask me to conch is heard? I fear Dhananjaya has

go. Consider well before you command

been slain and therefore Krishna has taken me to leave."

up arms. Satyaki, there is nothing you

"Satyaki," replied Yudhishtira, "I have cannot accomplish. Your bosom friend

thought over it. As I have weighed the Arjuna, he, who taught you, is in mortal danger against the need and I have

danger. Often has Arjuna spoken to me

concluded that you must go. You leave

admiringly of your great skill and

me with my full permission. Here is the prowess. 'There is not another soldier like powerful Bhima to look to my safety.

Satyaki,' he said to me when we were in There is Dhrishtadyumna also, and there the forest. Oh, look there! The dust is are many others besides. There is no need rising that side. I am certain Arjuna has to worry about me."

been surrounded. Jayadratha is a powerful So saying, Yudhishtira placed a boxful warrior, and there are many enemy

of arrows and other weapons in Satyaki's warriors there helping him and resolved to chariot and got fresh horses yoked thereto die in defence of him. Go at once,

and sent Satyaki uttering benedictions on him.

"Bhimasena, Yudhishtira is your charge.

immediately turning to Dhrishtadyumna

Be vigilant," said Satyaki, and went to said: "Panchala, you know very well that join Dhananjaya.

Drona is seeking, by some means or other, Satyaki met with violent resistance as he to seize Dharmaputra alive. Our foremost proceeded to dash through the Kaurava

duty is to protect the King. But I must also forces. But he cut his way through bearing obey him and fulfil his command. And so down all opposition. But the resistance I go, trusting him to your care."

was very stiff and his progress was slow.

"Bhima, do not be concerned. Go with an When Drona saw Satyaki part from

assured mind. Drona cannot take

Yudhishtira, he began to assault the
Yudhishtira without first killing me,"
Pandava formation without rest or
said the heroic son of Drupada, sworn
interval, until it began to break and retreat.
enemy of Drona. And Bhima hurried
Yudhishtira was greatly agitated.
away.

85. YUDHISHTHIRA'S FOND HOPE

The Kauravas surrounded Bhima in full

"ARJUNA has not returned, nor has force and vowed to prevent him from

Satyaki, who was sent after him. Bhima, going to Arjuna's relief. But like
a lion my fear grows. I hear the Panchajanya, scattering less noble beasts
he put his but not the twang of Arjuna's bowstring.

enemies to flight, killing no less than Satyaki, that bravest and most loyal
of eleven of the sons of Dhritarashtra. Bhima friends, has not come back
with any

then approached Drona himself. "Stop,"

tidings. My anxiety is increasing every cried Drona. "Here I am, your
enemy.

moment," said Yudhishtira to Bhima in You cannot proceed further
without

great perplexity of mind.

defeating me. Your brother Arjuna went

"I have never seen you so agitated,"

in with my consent. But I cannot let you replied Bhimasena. "Do, not let your go." Drona spoke thus believing that he fortitude grow less. Command me as you would receive the same courtesy from

please. Do not let the wheels of your mind Bhima as he did from Arjuna. But Bhima stick in the mud of anxiety."

was furious at hearing these words of

"Dearest Bhima, I fear your brother has Drona, and answered scornfully.

been slain, and it seems to me Madhava

"Oh brahmana, it was not with your has now himself taken up arms. I hear the permission that Arjuna went. He broke

conch of Madhava but I hear not the

your resistance and pierced your battle resounding twang of Gandiva. I fear

lines fighting his way through, but he did Dhananjaya, the unrivalled hero, in whom not hurt you out of pity. But I shall not, were centered all our hopes, has been

like Arjuna, show mercy to you. I am your killed. My mind is confused. If you would enemy. Once upon a time, you were our

do as I tell you, go at once to where

preceptor and were like a father to us. We Arjuna is. Join him and Satyaki, and do respected you as such. Now, you have

what needs to be done, and come back.

yourself said you are our enemy. May it Satyaki, under orders from me, pierced be so!" Saying this, Bhima aimed his the Kaurava ranks and proceeded in the mace at Drona's chariot that crumbled to direction of Arjuna. You go now, and do pieces. And Drona had to take to another likewise and, if you indeed see them alive, chariot.

I shall know it by your lion-roar."

The second chariot too was broken to

"My Lord, do not grieve. I shall go and let pieces. And Bhima forced his way

you know they are safe," said Bhima, and through overcoming all opposition. Drona

lost eight chariots that day. And the army effectively prevented the relief of

of the Bhojas, that tried to stop Bhima, Abhimanyu by the Pandavas, and thereby was completely destroyed.

caused Abhimanyu to be isolated,

He proceeded mowing down all

overpowered and slain.

opposition and reached where Arjuna was We have seen how Yudhishtira in his

fighting Jayadratha's forces.

anxiety sent first Satyaki and then Bhima As soon as he saw Arjuna, Bhima roared to join Arjuna in his battle against

like a lion. Hearing that roar, Krishna and Jayadratha. Bhima reached where Arjuna Arjuna were exceedingly pleased and

was engaged and sounded his simhanada

raised yells of joy. Yudhishtira heard (lion-roar). Dharmaputra heard the lion-these roars and, relieved of his doubts and roar of Bhima and knew that Arjuna was anxieties, he pronounced blessings on

found alive.

Arjuna. And he thought within himself: It was the fourteenth day and the battle

"Before the sun sets today, Arjuna's oath raged fiercely at many points, between will be fulfilled. He will slay the man who Satyaki and Bhurisravas at one place,

caused Abhimanyu's death and will return between Bhima and Karna at another and in triumph. Duryodhana may sue for

between Arjuna and Jayadratha at a third.

peace after Jayadratha's death. Seeing so Drona remained at the main front resisting many of his brothers slain, it is possible the attack of the Panchalas and the

that foolish Duryodhana may see light.

Pandavas, and leading a counter-offensive The lives of numerous kings and great

against them.

warriors have been sacrificed on the field Duryodhana arrived with his forces at the of battle and even the stubborn and

sector where Arjuna attacked Jayadratha, narrow-visioned Duryodhana may now

but was soon defeated and turned back.

see his fault and ask for peace. Will this The battle thus raged long and furiously indeed happen? The great grandsire

on more than one front. The armies were Bhishma has been offered as a sacrifice.

so deployed that each side was exposed to Will this wicked enmity end with it and danger in its rear.

shall we be saved from further cruel

Duryodhana was speaking to Drona:

destruction?"

"Arjuna, Bhima and Satyaki have treated While thus Yudhishtira

was fondly

us with contempt and proceeded

hoping and dreaming of peace, the battle successfully to Jayadratha's sector and was raging with great fury where Bhima, they are pressing hard on the Sindhu king.

Satyaki and Arjuna were engaging the

It is indeed strange that, under your

enemy.

command, our battle array should have

Only the Lord knows through what travail been broken and our plans completely

the world must evolve. His ways are

foiled. Everyone asks how it is that the inscrutable.

great Drona with all his mastery of the **86. KARNA AND BHIMA**

science of war has been so badly

ARJUNA had left Yudhishtira behind to outmaneuvered. What answer shall I

repel Drona's attacks and had gone to

make? I have been betrayed by you."

make good his word that before sunset

Duryodhana thus, once again, bitterly

Jayadratha would lie dead on the field of reproached Drona, who replied battle.

unperturbed:

Jayadratha had been the main cause of

"Duryodhana, your accusations are as Abhimanyu's death. He it was who had

unworthy as they are contrary to truth.

There is nothing to be gained by talking Bhimasena and stopped him from about what is past and beyond repair.

proceeding.

Think of what is to be done now."

The contrast between the two warriors

"Sir, it is for you to advise me. Tell me what is striking. Karna's handsome lotus-like face should be done. Give your best

face was radiant with smiles when he

consideration to the difficulties of the attacked Bhima saying: "Do not show situation and decide and let us do it

your back," "Now, do not flee like a coward quickly." Puzzled and perplexed, thus did Bhishma, and so on.

Duryodhana plead.

Bhima was all anger when taunted in this Drona replied: "My son, the situation is no manner. He was maddened by Karna's

doubt serious. Three great generals have smiles. The battle was fierce but Karna advanced, outmanoeuvring us. But they

did everything with a smiling air of ease have as much reason to be anxious as we, whereas Bhima's face glowed with rage

for their rear is now left as open to attack and his movements were violent.

as ours. We are on both sides of them and Karna would keep at a distance and send their position is not therefore safe. Be his well-aimed shafts but Bhima would

heartened, go up to Jayadratha again, and disregard the arrows and javelins falling do all you can to support him. It is of no thick upon him and always try to close avail to dishearten oneself by dwelling on with Karna.

past defeats and difficulties. It is best I Radheya did everything he did, calmly

stay here and send you reinforcements as and with graceful ease, whereas

and when required. I must keep the

Bhimasena fumed and fretted with
Panchalas and Pandava army engaged
impatience, as he showed his amazing
here. Otherwise, we shall be wholly
strength of limb.
destroyed."

Bhima was red with bleeding wounds all Accordingly, Duryodhana went
with fresh over and presented the appearance of an reinforcements again to
where Arjuna was Asoka tree in full blossom. But he minded directing his
attack on Jayadratha.

them not, as he attacked Karna cutting The narrative of the fourteenth
day's

bows in twain and smashing his chariot.

fighting at Kurukshetra shows that, even When Karna had to run for a
fresh chariot, in the Mahabharata times, the modern

there was no smile on his face. For anger tactics of turning and enveloping
rose in him, like the sea on a full moon movements was not unknown.

day, as he attacked Bhima. Both showed The advantages and risks of such
strategy the strength of tigers and the speed of appear to have been fully
understood and eagles and their anger was now like that discussed even in
those days. Arjuna's of serpents in a fury.

flanking manoeuvres perplexed his

Bhima brought before his mind all the

enemies greatly. The story of that day's insults and injuries which he and his

battle between Bhima and Karna reads

brothers and Draupadi had suffered, and very much like a chapter from the fought desperately, caring not for life.

narrative of a modern war.

The two cars dashed against each other Bhima did not desire to fight Karna or and the milk white horses of Karna's

remain long engaged with him. He was

chariot and Bhimasena's black horses

eager to reach where Arjuna was. But

jostled in the combat like clouds in a Radheya would, by no means, permit him thunderstorm.

to do this. He showered his arrows on

Karna's bow was shattered and his Bhima relentlessly continued his attack on charioteer reeled and fell. Karna then Karna. His sharp arrows pierced Karna's hurled a javelin at Bhima. But Bhima

coat of armor and he was in pain.

parried it and continued pouring his

But he too at once returned the attack and arrows on Karna, who had taken up a

wounded Bhima all over.

fresh bow.

Still the Pandava would not stop and

Again and again did Karna lose his

attacked Karna furiously. The sight of so chariot. Duryodhana saw Karna's plight many of Duryodhana's brothers dying for and calling his brother Durjaya said: "This his sake one after another was too much wicked Pandava will kill Karna. Go at

for Karna.

once and attack Bhima and save Karna's This, and the physical pain of his own life."

wounds made him lose courage and he

Durjaya went as ordered and attacked turned away defeated. But, when Bhima

Bhima who, in a rage sent seven shafts stood up on the field of battle red with which sent Durjaya's horses and his

wounds all over like a flaming fire and charioteer to the abode of Yama and

emitted a triumphant yell, he could not Durjaya himself fell mortally wounded.

brook it but returned to the combat.

Seeing his bleeding body wriggling on the **87. PLEDGE RESPECTED**

ground like a wounded snake, Karna was DHRITARASHTRA, hearing of the

overwhelmed with grief and circled round slaughter of his sons and the check

the hero, paying mournful honor to the received by Karna, was desolate.
"O

dead.

Sanjaya, like moths falling in the fire, my Bhima did not stop but continued the fight sons are being destroyed. The stubborn and greatly harassed Karna. Karna once Duryodhana has led the lads Durmukha

again had to find a fresh chariot. He sent and Durjaya, to their doom. Alas, I have well aimed shafts and hit Bhima who in a lost these boys! The fool said: 'Karna, fury hurled his mace at Karna and it

unrivalled among men for courage and the crashed on Karna's chariot and killed his accomplishment of war, is on our side.

charioteer and horses and broke the

Who then can defeat us? Even the gods

flagstaff. Karna now stood on the ground cannot win a battle against me when

with bent bow.

Karna is on my side. What can these

Duryodhana now sent another brother to Pandavas do to me?' But now he has seen relieve Karna. Durmukha went

Karna beating a retreat when Bhimasena accordingly and took Karna on his chariot.

attacked him. Has he seen wisdom at least Seeing yet another son of Dhritarashtra now? Alas, Sanjaya, my son has earned

come to offer himself up to death, Bhima the undying hatred of the son of Vayu, licked his lips in gusto and sent nine Bhima, who has the strength of

the god of shafts on the newly arrived enemy. And, death! We are indeed ruined!"

even as Karna climbed up to take his seat Sanjaya replied: "O king, was it not you in the chariot, Durmukha's armor was

who brought about this unquenchable

broken and he fell lifeless.

hatred, listening to the words of your When Karna saw the warrior bathed in

foolish and stubborn son? To you indeed blood and lying dead by his side, he was must be traced this greater disaster. You again overwhelmed with grief and stood are now but reaping the fruit of your

motionless for a while.

discarding the advice of Bhishma and the other elders. Blame yourself, king. Do not

blame Karna and the brave warriors who after another, for Bhima's passion was have done their best in battle."

roused and his attack was irresistible.

After thus admonishing the blind king, When Karna saw so many of the sons of

Sanjaya proceeded to tell him what

Dhritarashtra sacrificing themselves for happened. Five sons of Dhritarashtra,

him, his face was wet with tears and he Durmarsha, Dussaha, Durmata, Durdhara

mounted a fresh chariot and began to

and Jaya, when they saw Karna put to
attack Bhima with deadly effect.

flight by Bhima at once rushed on the

The two combatants clashed like clouds in latter.

a thunderstorm. Kesava, Satyaki and

When Karna saw this, he was heartened

Arjuna were filled with admiration and and turned back to resume his
attack.

joy as they watched Bhima fighting.

Bhimasena at first ignored the sons of Bhurishravas, Kripacharya,
Aswatthama,

Dhritarashtra and concentrated on Karna.

Salya, Jayadratha and many other warriors But they became so violent in
their assault of the Kaurava army also broke into

that Bhima got incensed and, turning his exclamations, astonished at the
way in attentions on them, disposed of all five of which Bhima fought.

them. They lay dead on the field, with Duryodhana was stung to the quick
and

their horses and their charioteers.

burned with anger. Karna's plight caused The young warriors with their
bleeding him extreme anxiety. He feared Bhima

wounds presented the appearance of a

would kill Radheya that day, and sent

forest with trees, uprooted by a strong seven more of his brothers directing them wind and lying flat on the ground with to surround Bhima and attack him

their beautiful red blossoms.

simultaneously.

When Karna saw another batch of princes The seven brothers sent by Duryodhana

slaughtered for his sake he fought more attacked Bhima. But fell one after another, grimly than ever before. Bhima too was struck down by his arrows. Vikarna, who more violent than before, thinking of all was killed last, was beloved of all.

the evil that Karna had wrought against When Bhima saw him fall dead after a

the Pandavas.

brave fight, he was deeply moved and

He used his bow so as to disarm Karna

exclaimed: "Alas, O Vikarna, you were completely. His horses and charioteer

just and knew what was dharma! You

were also laid low. Karna now jumped

fought in loyal obedience to the call of down from his chariot and hurled his

duty. I had to kill even you. Indeed this mace at Bhima.

battle is a curse upon us wherein men like But Bhima warded it off with shafts from you and the grandsire Bhishma have had his powerful bow and

covered Karna with to be slaughtered."

a shower of arrows and forced him to turn Seeing Duryodhana's brothers, who came back and walk on foot.

to help him, slain one after another in this Duryodhana, who watched this combat,

manner, Karna was overwhelmed by

was greatly grieved and sent seven of his anguish. He leant back on his seat in the brothers Chitra, Upachitra, Chitraksha, chariot and closed his eyes unable to bear Charuchitra, Sarasana, Chitrayudha and the sight.

Chitravarman, to relieve Radheya.

Then recovering control over his emotions They gave battle to Bhima displaying

he hardened his heart and began again his great skill and energy. But fell dead one attack on Bhima. Bow after bow was

broken up by Bhimasena's shaft, but grow fat. You are a savage, not fit for Karna kept the battle.

kshatriya battle. Get away!" Hurling Eighteen times he had to take up a fresh insulting taunts at him, he made the

bow. Karna had long ago discarded his helpless Bhima burn with rage, but

smile and his face showed savage anger mindful of his word to Kunti, refrained even as Bhima's. They now glared fiercely from killing him.

at each other as they fought.

"There, Arjuna! See how poor Bhima is Yudhishtira now heard Bhima's roar rise being harassed by Karna," said Krishna.

above the tumult of battle, and heartened Dhananjaya's eyes burned red with wrath, by it, he fought Drona with increased

when he saw the plight of his valiant

vigor.

brother.

In the renewed and fierce battle between He bent his Gandiva bow and discharged Bhima and Karna, Bhima lost his horses his arrows on Karna who then gladly

and charioteer. Soon his chariot also was turned his attentions from Bhima to

smashed to pieces. Then, Bhima hurled

Arjuna. He had pledged his word to Kunti his spear at Karna who was in his chariot not to kill more than one of the Pandavas and as Karna parried it with his shaft, and he reserved that option for the great Bhima advanced with sword and shield.

Arjuna.

But Karna broke the shield at once with **88. SOMADATTA'S END**

his shafts. Then, Bhima whirled his sword

"THERE comes the valorous Satyaki,"

and hurled it, and it cut Karna's bow into said Krishna, the charioteer, to

two and fell on the ground. But Karna

Dhananjaya. "Your disciple and friend is took up yet another bow and assailed

marching up, triumphantly breaking

Bhima with arrows more fiercely than

through enemy ranks."

before.

"I do not like it, Madhava," replied Bhima, in a fit of uncontrollable rage, Arjuna. "It was not right for him to have sprang upon Karna. Radheya took cover

left Dharmaputra and come here to join behind his flagstaff and escaped

me. Drona is there ever seeking an

destruction. Thereupon, Bhima jumped

opportunity to seize Dharmaputra. Satyaki out of Karna's car down into the field of should have stuck to his post there to battle where, deprived of all arms, he used guard him. Instead, he has come here. Old the elephants lying dead on the ground to Bhurisravas has intercepted Satyaki. It protect himself from Karna's arrows and was a great mistake for Yudhishtira to continued the fight.

have sent Satyaki away here."

He picked up anything he could lay hands There was a family feud between

upon, wheels of broken chariots, the limbs Bhurisravas and Satyaki that made them of horses and elephants that were lying inveterate foes.

about, and hurling them at Karna, kept It had come about this way. When Devaki, him engaged without interval. But this who was to be the blessed mother of Sri could not long continue and Bhima was

Krishna, was a maiden, many princes

soon at a great disadvantage. Karna said competed for her hand and there was a

exultingly:

great battle between Somadatta and Sini

"Foolish glutton, you do not know the over it.

science of war; why do you engage

Sini won, and on behalf of Vasudeva he yourself in battle here? Go to the jungle placed Devaki in his chariot and took her and fill yourself with fruits and roots and away. Since that incident there was feud

between the two clans, the Sini family and

"Dhananjaya," said Krishna, "Satyaki is that of Somadatta. Satyaki was Sini's

exhausted. Bhurisravas is going to kill grandson.

him now."

Bhurisravas was Somadatta's son. When

Still Arjuna was following only

they found themselves on opposite sides Jayadratha's movements.

in the Kurukshetra battle, it was natural

"Satyaki who came after an exhausting that, as soon as Bhurisravas saw Satyaki, battle with the Kaurava forces has been the old warrior challenged Satyaki to

forced to accept Bhurisravas' challenge,"

battle.

said Krishna again. "It is a most unequal

"Oh Satyaki," cried Bhurishravas, "I know battle. Unless we help him, beloved

you strut about thinking yourself a man of Yuyudhana will be slain."

great prowess. Here now I have you in my Even as Krishna was saying this,

power and will presently finish you. Long Bhurishravas lifted Satyaki up and brought him to the meeting. Like

him crashing to the ground and all the Indrajit destroyed Dasaratha's son men around in the Kaurava army

Lakshmana, you will die today and go to exclaimed: "Yuyudhana is dead!"

the abode of Yama, gladdening the hearts Again Krishna importuned: "Satyaki is of many a bereaved widow."

lying almost dead on the field, the best Satyaki laughed. "Have done with your among the Vrishni clan. One who came to vaunting," he interrupted. "Words are not help you, is being killed before your eyes.

deeds and do not frighten fighting men.

You are looking on, doing nothing."

Demonstrate your valor in action and do Bhurishravas caught hold of the prostrate not indulge in dry thunder like autumn Satyaki and dragged him on the ground as clouds."

a lion drags its elephant prey.

After this exchange of words, the battle Arjuna was in a great conflict of mind.

began, and the combat was as between

"Bhurisravas has not been called to battle two fierce lions. Their horses were killed, by me, nor has he challenged me to fight.

their bows were broken, and both were

How can I send my shaft at Bhurisravas rendered chariotless.

when he is engaged with another? My

They were now standing on the ground

mind recoils from such an act, although it fighting with swords and shields, till their is true a friend who came to help me is shields were hacked to bits and their

being slaughtered before my eyes."

swords broken. Then they were locked in Just as Arjuna finished saying this to a deadly embrace without weapons.

Krishna, the sky was darkened by a cloud They rolled together on the ground. They of arrows sent by Jayadratha. Arjuna

leaped up and they sprang on each other.

replied with a shower of arrows, but he They fell down again and so the combat constantly turned with pain to where

went on for a long while.

Satyaki was in the mortal grip of

Partha's mind was at the time concentrated Bhurisravas.

on Jayadratha's movements and he did not Krishna again pressed Arjuna to consider watch this combat between Satyaki and

Satyaki's condition. "O Partha, Satyaki the son of Somadatta.

has lost all his weapons and he is now in But his charioteer Krishna was deeply

Bhurisravas' power, helpless."

concerned about Satyaki's fate. For

When Arjuna turned, he saw Bhurisravas Krishna knew about their family feud.

with his foot on the prostrate body of Satyaki and sword upraised to slay him.

Before Bhurisravas could deliver the fatal helpless on the ground? I would have

thrust, Arjuna shot an arrow which went deserved to go to hell if I had failed to with the speed of lightning and the next intervene. You say, I have been ruined by moment the uplifted arm fell chopped off keeping company with Madhava. Who in

to the ground still holding the sword.

the wide world would not wish to be so Bhurisravas, all amazed, turned and saw ruined? You have spoken out of confused who had done it.

understanding. Satyaki who was weary

"Son of Kunti," he exclaimed, "I had not and exhausted when he came here and

expected this of you! It befits not a

who was inadequately armed, was

warrior to shoot from behind in this

challenged by you to give battle. You

manner. I was engaged in combat with

overcame him. Having been defeated, he someone else and you have attacked me

lay on the ground, powerless. What code without notice. Indeed, then, no man can of honor enabled you to raise your sword resist the evil influence of the company he to thrust it into the body of the fallen keeps, as your unchivalrous conduct

warrior and slay him? Do I not remember proves. Dhananjaya, when you go back to how you cheered the man who killed my

your brother Dharmaputra, what account boy Abhimanyu when he stood

are you going to give him of this valorous staggering, exhausted and weaponless, his deed. Ah! Who taught you this low trick, coat of armor torn off?"

Arjuna? Did you learn this from your

Bhurisravas who heard this did not answer father Indra or from your teachers Drona but spread his arrows on the ground with and Kripa? What code of conduct was it his left hand and made a seat for

that permitted you to shoot your arrow at meditation.

a man who was engaged in combat with

The old warrior sat in yoga and the sight another and could not so much as turn his deeply moved all the Kaurava soldiers.

eyes on you? You have done the deed of a They cheered Bhurisravas and uttered

low-bred fellow and foully besmirched

reproaches against Krishna and Arjuna.

your honor. You must have been

Arjuna spoke: "Brave men, I am sworn to instigated into it by the son of Vasudeva.

protect every friend within bow-shot of It was not in your own nature to do it. No me and I cannot let an enemy kill him. It one with princely blood in his veins would is my sacred pledge. Why do you blame

think of such a dastardly deed. I know you me? It is not right to hurl reproaches have been incited to it by that

without due thought."

contemptible Krishna."

After saying this to the warriors in the Thus did Bhurisravas with his right arm field who reproached him, he turned to cut off, bitterly denounce Krishna and Bhurisravas and said: "O excellent among Arjuna in the Kurukshetra field.

brave men, you have protected many who Said Partha: "Bhurisravas, you are old and have gone to you for help. You know that age seems to have affected your judgment.

what has happened is due to your own

You accuse Hrishikesa and me without

error. There is no justice in blaming me. If cause. How could I look on doing nothing, you like, let us all blame the violence when, before my eyes, you were in the act which governs kshatriya life."

of killing my friend, who came and risked Bhurisravas, who heard this, lowered his his life in battle on my behalf, one who head in salutation.

was like a right hand to me, and whom

Satyaki now recovered consciousness and you were going to stab when he was lying rose. Carried away by the impetuosity of

his passion, he picked up a sword and, left before nightfall, I do not think it advancing to Bhurishravas, sitting in yoga possible for Partha to reach Jayadratha.

on his seat of arrows, even when all

You, Aswatthama, Salya, Kripa, and I

around were shouting in horror and before must guard Jayadratha and do all we can Krishna and Arjuna, who rushed to the

to see that he does not fall into Arjuna's spot, could prevent him, with one swift hands during the next few hours before and powerful cut, he struck off the old sunset."

warrior's head which rolled down, while

"My king," Karna replied "I have been the body was still in the posture of

wounded all over by Bhimasena, and am

meditation.

so weary that my limbs have no power in The gods and the siddhas, who looked on them. Still, I shall put forth all the strength from above the battlefield, uttered

that is in me. I only live to serve you."

blessings on Bhurishravas. Everyone in the When Karna and Duryodhana were thus

field condemned Satyaki's act.

planning, Arjuna was engaged in a great Satyaki maintained he was right, saying: attack on the Kaurava army and putting

"After I fell down senseless, this enemy of forth all his strength, so that before sunset my family placed his foot on my prostrate he could break through to Jayadratha.

figure and attempted to kill me. I may slay Krishna put his Panchajanya in his mouth him in whatever posture he might choose and blew a loud note in the rishabha

to be." But none approved of his conduct.

swara, which was the signal for his own The slaying of Bhurisravas is one of the charioteer Daruka to arrive at once with many situations of moral conflict woven his chariot.

into the story of the Mahabharata to

When it came, Satyaki took his place in it, demonstrate that, when hatred and anger and attacked Karna vigorously and

have been roused, codes of honor and

skilfully, keeping him fully engaged.

dharma are powerless to control them.

Daruka's mastery of driving and Satyaki's **89. JAYADRATHA SLAIN**

archery were such as brought down the

"THE decisive hour has come, Karna,"

gods to witness the combat.

said Duryodhana, "If before nightfall this Karna's four chariot horses were disabled day Jayadratha is not slain, Arjuna will be and the charioteer was unseated. Then the disgraced and he will kill himself, for not flagstaff was cut asunder and the chariot having redeemed his oath. With Arjuna's was smashed. The great Karna stood

death, the destruction of the Pandavas is chariotless and the event produced a great certain and this kingdom will be ours in flutter in the Kaurava army.

unquestioned and absolute sovereignty.

Karna had to run and climb up into

Dhananjaya swore this impossible oath in Duryodhana's chariot. Sanjaya here tells a moment of thoughtlessness, because the Dhritarashtra to whom he was relating the gods had willed it that he should be thus incident: "The greatest adepts in archery destroyed by his own hand. It seems my are Krishna, Partha and Satyaki. There is stars are now in the ascendant. We should not a fourth to match them!"

not let this opportunity slip. We must see Arjuna broke through the Kaurava

somehow that his challenge fails. The

opposition and reached Jayadratha.

whole thing depends on you. Your great Inflamed by the thought of the slaughter skill in battle is on trial today. Prove of Abhimanyu, and all the great wrongs yourself this day. See the sun has sloped inflicted by the Kauravas, Arjuna fought down in the west. Within the little time with fury.

Savyasachin as he was, he discharged chicken, carried away Jayadratha's head.

shafts from the Gandiva bow, now using

"Listen, Arjuna," cried Krishna, "send one hand and now the other. He struck

your shafts in swift relays, so that the head terror and confusion among his enemies, may be supported from falling to the earth who felt as if Death had come to the

and borne into Vriddhakshatra's lap."

battlefield with wide-open jaws.

And Arjuna sent his wonderful arrows

It is only the poet of the Mahabharata that that carried away the head in the air. It can describe the combat that raged

was a strange sight. Vriddhakshatra was in between Arjuna and Aswatthama and the

his ashrama sitting in the open absorbed in other great warriors that protected the his evening meditation with eyes closed, king of Sindhu. They fought fiercely but when his son's head with beautiful black were all defeated and could not prevent hair and golden earrings gently dropped Arjuna from reaching Jayadratha. The

into his lap.

attack on Jayadratha began and the battle The old king finished his meditation and raged long. Both sides were constantly got up, when the head rolled down and

looking westwards, for the day was

fell on the ground. And, as ordained,

nearing its end. The Saindhava was no

Vriddhakshatra's head burst into a

mean foe, and taxed to the full, Arjuna's hundred fragments. Jayadratha and his

strength and skill were hard put to it.

father together reached the abode of the The sun sank towards the horizon and

brave.

reddened, but the battle did not cease.

Kesava, Dhananjaya, Bhima, Satyaki,

"There is but a very little time left. It Yudhamanyu and Uttamaujas blew their

seems Jayadratha has been saved and

conchs and Dharmaraja who heard the

Arjuna's challenge has failed. The vow is triumphant noise knew that it meant that unfulfilled and Arjuna is going to be

Arjuna had redeemed his oath and that the disgraced," said Duryodhana to himself in Saindhava had been slain.

great glee.

Then, Yudhishtira led his army fiercely Then, there was darkness and the cry went against Drona. It was nightfall, but on the round in both armies: "It is sunset and fourteenth day of the battle the rule of Jayadratha has not been killed. Arjuna has cease-fire at sunset was not observed. As lost." The Pandavas were depressed and the passions rose from day to day, one by one there were shouts of joy in the Kaurava one the rules and restraints broke down.

army.

90. DRONA PASSES AWAY

Jayadratha turned to the western horizon ALL those who have heard the story of

and thought within himself, "I am saved!"

the Mahabharata know about

for he did not see the sun then and thought Ghatotkacha, Bhimasena's famous son by the time-limit of danger from Arjuna was his asura wife. There are two young men over.

among the Mahabharata figures who

At that moment, however, Krishna said to embody all the qualities of heroism,

Arjuna: "Dhananjaya, the Sindhu raja is fortitude, strength, courage, and

looking at the horizon. I have caused this amiability. They are Arjuna's son,

darkness. The sun is still up and has not Abhimanyu, and Bhima's son,

set. Do your work. This is the moment for Ghatotkacha. Both of them gave up their it, for Jayadratha is off his guard."

lives on the Kurukshetra battlefield.

A shaft flew from the Gandiva bow, and, Towards the latter part of the

like a vulture swooping down on a

Mahabharata fight, the hatred roused on

both sides did not find satisfaction in his relentless attacks. "O Arjuna," said battle conducted during the daytime and Krishna, "there is none that can defeat this close at nightfall. On the fourteenth day, Drona, fighting according to the strict when the sunset, they did not cease

rules of war. We cannot cope with him

fighting but went on with it in torchlight.

unless dharma is discarded. We have no The Kurukshetra field presented a strange other way open. There is but one thing sight, the like of which had not been seen that will make him desist from fighting. If before in Bharatadesa. The generals and he hears that Aswatthama is dead, Drona soldiers on both sides were engaged in will lose all interest in life and throw battle, with thousands of torches burning down his weapons. Someone must

and using signals specially devised for therefore tell Drona that Aswatthama has nighttime.

been slain."

Ghatotkacha and his troops of asuras who Arjuna shrank in horror at the proposal, as are strongest at night, found darkness and he could not bring himself to tell a lie.

additional advantage and violently

Those who were nearby with him also

attacked Duryodhana's army.

rejected the idea, for no one was minded Duryodhana's heart sank within him when to be a party to deceit.

he saw thousands of his men destroyed by Yudhishtira stood for a while reflecting Ghatotkacha and his demon army moving

deeply. "I shall bear the burden of this in the air and attacking in weird and

sin," he said and resolved the deadlock!

unexpected ways.

It was strange. But when the ocean was

"Kill this fellow at once, Karna, for churned at the beginning of the world and otherwise, soon our whole army will cease the dread poison rose threatening to

to be. Finish him without further delay."

consume the gods, did not Rudra come

Thus begged all the perplexed Kauravas forward to swallow it and save them? To of Karna.

save the friend who had wholly depended Karna was himself angry and bewildered, on him, Rama was driven to bear the sin having just been wounded by one of the of killing Vali, in disregard of the rules of asura's arrows. He had with him no doubt fairplay. So also, now did Yudhishtira the spear of unerring effect which Indra decide to bear the shame of it, for there had given to him. But it could be used was no other way.

only once, and he had carefully husbanded Bhima lifted his iron mace and brought it it for exclusive use on Arjuna with whom down on the head of a huge elephant

a decisive encounter he knew was

called Aswatthama and it fell dead. After inevitable.

killing the elephant Aswatthama,

But in the confusion and wrath of that Bhimasena went near the division

eerie midnight melee, Karna, impelled by commanded by Drona and roared so that

a sudden urge, hurled the missile at the all might hear.

young giant. Thus was Arjuna saved, but

"I have killed Aswatthama!" Bhimasena at great cost. Bhima's beloved son,

who, until then, had never done or even Ghatotkacha, who from mid-air was

contemplated an ignoble act, was, as he showering his deadly arrows on the

uttered these words, greatly ashamed.

Kaurava army, dropped dead, plunging

They knocked against his very heart, but the Pandavas in grief.

could they be true? Drona heard these

The battle did not stop. Drona spread fear words as he was in the act of discharging and destruction in the Pandava army by a Brahmastra.

"Yudhishtira, is it true my

son has been slain?" Dronacharya asked

"You brahmanas, abandoning the

addressing Dharmaputra.

legitimate functions of your varna and The acharya thought that Yudhishtira

taking to the Kshatriya profession of arms, would not utter an untruth, even for the have brought ruin to princes. If you

kingship of the three worlds.

brahmanas had not gone astray from the When Drona asked thus, Krishna was

duties belonging to you by birth, the

terribly perturbed. "If Yudhishtira fails princes would not have been led to this us now and shrinks from uttering an

destruction. You teach that non-killing is untruth, we are lost. Drona's Brahmastra is the highest dharma and that the brahmana of unquenchable potency and the

is the supporter and nourisher of that Pandavas will be destroyed," he said.

dharma. Yet, you have rejected that

And Yudhishtira himself stood trembling wisdom which is yours by birth, and

in horror of what he was about to do, but shamelessly undertaken the profession of within him also was the desire to win.

killing. It was our misfortune that you

"Let it be my sin," he said to himself and descended to this sinful life."

hardened his heart, and said aloud: "Yes, These taunts of Bhimasena caused

it is true that Aswatthama has been

excruciating pain to Drona who had

killed."

already lost the will to live. He threw his But, as he was saying it, he felt again the weapons away and sat down in yoga on

disgrace of it and added in a low and

the floor of his chariot and was soon in a tremulous voice, "Aswatthama, the trance.

elephant" words which were however At this moment Dhrishtadyumna with

drowned in the din and were not heard by drawn sword, came and climbed in to the Drona.

chariot and heedless of cries of horror and

"O king, thus was a great sin committed,"

deprecation from all around he fulfilled said Sanjaya to the blind Dhritarashtra, his destiny as the slayer of Drona by

while relating the events of the battle to sweeping off the old warrior's head. And him.

the soul of the son of Bharadwaja issued When the words of untruth came out of

out in a visible blaze of fight and mounted Yudhishtira's mouth, the wheels of his heavenwards.

chariot, which until then always stood and The Mahabharata is a great and wonderful moved four inches above the ground and story. The sorrows of human life are

never touched it at once came down and painted with sublime beauty and rolled touched the earth.

out in a grand panorama. Behind the story Yudhishtira, who till then had stood

of errors and sorrows the poet enables us apart from the world so full of untruth, to have a vision of the Transcendent

suddenly became of the earth, earthy. He Reality. Thus it is that the Mahabharata, too desired victory and slipped into the though a story, has come to be a book of way of untruth and so his chariot came dharma. This book, in style and substance, down to the common road of mankind.

is altogether different from tales and When Drona heard that his beloved son

romances. In modern novels, dramas and had been slain, all his attachment to life pictures, exciting scenes are enacted, the snapped. And desire vanished as if it had hero passes through dangers and

never been there. When the veteran was in difficulties and finally marries a woman that mood, Bhimasena loudly spoke

whom he loves. Or else everything seems indicting him in harsh words:

to go on happily but suddenly things go

wrong and terrible misfortune happens Duhsasana's arm out and threw the and the curtain drops. This is the art bleeding limb on the battlefield.

scheme of ordinary sensational stories.

And then he fulfilled the terrible oath he The Ramayana and the Mahabharata are

had taken thirteen years before. He sucked quite a different kind of artistic creation.

and drank the blood from his enemy's

When we read them, our inner being is

body like a beast of prey and danced on seized and cleansed, so to say, by being the bloody field, mad with passion. "I passed alternately through joys and

have done it!" he roared. "The oath I sorrows, and we are finally lifted above swore against this great sinner has been both and taken to the Transcendent and redeemed. It only remains to redeem my Real.

oath as regards Duryodhana. The

91. THE DEATH OF KARNA

sacrificial fire is ready. Let that victim WHEN Drona died, the princes of the

also prepare."

Kaurava army installed

Karna as

The scene made everyone shudder. Even

Generalissimo. Karna stood up in his

great Karna was shaken as he saw Bhima gorgeous war chariot driven by Salya. The in this ecstasy of wrath. "Do not flinch,"

dauntless confidence of his bearing and said Salya to Karna. "It does not befit you his great renown as a warrior heartened to show any sign that may be mistaken for the Kauravas. The battle again began.

fear. When Duryodhana stands quivering Readers of the stars were consulted and in despair; it is not right that you also the Pandavas chose the propitious hour for should lose heart. After the great

grim battle. Arjuna led the attack on

Duhsasana's death, the army's hope rests Karna, supported by Bhimasena

solely on you. You must now bear the full immediately behind his chariot.

burden. Like the gallant warrior you are, Duhsasana made a concentrated attack on seek single combat with Arjuna, and win Bhima and sent a shower of arrows at

eternal glory on earth or the soldier's him. Bhima chuckled and said to himself.

heaven!" At these words, Karna recovered

"I have this wretch now safe in my hands.

his courageous spirit. With eyes red with I shall today redeem my promise to

wrath and unshed tears, he bade Salya

Draupadi. Too long has my oath waited

drive the chariot towards Arjuna.

for performance."

"Enough of fighting," said Aswatthama As Bhima thus bethought himself of what addressing Duryodhana earnestly. "Let us Duhsasana had done to Draupadi, the

terminate this disastrous enmity. Beloved anger within him blazed up uncontrollably friend, make peace with the Pandavas.

and throwing down all his weapons, he

Stop the battle."

jumped from his chariot and leapt upon

"What? Did you not hear the words that Duhsasana like a tiger on its prey, hurled the stubborn Bhima uttered when like a him down and broke his limbs.

ravens beast, he drank human blood and

"Wicked beast, is this the wretched hand danced over my brother's mangled body?

that held Draupadi by the hair? Here, I What talk can there be now of peace?

tear out the root from your body. If there Why do you speak vain words!" said be any here wishing to help you, let him Duryodhana. Saying thus, he ordered a

come forward and try!"

fresh disposition of the forces, and gave Glaring hatefully at Duryodhana as he the command for attack.

roared this challenge, Bhimasena tore

Then followed a great battle. The son of Surya sent a dazzling arrow, which spat

fire and made for Arjuna, like a serpent sought to poison and kill Bhima. You

with its flaming double-tongue out. Then acquiesced in the plot to burn the

Krishna, Arjuna's charioteer, at the nick of Pandavas alive when sleeping in the

time, pressed the vehicle down five

palace of wax into which they had been fingers deep in the mud, so that the

lured. What had happened to dharma all serpent shaft just missed Partha's head but that time? What did dharma tell you when struck off his helmet! Arjuna was red with violent hands were laid on Draupadi and shame and anger and he fixed a dart on his you were looking on enjoying the sight?

bow to make an end of Karna.

Did you not then mock at her saying:

And Karna's fated hour was come, and as

'Your husbands have left you unprotected, had been foretold, the left wheel of his go and marry another husband'? The

chariot suddenly sank in the bloody mire.

tongue that was not ashamed to utter those He jumped down on the ground to lift the words now talks of chivalry. Chivalry

wheel up from the mud.

indeed! When a mob of you surrounded

"Wait a minute!" he cried. "My chariot the young Abhimanyu and shamelessly

has sunk in the ground. Great warrior as slew him, was that chivalry? Wicked man, you are, and knowing dharma as you do, do not talk now of chivalry and fairplay, you would certainly not take unfair

for you have never honored them!"

advantage of this accident. I shall

When Krishna was denouncing him in this presently set my car right and give you all manner in order to urge Arjuna to prompt the battle you want."

action, Karna bent his head in shame and Arjuna hesitated. Karna was now uttered

not a word. Karna silently

somewhat perturbed on account of the

ascended the chariot leaving the wheel

mishap. He remembered the curse that had still stuck in the mud and took his bow been pronounced on him, and again

and sent an arrow at Arjuna with unerring appeal to Arjuna's sense of honor.

aim and such power that it stunned him Krishna intervened. "Ha, Karna!" he for a moment.

exclaimed, "it is well that you too Karna utilised the respite won, to jump remember that there are things like

down again and hurriedly tried to lift the fairplay and chivalry! Now that you are in chariot wheel up. But the curse was too difficult, you remember them indeed.

strong for him and fortune had deserted But when you and Duryodhana and

the great warrior.

Duhsasana and Sakuni dragged Draupadi

The wheel would not budge, though he

to the Hall of Assembly and insulted her, strove with all his great strength. Then he how was it you forgot them utterly? You tried to recall the mantras of mighty astras helped to inveigle Dharmaputra, who was he had learnt from Parasurama, but his fond of play but was unskilled at it, to memory failed in the hour of his need, gamble, and you cheated him. Where had even as Parasurama had foretold.

your fairplay hidden itself then? Was it

"Waste no more time, Arjuna," cried fairplay to refuse to give to Yudhishtira Madhava. "Send your shaft and slay your his kingdom when according to the pledge wicked enemy."

the twelve years of forest life and the Arjuna's mind was wavering. His hand

thirteenth year incognito were duly

hesitated to do what was not chivalrous.

completed? What had happened to the

But when Krishna said this, the poet says: dharma you appeal for now?
You

"Arjuna accepted this command of the conspired with the wicked men who

Lord and sent an arrow which cut and These words of Duryodhana were
lustily severed the head of the Radheya."

cheered by the others. They supported his The poet had not the heart to
impute this stand and they chose Salya and gave him act to Arjuna who
was the embodiment of the supreme command from then on.

nobility. It was the Lord Krishna that Salya was mighty of limb and as
brave as incited Arjuna to kill Karna when he was any of the warriors who
had been killed.

vainly trying to raise his chariot out of the The army was arrayed under his
mud in which it had stuck. According to leadership and the battle raged
fiercely.

the code of honor and laws of war

On the side of the Pandavas, Yudhishtira prevailing then, it was wholly
wrong.

now led the attack personally against

Who could bear the responsibility for

Salya. It astonished everyone to see how breaches of dharma except the Lord

the man, who was till then the very

Himself? The lesson is that it is vanity to incarnation of gentle ness, fought so

hope, through physical violence and war, furiously.

to put down wrong. The battle for right, The battle was equal for a long while, conducted through physical force leads to when Yudhishtira hurled at Salya, his numerous wrongs and, in the net result, spear that went straight and struck him.

adharma increases.

Like the great flagstaff at the end of a **92. DURYODHANA**

festive function, Salya's body lay lifeless WHEN Duryodhana beheld Karna's death,

on the field, crimson with blood.

his grief knew no bounds. Kripacharya

When Salya, the last of the great generals, was deeply moved by Duryodhana's

fell dead, the Kaurava army lost all hope.

anguish of heart and said: "Moved by The surviving sons of Dhritarashtra,

ambition and greed we placed too great a however, joined together and attacked

burden on friends. They have

Bhima from all sides. He slew them all.

uncomplainingly borne it and laid down The son of Vayu had nourished his
their lives on the battlefield and attained burning anger for thirteen years
from the the happy regions above. There is but one time Draupadi was
insulted in the Hall of course left to you to make peace with the Assembly.
He said to himself now: "I Pandavas. Do not, O King, any longer
have not lived in vain, but Duryodhana continue this ruinous fight."
still lives," and smiled grimly.

Even at that moment of deep despair,
Sakuni led the attack on Sahadeva's
Duryodhana did not relish this counsel.
division. After a while, Sahadeva

"Perhaps, there was a time for that, but it discharged a sharp-edged sword-
arrow

is long past. What talk can there be of saying: "Fool, here is the reward for
your peace between the Pandavas and us with great sin." It went straight
and cut through all this inexpressible blood between us, the Sakuni's neck
like a sword. And the head, blood of our dearest and theirs? If I

which was at the root of all the wicked surrender in order to escape death,
how deeds of the Kauravas, rolled on the

can I escape the contempt of the world?
ground.

What happiness can I hope to have in a Left leaderless, the wreck of the
broken life so ignobly saved? And what joy can I army scattered and fled
in all directions, hope to find in sovereignty, secured by a pursued and
slaughtered to a man by the peace after my brothers and relatives have
exulting victors.

all been slain?"

"Thus utterly was destroyed thine army of eleven Akshauhinis, O! Bharata, out of

the thousands of kings, who espoused thy may take it all. It is not for kingdom or cause in their pride and might, only

land that we fight. Must I recount all your Duryodhana could be seen on that

sins? The wrongs you did us, and the

battlefield, fainting and sore wounded,"

outrage you perpetrated on Draupadi,

said Sanjaya, describing the debacle to the cannot be expiated except with your life."

blind king.

Sanjaya, who related the events to the After doing, in vain, all he could to rally blind old king, here said: "When your son his defeated army, Duryodhana, left

Duryodhana heard these harsh and cruel almost alone, took up his mace and

words spoken by Dharmaputra, he at once walked towards a pool of water. His

rose from the water, mace in hand."

whole frame was burning like fire, and Stepping out of the pool, the unfortunate water attracted him. "The wise Vidura Duryodhana said: "Come, one by one, all knew what would happen and he told us,"

of you, for I am single. You five will he said to himself, as he entered the water.

surely not join together and attack me who Of what avail is wisdom that comes too am alone and without armor, weary and

late? What has been done must produce its wounded all over."

result that has to be suffered. That is the Yudhishtira replied sharply: "If indeed it law. Yudhishtira and his brothers arrived be wrong for many to join together and there in relentless, pursuit of their great attack a single person, pray tell us how enemy.

Abhimanyu was attacked and killed? Did

"Duryodhana!" exclaimed Yudhishtira, you not consent to many combining and

"after destroying family and tribe, would attacking that boy, standing all alone you yourself escape death by concealing amidst your crowd? Yes, when men face

yourself in this pond? Where is your pride misfortune, they see and preach dharma now? Have you no shame? Come up and

and chivalry to others. Wear your coat of fight. A kshatriya by birth, do you shrink armor. Choose any of us you like and

battle and death?"

fight. Die and go to swarga or win and be Stung to the quick by these words,

king."

Duryodhana replied with dignity: "I have Accordingly, the combat began between

not come here, Dharmaputra, a fugitive Bhima and Duryodhana. Sparks of fire

for my life. It was not fear that brought flew when their maces clashed.

me here. I stepped into the water to cool Duryodhana and Bhima were equal in

the fire that is raging within me. I neither strength and skill, and the battle raged fear death nor wish to live, but why

long, and the issue hung doubtful. Those, should I fight? The earth has now nothing who stood watching, were debating as to left that I came to fight for! All those who whom would win. Krishna said to Arjuna stood by me have been slain. My desire that Bhima would redeem the oath he

for kingdom is gone. I leave the world to swore in the Hall of Assembly and smash you without a rival. Enjoy it in undisputed Duryodhana's thighs. Bhima heard this

sovereignty."

and, at that moment, the memory of the Yudhishtira replied: "Now, that is really great outrage came vividly to his mind.

generous, especially after you said you He leaped like a lion and came down with would not allow us even a needle-point of his mace on Duryodhana's thighs and

land. When we begged for peace and

broke them and Duryodhana fell heavily entreated you to give us a portion, you on the ground, wounded to death.

spurned our proposal. Now, you say we

Bhima jumped on the prostrate body of When Duryodhana said this, flowers were his enemy, stamped on his head with his showered down from the heavens by the

heavy foot and danced a terrible dance.

gods. Inordinate desire took Duryodhana

"Cease, Bhima," cried Dharmaraja. "You into the wrong path, whence ensued anger have paid off the debt. Duryodhana is a and numerous breaches of dharma. But no prince and a cousin. It is not right to put one could question the unconquerable

your foot on his head."

spirit of Dhritarashtra's son.

Said Krishna: "Soon the wicked man's soul **93. THE PANDAVAS
REPROACHED**

will depart from the body. Sons of Pandu, WHEN the war was nearing its end,

Duryodhana and his friends have been

Balarama arrived at Kurukshetra after

slain. Why linger here? On to your

completing his tour of holy places. He chariots."

came just when Bhima and Duryodhana

When Krishna said this, the face of the were engaged in their last mortal combat.

fallen Duryodhana glowed like a blazing He saw Bhima aiming the deadly blow

fire with anger and hatred. Turning his which broke Duryodhana's thighs, and his eyes towards Krishna he said:

anger flamed up at this great breach of the

"By base tricks you contrived the death of rules of single combat.

warriors, who fought bravely according to

"Fie upon you all! Would any kshatriya the laws of war. You could not have

hit below the navel? This Bhima has

dreamt of victory in a fair fight with offended the law most disgracefully," he Karna or Bhishma or Drona. Have you not exclaimed and impatiently going up to his a spark of shame left?"

brother Krishna, shouted:

Even dying, Duryodhana felt no regret for

"You can look on and tolerate all this. But all that he had done.

I cannot bear to see such unclean

"Duryodhana," said Krishna, "vainly do fighting!" Saying this he advanced you accuse others. Greed and pride of

towards the offending Bhima with

power led you to unnumbered wicked

upraised plough. The plough was

deeds and you are reaping as you sowed."

Balarama's weapon on supreme occasions,

"Wretch!" replied Duryodhana. "Living, I as the discus was Krishna's. Krishna was was a great prince, generous friend, and a alarmed when he saw his elder brother

terrible foe. All human joys, such joys as advancing in a passion towards Bhima.

kings wish for in vain, and even Gods do He rushed forward and, intercepting him, not despise, have been mine, in their

said: "The Pandavas are our friends and fullness. A warrior's death is the fitting closest relations. They have been the

crown of such a life. Dying, I go

victims of insufferable wrongs at the

triumphantly to swarga to join my friends hands of Duryodhana. When Draupadi

and my brothers who have gone there

was insulted in the Assembly Hall, Bhima already and are waiting to welcome me.

vowed: 'I will one day in battle break the You remain here below, your objects

two thighs of Duryodhana with this mace defeated and yourselves the object of

and kill him.' He proclaimed this solemn contempt of all kshatriyas. I do not mind oath at that time and everyone has known Bhima putting his foot on my head as I lie it. It is the duty of a kshatriya to fulfil the helpless on the ground with legs broken.

vow he has solemnly taken. Do not let

What care I? In a few minutes more will your anger mislead you and do not be

not the feet of crows and vultures settle on unjust to the innocent Pandavas. You

my head?"

should, before condemning Bhima, take

into account all the wrongs that the the indignant Balarama immediately left Kauravas have done to the Pandavas.

for Dwaraka.

Nothing but error can result if one

"Yudhishtira, why this strange silence?"

proceeds to judge conduct without taking asked Krishna.

into account the chain of events leading

"O Madhava, it hurts me to see Bhima up to it. You cannot snatch a particular act leap on cousin Duryodhana's mortally

out of its context and proceed to give wounded body and trample on his head. I judgment on it alone without gross

see the end of the glory of our race. We injustice. The era of Kali has arrived, were wronged by the Kauravas. I know

when the laws of a previous age cannot the full measure of grief and anger in apply. It was not wrong for Bhima to

Vrikodara's heart, and don't wish to blame strike below the navel an enemy who had him beyond reason. We have killed

wickedly contrived against his life on Duryodhana, who was afflicted by

many occasions. It was because of

uncontained greed and poverty of

Duryodhana's foul instigation that Karna understanding. What serves it now to

sent a shaft from behind and broke

debate the ethics of it or nicely to weigh Abhimanyu's bowstring when he was

the propriety of a much wronged man's

defending himself against heavy odds.

revenges?"

Arjuna's young son was attacked by

Yudhishtira was greatly oppressed in numerous warriors who surrounded him,

mind. When men transgress the law, when he stood all by himself in the field, extenuations and excuses are of no avail deprived of bow and chariot, and in a

in giving mental satisfaction.

most cowardly manner, killed him.

Arjuna, of penetrating intellect, was silent.

Duryodhana thought evil and practised

He did not show approval of Bhima's act.

deception from the time of his birth and Nor did he say anything by way of

has brought about the destruction of his detraction. The rest of the people, who people. There is no sin in Bhima killing were there, were however loud in

this man. Bhima bore the wrongs done

condemnation of Duryodhana and were

and kept his wrath within himself for

reminding one another of all his misdeeds thirteen long years. Duryodhana knew

and errors. Krishna turned towards them well that Bhima had sworn to break his and said:

thighs and kill him. When he challenged

"Warriors, it is not proper that we go on the aggrieved Pandavas to battle, he knew speaking against an enemy who has been very well that he invited Bhima to make defeated and is lying mortally wounded.

good his oath. How can you think that it We should not speak ill of a dying man.

was wrong for Bhima to do this?"

He was stupid and brought about his own Krishna's words did not change

end. He fell into the company of bad men Balarama's opinion, but his anger

and was ruined. Let us go."

subsided. "Duryodhana will attain the Duryodhana, who was stretched on the

happy regions reserved for the brave.

ground in intense, agony, when he heard Bhima's fame has been tarnished for all Krishna say this, went into a paroxysm of time. It will be said among men that the rage. He half raised himself on his arms in son of Pandu broke the laws of war in

spite of the excruciating pain, and

attacking Duryodhana. It will remain

exclaimed:

forever a great blot on his good name. I

"Wretch! Son of a slave! Was not your hate to stay here any longer." So saying father Vasudeva Kamsa's slave? You have

no business to sit or move with princes.

You made Jayadratha, the Sindhu king, You speak like a shameless wretch. I saw believe that the day was over and he was you instigate Bhima to aim his blow at my past danger, and thus he was slain when thigh! Do you think I did not see you, he was off his guard."

making as though casually talking to

Thus did Duryodhana pour his

Arjuna, pointing to your thigh, but really denunciation against Krishna and then, indicating to Bhima that he should strike exhausted by the pain of his wounds and me on the thighs, disregarding the laws of the violence of his rage, he fell prostrate single combat? Till then it had been equal again.

battle. You have neither pity nor shame.

"Son of Gandhari," said Krishna, "why do Did you not contrive the death of the

you let your anger add to the pain of your grandsire Bhishma through stratagem?

last moments? It is your own misdeeds

You advised Sikhandin to be placed in

that have brought about your end. Do not front when attacking Bhishma, knowing

attribute it to me. Bhishma and Drona had that the grandsire would scorn to fight a to die on account of your sins. So also woman, and would let himself be mortally were you the cause of the death of Karna wounded without resistance. You brought and others. Need I recount all the wrongs about the end of Dronacharya through

that you were guilty of against the sons of making Dharmaputra utter a falsehood.

Pandu? What punishment can be too

You were the father of that deadly lie that severe for the great outrage, which you issued from Yudhishtira's mouth, and

inflicted on Draupadi? The animosities made Dronacharya throw his bow away.

and passions that resulted from your

Did you not look on without protest, and misdeeds cannot be made ground for

rejoice, when that, wretch

condemning others. All the deceptions

Dhrishtadyumna attacked and killed the and lapses you charge us with were forced acharya who had stopped fighting,

on us by reason of your wicked conduct.

throwing away his weapons, and settled You have paid off on the battlefield the down in yoga posture for meditation on debt incurred by your greed. But you are the Supreme? Was it not you who

dying the death of a brave man. You will wickedly contrived to make Karna hurl

go to the happy regions reserved for

the fatal spear at Ghatotkacha instead of kshatriyas who lay down their lives on the reserving it for Arjuna as he had all along field of battle."

resolved to do? O great sinner, surely it

"Krishna, I go to swarga with my friends was you who instigated Satyaki to butcher and relatives. But you and your friends Bhurisravas when his right arm had been will live on earth to suffer," said the foully cut off and he stopped fighting and stubborn Duryodhana. "I studied the spread his arrows for a seat for holy

Vedas. I have given gifts ordained by law meditation. It was you who brought about and I have reigned supreme over all the the death of Karna by inducing Arjuna to sea-girt earth. While I lived, I stood upon attack him in a cowardly manner when he the humbled heads of foes. All human

was engaged in lifting his chariot wheel joys, such joys as even the Gods cannot which had sunk and stuck in the mud in despise and kings sigh for in vain, the the field of battle. Oh worthless man, sole very pinnacle of power, were mine. Dying cause of our destruction, the whole world now, such death as warriors deem the

has condemned your act when by sorcery crown of kshatriya life, I go to meet in you made it appear as if the sun had set.

heaven my friends and brothers gone

before, eager to welcome me. Who is beasts began to make as the night

more blest, I, or you who, doomed to

advanced. He was turning over in his

linger here, mourning for slaughtered

mind how to execute his promise to

friends in desolate homes, find the long Duryodhana.

sought triumph but ashes in your mouth?"

On the branches of the banian tree, under said Duryodhana. And the gods showered which the three warriors were resting, flowers down on the dying warrior and the hundreds of crows roosted. They were all gandharvas played music and the sky was quiet and asleep until a big owl came and illuminated. Vasudeva and the Pandavas began to attack the birds one after another felt small.

and kill them. When Aswatthama saw the

"There is truth," said Krishna, "in what nocturnal bird of prey tear the helpless Duryodhana said. You could not have

crows, he got an idea. The crows that

defeated him by fair means. This wicked could not see at night flew round and

man was invincible in battle."

round helplessly and fell victims to the **94. ASWATTHAMA**

owl that attacked them violently.

WHEN Aswatthama heard how

"These wicked Pandavas and the Panchala Duryodhana lay mortally injured, and

that killed my father and all their

learnt the details of the combat, his

supporters can easily be killed by us, if we righteous anger swelled like the sea. The surprise them when they are sleeping in deception, practised by the Pandavas in their tents at night even as this owl is order to bring about his father's end, had attacking these blind crows. Thus can I been rankling in his mind.

avenge the deeds of foul play they have Now, when he learnt how Duryodhana

practised on us. I am deeply indebted to had been stricken down mortally against this bird of prey from whom I have

all rules of chivalry, he went to the spot received the teaching. There is no offence where Duryodhana was lying and there

in adopting plans to suit one's altered took an oath that he would that night send circumstances. If we can lawfully attack the Pandavas to the abode of Yama.

an enemy, when his army is tired or when Duryodhana, who was in the last physical his forces are scattered, why then should agony of departing life, was transported not we, who have lost our armies, attack with joy when he heard Aswatthama take our enemies when they are asleep? There this oath. He immediately ordered those can be nothing wrong in it. Indeed it is who stood nearby to install Aswatthama only thus that we can punish and defeat as Supreme Commander of the Army with

these Pandavas who have achieved

due ceremony and, when that was over,

successes through foul play. We have no said to Him: "All my hopes are in you."

other course open."

It was sunset and the forest was in utter Aswatthama made up his mind and he

darkness when under a big banian tree

immediately woke up Kripacharya and

Kripacharya, Kritavarma and Aswatthama informed him of his plan.

Kripacharya, halted for rest. They were so greatly

who heard it, was astonished.

fatigued that Kripacharya and Kritavarma

"This can never be," said he. "It is wholly fell fast asleep as soon as they lay down.

wrong. To attack men who have retired to But Aswatthama did not get sleep, for

sleep, has never been done before. It

sorrow, indignation and hatred burnt

would be an unprecedented crime against within him. He was listening to the noises the laws of kshatriya conduct.

that the nocturnal birds and prowling

Aswatthama, for whom are we fighting?

The man for whose sake we joined in this breached the embankment of dharma and

war has been fatally wounded and his end released the flood, and not a, drop of has arrived. We have discharged our

dharma is now left! Karna, who was on

obligations most loyally. We fought our the ground putting right the wheel of his best for the greedy and wrongheaded

chariot, was murdered by these lawless Duryodhana but we failed irretrievably.

rascals. Bhima has killed Duryodhana

There is no purpose now in our continuing with a blow below the navel. What

the fight and it is folly to do so. Let us go dharma has been left for us to follow? The to Dhritarashtra and the faultless

Pandavas have, once for all, destroyed the Gandhari, and place ourselves at their wall of dharma. Why should we make

disposal. Let us take counsel of wise

research into law and chivalry when

Vidura also. They will tell us what lies dealing with these ruffians who have

before us to do."

attained successes by destroying both? If When Kripacharya spoke thus, by killing the sleeping Panchalas, who Aswatthama's grief and indignation butchered my great father, I may be

increased and he spoke bitterly:

doomed to rebirth in the body of a foul

"Everyone feels sure that what he thinks is bird or of a wriggling worm, I do not care.

the only right and proper thing to do.

I seek such a birth!"

One's understanding naturally limits one's. Saying this and, without waiting for an answer, these Pandavas have been guilty. Aswatthama proceeded to harness of the foulest conduct. They killed his horses and got his chariot ready to noble and trustful father through a lie.

start. When he was about to leave

They have killed Duryodhana against the Kripacharya and Kritavarma cried: "Stop.

laws of chivalry. I have no doubt in my. What are you resolved upon doing, mind that what I propose to do is quite Aswatthama? We cannot approve of it,

proper vengeance for all these foul deeds.

but neither can we desert you in your

It is only if I carry out this plan that I can desperate enterprise. The path you are possibly repay my debt to my king and to bent on treading, we shall also follow. The my father. I have decided on it and I do sin you are resolved upon, let us share not propose to alter my plan. I am going also." So, they went along with him. Thus tonight to the tents where they are

does evil grow! One transgression begets sleeping having cast off their armor and the next and thus evil grows from evil there I will kill the Pandavas and

submerging righteousness. Evil flourishes Dhritadyumna while they are asleep."

on retaliation.

Kripacharya was deeply grieved to hear They reached the Pandava camp.

Aswatthama speak thus: "You have

Dhrishtadyumna had doffed his armor and attained a great name among men," he was plunged in deep slumber in his tent.

pleaded, "Your spotless character will by Aswatthama leapt on the sleeping warrior this be blemished, even like a milk-white and, before he could put himself into a cloth bespattered with blood. Never could posture of defence, cruelly kicked him to it be right to kill sleeping men. Desist death.

from this."

The same process was relentlessly

"Sir, what are you talking? These repeated until all the Panchalas and all the Pandavas butchered my father when he

sons of Draupadi were killed one by one had thrown away all his weapons and had when they were plunged in sleep in their sat down in prayer. These men have

tents.

After having done this deed, the like of the formidable Karna, have, by our

which had never before been considered unwariness, been crushed and destroyed possible among kshatriyas, Kripacharya, like vermin. We have allowed ourselves to Kritavarma and Aswatthama came out of

be destroyed like a merchant ship which, the tents and set fire to the camp. When having successfully crossed the big seas, the fire spread, the sleeping soldiers were returns home but capsizes in a ditch and is awakened and fled hither and thither in lost."

confusion, even like the crows on the

Draupadi was overwhelmed by

banian tree under which they had rested in inconsolable grief. She came to

the forest, and they were mercilessly

Dharmaputra's side and wept. "Is there no slaughtered by Aswatthama.

one to avenge my children's slaughter, by

"We have done our duty," said destroying this great sinner Aswatthama?"

Dronacharya's son. "Let us go and give she cried.

the glad news to Duryodhana, if we can When she

said this, the Pandavas

reach him, before he expires. Let him die immediately went out in search of the

pleased."

murderer. They looked for him in all sorts The three of them accordingly hurried to of places and found him, at last, on the Duryodhana.

bank of the Ganga, hiding himself behind **95. AVENGED**

Vyasa.

"O, DURYODHANA, you are yet alive, When he saw the Pandavas and Janardana hear the news and rejoice! All the

approaching, Aswatthama quietly took up Panchalas have been slaughtered. The

a blade of grass and charged it with the sons of the Pandavas have also been all mantra of destruction and sent it forward done to death. The entire army of theirs saying: "May this destroy the race of the has been destroyed. We made a night

Pandavas." And it went straight to the attack on them when they were asleep.

womb of Uttara who bore in her the son of There are only seven survivors now on the Abhimanyu.

Pandava side. On our side, Kripacharya, The race of the Pandavas would have been Kritavarma and I remain."

destroyed thereby but for the intervention Thus said Aswatthama to the dying

of Sri Krishna who saved the child in the Duryodhana who, on hearing this, slowly mother's womb. This child was Parikshit opened his eyes and, with struggling

who was later crowned by Yudhishtira

breath, gasped out these words:

when the Pandavas retired to the forest.

"Aswatthama, you have indeed done for Aswatthama pried out the shining jewel me what neither the great Bhishma nor the that was part of his head and gave it to valiant Karna could achieve! You have

Bhima, acknowledging his defeat, and

gladdened my heart and I die happy."

went away to the forest. Bhima took the Saying this, Duryodhana expired.

great jewel and, going to Draupadi said: When he saw the unexpected destruction

"Angel of spotless purity, this is for you.

of his army as a result of the attack during The man, who killed your beloved sons, sleep, Yudhishtira gave way to grief and has been vanquished. Duryodhana has

broke down:

been destroyed. I have drunk the blood of

"At the very moment of victory, we have Duhsasana. I have avenged the great

been totally defeated. The vanquished

outrage and discharged my debts."

have indeed triumphed. Draupadi's

Draupadi took the jewel and, going up to children, who survived the onslaught of Yudhishtira bowed and said: "Faultless

king, it befits you to wear this in your not be prevented. Henceforth, crown."

Yudhishtira is your son. You should try **96. WHO CAN GIVE SOLACE?**

to love him and in that way bear the

WHEN the battle was over, Hastinapura

burden of life, giving up grief."

was a city of mourning. All the women

Making his way, through the crowd of

and children were weeping and lamenting weeping women Yudhishtira approached

their slain, nearest and dearest. With many Dhritarashtra and bowed before him.

thousands of bereaved women

Dhritarashtra embraced Yudhishtira, but accompanying, Dhritarashtra went to the there was no love in that embrace.

field of battle. At Kurukshetra, the scene Then Bhimasena was announced to the

of terrible destruction, the blind king blind king. "Come," said Dhritarashtra.

thought of all that had passed, and wept But Vasudeva was wise. He gently pushed aloud. But, of what avail was weeping?

Bhima aside and placed an iron figure

"O king, words of consolation addressed before the blind Dhritarashtra, knowing to a bereaved person do not remove his the old king's exceeding anger.

grief. Thousands of rulers have given up Dhritarashtra hugged the metal statue to their lives in battle for your sons. It is now his bosom in a firm embrace and then the time that you should arrange for proper thought came to him of how this man had funeral ceremonies for the dead," said killed everyone of his sons. And his wrath Sanjaya to Dhritarashtra.

increased to such a pitch that the image

"It is not right to grieve for those who die was crushed to pieces in his embrace.

in battle. When souls have left their

"Ha! My anger has deceived me," cried bodies, there is nothing like relationship, Dhritarashtra. "I have killed dear Bhima."

nothing like brother or son or relative.

Then Krishna said to the blind king:

Your sons have really no connection with

"Lord, I knew that it would be thus and I you. Relationship ends with death, being prevented the disaster. You have not

only a bodily connection and a mere

killed Bhimasena. You have crushed only minor incident in the soul's eternal life.

an iron image that I placed instead before From the nowhere do lives come, and,

you. May your anger be appeased with

with death, they again disappear into what you have done to this image. Bhima nowhere. Why should we weep for them?

is still alive."

Those who die in battle after a heroic fight The king was composed somewhat and he

go as guests to receive Indra's hospitality.

blessed Bhima and the other Pandavas

Grieving for what is past, you cannot gain who then took leave of him and went to anything in the nature of dharma, pleasure Gandhari.

or wealth." Thus, and in many more ways, Vyasa was with Gandhari. "Oh

did the wise and good Vidura try to

queen,"said the rishi, "be not angry with assuage the king's grief.

the Pandavas. Did you not tell them even Vyasa also approached Dhritarashtra

when the battle began: 'Where there is tenderly and said: "Dear son, there is dharma, there surely will be victory'? And nothing that you do not know

and which so it has happened. It is not right to let the you have to learn from me. You know

mind dwell on what is past and nurse

very well that all living beings must die.

one's anger. You must now call to aid

This great battle came to reduce earth's your great fortitude."

burden as I have heard from Lord Vishnu Gandhari said: "Bhagavan, I do not envy Himself. That is why this calamity could the victory of the Pandavas. It is true that

grief for the death of my sons has robbed lifelong penance for her husband's

me of my understanding. These Pandavas blindness. He bowed low before her and also are my sons. I know that Duhsasana said softly:

and Sakuni brought about this destruction

"Queen, the cruel Yudhishtira, who of our people. Arjuna and Bhima are

killed your sons, stands before you fit to blameless. Pride brought this battle about be cursed. Do curse me who have

and my sons deserve the fate they have committed great sin. I care not for life or met. I do not complain about it. But then, for kingdom." Saying this, he fell on the in Vasudeva's presence, Bhima called

ground and touched her feet.

Duryodhana to battle and they fought.

Gandhari heaved a deep sigh and stood

And, knowing that Duryodhana was

mute. She turned her head aside knowing stronger and could not be defeated in that if, through the cloth with which her single combat, Bhima struck him below

eyes were bound, her vision fell on the the navel and killed him. Vasudeva was prostrate Yudhishtira he would be

looking on. This was wrong and it is this reduced to ashes on the spot. But through that I find it impossible to forgive."

a little space in the cloth, even as she Bhima, who heard this, came near and

turned her face away, her eyes fell on the said: "Mother, I did this to save myself in toe of the prostrate Yudhishtira. At once, battle. Whether it was right or wrong, you says the poet, the toe was charred black.

should bear with me. Your son was

Arjuna knew the power of bereaved

invincible in combat and so I did in self-Gandhari's wrath, and hid himself behind protection what was undoubtedly wrong.

Vasudeva. The wise and good Gandhari

He called Yudhishtira to play and

suppressed all her anger and blessed the deceived him. We had been wronged by

Pandavas and sent them to Kunti.

your son in so many ways. He would not Gandhari turned to Draupadi, who was in give back the kingdom, of which be took lamentation, having lost all her sons.

unlawful possession. And you know what

"Dear girl," said Gandhari. "Do not your son did to blameless Draupadi. If we grieve. Who can give solace to you and had killed your son on the spot, when he me? It is through my fault that this great misbehaved in the Hall of Assembly,

tribe has been destroyed altogether."

surely you would not have blamed us.

97. YUDHISHTHIRA'S ANGUISH

Bound by Dharmaraja's vow, we

THE Pandavas performed the til and
restrained ourselves with difficulty then.

water ceremonies for the peace of the

We have since discharged honor's debt

souls of the dead warriors and camped on and found satisfaction in battle.
Mother, the bank of the Ganga for a month.

you should forgive me."

One day, Narada appeared before

"Dear son, if you had left but one out of Yudhishtira. "Son, through Krishna's my hundred sons and killed all the rest grace, the valor of Arjuna and the power and satisfied your anger, I and my old of your dharma, you were victorious and husband would have found solace in that you are the sovereign lord of the land. Are surviving son for the rest of our lives.

you happy?" he asked.

Where is Dharmaputra? Call him." She Yudhishtira replied: "Bhagavan, it is true said.

the kingdom has come into my

Hearing this, Yudhishtira trembled as he, possession. But my kinsmen are all gone.

with clasped hands, approached Gandhari, We have lost sons that were dear. This whose eyes were bound in a cloth in loyal victory appears to me but a great defeat. O

Narada, we took our own brother for an enemy and instructed him fully in the use of the bow and killed him, even Karna who

and the withdrawing of the Brahmastra.

stood rooted like a rock in his honor and One day, however, he discovered that the at whose valor the world wondered. This disciple was not a brahmana. It happened terrible act of slaying our own brothers that an insect bit a hole into Karna's thigh was the result of our sinful attachment to thigh when one afternoon the teacher had our possessions. Karna, on the other hand, fallen asleep on Karna's lap. Karna bore kept the promise he gave to our mother the acute pain quietly and did not stir, lest and abstained from killing us. Oh! I am a master should wake up. The warm

sinner, a low fellow who murdered his

blood trickling from the wound woke up own brother. My mind is troubled greatly Parasurama. When he saw what had

at this thought. Karna's feet were so much happened, he was angry.

like our mother's feet. In the large hall,

"You are a kshatriya; otherwise you could when that great outrage was committed

not have borne this physical pain without and my anger rose, when I looked at his stirring. Tell me the truth. You are not a feet, which were so much like Kunti's feet, brahmana. You have deceived your

my wrath subsided. I remember that now teacher. Fool! When your hour comes,

and my grief increases."

your knowledge of astras will fail you and So saying, Yudhishtira heaved a deep

what you have learnt from me through

sigh. Narada told him all about Karna and deception will not avail you."

the curses that had been pronounced on Parasurama's wrath against kshatriyas is him on various occasions.

well known and, when he discovered that Once, when Karna saw that Arjuna was

Karna was a kshatriya, he cursed him thus superior to him in archery, he approached in his anger.

Drona and entreated him to teach him how Karna was free in making gifts. One day, to wield the Brahmastra. Drona declined Indra, who was Arjuna's father, came in saying it was not open to him to instruct the garb of a brahmana and begged of

any but a brahmana of faultless conduct or Karna for a gift of the divine earrings and a kshatriya who had purified himself by armor with which he had been born.

much penance. Thereupon, Karna went to Karna took them out and gave them away the Mahendra hills and deceived

accordingly. From that time, Karna's

Parasurama by saying that he was a

strength was reduced.

brahmana and became his disciple. From

"Karna's pledge to his mother Kunti that him he obtained instruction in archery and he would not kill more than one of the the use of many astras.

five of you, Parasurama's curse, the anger One day, when Karna was practising with of the brahmana whose cow was killed by his bow in the forest near Parasurama's Karna, the way in which his charioteer asrama, a brahmana's cow was

Salya depressed him by underrating his accidentally hit and killed. The brahmana valor and Vasudeva's stratagems, these was angry and uttered a curse on Karna: combined to bring about Karna's end. Do

"In battle, your chariot wheels will stick in not grieve believing that you alone caused the mud and you will be done to death, his death." Thus said Narada, but even like this innocent cow which you

Yudhishtira was not consoled by these have killed."

words.

Parasurama was exceedingly fond of

"Do not blame yourself, son, for Karna's, Karna and taught him all the archery he death," said Kunti. "His father, the sun

lord himself, pleaded with him. He taking sanyasa. Bhimasena also spoke and begged of him to give up the wicked-harshly.

hearted Duryodhana and join you. I too

"You talk, alas" he said, "like a dull-tried hard. But he would not listen to us.

witted person who has committed to

He brought his end on himself."

memory the texts of the sastras without

"You deceived us, mother" said understanding their sense. Sanyasa is not Yudhishtira, "by hiding the secret of his the dharma of kshatriyas. The duty of a birth from us. You became thus the cause kshatriya, is to live an active life and of this great sin. May women never be

perform his proper task, not to go to the able to keep a secret henceforth."

forest renouncing activity."

This is the poet's story of how

Nakula also contested the propriety of Yudhishtira cursed all women in his

Dharmaputra's proposal and insisted that anguish over having killed his own elder the path of work was the right one to

brother. It is a common notion that

follow and the way of sanyasa was beset women cannot keep secrets. And this

with difficulties.

story is a beautiful conception illustrating Sahadeva also argued likewise and

that popular belief.

entreated: "You are my father, my mother, It may be that in worldly affairs, it is an my teacher, as well as brother. Do not advantage to be able to keep secrets. But it leave us, bear with us."

is not great virtue from the point of view Draupadi also spoke. "It was right we of moral character, and women need not killed Duryodhana and his men. Why

grieve over an incapacity of this kind, if should we regret it? Among the duties of a indeed Kunti's legacy still persists.

king is included the inflicting of just The affectionate temperament natural to punishment. It cannot be avoided and is women may perhaps incline them to

an essential part of the ruler's duty. You openness. But some women do keep

have meted just punishment too evildoers.

secrets very well indeed, and not a man There is no cause whatsoever for

possess this ability either. It is a fallacy to contrition. It is now your sacred duty to attribute the differences that arise out of take up the burden of governing the land training and occupation on nature itself according to dharma. Cease grieving."

and imagine some qualities as peculiar to Then Vyasa spoke to Yudhishthira at

a sex.

length and explained where his duty lay, **98. YUDHISHTHIRA COMFORTED**

pointing out precedents, and persuaded YUDHISHTHIRA'S pain of mind

him to go to the city and take up the

increased everyday as he thought of all the burden of ruling the land.

kinsmen that had been killed. He was

Yudhishthira was duly crowned at

stricken with intense remorse and decided Hastinapura. Before taking up the duties he must give up the world go to the forest of the State,

Yudhishtira went to where and do penance to expiate his sin.

Bhishma lay on his bed of arrows

"I see no joy or good," he said to his awaiting his death, and took his blessing brothers, in taking up the office of king or and instruction in dharma. This instruction in worldly enjoyment. Do rule the land of Bhishmacharya to king Yudhishtira is yourselves leaving me free to go to the the famous Santiparva of the

forest."

Mahabharata. After the discourse was

Arjuna talked of the nobility of family life over, Bhishma's soul passed out. The king and the entire good one may do without went to the Ganga and offered libations,

in accordance with ancient custom, for the was, for this reason, stricken with envy of peace of the departed soul.

his brother.

After the ceremony was over,

In this world men become envious of

Yudhishtira went up the bank. There, as others, just because the others are good, he stood for a while, all the tragic events while they themselves are not so good, came back to his mind, and overcome by and they cannot bear this. It is strange intense grief, he fell senseless on the indeed that men should not suffer even ground, like an elephant struck down by virtue in others.

the hunter.

Brihaspati harassed Samvarta in many

Bhima went up to his big brother and

ways. When he could not stand it any
caressed him tenderly and spoke to him more, poor Samvarta put on the
soothing words. Dhritarashtra also came appearance of an eccentric and
wandered up and said to Yudhishtira:

from place to place, and spent his days in

"You should not grieve like this. Arise that way to escape from his
brother's

and, assisted by your brothers and friends, persecution.

reign over the kingdom that awaits your King Marutta of the Ikshwaku
dynasty

rule. Your duty now is to do what

made great penance and obtained from the appertains to the office of king.
Leave Lord of Kailasa a great goldmine in the grief to Gandhari and me.
You achieved Himalayas and, with his resources thus victory in battle in
accordance with the augmented, he decided to perform a great dharma of
warriors. The duties

Yajna.

appertaining to that victory await your Marutta requested Brihaspati to
conduct attention now. Fool that I was, I did not the yajna for him. But
Brihaspati feared pay heed to the words of Vidura and

that Marutta would, as a result of the committed a great error. I listened to
the yajna, overshadow the gods who were his ignorant words of
Duryodhana and

charge.

deceived myself. Like gold seen in a

He refused to comply with the king's
dream the glory has vanished. My
invitation, despite his pressing entreaties.

hundred sons have disappeared into the Thereupon, king Marutta, who had
come

world of nowhere. But I have you as my to know about Samvarta found his
son now. Do not grieve."

whereabouts and approached him with the **99. ENVY**
invitation to conduct his yajna.

AFTER the libation ceremony for

He at first refused and tried to avoid the Bhishma was over, Vyasa narrated
to

honor, but finally yielded. This further grief-stricken Yudhishtira an
episode in increased Brihaspati's envy of his

Brihaspati's life. The wisest of men are unfortunate brother.

sometimes affected by envy and suffer

"Here is this enemy of mine, Samvarta, thereby. Brihaspati, teacher to the
gods going to conduct king Marutta's great

themselves, was master of all knowledge.

yajna. What shall I do now?" Thus did He was learned in all the Vedas and
all the Brihaspati brood over it until his envy sciences, yet he was once the
victim of affected his health. His health declined this debasing emotion
and suffered

rapidly and he became thin and pale. His disgrace.

condition grew worse everyday, until it Brihaspati had a younger brother, attracted the attention of Indra himself.

Samvarta, who was also a person of great Indra, chief of the gods, approached the learning and a very good man. Brihaspati divine preceptor and saluting him asked:

"Lord, why are you ill? What has caused The god of fire agreed and went on this this languishing? Do you sleep well? Do mission. The trees and the creepers along the attendants serve you properly? Do

his path caught fire and the earth trembled they anticipate your wishes and not wait as he marched roaring.

to be told? Do the gods behave

He presented himself before the king in courteously towards you or has there been his divine form.

any lapse in this respect?"

The king was mightily pleased to see Agni To Indra's anxious inquiry, Brihaspati stand before him. He ordered the

replied: "Deva raja, I sleep on a good bed attendants to do all the usual honors of and in right time. The attendants serve me hospitality. "Let him be duly seated. Have with all devotion. There is nothing

his feet laved and bring the gifts proper to wanting in the respect and courtesies

his greatness," said the king, and this was shown by the gods." Then his voice failed done.

and he could not proceed. So great was his Agni then explained why he had come.

prostration of spirit.

"Do give up this Samvarta. If you require

"Why are you grieved?" asked Indra a priest, I shall bring Brihaspati himself to affectionately. "Why have you grown thin help you."

and bloodless? Tell me what troubles your Samvarta, who heard this, was indignant.

mind."

The wrath of one who led the strict life of Brihaspati then told Indra about it all.

a brahmacharin was exceedingly potent.

"Samvarta is going to conduct a great

"Stop this chatter!" he said to Agni. "Do yajna. It is this that has made me wan and not let my anger burn you up."

thin. I cannot help it," said he. Indra was Fire reduces things to ashes, but surprised.

brahmacharya can burn up fire itself!

"Learned brahmana, there is no object of At Samvarta's anger Agni, trembling like desire that is not already yours. You are an aspen leaf, retired quickly. He returned wise and learned, and the gods themselves to Indra and told him what had happened.

have accepted you as their priest and wise The king of the gods could not believe the counselor. What harm can Samvarta do to story. "Agni, you burn up other things in you? There is nothing you can lose on

the world. How can anything burn you?

account of him. Why do you needlessly

What is this story of Samvarta's angry take upon yourself this suffering by mere eyes reducing you to ashes?"

envy?"

"Not so, king of the gods," said Agni.

It was amusing that Indra should so far

"Brahmic power and the potency born of and so humanly forget his own history as brahmacharya are not unknown to you."

to give counsel of good conduct. But

Agni thus reminded Indra of what the

Brihaspati refreshed his memory on the latter had suffered; incurring the wrath of point and asked: "Would you yourself those whom had attained Brahmic power.

delightedly watch your enemy's power

Indra did not wrangle but called a

growing? Judge me by how you would

Gandharva had said: "Now, Agni has have felt had you been in my position. I failed. I want you to go as my messenger beg of you to save me against this

and ask Marutta to give up Samvarta. Tell Samvarta. You must find a way to put this him that if he does not, he will incur my man down."

wrath and be destroyed."

Indra sent for Agni and said to him: "Go and stop the yajna of Marutta somehow."

The Gandharva went accordingly to king The innocent recluse had not heard about Marutta and faithfully conveyed Indra's the great battle that had been fought.

message and warning.

Krishna was astounded at the question of The king would not listen. "I cannot be his brahmana friend. For a while, he stood guilty of the deadly sin of deserting a silent not knowing what to say in reply.

trusting friend," said the king: "I cannot Then he softly disclosed what had give up Samvarta."

happened.

The Gandharva said: "O king, how can

"Sir, a terrible battle had been fought by you survive, when Indra hurls his bolt at the Pandavas and the Kauravas, I tried you?"

hard and applied every means to prevent Even as he said this, the clouds above the fight and make peace between them.

thundered and everyone knew that the god But they would not listen. Almost all of of the thunderbolt was coming, and

them have perished on the field of battle.

trembled in fear.

Who can stop the hand of fate?" Then he The king was in great fear and entreated related all that had happened.

Samvarta to save him.

When Utanga heard the narrative, he was

"Fear not," said Samvarta to the king, and exceedingly wroth. With eyes red with

he proceeded to put the power of his

indignation he spoke to Madhava:

penance into action.

"Vasudeva, were you there standing by Indra, who had come to do battle, was

and did you let all this happen? You have compelled to change over to benevolent indeed failed in your duty. You have

peace and to take part in the yajna as the surely practised deceit and led them to radiant god of sacrifices. He received the destruction. Prepare now to receive my burnt offering in proper form and retired.

curse!" Vasudeva smiled and said: "Peace, Brihaspati's plan of envy failed miserably.

peace! Calm yourself. Do not use up the Brahmacharya triumphed. Envy is a

fruit of your great penances in this anger.

deadly sin. It is a universal disease. If Listen to what I say and then, if you like, Brihaspati who could defeat the goddess you may pronounce your curse."

of knowledge herself in learning became a Krishna pacified the indignant brahmana victim to envy, what is there to say about and appeared to him in his all-embracing ordinary mortals?

form, the Viswarupa.

100. UTANGA

"I am born in various bodies from time to time. When the battle was over, Krishna bade time to save the world and establish the farewell to the Pandavas and went to

good. In whatever body I am born, I must Dwaraka. While on his way, he met his

act in conformity with the nature of that old brahmana friend Utanga. Krishna

body. When I am born as a Deva, I act as stopped and descending from his chariot a Deva does. If I appear as a Yaksha or as saluted the brahmana.

a Rakshasa, I do everything like a Yaksha. Utanga returned the greeting and

or a Rakshasa. If I am born as a human proceeded to make the usual inquiries

being, or as a beast, I do what is natural to about the health and welfare of relatives.

that birth and complete my task. I begged

"Madhava, do your cousins the Pandavas very hard of the ignorant Kauravas. They and the Kauravas love one another as

were arrogant and intoxicated by power. Brothers should? Are they well and

and paid no heed to my advice. I tried to flourish?" he asked.

intimidate them. Therein also I failed. I was in wrath and showed them even my

Viswarupa. Even that failed to have an Seeing the strange disappearance of the effect. They persisted in wrongdoing.

Nishada, Utanga reflected: "Who was They waged war and perished. O best

this? He could not have been a real

among brahmanas, you have no reason to Nishada. It was certainly a test and I have be angry with me."

blundered miserably. My philosophy

After this explanation of Krishna, Utanga deserted me. I rejected the water offered recovered his calm. Krishna was,

by the Nishada and proved myself to be delighted.

an arrogant fool."

"I wish to give a boon to you. What would Utanga was in great anguish. A moment

you like?" said Krishna.

later Madhava himself appeared with

"Achchyuta," said Utanga, "is it not conch and discus. "O Purushottama!"

enough I have seen Thee and Thy Form

exclaimed Utanga; "you put me to a Universal? I do not desire any further difficult trial. Was it right of you to try me boon."

thus? Make an untouchable offer unclean But Krishna insisted and the desert

water to me, a brahmana, to drink. Was wandering simple brahmana said: "Well, this kind?" asked Utanga. Utanga spoke in my Lord, if you must

give me some boon, bitter tones.

let me find water to drink whenever I

Janardana smiled. "O Utanga, for your might feel thirsty. Give me this boon."

sake, when you put my boon into action, I Krishna smiled. "Is this all? Have it then,"

asked Indra to take amrita to you and give he said, and proceeded on his journey.

it to you as water. He said he could not One day Utanga was very thirsty and,

give to a mortal what would give him

unable to find water anywhere in the

immortality, while he was willing to do desert, he bethought himself of the boon anything else. But I prevailed upon him he had received.

and he agreed to take amrita and give it to As soon as he did this, a Nishada appeared you as water, provided I let him do it as a before him, clothed in filthy rags. He had Chandala and tested your understanding five hunting hounds in leash and a water-and found you willing to take water from skin strapped to his shoulder.

a Chandala. I accepted the challenge

The Nishada grinned at Utanga and

believing you had attained jnana and

saying, "You seem to be thirsty. Here is transcended externals. But you have done water for you," offered the bamboo spout this and made me suffer defeat at Indra's of his water-skin to the brahmana to drink hands." Utanga saw his mistake and was from.

ashamed.

Utanga, looking at the man and his dogs **101. A POUND OF FLOUR**

and his water skin, said in disgust:

WHEN Yudhishthira was crowned and

"Friend, I do not need it, thank you."

installed as king after the Kurukshetra Saying this, he thought of Krishna and battle, he performed an aswamedha yajna.

reproached him in his mind: "Indeed, was As was the custom on occasions of this this all the boon you gave me?"

great horse sacrifice, all the princes of the The outcaste Nishada pressed Utanga over land gathered on invitation and the yajna and over again to quench his thirst, but it was completed in great splendor. The

only made Utanga more and more angry

brahmanas and the poor and the destitute and he refused to drink. The hunter and people, who had come in great numbers

his dogs disappeared.

from all parts of the country, received bounteous gifts. Everything was done in

magnificent style and in conformity With Everyone is pleased with the gifts and the injunctions relating to the sacrifice.

returns happy and contented. The mantras From somewhere unseen, a weasel

have been chanted perfectly and the

suddenly appeared right in the middle of oblations duly offered. The four castes are the assembled guests and priests in the pleased. Why do you speak as you do? Do great pavilion and, after rolling on the explain yourself."

ground laughed a loud human laugh as if The weasel laughed again and said: "O

in derision. The priests were alarmed at brahmanas, what I said is true. I do not this strange and unnatural occurrence and grudge the good fortune of king

wondered whether it was some evil spirit Yudhishtira or the good fortune of any of that had come to pollute and disturb the you. It is not envy that makes me say this.

sacred rites.

The yajna, which you have just completed The weasel's body was on one side all

so showily, is not in truth as great an act shining gold. This remarkable creature as that gift of the poor brahmana, which I turned round and took a good view of the have seen. And in reward for his gift, he assembly of princes and learned

and his wife, son and daughter-in-law

brahmanas that had come from various

were immediately taken to swarga. Listen countries and gathered in that great

to my story which is a true narrative of pavilion and began to speak:

what I saw myself. Long before you

"Princes assembled and priests, listen to waged your battle there, a brahmana, lived me. You no doubt believe that you have in Kurukshetra,

who obtained his daily completed your yajna in splendid style.

food by gleaning in the fields. He and his Once upon a time, a poor brahmana who

wife, son and daughter-in-law, all four lived in Kurukshetra made a gift of a

lived in this manner. Everyday in the

pound of maize flour. Your great horse afternoon they would sit down and have sacrifice and all the gifts made in that their only meal for the day. On days when connection are less than that small gift of they failed to find enough grain, they the Kurukshetra brahmana. You seem to

would fast until the next afternoon. They think too much of your yajna. Pray, be not would not keep over any thing for the next so vain about it."

day if they got more than they required for The gathering was amazed at this strange the day. This was the strict unchhavritti and impertinent speech of the golden

discipline they had pledged themselves to weasel. The brahmana priests, who had

observe. They passed their days thus for performed the sacrificial rites, went up to many years, when a great drought came

the weasel and spoke to it:

and there was famine all over the land. All

"Wherefrom and why have you come to cultivation ceased and there was neither this yajna, performed by good and worthy sowing nor harvesting nor any grain

men? Who are you? Why do you utter

scattered in the fields to be gleaned. For words of scorn about our sacrifice? This many days the brahmana and his family

aswamedha has been duly completed in

starved. One day, after wandering in

every detail in accordance with sastraic hunger and heat, with great difficulty they injunctions. It is not proper that you came home with a small quantity of

should speak derisively of our great

maize, which they had gathered. They

sacrifice. Everyone that has come to this ground it and after saying their prayers yajna has been duly attended to and has they divided the flour into four equal parts been accorded suitable honors and gifts.

and, offering thanks to God, sat down

eagerly to eat. Just then, a brahmana hungry as I am and you should not make entered and he was exceedingly hungry.

any distinction between us. I entreat you Seeing an unexpected guest arrive, they not to deny my request.' The brahmana

got up and made due obeisance and asked yielded and took the wife's share and gave him to join them. The pure-souled

it to the guest who took it greedily and ate brahmana and his wife and son and

it. But he was still hungry! Great was the daughter-in-law were exceedingly

distress of the poor brahmana of

delighted to have the good fortune of

Kurukshetra. His son, who saw this, came receiving guest at that juncture. 'Oh best forward. 'Father, here is my share,' said of brahmanas, I am a poor man. This flour he. 'Give it to this guest who seems to be of maize was obtained in accordance with still hungry. I shall be indeed happy if we dharma. Pray accept this. May blessings shall thus be able to fulfil our duty.' The attend on you,' said the brahmana of

father's distress increased. 'Child!' he Kurukshetra and gave his share of the

exclaimed, 'old men can stand starvation.

flour to the guest. The guest ate it with Youth's hunger is severe. I am not able to avidity but he was still hungry when he find it in my heart to accept what you say.'

had finished. Seeing his hungry and

The son insisted: 'it is the duty of the son unsatisfied look, the brahmana was

to look after his father in his declining grieved and did not know what to do,

years. The son is not different from the when his wife said: 'Lord, give my share father. Is it not said that the father is born also to him. I shall be glad if the guest's afresh in his son? My share of the flour is hunger he satisfied.' Saying this, she yours in truth. I beg of you to accept what handed her share of the flour to her

I give and feed this hungry guest.' 'Dear husband to be given to the guest. 'Faithful boy, your nobility and your mastery over one,' said the brahmana, 'the beasts and the senses fill me with pride. Blessing on the birds and all the animals tend the you. I shall accept your share!' said the females of their species with care. May father, and he took the son's flour and man do worse? I cannot accept your

gave it to the guest to eat. The guest ate suggestion. What shall I gain in this or in the third part of the flour also but he was the other world if I leave you to starve and still hungry! The brahmana, who lived on suffer hunger, you who help me and serve scattered grain, was confused. While he me to do the sacred duties of a

was in distress, not knowing that to do, his householder's life? Beloved one, you are daughter-in-law addressed him thus:

now skin and bone and famished and

'Lord, I shall give my share too and gladly exceedingly hungry. How can I leave you complete our efforts to feed this guest. I to suffer in that condition and hope to beg of you to accept it and bless me, your attain any good by feeding the guest? No, child, for, by that, I shall have eternal I cannot accept your offer.' 'You are

good as my reward.' The father-in-law

versed in the sastras, best of brahmanas', was sad beyond measure. 'O girl of

replied the wife. 'Is it not true that dharma, spotless character, pale and emaciated as artha and all the objects of human activity you are from starvation, you propose to are to the common and equal benefit of give your part of the food also to me, so both of us who have been joined together?

that I may earn merit by giving it to this Do look on me with compassion and take guest. If I accept your offer, I shall indeed my share of the flour and satisfy the

be guilty of cruelty. How could I possibly requirements of this our guest. You are look on when you wither in hunger?' The

girl would not listen. 'Father, you are lord rolled in joy on the ground where some of of my lord and master, preceptor of my the flour had been scattered. It made one preceptor, god of my god. I implore you side of me

into bright gold. I turned on the to accept my flour. Is not this body of other side but there was no more flour left mine dedicated wholly to serve my lord?

and that part of me is still as it was.

You should help me to attain the good. Do Desirous of getting my body made all

take this flour, I entreat you.' Thus

gold, I have been trying every place where implored by his daughter-in-law, the

men perform great yajnas and penances. I brahmana accepted her share of the flour heard that Yudhishtira of world fame

and blessed her saying: 'Loyal girl, may was performing a yajna and came here,

every good be yours!' The guest received believing that this sacrifice might come up this last portion avidly and ate it and was to the standard. But I found it did not. So, satisfied. 'Blessed is your hospitality, I said that your great aswamedha was not given with the purest intent and to the so great as the loft of flour which that uttermost of your capacity. Your gift has brahmana made to his guest." The weasel leased me. Lo there, the gods are

then disappeared.

showering flowers in admiration of your **102. YUDHISHTHIRA RULES**

extraordinary sacrifice. See the gods and MAN pursues madly the object of his

the Gandharvas have come down in their desire until it is got. When it is in his bright chariots with their attendants to possession, he is soon satisfied,

but he take you with your family to the happy becomes the slave of ever-fresh longings regions above. Your gift has achieved

and fresh griefs and finds no peace.

swarga for you, as well as for your

Although to fight and to kill his enemies ancestors. Hunger destroys the

is a Kshatriyas dharma, what joy can one understanding of men. It makes them go gets out of power and position and wealth aside from the path of rectitude. It leads acquired by slaughter and grief inflicted them to evil thoughts. The pious, when on brothers and near relations? It was this suffering the pangs of hunger, lose their that Arjuna pointed out in his powerful steadfastness. But you have, even when plea before Krishna when the battle

hungry, bravely set aside your attachment commenced. Krishna in answer, explained to wife and son and placed dharma above the principles of man's activities and the all else. Rajasuya sacrifices and horse proper discharge of one's duties. But, what sacrifices completed in splendor, would Arjuna felt and argued had also a great pale into insignificance before the great deal of force and there was more truth in it sacrifice you have done through this

than appeared on the surface.

single act of hospitality. The chariot is The Pandavas defeated the Kauravas and waiting for you. Enter and go to swarga, became the unquestioned sovereigns of

you and your family.' Saying this the

the land. They took up their duties and mysterious guest disappeared."

discharged them according to dharma.

Having related this story of the

But, they found not in victory, the joy that Kurukshetra brahmana who lived by

they had expected.

gleaning scattered ears of corn in the field,

"When the Pandavas won and obtained the weasel continued:

the kingdom, how did they treat

"I was nearby and caught the fragrance Dhritarashtra?" asked king Janamejaya, wafted from that flour of the brahmana. It and Vaisampayana, who recited Vyasa's

made my head all gold. I then went and Mahabharata to the king, tells the story.

The Pandavas with the utmost respect as they showed him no unkindness. The

treated Dhritarashtra, who was plunged in Pandavas behaved unexceptionably

a sea of grief. They tried to make him towards their old uncle. After a time, happy. They did nothing to make him feel however, Bhima began on occasions to

humiliated. Yudhishtira issued no orders give cause for offence. He would

except with his approval. Gandhari, whose sometimes, in impatience, countermand

hundred sons had disappeared like dream-the old man's instructions. He would let gold, was looked after by Kuntidevi with fall in Dhritarashtra's hearing words like loving and sisterly devotion and Draupadi

"Those perverse cousins of ours have dutifully ministered to them both, with themselves to thank for their destruction."

equal respect.

It was not possible for Bhima to forget or Yudhishtira furnished Dhritarashtra's forgive Duryodhana, Karna or Duhsasana.

house with rich seats and beds and

Gandhari felt intensely grieved when she decorations and all else that was wanted.

noticed that Bhima uttered words, which He sent from the royal kitchen most

pained Dhritarashtra. She was, however, a dainty and palatable dishes prepared for noble and enlightened soul. Whenever she him. Kripacharya, lived with Dhritarashtra felt pained at what Bhima said, she would and kept him company. Vyasa comforted

look at Kunti and find peace. For Kunti him with instructive stories of olden

was a veritable embodiment of dharma

times, calculated to assuage his sorrow.

and inspired forbearance. Fifteen years In the administration of affairs of the passed in this manner.

State, Yudhishtira consulted

103. DHRITARASHTRA

Dhritarashtra and conducted himself so as FIFTEEN years passed under king

to give him the feeling that in truth the Yudhishtira's reign, when old

kingdom was ruled on his behalf and that Dhritarashtra found himself utterly unable he, as the eldest member of the family, any longer to bear the burden of grief.

was still the supreme authority.

Hurt by Bhima's occasional reproaches, he Yudhishtira was most careful in his

found no heart to accept the courtesies and speech, never to allow himself to say

comforts provided under king

anything to cause pain to the bereaved old Yudhishtira's orders. Unknown to the

man. The princes, who came to

Pandavas, he secretly fasted and

Hastinapura from all parts of the world, underwent hard penances.

gave Dhritarashtra the same honors; as Gandhari too observed manifests and

they did of old, as if he were still the inflicted privation on her. And one day emperor.

Dhritarashtra sent for Dharmaputra and The women attendants gave Gandhari no

spoke to him thus:

occasion to feel her fallen estate.

"Son, blessings on you. I have spent Yudhishtira had instructed his brothers fifteen happy years under your roof. You most strictly that nothing should be done have tended me most lovingly. I have

to cause the slightest pain to their uncle, made gifts and offerings to ancestors and who had lost all his sons.

fulfilled all my desires in that respect.

The brothers, with perhaps the exception Bereaved Gandhari, laying aside her own of Bhima, followed this injunction

grief, has ministered to my physical wants faithfully. Dhritarashtra too conducted all these years. My cruel sons, who

himself lovingly towards the Pandavas.

committed unforgivable wrong to

He showed no ill will towards them even Draupadi and deprived you of your lawful

inheritance, perished on account of their and filial affection from me, their child. If sins. But they fought like brave soldiers you go away to the forest, I must go with and died in the battlefield and have gone you and serve you there. If you retire to to the happy regions reserved for the

the woods and leave me here, what joy

brave. The time has come when with

shall I have in kingship? I prostrate myself Gandhari I must do what has to be done before you and implore you to forgive the for our next state. You know what the

errors we have been guilty of. Serving you sastras have lain down. I must now go to will give me true joy and peace of mind.

the forest. These robes must be replaced Give me that opportunity and privilege.

by bark and tattered old clothes, suitable Do not desert me."

for the life of Vanaprastha. I desire to go Dhritarashtra was deeply moved. But he and live in the forest, praying for your said: "Kunti's beloved son, my mind is good. I want your permission for this. Let fixed on going to the forest and on

me follow the practice of our fathers. As penance. I can find no peace otherwise king, you will share in the fruits of my now. I have lived under your roof for

penance."

many years. You and all your people have Yudhishtira received a shock when he

served me with unstinted devotion. You saw Dhritarashtra and heard him say this.

must permit me now to fulfil my wish and

"I did not know," he said, "that you had let me go."

been fasting and sleeping on the bare

Having thus spoken to Yudhishtira, who ground and mortifying your flesh in this stood with clasped hands and trembling manner. My brothers too were unaware of with agitation, Dhritarashtra turned to this. I was misled into believing you were Vidura and Kripacharya: "I beg of you to well

looked after and happy. Father, you comfort the king and make him grant my have suffered grief, for which there can be prayer. My mind is fixed on the forest. I no solace. I see no good in kingdom or am unable to speak any more. I am feeling pleasures. I am a sinner. Desire and

dry in my throat. Perhaps, it is due to age.

ambition deceived me into this. Let your I have talked too much. I am tired."

son Yuyutsu be king, or anyone else you Saying this, he leaned helplessly on

choose. Or if you will do so, you yourself Gandhari and swooned.

may take up the duties of king and look Yudhishtira was unable to bear this

after the people. I shall go to the forest.

distress of the grand old man, who had Let me terminate this chapter of error. I possessed the sinews of an elephant and implore you to save me from further

had had strength enough to crush the

obloquy and burning shame. I am not the metal figure of Bhima into powder.

king. You are the king. You ask me for How lean he had become now and

permission to go. How then can I give or emaciated, with his bones showing

refuse permission to you? Let me assure through his skin, piteously leaning

you that my anger against Duryodhana is senseless on Gandhari like one destitute.

a thing of the past, gone without a trace.

"Have I caused all this?" he reproached Fate willed it and engulfed us all in

himself. "Miserable and unworthy am I, confusion of mind. And events happened ignorant of dharma, devoid of

which were not in our control. We are

intelligence. A curse on my learning!"

your children, even like Duryodhana and He sprinkled water on Dhritarashtra's face his brothers. Gandhari and Kunti is alike and caressingly stroked him with his soft mother to me and command equal regard

hands.

When the old man recovered, he tenderly slowly walked out of the city on his

clasped the Pandava to his bosom and

journey to the forest.

muttered: "My dear boy, how sweet is Gandhari, who, because her lord and your touch! I am happy."

husband was blind, gave up the use of her Then Vyasa entered. When he was

eyes and wrapped her face with a cloth all acquainted with what had happened, he

her life, placed her hand on Kunti's

said to Yudhishtira:

shoulder and slowly walked along, thus

"Do what Dhritarashtra, eldest of the guided.

Kurus, desires. Let him go to the forest.

Kunti had decided in her mind to go with He is old. All his sons have gone before Gandhari to the forest. As she walked on, him. It is not possible for him much

she was speaking to Yudhishtira: "Son, longer to bear his grief. Gandhari, whom do not ever let your speech be angry when God has blessed with enlightenment, has you speak to Sahadeva. Remember with

borne her sorrows with courage. Do not love Karna who died a hero's death on the stand in the way of their wishes. Let not battlefield. He was my son, but I

Dhritarashtra pine away and die here. Let committed the crime of not disclosing it to him go and live among the honeyladen

you. Look after Draupadi with unfailing flowers of the forest and breathe their tenderness. Do not ever give cause for fragrance, leaving the cares of the world grief to Bhima, Arjuna, Nakula and

behind. The dharma of kings is to die in Sahadeva. Keep this ever in mind, son.

battle or to spend their last days in

The burden of the family is now wholly retirement in the forest. Dhritarashtra has on you."

ruled the kingdom and performed yajnas.

Dharmaputra had till then believed that When you were in the wilderness for

Kunti was accompanying Gandhari only

thirteen years, he enjoyed the wide earth for a distance to say goodbye.
When he through his son and gave bounteous gifts.

heard her speak thus, he was taken aback You left him nothing to desire.
The time and was speechless for a few minutes.

has come for him to do penance. Let him When he recovered from the
shock he

go with your hearty consent, and without said: "Mother, not thus! You
blessed us anger in his heart."

and sent us to battle. It is not right you Dharmaraja said: "So be it!"

should now desert us and go to the forest."

Then Vyasa returned to his hermitage.

Yudhishthira's entreaties were however of **104. THE PASSING AWAY OF
THE**

no avail. Kunti held to her purpose.

THREE

"I must join my lord and husband

WHEN Yudhishtira at last gave his

wherever he be now. I shall be with

consent for Dhritarashtra's retirement to Gandhari and go through the discipline of the forest, Dhritarashtra and Gandhari forest life and soon join your father. Go went back to their residence and broke back unagitated. Return to the city. May their fast.

your mind ever stand steady on dharma."

Kunti sat with Gandhari and they ate

Thus did Kunti bless her illustrious son together. Dhritarashtra asked Yudhishtira and depart.

to sit by him and gave him his last

Yudhishtira stood speechless. Kunti went blessings.

on her way, looking back occasionally at Then the old man stepped out and, with him and her other sons.

his hand resting on Gandhari's shoulder, Each with hand on the shoulder of the

other, this picture of the three elders of the

tribe wending their way to the forest, birth to a mace, not a boy or a girl and that leaving their sons behind, is painted by mace will prove to be Yama to your tribe the poet so vividly that it fills the reader and destroy you all." The rishis departed with solemn grief, as if the parting

after pronouncing this curse.

happened in his own family now.

The foolish Yadavas were rather

Dhritarashtra, Gandhari and Kunti spent perturbed at this unpleasant ending of three years in the forest. Sanjaya was with what they had thought was a good joke.

them. When one day, Dhritarashtra

Next day, they were in consternation to finished his ablutions and returned to their see that Samba, the man who had been

hermitage, the forest had caught fire.

dressed up in female clothes, developed The wind blew and the flames spread

labor pains and lo and behold, gave birth everywhere. The deer and the wild boars to a mace! This filled them with terror ran in herds hither and thither, and rushed because they felt that their end was near madly to the pools.

as the rishis had cursed.

Dhritarashtra told Sanjaya: "This fire will They deliberated long and finally ground envelop us all. You had better save

the mace to fine powder, which they

yourself."

scattered in the sea, and thought they, had Saying this, the blind old king, Gandhari thus disposed of the danger.

with her eyes blindfolded and Kunti sat Nothing happened for some time. Seasons down on the ground, the three of them, passed. The rains came

and on the beach, facing eastwards in yoga posture and

near where they had strewn the fine dust calmly gave themselves up to the flames.

of the awful club, there sprang up a dense, Sanjaya, who had been to the blind king, crop of rushes.

throughout all his days, his only light and When the Yadavas saw this, they were

was dear to him like life itself, spent the curious and amused, for they had

rest of his days in the Himalayas as a forgotten all about the curse of the revered sanyasin.

guests.

105. KRISHNA PASSES AWAY

One day, long after, the Yadavas went to KRISHNA ruled at Dwaraka for thirty-six the beach for a picnic and spent the whole years after the Kurukshetra battle was day in dance and drink and revelry. The over. The Vrishnis, the Bhopas and other liquor began to work.

branches of the Yadavas belonging to

At first merry, then pugnacious, they

Krishna's tribe spent their days in

began to talk without restrain, raking up unrestrained self-indulgence and luxury.

old offences and quarrelling, on slight They lost all sense of discipline and cause with one another. Among the humility.

Yadavas, Kritavarma had fought on the

Once, some rishis came to Dwaraka. The side of the Kauravas and Satyaki on that arrogant and irreverent Yadavas mocked of the Pandavas.

these rishis with a practical joke. They

"Would any Kshatriya attack and kill dressed up one of their young men like a sleeping soldiers, O Kritavarma? You

woman and, presenting him to the revered have brought a great and lasting disgrace guests, said: "O ye learned men, tell us on our tribe," said Satyaki, taunting whether this lady will have a boy or a Kritavarma, and a number of drunken

girl."

Yadavas applauded the attack. Kritavarma The rishis saw through the irreverent joke could not bear the insult.

and said in anger: "This person will give

"Like a butcher, you slaughtered the great Krishna saw all his people thus destroy Bhurisravas when seated in yoga after his themselves as predestined. When he saw right hand was cut off and you, coward, the passing of Balarama, he roamed about dare to taunt me," he exclaimed and a in deep meditation in the wilderness,

number of the revelers joined him and

pondering on the completion of his avatar.

began to scoff at Satyaki for his barbarous

"The time has come for me to go," he said deed.

to himself and, lying on the ground fell Soon, all the Yadavas were in the quarrel asleep.

on one side or the other and presently In that wooded beach, a hunter, prowling from words they came to blows, which

for game, saw Vasudeva lying on the

swiftly developed into a free fight.

ground among the shrubs. From a

Satyaki, with his sword drawn, sprang

distance, the hunter mistook Krishna for a upon Kritavarma and cut his head off,

wild animal resting on the ground.

exclaiming: "Here is the end of the He bent his bow and shot an arrow at the coward who killed sleeping soldiers! "

prostrate figure which, piercing his foot in Others immediately fell upon Satyaki with the insteep, went full through his body.

their drinking bowls and pots and

Thus did the great Vasudeva depart from anything they could lay hands upon.

the world of men.

Pradyumna, Krishna's son, joined the fray **106. YUDHISHTHIRA'S FINAL**

to rescue Satyaki and there was a

TRIAL

desperate melee in which both Satyaki

To Hastinapura came the sad tidings of and Pradyumna were killed.

the death of Vasudeva and the destruction Krishna knew that the destined hour was of the Yadavas. When the Pandavas

come, and plucking the tall rushes, which received the news, they lost all remaining fringed the beach, laid about him with attachment to life on earth.

them indiscriminately.

They crowned Parikshit, son

This led to every one of the Yadavas

ofAbhimanyu, as emperor and the five

doing the same and there was great

brothers left the city with Draupadi. They indiscriminate slaughter. The rishis' curse went out on a pilgrimage, visiting holy had begun to work.

places and finally reached the Himalayas.

The rushes that had grown out of the mace A dog joined them somewhere and kept

became each one of them a mace as it was them company all along. And the seven of plucked by the doomed men in their

them climbed the mountain on their last unreasonable fury. They used them on one pilgrimage. As they toiled up the

another with deadly effect and soon all of mountain path one by one fell exhausted them were destroyed in this drunken

and died.

brawl.

The youngest succumbed first. Draupadi, Balarama, who was seeing all this, was Sahadeva and Nakula were released from overwhelmed with shame and disgust and the burden of the flesh one after another.

sank to the ground. He gave up his life as Then followed Arjuna and then great

he lay in a yoga trance. Balarama passed Bhima too.

away into the ocean in a stream of light, Yudhishtira saw his dear ones fall and which issued from his forehead like a

die. Yet, serenely he went on not giving silver serpent. Thus ended the avatar of way to grief, for the light of Truth burned Narayana in Balarama.

bright before him. Yudhishtira knew

what was shadow and what was before our eyes, innocent Panchali, united substance.

to us in sacred wedlock, was dragged to The dog still followed Yudhishtira. The the Hall of the Assembly and insulted

lesson enforced by the poet in this episode under the orders of this wicked man. I of the dog is that dharma is the only

cannot bear the sight of this man. Tell me, constant companion in life's journey.

where are my brothers? I wish to go

It was dharma who, in the shape of the where they are." Saying this
Yudhishtira dog, followed Yudhishtira up the

averted his eyes from where Duryodhana wearisome mountain path, when
his

was seated in glory.

brothers and wife had gone leaving him Then Narada, the heavenly rishi of
alone.

encyclopedic knowledge, smiled

Finally, when he reached a great height, disapprovingly at Yudhishtira
and said: Indra appeared in his chariot.

"Renowned prince, this is not right. In

"Your brothers and Draupadi have arrived swarga, we harbor no ill will.
Do not

before you. You have lagged behind,

speak in this manner about Duryodhana.

burdened with your body. Ascend my

The brave Duryodhana has attained his

chariot and go with me in the flesh. I have present state by force of
kshatriya dharma.

come to take you," said Indra. But when It is not right to let the things of
the flesh Yudhishtira went up to take his seat in stay in the mind and
breed ill will. Do Indra's chariot, the dog also climbed up.

follow the law and stay here with king

"No, no," said Indra. "There is no place Duryodhana. There is no place in swarga for dogs in swarga," and pushed the dog for hatred. You have arrived here with away.

your human body; so it is that you have

"Then there is no room for me either,"

these inappropriate feelings. Discard

said Yudhishtira, and refused to enter the them, son!"

heavenly chariot if he had to leave his Yudhishtira replied:

faithful companion behind.

"O sage, Duryodhana, who did not know Dharma had come to test Yudhishtira's right from wrong, who was a sinner, who loyalty and he was pleased with his son's caused suffering to good men, who fed

conduct. The dog vanished from sight.

enmity and anger and who brought death Yudhishtira reached swarga. There, he to countless men, has attained this swarga saw Duryodhana.

of warriors. Where is that region of

The Kuru prince was seated on a beautiful greater glory, which must be the abode of throne and he shone with the splendor of my brave and good brothers and

the sun

and around him stood in

Draupadi? I am eager to see them and

attendance the goddess of heroism and

Karna, and also all the friends and princes other angels. He did not see his brothers who gave up their lives in battle for me. I or anyone else. Yudhishtira was

do not see them here. I desire to meet astonished.

again Virata, Drupada, Dhrishtaketu and

"Where are my brothers, ye denizens of Sikhandin, the Panchala prince. I long to swarga?" asked Yudhishtira. "This man see the dear sons of Draupadi and

of greed, of limited vision, is here. I do Abhimanyu. I do not see them here.

not care to spend my time in his company.

Where are they, who threw their bodies We were driven by this man's envy and

into the blazing fire of battle for my sake, spite to kill friends and relatives. We like ghee in the sacrifice? I do not see any stood tied by dharma to inaction when, of them here. Where are they all? My

place must be among them. At the close of loud lamentation. "O Dharmaputra, do not the battle, my mother Kunti wanted me to go back! Stay here for a few minutes at offer libations for Karna also. When I least. Your presence has given us

think of it, even now, grief overwhelms momentary relief from torture. As you

me. In ignorance of his being my own

came, you have brought with you a whiff blood brother, I caused Karna to be slain.

of air so sweet and pure that we have

I am eager to see him. Bhima, dearer to find a little relief in our agony. Son of me than life, Arjuna, who was like Indra Kunti, the very sight of you gives us

himself, the twins Nakula and Sahadeva comfort and mitigates our suffering. O

and our dear Panchali, steadfast in

stay, be it for ever so short a time. Do not dharma, I long to see and be with them all.

go back. While you are here, we enjoy a I do not wish to be in heaven, for what respite in our torture." Thus the voices good is it for me to be here, away from pleaded.

my brothers? Wherever they may be, that Hearing the loud lamentations that thus me is swarga; not this place!"

came from all around him, Yudhishtira The angels, who heard this, replied:

stood in painful bewilderment.

"O Yudhishtira, if you indeed desire to Overwhelmed with pity at the poignant

be with them, by all means, you may go at anguish in faintly remembered voices, he once. There is no need to delay," and they exclaimed:

ordered an attendant to take Yudhishtira.

"Alas wretched souls! Who are ye that So, the messenger proceeded in front and lament like this? Why are you here?"

Yudhishtira followed him. As they went

"Lord, I am Karna," said a voice.

along, it soon became dark and in the

"I am Bhima," said another.

gathering gloom could be dimly seen

"I am Arjuna," cried a third voice.

things weird and revolting.

"Draupadi," cried another voice in piteous He waded through slippery
slime of blood tone.

and offal. The path was strewn with

"I am Nakula," "I am Sahadeva," "We are carrion and bones and dead
men's hair.

Draupadi's sons," and so on, came Worms were wriggling everywhere and
mournful voices from all around, till the there was an insufferable stench
in the air.

accumulated pain was more that

He saw mutilated human bodies

Yudhishthira could bear.

everywhere.

"What sin indeed have these been guilty Yudhishthira was horrified and
confused.

of?" cried he. "Dhritarashtra's son A thousand thoughts tortured his mind
as Duryodhana, what good deeds did he do

he proceeded.

to sit like Mahendra in heaven, while

"How far have we to go yet on this road?

these are in hell? Am I dreaming or am I Where indeed are my brothers?
Tell me, awake? Is my mind deranged? Have I

my friend," he enquired of the messenger gone crazy?"

in deep anguish.

Overwhelmed by anger, Yudhishtira

The messenger quietly replied: "If you so cursed the gods and denounced
dharma.

desire, we may turn back." The foul odors He turned to the angel attendant
and said of the place were so sickening that for a sharply: "Go back to your
masters. I shall moment Yudhishtira was minded to go

stay here where my dear brothers, for no back.

other sin than devotion to me, are

But just then, as if divining his intention, consigned to the tortures of hell.
Let me vaguely familiar voices rose all around in be with them."

The messenger went back and conveyed to Indra what Yudhishtira had
said.

Thus passed the thirteenth part of a day.

Then Indra and Yama appeared before

Yudhishtira where he stood in anguish.

When they came, the darkness rolled

away and the horrid sights disappeared.

The sinners and their suffering were no more to be seen. A fragrant breeze blew as Yama, the god of dharma, smiled on his son Yudhishtira.

"Wiseest of men, this is the third time I have tested you. You chose to remain in hell for the sake of your brothers. It is inevitable that kings and rulers must go through hell if only for a while. So it was that for the thirtieth part of a day you too were doomed to suffer the pangs of hell.

Neither the illustrious Savyasachi

(Arjuna) nor your beloved brother Bhima is really in hell. Nor Karna the just, nor anyone else who you thought had been

consigned to suffering. It was an illusion designed to test you. This is not hell, but swarga. Do you not see there Narada

whose travels cover the three worlds?

Cease grieving."

Thus said Yama to Dharmaputra, who,

thereupon, was transfigured. The mortal frame was gone and he was a god. With

the disappearance of the human body, also disappeared all trace of anger and hatred.

Then Yudhishtira saw their Karna and all his brothers and the sons of Dhritarashtra also, serene and free from anger, all

having attained the state of the gods. In this reunion, Yudhishtira at last found peace and real happiness.

GLOSSARY

Aswathama : Son of Dronacharya and

last supreme commander of the Kaurava

Abhimanyu : Son of Arjuna and Subhadra force.

who was married to Uttara, daughter of Bahlika, Dasharna, : States the kings of King Virata.

which were Kalinga, Magadha, friendly to Acharya : Teacher or Guru.

the Pandavas, Matsya, Panchala, Salva

Achuta : A synonym of Sri Krishna.

Baladev : Balarama, elder brother of Sri Adhiratha : Karna's foster-father.

Krishna.

Agastya : A great sage whose life-story Balarama : Elder brother of Sri Krishna.

the Pandavas learnt while on pilgrimage Balarama : An avatar or incarnation of to holy places is wife Lopamudra was

Adishesha the thousand-hooded serpent on equally a great sage in her own right.

which Lord Mahavishnu reclines in

Agnihotra : A sacrifice to God Agni.

Vaikuntha.

Airavata : Indra's elephant.

Bakasura : A voracious, cruel and terribly Ajatasatru : Having no enemy, friend of strong Rakshasa or demon who lived in a all born things, an epithet of Yudhishtira.

cave near the city of Ekachakrapura

Akshayapatra : A wonderful vessel given whom Bhima killed to the great relief of to Yudhishtira by the Sun god which

the citizens.

held a never-failing supply of food.

Bhagadatta : King of Pragjyotisha, a

Alambasa : A Rakshasa friend of

Kaurava ally.

Duryodhana who had joined his forces but Bhagawan : Form of address to Gods and Satyaki compelled him to flee from the great rishis, example- Bhagawan Sri

battlefield.

Krishna, Narada, Vyasa.

Amrit : Ambrosia, the food of the gods, Bharata : Son of Kaikeyi and King which makes the partaker immortal.

Dashratha, stepbrother of Rama, who was Anga : Mlechchha kings, a Kaurava

exceptionally devoted to and loved Rama.

supporter.

Bharadwaja : A rishi, father of

Arani : An upper and a lower piece of Yavakrida.

wood used for producing fire by attrition.

Brahma : Creator of the universe.

Artha (Wealth) : one of the objects of Brahmastra : A divine weapon,
human life, the others being Dharma,
irresistible, one given by Lord Brahma (righteous- ness), Kama
(satisfaction of himself.

desires), Moksha (spiritual salvation).

Brahmacharin : A religious student,

Arundhati : Wife of sage Vasishtha.

unmarried, who lives with his spiritual Ashtavakra : A towering scholar
while

guide, devoted to study and service.

still in his teens.

Brahmacharya : Celibacy, chastity; the Asita : A sage who held that
gambling stage of life of Vedic study in which

was ruinous and should be avoided by all chastity and service are
essential.

wise people.

Brihadaswa : A great sage who visited Asmaka : A Kaurava warrior who
the Pandavas in their forest hermitage and attacked Abhimanyu.

reminded them of King Nala of Nishadha Astra : A missile charged with
power by who also lost his kingdom in the game of a holy incantation.

dice and who deserted his wife Damayanti Aswamedha Yajna : A horse
sacrifice.

because of a curse but ultimately regained both,

Brihadratha : Commander of three fight the Kaurava armies, with Brihannala regiments reigned over Magadha and

as his charioteer.

attained celebrity as a great hero, married Burisrwas : One of the powerful kings on the twin daughters of the Raja of Kasi. His the side of the Kauravas.

two wives ate each half of a mango given Bibhatsu : One of Arjuna's name meaning by sage Kausika and begot half a child a hater of unworthy acts.

each. A Rakshasi recovered the two

Chala : A Kaurava warrior.

portions from a dustbin wherein they were Chandala : A person of a degraded caste, thrown and when they accidentally came whose conduct was much below standard

together, they became a chubby baby,

and whose cause pollution.

which she presented to the king, saying it Charachitra : A son of King Dhritarashtra was his child, which later became known who perished in the war

as Jarasandha.

Chavadi : Place of public assembly of the Brihadyumna : A King, a disciple of sage village. It is the property of the entire Raibhya.

community. In it all public business is Brihannala : Name assumed by Arjuna

transacted, and it serves also as the village while living at Virata's court in incognito.

club the headquarters of the village police Brihatbala : A daring warrior who

and guest house for travellers.

charged at Abhimanyu caught in the

Chekitana : Head of one division of the Kaurava army's net.

Pandava army.

Bhima : The second Pandava brother who Chitra : A son of Dhritarashtra killed in excelled in physical prowess as he was the war.

born of the wind-god.

Chitraksha : One of the many sons of

Bhishmaka : King of Vidarbha, father of King Dhritarashtra who fell in the war Rukmini and Rukma.

Chitrasena : King of the Gandharvas who Bhishma : The old grandsire to whose

prevented the Kauravas from putting up care were committed the five Pandavas by their camp near the pond where he

the rishis when the eldest Yudhishtira himself had encamped.

attained the age of sixteen for their proper Chitrayudha : A Kaurava prince who laid upbringing including mastery of the

down his life in the war.

Vedas, Vedanta and various arts

Chitravarma : A brother of Duryodhana especially those pertaining to the

who was killed in the war

Kshatriyas. Later he intervened but

Chitrangada : Elder son of Santanu born without success to bring about peace and of Matsyagandhi (Satyawati) who

understanding between the Kauravas and succeeded his father on the throne of

the Pandavas who ruled separately from Hastinapura.

Hastinapura and Indraprastha

Chitrasena : A Kaurava warrior.

respectively. He was the eighth child of Daruka : Sri Krishna's charioteer.

King Santanu and Ganga. Appointed

Dasaratha : King of Ayodhya and Rama's supreme commander of the Kaurava

father.

armies.

Darshana : A country whose king

Bhojas : A branch of the Yadava clan

attacked Bhagadatta's elephant in an effort belonging to Krishna's tribe.

to save Bhima.

Bhuminjaya : Another name of prince

Devadatta : Name of Arjuna's conch.

Uttara son of Virata who had proceeded to Devaki : Mother of Sri Krishna.

Devata : A sage who condemned the Dharmaputra : The son of Yama, epithet game of dice as an evil form of gambling of Yudhishtira.

and declared it unfit as entertainment for Dhartarashtras : Sons of Dhritarashtra good people, as it usually offered scope Draupadi : Daughter of King Drupada,

for deceit and dishonesty.

King of Panchala, who married all the five Devavrata : The eighth child of Santanu Pandavas though Arjuna had won her in and Ganga who in time mastered the art the Swayamvara, because of the vow that yielding arms and learned the Vedas and they would share everything in common.

Vedanta as also the sciences known to

Drona : Son of a Brahmana named

Sukra was crowned Yuvaraja (heir

Bharadwaja; married a sister of Kripa and apparent), but later vowed to celibacy and a son Aswathama was born to them; learnt was known as Bhishma.

military art from Parasurama, the maser.

Devayani : The beautiful daughter of

Later he became the instructor to of the Sukracharaya, preceptor of the demons, Kaurava and Pandava princes in the use of who fell in love with Kacha, son of

arms.

Brihaspati, preceptor of the Devas.

Drupada : King of Panchala, father of

Devendra : King of the Gods.

Draupadi who became the wife of the

Dharma : Righteous course of conduct.

Pandavas

Dharmagranthi : Assumed named of

Duhsasana : Duryodhana's brother who

Nakula at Virata's court.

dragged Draupadi to the hall of assembly Dharmananda : The delighted of Dharma,

pulling her by her hair.

a name of Yudhishtira, the son of

Durdhara : A son of Dhritarashtra killed Dharma or Yama.

by Bhima in the war.

Dharmavyadha : He possessed the secret Durjaya : A brother of Duryodhana who of good life and lived in the city of

was sent to attack Bhima, to save Karna's Mithila. He was a meat-seller.

life but lost his own.

Dhananjaya : One of the names of

Durmarsha : A son of Dhritarashtra killed Arjuna.

by Bhima.

Dhanusaksha : A great sage whom

Durmata : A son of Dhritarashtra who got Medhavi, son of sage Baladhi, once

killed by Bhima.

insulted. He took the form of a bull and Durmukha : A chariot-borne warrior on butted at that mountain and broke it to the Kaurava side.

pieces. Then Medhavi fell down dead.

Durvasa : A sage known for his anger

Dhaumya : Preceptor of the Pandavas,

who visited the Kauravas.

who accompanied them during their exile Durvishaha : A warrior fighting on the to the Kurijangala forest, singing Sama Kaurava side.

hymns addressed to Yama, Lord of Death.

Dushkarma : A warrior belonging to the Dhrishtadyumna : Supreme commander of

Kaurava side.

the Pandava forces eldest brother of

Dussaha : A son of Dhritarashtra killed Draupadi.

by Bhima.

Dhrishtaketu : A kinsman of the

Dwaitayana : A forest where the

Pandavas.

Kaurava, cows were being bred and

Dhritarashtra : Elder son of Vichitravirya housed.

and Ambika, born blind, father of

Ganapati : A man of Vvasa who

Duryodhana.

agreed to write down without pause or

hesitation the story of the Mahabharata Indrakila : A mountain Arjuna
passed on dictated by Vyasa.

his way to the Himalayas to practise

Gandhari : Dhritarashtra's wife and queen austerities to acquire powerful
new

mother of the Kauravas.

weapons from Lord Mahadeva.

Gandharvas : A class of celestial beings Iravan : Arjuna's son by a Naga
wife who regarded as specialists in music.

fell in the battle on the eighth day.

Gandiva : Arjuna's most potent bow.

Janaka : King of Mithila, a great

Gangadwara : A place where sage

Rajarishi; father of Sita, wife of Sri Rama.

Agastya and his wife performed penance.

Janamejaya : A king who conducted a

Ghalotkacha : Son of Bhima from

great sacrifice for the well being of the demoness Hidimba.

human race.

Govinda : One of the epithets of Sri

Janardana : A name of Krishna

Krishna and Vishnu; it means a cow-

Jarasandha : Mighty king of Magadha of keeper and refers to Krishna's occupation whose prowess all Kshatriyas were afraid.

in Gokula, the colony of cowherds.

Killed by Bhima in a thirteen-day non-Guru : Revered preceptor, teacher.

stop physical combat: with Sri Krishna Hamsa, Hidimbaka, Kamsa. :
Allies of

and Arjuna as witnesses.

King Jarasandha; the last married the two Jarita, Laputa : Female companions of a daughters of Jarasandha. Also Krishna's saranga bird, who was a rishi named

step-uncle whom Krishna killed.

Mandapala in his previous birth when he Halayudha : Plough-weaponed, an epithet was refused admission to heaven be cause of Balarama who wielded a plough as his he was childless.

weapon.

Jalasura : A demon killed by Bhima.

Hanuman : Wise and learned monkey

Jaya : A son of King Dhritarashtra who devotee of Sri Rama, who possessed

was killed by Bhima in the war

extraordinary powers of discrimination Jayadratha : A warrior on the side of Pandavas and who searched and found

Kauravas who closed the breach effected Sita in her confinement in Lanka.

by Abhimanyu in the Chakravyuha

Hastinapura : Capital city of the Kauravas.

military formation by Dronacharya and

Hrishikesha : Krishna.

trapped him inside.

Ilvala : This demon and his brother Vatapi Jayatsena : A kinsman of the Pandavas.

hated brahmanas implacably. Ilvala would Jayatsena : A warrior fighting on the side invite a brahman to a feast at which he of Kauravas.

would serve the meat of the goat into

Jnana : Knowledge of the eternal and real which his brother had turned he. After the Kacha : Grandson of sage Angiras and

brahmin had partaken of the feast he

son of Brihaspati, who went to seek

would call his brother out who would rend knowledge under Sukracharya as a

his way back to life, tearing the belly of brahmacharin. Devayani, the preceptor's the guest.

lovely daughter, fell in love with him. The Indra : King of the Gods.

Asuras (demons) suspecting him of

Indrajit : Son of Ravana, King of Lanka, wanting to steal the secret of reviving the who conquered Indra, the Lord of Gods

dead, killed him a number of times. But and who was killed by Rama's brother

due to Devayani's love for him, her father Lakshmana.

brought him back to life every time he Indrasena : A kinsman of the Pandavas.

was killed. Ultimately the secret was

learnt by the devas who then succeeded in Krishna-Dwaipayana : Sage Vyasa.

defeating the asuras.

Krauncha : Curlew-heron.

Kagola : A disciple of the great sage and Krauncha-Vyuha : military formation on a teacher of Vedanta, Uddalaka.

pattern supposed to resemble a heron with Kambojas : Enemies of the Kauravas

outstretched beak and spreading wings. In whom Karna had defeated ancient Indian practice, armies were

Kamsa : Maternal Uncle of Sri Krishna

arrayed for battle in formations of definite and son of Ugrasena, also son-in-law of patterns, each of which had a name such Jarasandha, whom Sri Krishna killed.

as Chakra, or Kurma or Krauncha, or

Kanika : Minister of Sakuni.

Makara according to a real or fancied

Kanka : Assumed name of Yudhishtira at resemblance.

Virata's court.

Kritavarma : A notable Yadava warrior

Kausikam : A sage who learnt from

fighting on the side of Kaurava forces.

Dharmavyadha the secret of Dharma, of

Kshatradharma : A great warrior on the performing one's duty.

side of Pandavas.

Karna : A matchless warrior, son of the Kuchasthala : A city where Krishna

Sun god and Kunti. Disciple of

stayed the night on his way to the court of Parasurama. Also son of Radha, his

Dhritarashtra.

foster-mother, and was known as

Kumbhakarna : Brother of Ravana, King

Radheya.

of Lanka, who was asleep most of the

Kartavirya : A great warrior who defeated time because of the curse of Brahma.

Ravana, King of Lanka.

Kundinapura : Capital of Vidarbha.

Kartikeya : Commander of the armies of Kunti : She was the daughter of Sura and the devas.

was known as Pritha. She was given in

Kekaya : A brave warrior on the Pandava adoption to the king's childless cousin side into whose chariot Bhima got during Kuntibhoja and was named Kunti after her the fighting on the sixth day.

adoptive father. Sage Durvasa, whom she Kesava : One of the names of Sri Krishna.

had served while he was a guest at her Ketama : Another chief whose head was

father's house, gave her a divine mantra cut off by Drona.

which when repeated would give her a son Khandavaprastha : The ancient capital

from any god whom she would call upon.

from where the ancestors of Pandavas,

Out of childish curiosity, she invoked the Nahusha and Yayati ruled. The Pandavas Sun god by repeating the Mantra and then rebuilt the ruined city and erected palaces she gave birth to a son born with divine and forts and renamed it Indraprastha.

armor and earrings. Ashamed, she placed Kichaka : Sudeshna's brother, the child in a sealed box and set it afloat commander-in-chief of Virata's army, who on a river. The box was picked up by a made advances to Sairandhri (Draupadi).

childless charioteer and brought up as his He was invited to meet her at night at the own and became known as Karna. Later,

ladies dancing hall and was met instead by Kunti chose Pandu as her husband at a

Valala (Bhima) dressed up as a female

Swayamvara.

who killed him (Kichaka).

Kunti-Madri : Queens of King Pandu

Kripacharya : Aswathama's uncle who

who gave birth to three and two sons

advocated a combined assault on Arjuna known as the Pandavas in the forest where in battle as against Karna's boast that he he spent many years for having committed could take him on single-handed.

some sin. The sons were known as

Yudhishtira, Bhima. Arjuna, Nakula, and Mandavya cursed Dharma who was born

Sahadeva.

as Vidura, the wise, to the servant maid of Kurma : Tortoise.

Ambalika, wife of King Vichitravirya,

Lakshmana : Younger step-brother of

who offered her to Sage Vyasa in place of Rama and son of Sumitra and King

Ambalika.

Dasaratha. Duryodhana's gallant young

Maricha : A character in the Ramayan, son also bore this name.

uncle of Ravana who transformed him self Lomasa : A brahmana sage who advised

into a golden deer at the behest of Ravana the Pandavas to reduce their retinue while to entice Sita.

repairing to the forest. Those unable to Markandeya : A sage who told

bear the hardships of exile were free to go Yudhishtira the story of a brahmana,

to the court of Dhritarashtra or Drupada, Kausika.

king of Panchala. He accompanied

Marutta : A king of the Ikshwaku dynasty Yudhishtira on his wanderings.

whose sacrifice was performed by

Lopamudra : Daughter of the king of

Samvarta in defiance of Indra and

Vidarbha who married the sage Agastya.

Brihaspati.

Lord Narayana : Refuge of men;

Matali : Charioteer of Indra who took

Mahavishnu.

Arjuna to the kingdom of gods.

Madhava : One of the names of Krishna.

Medhavi : Son of Sage Baladhi who

It means the Lord of Lakshmi.

desired that his son should live as long as Madhusudana : Another name of Krishna, a certain mountain lasted.

the slayer of the asura Madhu.

Meru : An ancient mountain. Becoming

Mahavishnu : Lord of the Universe who

jealous of Meru, the Vindya began to

took human birth in order to wrest his grow very high obstructing the sun, the kingdom from Emperor Bali for the

moon and the planets. Agastya whom the salvation of the world. Lord Vishnu also Vindhya mountain respected asked it to took birth as Rama, son of Dasaratha, to stop growing until he crossed it on his kill Ravana, King of Lanka.

way to the south and returned to the north Mahendra : A King who had attained

again. But he did not return at all, having heaven.

settled in the south.

Maitreya : A sage who visited the court of Nahusha : A mighty king who was made

Dhritarashtra, expressed sorrow at the king of the gods because Indra had Pandava's plight, advised Duryodhana not disappeared due to his killing Vritra

to injure the Pandavas for his own good.

through sin and deceit.

Mantra : An incantation with words of

Nakula : Fourth brother of the Pandavas.
power.

Nala : King of Nishadha who lost his

Manasarovar : A sacred lake in the
kingdom in a game of dice and deserted Himalayas
his wife Damayanti because of a curse.

Mandavya : A sage wrongly punished by

Nandini : Vasishtha's divinely beautiful the king by being impaled as the chief of cow.

robbers who had clandestinely hidden

Nara : Arjuna or Dhananjaya.

their stolen goods in a corner of his

Narada : The sage who suddenly appeared hermitage when he was in deep

before Dhritarashtra and Vidura as the contemplation. Lord Dharma gave him

latter was describing the departure of the this punishment for having tortured birds Pandavas to the forest and uttered a

and bees in his childhood. At this

prophecy that after fourteen years the

Kauravas would be extinct as a result of Prabhasa : The Vasu who seized

Duryodhana's crimes and vanished as

Vasishtha's divine cow.

suddenly.

Pradyumna : Sri Krishna's son.

Narayana : Sri Krishna or Krishna;

Pratikhami : Duryodhana's charioteer.

Vishnu.

Pritha : Mother of Karna, Kunti before her Narayanas : Krishna's kinsmen.

marriage.

Narayanasrama : A charming forest where Pundarikaksha : Krishna, the lotus-eyed the Pandavas had halted during their

one.

wanderings.

Purochana : An architect who built a

Nishadha : A country where Indra, Lord beautiful wax palace named "Sivam" in of the gods had lived once disguised as a Varanavata.

brahmana.

Purumitra : A Kaurava warrior

Nishada : An aboriginal hunter

Pitamaha : Literally grandfather, which or fisherman: a man of low or degraded

however carried no imputation of senile tribe in general; an outcaste.

infirmity but denotes the status of the Panchajanya : Name of Krishna's conch.

pater familias.

Palasa : Butea frondosa, "flame of the Ptirushottama : An epithet of Sri Krishna.

forest".

It is one of the names of Vishnu and

Panchali : Another name of Draupadi

means the Supreme Being.

Queen of the Pandavas and daughter of

Raibhya : A sage whose hermitage was

King Drupada.

situated on the banks of the Ganga. The Panchalya : A son of King Drupada who

Pandavas during their wanderings visited died in the war.

it. This ghat was very holy. Bharata, son Pandu : Second son of Vichitravirya and of Dasaratha bathed here. Indra was

Ambalika who succeeded to the throne of cleansed of his sin of killing Vritra

Hastinapura on his father's death, as his unfairly by bathing in this ghat. elder brother Dhritarashtra was born

Sanatkumar became one with God. Aditi, blind, father of the Pandavas. mother of the gods, prayed here to be

Parasara : A great sage, father of Veda blessed with a son.

Vvasa.

Radheya : Son of Radha, a name of

Paravasu : Son of Raibhva and elder

Karna, who as a foundling was brought up brother of Arvavasu whose wife was

as a son by Radha, the wife of the

violated by Yavakrida, who was killed

Charioteer Adhiratha.

with a spear by a fiend for his sin.

Rajasuya : A sacrifice performed by a

Parikshit : Son of Abhimanyu and

king to be entitled to assume the title of grandson of the Pandavas who was

"Emperor".

crowned king after the holocaust claimed Ravana : King of Lanka who abducted

the Kauravas and the Pandavas.

Sita, the beautiful wife of Ramachandra.

Partha : Arjuna.

Rishabha : The second note of the Indian Parvati : Consort of Siva.
Rukmini played gamut (Shadja, rishabha, gandhara,

to her for saving her from the cruel

madhyama, panchama, daivata, nishada -

Sisupala king of Chedi, as she had set her sa, ri, ga, ma, pa, dha, ni.)

heart on marrying Krishna.

Rishyasringa : Son of sage Vibhandaka, Paurava : A Kaurava hero.

who had grown up seeing no mortal

Phalguna : Arjuna.

except his father. The king of Anga,

which was afflicted with a dire famine, to Samvarta : Brihaspati's younger brother, a bring rain and plenty, invited him.

person of great learning.

Romapada : King of Anga which was

Samba : A Yadava youngster dressed as a woman once visited by a great drought.

woman who gave birth to a mace, as

Rudra : One of the names of Siva.

foretold by rishis.

Rudra dance : Siva's cosmic dance of

Sanga : Son of Virata. When king Virata was

wounded, he had to get into Sanga's chariot. Heir apparent to the throne of chariot, having lost his chariot, horses and Vidarbha. When defeated by Balarama

charioteer

and Krishna he established a new city

Sanjaya : The narrator who tells blind Bhojakata, ashamed to return to

Dhritarashtra the progress of the war from Kundinapura, the capital of Vidarbha, and day to day. He told the king that a victim ruled over it.

of adverse fate would first become

Sachidevi : Wife of Indra, king of the devas and loses his sense of right and wrong on whom Nahusha's evil eye fell.

wrong. Time would destroy his reason and She was also known as Indrani.

drive him to his own destruction.

Sahadeva : Youngest of the Pandava

Sankula Yuddha : A melee, confused

princes who offered the first honors to fight, a soldiers battle as distinguished Krishna at the Rajasuya sacrifices.

from the combats of heroes.

Saibya : A ruler friendly to the Pandavas.

Shanta : Wife of sage Rishyasringa.

Sairandhri : A maid servant or female

Santanu : King of Hastinapura, father of attendant employed in royal female

Bhishma.

apartments.

Sanyasin: One who has renounced the

Sakuni : He played dice on behalf of the world and its concerns.

Kauravas and succeeded in defeating the Sarasana : One of the Kaurava brothers Pandavas by a stratagem. As a result the who died in the war.

latter had to go and live in the forest for Sarmishtha : Princes and daughter of king thirteen years. According to the conditions Vrishaparva who got angry with Devayani of the game, the thirteenth and last year of and slapped and pushed her into a dry

exile was to be spent incognito. If

well.

discovered by anyone they were again to Satanika : Virata's son whose bead was repair to the forests for a like term. He severed by Drona.

was considered to be the evil genius, who Satyajit : A Panchala prince, a hero who beguiled Duryodhana to take to evil ways.

stood by Yudhishtira to prevent his being Salva : Friend of Sisupala, who besieged taken prisoner by Drona, while Arjuna

Dwaraka Sri Krishna's kingdom to avenge was away answering a challenge by the

Sisupala's death at the latter's hand.

Samsaptakas (the Trigartas).

Salya : Ruler of Madradesa and brother of Satyaki : A Yadava warrior, friend of

Madri and uncle of the Pandavas who

Krishna and the Pandavas who advocated because of having received hospitality collecting their forces and defeating the from Duryodhana went over to his side.

unrighteous Duryodhana.

Samsaptaka : One who has taken a vow to Satyawati : A fisherman's daughter who conquer or die, and never to retreat. The possessed uncommon beauty and

Samsaptakas were suicide-squads, vowed emanated a divinely sweet fragrance and to some desperate deed of daring.

king Santanu became enamored of her,

married her and made her his queen.

Satyavrata : Warrior on the Kaurava side.

Sumitra : Abhimanyu's charioteer.

Saugandhika : A plant that produced a

Supratika : Name of King Bhagadatta's

very beautiful and fragrant flower that elephant.

Bhima went to get for Draupadi.

Susarma : King of Trigarta, a supporter of Savyasachin : Ambidexter, one who can

the Kauravas who backed the proposal to use both hands with equal facility and invade Matsya, Virata's country.

effect. A name of Arjuna who could use Suvarna : A soldier on the Kaurava side.

his bow with the same skill with either Sri Rama : Also knew as Rama, hands.

Ramachandra or Sri Rama. Hanumana

Sikhandin : A girl turned man, warrior on tells Bhima how he was deeply thrilled the Pandava side who restored order

when he happened to touch Rama's body.

among scattered, subdued soldiers,

This king of Ayodhya was banished to the Drupada's son.

forest for fourteen years, killed Ravana Simhanada : A lion-note or roar; a deep the king of Lanka who abducted his wife, roar of defiance or triumph which

Sita.

warriors were wont to utter to inspire Srinjayas : Pandava supporters.

confidence in their friends, of terror in Srutayu, Astutayu : Two brothers fighting their enemies.

on the Kaurava side attacked Arjuna but Saindhava : Jayadratha.

were

Sini : One of the suitors to Devaki's hand.

killed.

A kinsman of the Kauravas.

Srutayudha : A Kaurava warrior whose

Sisupala : King of Chedi. Died at the

mace hurled at Krishna rebounded

hands of Krishna at the time of

fiercely, killing Srutayudha himself. Her Dharmaputra's Rajasuya sacrifice.

mother Parnasa had obtained that gift

Somadutta : One of the suitors to Devaki's from Varuna who had specified that the hand. A kinsman of the Kauravas.

mace should not be used against one who Subahu : King of Kulinda in the

does not fight, else it would kill the person Himalayas, ally of the Kauravas.

who hurls it.

Subhadra : Wife of Arjuna, sister of Sri Swarga : The heaven of Indra where

Krishna and mother of Abhimanyu.

mortals after death enjoy the results of Sudakshina : A warrior on the Kaurava

their good deeds on earth.

side.

Sveta : A son of King Virata who fell in Sudarsana : A warrior on the Kaurava

battle to Bhishma's arrow.

army.

Tantripala : Assumed name of Sahadeva

Sudeshna : Queen of King Virata whom

at Virata's court.

Sairandhri (Draupadi) served.

Uddalaka : A great sage and teacher of Sugriva : Monkey-king, friend of Sri

Vedanta.

Rama, and brother of mighty Vali whom

Umadevi : Wife of Siva.

Sri Rama killed.

Unchhavritti : The life of a mendicant, Sujata : Daughter of Sage Uddalaka and begging his food.

wife of Kagola, his disciple who had

Upachitra : One of King Dhritarashtra's virtue and devotion but not much of

sons who perished in the war.

erudition, mother of Ashtavakra.

Upaplavya : A place in Matsya Kingdom, Suka : A sage, son of Vyasa, who related where the Pandavas settled after their the Srimad Bhagavata to King Parikshit, exile of thirteen years.

grandson of Arjuna.

Urvashi : An apsara in Indra's court, whose Vichitravirya: Younger son of Santanu

amorous overtures Arjuna declined.

who succeeded King Chitrangada on the

Vaisampayana : Chief disciple of sage

throne of Hastinapura. He had two sons, Vyasa who revealed the epic for the

Dhritarashtra and Pandu.

benefit humanity.

Vikarna : A son of Dhritarashtra who

Vaishnava : A sacrifice performed by

declared the staking of Draupadi illegal, Duryodhana in the forest. Yayati,

as Yudhishtira himself was a slave and Mandhata, Bharata and others also

had lost all his rights. Therefore the performed it.

Kauravas had not won Draupadi legally, Vaishnava mantra : An invocation which he held

endows a missile with some of the

Vinda, Anuvinda : Two brothers kings of irresistible power of Vishnu.

Avanti, great soldiers whom were on the Vajrayudha : The weapon with which

Kaurava side, they suffered defeat at the Indra killed Visvarupa on suspicion

hands of Yudhamanyu

because his mother belonged to the asura Virata : King of Matsya, the country

tribe of daityas.

which was suggested by Bhima to live in Valala : Assumed name of Bhima when,

incognito during the thirteenth year of he worked as a cook at Virata's court.

their exile.

Vali : Monkey-king, brother of Sugriva.

Visoka : Bhima's charioteer.

Vanaprastha : The third stage of the

Visvarupa : Name of Twashta's son who

dvija's life, when he is required to

became the preceptor of the gods,

relinquish worldly responsibilities to his Brihaspati having left when insulted by heirs and retires to the woods with his Indra.

wife for an anchorite's life.

Vivimsati : A Kaurava hero.

Vandi : Court poet of Mithila who on

Viswarupa : All-pervading, all-including being defeated by Sage Ashtavakra in

form. See the description in the Bhagavad debate drowned himself in the ocean and Gita chapter eleven.

went to the abode of Varuna.

Vridhakshatra : King of the Sindhus,

Varanavata : A forest in which the

father of Jayadratha into whose lap his son Pandavas were asked to stay in a wax-Jayadratha's head was caused to fall by house which was to be set on fire at

Arjuna after cutting off Jayadratha's head.

midnight in order to kill the Pandavas Vrika : A Panchala prince who fell in

while they were asleep.

battle.

Vasishtha : A sage who had cursed the

Vrishu, Achala : Sakuni's brothers.

eight Vasus to be born in the world of Vrishnis, Kekayas : Tribals who were

men as sons of Ganga and Santanu. Ganga devoted to the Pandavas, who with Sri

threw her seven children in to the river Krishna visited the Pandavas in their

with a smiling face.

exile.

Vasudhana : Another warrior who

Vrishasena : A warrior on the Kaurava

perished in the battle on the Twelfth Day.

side.

Vasudeva : An epithet of Krishna. It

Vritra : Son of Twashta who was defeated means both son of Vasudeva and the

by Indra's weapons Vajrayudha. He was

supreme spirit that pervades the universe.

born out of his father's sacrificial flames Vedavyasa : Vyasa, author of the

and became Indra's mortal enemy.

Mahabharata.

Vrikodara : Wolf-bellied, an epithet of Bhima, denoting his slimness of waist and insatiable hunger.

Vyasa : Compiler of the Vedas, son of sage Parasara.

Vyuha : Battle arrays.

Yama : God of death. God of dharma, whose son was Yudhishtira. It is he whose questions Yudhishtira answered correctly whereupon his dead brothers were brought back to life on the banks of the enchanted pool.

Yajna : A sacrifice.

Yaksha : A class of demi-gods, subjects of Kubera, the god of wealth.

Yavakrida : Son of Sage Bharadwaja who was bent upon mastering the Vedas.

Yayati : Emperor of the Bharata race who rescued Devayani from the well into

which she had been thrown by

Sarmishtha. He later married both

Devayani and Sarmishtha. One of the ancestors of the Pandavas who became prematurely old due to Sukracharya's curse.

Yudhamanyu : A prince supporting the

Pandavas.

Yuyudhana : Another name of Satyaki.

Yuyutsu : A noble son of Dhritarashtra who bent his head in shame and sorrow

when Yudhishtira lost Draupadi. He also disapproved of the unfair way in which Abhimanyu was killed.